

THE FAVOURITE SCHOOL STORY PAPER!

The **GEM** LIBRARY

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"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!"
A Grand Football Tale.

"CONDEMNED BY THE STUDY!"
A Story of Tom Merry & Co.

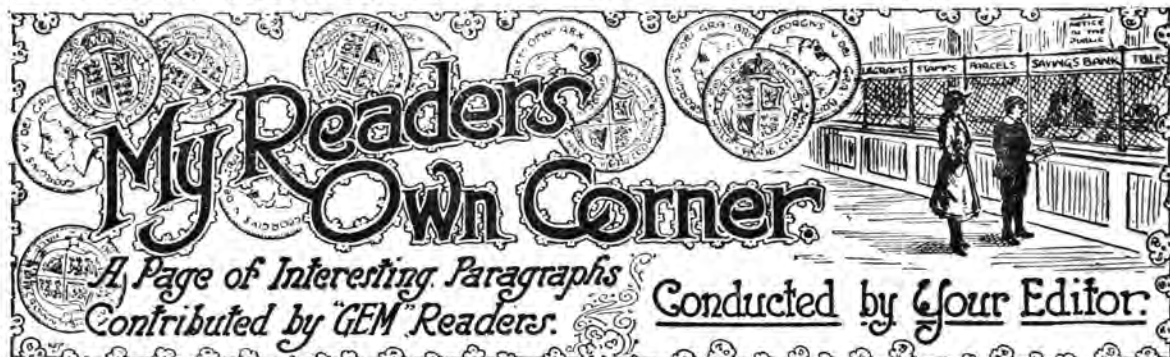
"SLAVE ISLAND!"
Thrilling Adventure Yarn.



ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY RUNS AWAY!

(A surprising incident from the grand School Tale in this issue.)

IS YOUR CONTRIBUTION IN THIS WEEK?



NOTE.—Half-a-crown will be awarded to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

A Slip of the Tongue.

Prefect: "There's a gentleman called to see you, sir. I took him to the sitting-room. He says he's the Duke of Newcastle. Shall I go and light the fire?" Head: "What?" Prefect: "I mean, shall I light the fire?"—E. A. Manders, 21, Union Road, London, N. 7.

That Weak Chest.

Screen Cowboy: "What's become of old Bill Pepper? I haven't seen him about the studio for a long time." His Friend: "What, haven't you heard? A two-ton block of stone fell on his chest and killed him." Screen Cowboy: "Ah. I always said he would have to be very careful with that weak chest of his."—Horace Chivers, 26, Houselands Road, Tonbridge, Kent.

Quite O.K.

Mr. Selby: "Now, D'Arcy, what is the All Red Route?" Wally D'Arcy: "Please, sir, the beetroot."—Stanley F. Bennett, 110, Milton Road, Leicester.

Puzzling.

Officer (to first recruit): "What's your name?" Recruit: "Watt, sir." Officer: "What is your name?" Recruit: "Watt, sir." Officer (impatiently): "What is your name?" Recruit: "W-a-a-t, Watt, sir." Officer: "Well, and where do you come from?" Recruit: "Ware, sir." Officer: "Yes, where from?" Recruit: "The village of Ware, sir." Officer (to next recruit): "Your name?" "Mee, sir." "Yes, you! What's your name?" "Mee, sir—M-e-e." "Humph! Where from?" "Hoo, sir." "Confound it—you, sir!" "Hoo, sir." "Well, confound it—you! Well, if ever—" Sergeant (interposing): "This man comes from the village of Hoo, near Chatham, sir."—C. Jones, 35, Donaldson Street, Anfield, Liverpool.

Master's Orders.

A farmer engaged a servant, and the latter was sent to get the butter. The servant carried the butter in his hand, and it melted away. "You should have carried it between two cabbage leaves," said the master, "and dip it in every

pond you come to to keep it cool." The next day the servant was sent for a puppy, and he dipped the animal in every pond. "You stupid fellow, you should have slipped a collar on the dog and led it home," said the employer. When a piano was to be fetched, the servant pushed it home. "It was a job for six men and a trolley," said the infuriated master. Next time, when sent for a box of matches, the clever servant took half a dozen men and a cart, and after that the master got fed-up. "Take this hammer," he said, "and kill every fly you see." The servant did as ordered. Bang went a window. The shopkeeper flew out, but he had a fly on his bald head, and the hammer descended. The servant was hailed before the judge. "Half a second, please, judge," said the man; "let me kill that fly." The judge was knocked flat by a hefty blow. After that someone had the happy idea of taking away the hammer.—William T. Smith, Post Office, Maraisburg, Transvaal, South Africa.

Neglecting His Duty.

A spectator at a football match persisted in shouting rude remarks to the referee, who at last went up to the man and said: "Look here, I've been watching you for about fifteen minutes!" "Ah thowt so," came the scathing reply—"ah thowt so. Ah knew very well tha' wasn't watching the game!"—B. O'Dwyer, 56, Cottenham Street, C-on-M., Manchester.

Ready Made.

He clasped her hand in a passionate embrace; the very sofa thrilled with emotion. "And one day, light of my life," he cried, "you will be mine—all mine! Those silken tresses, those sky-blue eyes, that rosebud mouth, those dear, darling, pearly teeth that show like seashore shells, are more precious to me than the world's wealth. Let me gaze on them, my beloved!" The sofa thrilled again, and from beneath came the shrill voice of the bride-to-be's young brother: "Why don't you take 'em out and show 'em, Sis?"—W. J. Hunt, 26, Whyke Road, Chichester, Sussex.

A Hair Cut.

Is a man mean who cuts his own hair? I knew a man who did this, and his fellow-workmen never realised the truth. I have seen the same man shave himself with a cheap iron-handled pocket-knife. He is not a mean man. He likes to make experiments, that's all. I tried the hair-cutting experiment myself. I went over my hair with sharp scissors, clipping off little pinches, feeling all the time with my fingers to make sure I was going regularly and keeping it smooth. I then shaved my neck. Then I washed and combed it, and appeared before five men and nine girls with my hat off. There was not the slightest comment, and I knew my experiment was a success.—Arthur Wheeler, 34, Duckworth Street, St. John's, Newfoundland.

A Humble Shilling.

I was born in a mountain, and was dug out in a very dirty state. After being cleaned, I was given to Sir Francis Drake, who brought me over to England, where I was naturalised and turned into a shilling, with the face of Queen Elizabeth on one side, and the arms of England on the other. After this I found in me a wonderful inclination to ramble, and travelled all over the world. I had a long stay in a miser's chest along with five hundred of my brothers, but I came out none the worse. Later on I was lost, and a poor cavalier found me, and made me into a ring, which he gave away. But the recipient did not care for me, so into the melting-pot I went.—G. D. Collard, 49, Portsdown Road, Maida Vale, W. 9.

Walking.

You will greatly strengthen your feet by indulging in regular walking exercise, and studying the best way of carrying the feet. Strengthen the muscles of the calf and leg by standing with the feet firmly planted on the ground, hands clenched at sides, while you lower and raise the body well on the toes. This should be a frequent exercise. It develops the muscles, and tends to keep you fit.—N. Hibberd, 65, Chapel Street, Handsworth, Birmingham.

Contributions are invited from readers of the "GEM" for publication on this page. Anything will do, so long as it is interesting, short, and concise—a good joke, a description of a holiday, a bright idea for increasing the popularity of the "Gem," a good anecdote. "Pars" should not be more than three hundred words long—the shorter the better. They can be sent in on a postcard. Address all contributions to The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and mark them "Readers' Own Corner."

RENTON OF THE ROVERS!



A Magnificent New Football Serial. By PAUL MASTERS.

Read This First.

JIMMY RENTON, a splendid footballer, is compelled to leave St. Clive's prematurely, owing to the failure of his father in business. Jimmy obtains a situation as a reporter on the staff of the "Burchester Times." At the newspaper-office he chums up with

BILLY DESMOND, a cheery, good-natured fellow; and he also comes into contact with

LUKE RAYNER, who hates Jimmy from the start, and is determined to bring about his downfall.

Jimmy plays against orders in a match between Burchester United and his old school. Mr. Wilberforce, his "chief," appears on the ground, but Jimmy successfully conceals his identity. He accompanies Mr. Wilberforce back to Burchester without being recognised; but as soon as they reach their destination Rayner appears on the scene and betrays Jimmy.

As a result of his escapade, Jimmy Renton is handed a month's money and ordered to quit. He bids a reluctant farewell to his chum Desmond, who fears that he may never see Jimmy again.

(Now read on.)

A Rascal Well Licked!

WITH a heavy heart Jimmy Renton made his way to his lodgings.

He felt utterly down and out, and with good reason.

He had been deprived of his job; he had been hounded out of the office; his career as a journalist had come to an untimely end—thanks to Rayner!

Small wonder that Jimmy Renton, as he walked heavily along the familiar high-street of Burchester, felt bitter towards the cad who had betrayed him.

It was Rayner's father who had brought Jimmy's own father to ruin. He had been in partnership with Mr. Renton in business, and he had swindled him right and left. Then, directly the business failed, he had emulated the Arabs in the poem, and silently stolen away.

Jimmy Renton's blood boiled when he reflected how Rayner senior and junior had compassed the downfall of himself and his father. He was not by nature a vindictive fellow, but he couldn't help longing for an opportunity of levelling things up.

What was he to do now? Where was he to go?

It was one thing to talk of getting another job, and quite another thing when it actually came to getting one.

The streets of Burchester were already thronged with ex-Tommies, struggling along on paltry pensions, and eager to find employment of some sort in order to keep the wolf from the door.

Jimmy Renton felt that these men's claims came before his. They had fought for their country in time of war, whereas he—Jimmy—had been safely harboured at St. Clive's, away from all

risk, save in the form of an occasional air-raid.

It would be worse than useless to look for another job in Burchester. The job from which Jimmy had just been sacked had been obtained for him by his uncle, and it would be no use appealing for further help from that quarter.

It would be no use going home, either. He could not sponge on his people, who were in dire straits themselves.

There seemed to be no solution of the baffling problem which confronted Jimmy Renton. He thought and thought until his head ached; but by the time he reached his lodgings he had his upon no way out.

Mrs. Higgs, his landlady, eyed him sympathetically as he came in. Her lodger had told her that morning that he anticipated getting the sack. Evidently his anticipations had been realised.

"Well, Mrs. Higgs," said Jimmy, "the chopper's come down, and I've got to quit."

"I'm real sorry for you, Mr. Renton," said the landlady. "But a smart young feller like you won't be out of a job for long."

"Wish I could think so," said Jimmy. "But it isn't the easiest thing in the world to get a job nowadays."

"Couldn't you get a billet on some other noospaper?"

"I doubt it. A good many of 'em are overstaffed as it is. Besides, I'm not exactly bursting to go back to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 662.

journalism. I wasn't cut out for that sort of thing."

Mrs. Higgs nodded.

"Now, how much do I owe you?"

"Two pun two an' tuppence-ha'penny," said the landlady. "That includes fuel an' light an' attendance."

"Jolly reasonable, too," said Jimmy, as he paid over the money. "I've been very comfy here, and I'm sorry to leave."

"Not so sorry as I am to lose yer," said Mrs. Higgs. "I gets more dodgers than lodgers in this 'ouse, an' it's refreshin' to meet a young gent wot's pufficky straight."

Jimmy held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Higgs!"

"Good-bye, sir, an' good luck! May you go down to prosperity, as the sayin' goes."

Jimmy Renton had crammed his few belongings into a small attache-case overnight, in anticipation of his departure. He fetched the case from his room, and, after a further effusive send-off from his landlady, he stepped out into the street.

Early that morning the conditions had been cold and cheerless. But the sun was now shining brilliantly, as if in mockery at Jimmy Renton's sorry plight.

Jimmy had formed no plans, and he had no fixed destination in mind as he strode along. He had a few pounds in his pocket, sufficient to tide him over for a time. But as soon as his funds were exhausted—

Jimmy shuddered a little at the ominous prospect.

He was proceeding along a quiet thoroughfare on the outskirts of the town, when he suddenly came face to face with the fellow who was responsible for the present crisis in his affairs.

Luke Rayner glanced at the case Jimmy was carrying, and, in spite of his alarm at the unexpected meeting, he could not repress a malevolent grin.

"So you're sacked?" he said.

"Thanks to you—yes!" replied Jimmy.

And he sat the case down on the pavement, removed his coat, and hung it on the adjacent railings.

Rayner followed these movements with considerable apprehension.

"What are you up to?" he faltered.

"I'm going to give you the licking of your life!" was the grim reply.

Rayner threw a nervous glance up and down the street. Save for those two the thoroughfare was deserted.

"There's no escape for you, you cad!" said Jimmy Renton contemptuously.

"Off with your coat!"

"I'm not going to fight!"

"Just as you choose. Whether you make any resistance or not, you're going to get that licking!"

Rayner moistened his dry lips.

"I—I've done nothin'!" he stammered.

"You've got me sacked from my job out of sheer spite. And now you're goin' through the mill!"

Rayner tried hard to delay matters, in the hope that somebody would come along and interfere.

But Jimmy Renton was in no mood for delay.

"Off with your coat!" he repeated.

And there was something in his tone which made Rayner promptly obey.

There had already been one bout of fist-cuffs between Jimmy Renton and Luke Rayner, and the latter had had decidedly the worst of the argument. History was likely to repeat itself on this occasion.

"Ready?" asked Jimmy grimly.

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Without pausing to reply, Rayner rushed in, and delivered an unfair blow below the waistline. In this way he hoped to put his opponent out of action at the outset.

Jimmy reeled from the cowardly blow, and he was compelled to clutch at the railings for support.

But he was far from being hors de combat. Recovering himself with an effort, he advanced towards Rayner, and dealt him a smashing blow between the eyes.

The recipient of the blow promptly measured his length on the pavement. He showed no inclination to rise, but Jimmy Renton gripped him by the shoulders and heaved him to his feet.

He was beside himself with passion—a very rare event, so far as Jimmy Renton was concerned.

"Come on!" he muttered fiercely. "You've got to go through with it!"

Rayner's courage—of which he had not a great deal at any time—had oozed out at his finger-tips. He backed away towards the railings, his face pale, his knees trembling.

"Hold on!" he panted. "I—I've had enough! Do you want to kill me, you mad fool?"

Jimmy Renton stepped back, and for a moment there was silence, save for the laboured breathing of the two. Then Jimmy sprang at the cowering creature, who had no spark of manliness in him.

Rayner put his arms up in front of his face, to protect himself from his opponent's fierce onslaught. He succeeded in saving his face all right, but he failed to ward off a powerful drive in the chest—a blow which fairly flattened him against the railings. Then he slid down on to the pavement, and rolled over with a groan.

Furious though he was, Jimmy Renton realised that Rayner had had enough. He lay grovelling on the dusty pavement—a rascal well licked. And he had only himself to blame for the severity of the licking. Had he fought fairly instead of aiming a blow below the belt, he would not have received nearly such a rough handling.

"I hope that will be a lesson to you, you worm; but I'm afraid it won't be!" said Jimmy. "You're an out-and-out waster, and they say that the Ethiopian can't change his skin, or the leopard his spots. You'll always be what you are now—a creepy, crawly thing, disguised as a human being. I'm going now, and I hope I've seen the last of you!"

"Hang you!" snarled Rayner. "We shall meet again, one of these days, and I'll make you suffer for this!"

Ignoring this vindictive threat, Jimmy Renton donned his coat, picked up his attache-case, and strode away. The very sight of the grovelling Rayner nauseated him.

Jimmy did not look back. And Luke Rayner followed his retreating figure with gleaming eyes.

"I'll cross his path again sooner than he expects!" he muttered savagely. "And when I do, he'll be sorry he ever gave me this lamming!"

Whether Rayner's threat was likely to materialise, or whether it was merely an idle avowal, remained to be seen.

Not Wanted!

JIMMY RENTON halted, and rested awhile by the roadside.

The sun was high in the heavens, and Burchester had been left far behind by the wanderer.

Jimmy was tired and dispirited. He was already weary of tramping. He had heard that a solitary walking tour was one of the greatest pleasures in the

world; but his own experience was proving otherwise.

"About time I had something to eat," he reflected. "When I get to the next place of any importance I'll have a tuck-in."

After a rest of half an hour, Jimmy continued to plod his weary way, but not homeward. He stuck to his resolve not to go home and be a burden to his people. Come what may, he would fight his own battles. It would mean privation and hardship—it might even mean starvation—but Jimmy Renton meant to sink or swim alone. He was independent to the verge of folly; but there was something noble in his resolve not to drag others into his troubles.

"My people," he reflected, "have quite enough troubles of their own just now."

Dusty and footsore, Jimmy Renton tramped on.

It seemed ages ago since he had left the office of the "Burchester Times." He wondered what Billy Desmond was doing. Thinking of him, no doubt—wishing him good luck in his wanderings.

"Old Billy's a rattling good sort!" he told himself. "Doubt if I shall ever see him again, though, unless in a few years' time, when he's boss of the 'Burchester Times,' he gives me a job as Fighting Editor!"

And Jimmy laughed aloud at this romantic possibility. His laugh echoed weirdly along the deserted road.

Jimmy's next stopping-place was the flourishing town of Easthampton. He was pretty well fagged out when he arrived there, and great was his relief when he came to an inviting-looking restaurant. He went inside and dropped into a seat—the picture of exhaustion. A sympathetic-looking waitress handed him a menu-card.

"I'm simply ravenous, miss," said Jimmy. "I'd like something substantial. What do you recommend?"

"Our steak-and-kidney-puddings," said the waitress, "are the finest in the town."

"Right you are! Trot out a portion—a double portion, if you like. I expect I shall survive."

Jimmy Renton was soon going strong with the steak-and-kidney-pudding. And he followed it up with apple-tart and custard. He concluded with cheese and coffee, and he rose from the table like a giant refreshed. But he made a wry face when his bill was presented. The figure startled him.

"If I go on at this rate," he reflected. "I shall be stony within a few days. I shall have to go steady, and husband my resources."

He paid the bill, nodded genially to the waitress, and passed out into the street.

For the life of him he could not decide what to do next. He hadn't the heart to continue his weary tramp into the country; and, after some reflection, he decided to explore the busy streets of Easthampton, in the hope of getting employment of some sort.

The thoroughfares were thronged with well-dressed men and women. They all seemed to be happy—to have some definite object in life. Jimmy Renton envied them as he passed them by.

He halted at length outside a newspaper office which bore the sign of the "Southern Daily News."

Passing inside, he scanned the advertisement pages of the paper.

There were several jobs going begging, and Jimmy jotted down a few names and addresses in his notebook.

There was an auctioneer wanting a clerk; there was a shop-assistant required by a large drapery establishment; and

a smart, reliable youth was advertised for to act in the capacity of cinema-operator.

Jimmy Renton promptly called upon the auctioneer, only to find that he had been forestalled.

"Sorry," said the auctioneer, "but the vacancy was filled only an hour ago."

Jimmy turned his attention to the large drapery firm which required a shop-assistant.

Here, again, he was unlucky. There had been plenty of applicants, one of whom had already been selected for the job.

"You haven't missed much," said the under-manager, whom Jimmy interviewed. "The salary wouldn't have kept you in tobacco."

Jimmy turned disconsolately away. He tramped to the other end of the town, until he came to the Bijou Cinema.

A stoutish individual, in a loud check suit, was standing outside, changing the bills.

"Can I see the manager?" inquired Jimmy.

"I'm the manager. What d'you want?"

"You were advertising for an operator. Have you got one yet?"

"No."

"Then I should like to offer myself for the job."

The manager surveyed Jimmy Renton with a critical stare.

"What d'you know about cinema operating?" he asked.

"Nothing, at present. But I should soon learn."

The manager grunted.

"Haven't got time to teach you your job," he said. "I want an experienced man."

And he turned his back on Jimmy. The latter was getting used to disappointments, by this time.

"My luck's dead out," he told himself.

"Nobody's got any use for me."

He didn't want to go back to journalism, if he could possibly help it. But that would be better than courting starvation. So Jimmy revisited the offices of the "Southern Daily News," and asked to see the editor.

"Editor's engaged," said a cheeky-looking office-boy.

"Then I'll wait," said Jimmy, dropping into a chair.

"What's your business?"

"I want to speak to the editor privately."

The office-boy glanced disdainfully at Jimmy Renton's dusty boots, and at his dishevelled appearance.

"If you've come here on the cadge," he said, "I might as well tell you at once that there's nothing doing."

"You—you cheeky young cub—"

"You won't get much change out of the boss. He's got a short way with tramps."

"And I've got a short way with insolent young brats like yourself!" retorted Jimmy.

And his open palm came with a crack like a pistol-shot across the office-boy's cheek.

The victim uttered a yelp of anguish.

"Like some more?" asked Jimmy obligingly.

"Nunno!"

"Well, you'd better hustle around and tell the editor that I should like to see him."

The office-boy caressed his livid cheek, and deemed it prudent to obey.

"What name shall I give?" he asked sullenly.

"Renton."

The boy disappeared. He returned a moment later.

"The editor will see you now," he said. "This way!"

Jimmy was ushered into the editorial sanctum.

A distinguished-looking man, of middle-age, was seated at his desk, with his coat off and his sleeves rolled back. He looked up as Jimmy Renton came in.

"You want to see me?" he inquired gruffly.

"I called to see if you had a vacancy on your staff for a reporter, sir," said Jimmy.

"H'm! Well, I haven't a vacancy, but I could create one for a really good man."

Jimmy looked hopeful. He felt that there was something doing at last.

"Had any previous experience?" asked the editor.

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"On the 'Burchester Times.'"

"The 'Burchester Times,' eh? Then you must be pretty good. Why did you leave?"

"Ahem! There was a—a misunderstanding!" faltered Jimmy.

The editor frowned.

"That doesn't sound very satisfactory," he said. "I happen to be personally acquainted with Mr. Wilberforce, who edits the 'Burchester Times.' I'll call him up on the 'phone, and if he satisfies me that you are a good man, and gave every satisfaction, I shall engage you."

Jimmy Renton waited, in a state of suspense, while the editor got through to Burchester.

Would Mr. Wilberforce be a sport, and refrain from blacking his character? Or would he condemn Jimmy, and refuse to recommend him?

The question was soon answered.

After a brief conversation the editor replaced the receiver. And the glance he bestowed upon Jimmy Renton was far from reassuring.

"I've spoken to Mr. Wilberforce," he said, "and he tells me that you were dismissed from his service for neglect of duty. It appears that you defied his orders, and played football when you should have been at work."

"I—I—" stammered Jimmy.

"This place is not a school for slackers," said the editor, with asperity.

"I cannot, therefore, give you an appointment on the staff of my paper. Good-afternoon!"

As Jimmy Renton passed out into the street—with the office-boy grinning at him en route—he felt that this was the last straw.

He had come within an ace of getting a fresh job, and Mr. Wilberforce had refused to recommend him.

What was to be done now?

As he stood on the pavement in a state of irresolution, a long line of laden trams went rumbling past.

In front of each vehicle was a board bearing the name of its destination—"Easthampton Football Ground."

The Easthampton team was one of the finest in the country, and there was a home fixture that day.

The trams were packed, inside and out, and large throngs of people were wending their way to the ground on foot.

Jimmy Renton interrogated one of the passers-by.

"Who are Easthampton playing this afternoon?" he inquired.

"Belmont Rovers."

Jimmy gave a thrill as the name of that club was mentioned. Like most fellows, he had always had a favourite team—a team whose exploits he followed closely week by week throughout the football season. And his favourite team was Belmont Rovers. He had never seen them play, but from what he had read of them he knew that they played good,

clean, sparkling football. He knew the names of the eleven by heart. Each individual, from the goalie to the centre-forward, was a hero in the eyes of Jimmy Renton. He had always longed to see Belmont Rovers in action; and here was his opportunity.

Almost forgetful of the desperate plight he was in—so great was his excitement—Jimmy followed the crowd.

And a very hilarious crowd it was. Rattles and tin-whistles and mouth-organs were in evidence. And practically everybody sported a red-and-white rosette. Red-and-white were the Easthampton colours.

Hemmed in by the jostling, surging throng, Jimmy Renton came at length to the ground. It was a picturesque ground, bordered by steep banks. And, having paid for admission and passed through the clinking turnstiles, Jimmy took up his position on one of the elevated banks, and waited with breathless impatience for the rival teams to take the field.

Presently a full-throated shout rang out from the multitude, as eleven men of splendid physique, and attired in red-and-white striped jerseys, sprinted out on to the field of play.

"Easthampton!"

"Here they are!"

"Here are the boys!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a lull in the shouting, and then the visiting team came out in their Cambridge-blue jerseys and white knickers.

"Play up, the Rovers!" shouted Jimmy Renton spontaneously.

"They'll need to!" said a voice at his elbow.

There was plenty of applause for Belmont Rovers, but it came from odd parts of the group, and was not so universal and whole-hearted as the previous bout of cheering had been. The home team were hot favourites, of course.

Easthampton won the toss, and there was a further volley of cheering as the teams lined up.

The referee sounded his whistle.

"Hurrah!"

"Now they're off!"

"Play up, the Hornets!"

The nickname of the "Hornets" was applied to the Easthampton team; and it was fully justified, for they had certainly stung a good many League elevens that season. And they looked forward with confidence to adding Belmont Rovers to their list of victims.

Jimmy Renton watched the opening exchanges with keen interest. And, as he watched, he felt more intensely than ever that old longing of his—to win fame, if not fortune, as a professional footballer.

He wondered how these men of Easthampton and Belmont Rovers had got their jobs.

"I suppose they played in minor football at first, and attracted the notice of enterprising club directors," he reflected.

The ball travelled from end to end of the field, and the spectators cheered and groaned alternately, in accordance with their emotions.

Nobody was looking at the dusty, dishevelled, but eager-eyed youth who was wedged between a group of enthusiasts on the top of one of the green banks.

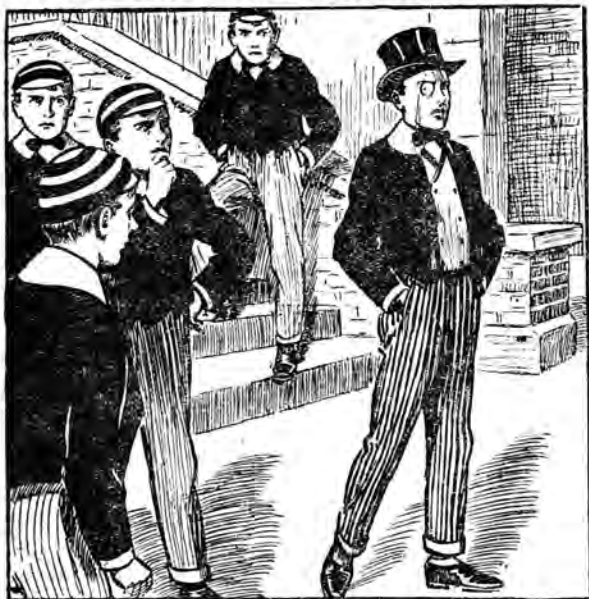
Had anyone been noticing Jimmy Renton just then, he would have been seen to slap his thigh, and he would have been heard to exclaim:

"By Jove! I know what I'll do. I'll approach the Easthampton directors, and ask them to give me a trial!"

(Another grand instalment of this magnificent football serial next week.)

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YOU MUST NOT MISS READING THIS GRAND SCHOOL TALE!



Instead of joining his chums, D'Arcy passed them by, with an expressionless face and cold averted glance.

CHAPTER 1. In Direst Peril.

WESCUE, deah boys!" Tom Merry & Co. stared. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the Terrible Three of the Shell were sauntering down the leafy, shady lane towards Rylcombe. The afternoon was warm, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had agreed unanimously that the ginger-pop at Mrs. Murphy's was a subject worthy of their very special attention.

But they forgot all about ginger-pop as that startling howl burst suddenly upon their ears.

A running figure burst upon their view, coming from the village, and they recognised Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was clad with his usual elegance; but he was not clad for running, especially on a warm afternoon.

He wore a light grey overcoat—a nobby little coat which was in itself a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. His silk hat was on the back of his head, and beneath it his brow was bedewed with perspiration.

He waved a shapely, gloved hand to the chums of the Shell, and shouted:

"Wescue!"

"It's Gussy!" remarked Monty Lowther. "That's his new coat. I remember he was going to his tailor's this afternoon about his new coat. But what's the matter with him?"

"Bull after him, perhaps," said Manners.

"Wescue!"

Arthur Augustus came panting up. He stopped as he joined the Shell fellows, and cast an anxious glance backward along the lane.

"Thank goodness I've met you chaps!" he gasped. "You are friends in need, deah boys!"

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry.

"He's aftah me!"

"Who's after you?"

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"Young Pilchah!"

"Pilcher?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus pushed back his topper a little further, and mopped his manly brow with a cambric handkerchief.

The Terrible Three blinked at him.

Arthur Augustus was the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School at St. Jim's—he was of the nuts, nutty—but he had never been known to show the white feather. He was, in fact, like a lion in his wrath when his noble blood was roused. Yet here he was, running away—actually running away—from Master Pilcher, the chemist's boy, of Rylcombe! Tom Merry could scarcely believe his eyes, or his ears.

"Why, you—you—" he stuttered.

"What are you running away for?"

"Fwom Pilchah, deah boy!"

"Are you afraid of Pilcher?" roared Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Is this how you keep up the credit of St. Jim's?" demanded Manners.

"What would Study No. 6 say to this?"

"Weally Mannahs—"

There was a tramp of feet on the road and Master Pilcher came round the bend in the lane, at full speed, evidently in hot pursuit of the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus promptly dodged behind the Terrible Three.

"Keep him off, deah boys!"

Pilcher slowed down as he saw the four juniors.

"Keep him off!" repeated Tom Merry blankly. "I suppose you can fight Pilcher, can't you?"

"Wathah not."

"Why not?" yelled Tom.

"Quite impos, deah boy. I twust you do not think I am afraid of him?"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!"

"Wats! I have to considah my coat—"

"Your coat?"

"My new coat," explained Arthur Augustus. "I have just got it from the tailah. That diswespctful young wascal

chi-iked me as I came out of the tailah's shop, and I pulled his eah. I could not allow him to make diswespctful wemahs to me, of course. Then the howwid boundah wanted me to fight him—"

"I suppose he did, if you pulled his ear," grinned Lowther. "Well, here he is—fight him!"

"Impos. It would wuin my coat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is the first time I have worn this coat. I suppose you are awah that clothes are fwightfully expensive now. I weally do not know what my governah will say when he weceives the bill for twelve guineas for this coat. And that awful young wascal is goin' to make it mudday—he said so, the young wulfian!"

"So you ran away?"

"Yaas; undah the cires, there was nothing else to be done. I am goin' to put on some old clothes to-morrow and look for young Pilchah, and give him a feahful thwashin'. But just now I should be vevy much obliged to you fellows to keep him off."

"Yah!" This remark came from Master Pilcher. "Yah! Cold feet! Funk! Yah!"

"Bai Jove! Go and thwash that impertinent young boundah for me, Tom Mewwy."

"Rats!" said Tom, cheerfully.

"Will you thwash him for me, Lowthah?"

"More rats!"

"Will you, Mannahs—"

"Not this afternoon!" grinned Manners. "Here, young Pilcher, why don't you come on?"

"I'll come on, if you chaps will see fair play," answered Pilcher, hovering in the offing, so to speak.

"So we will!" said Tom Merry. "Stand up to him, Gussy. Never mind your coat—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Think of the honour of St. Jim's,"

said the captain of the Shell severely.

"Think of the way your brother Conway stood up to the Huns!"

CONDEMNED BY THE STUDY!

A MAGNIFICENT, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THE "GEM" LIBRARY—

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Conway was not wearin' a new coat when he stood up to the Huns, Tom Mewwy. I should be vewy pleased to stand up to the Huns, or anybody else, in an old coat. But—"

"Come on, Pilcher!"

"Keep him off, you wottahs!"

"Rats!"

"You awful boundahs—this is not a joke! Oh, deah!"

Arthur Augustus backed away as Pilcher came on. Master Pilcher, assured of the neutrality of the Terrible Three, was eager for combat, with Hunnish designs upon that nobby new coat.

For a moment Gussy hesitated.

The noble blood of the D'Arcys was boiling in his aristocratic veins, his fists were clenched, and his eye gleamed through his eyeglass.

But the thought of his new coat supervened.

Joseph's celebrated coat was "not in it" with that coat; and the coat was the first consideration. Arthur Augustus fled.

"Yah!" roared Pilcher. "Funk!"

"Bai Jove!"

Gussy almost turned, but not quite. He ran on.

"Come back!" shouted Tom Merry. D'Arcy did not heed.

With perspiration streaming down his noble face, he sprinted on, with the ferocious Pilcher streaking after him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three roared with laughter, as pursuer and pursued vanished round a turn in the lane in the direction of St. Jim's.

"Two to one on Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "I hope he's enjoying a sprint in this sunshine, with a coat on. It never occurred to his mighty brain to take his coat off and ask us to hold it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With an intellect like that, Gussy will make a sensation when he gets into the House of Lords. What about that ginger-pop?" asked Lowther.

And the chums of the Shell strolled on into the village, grinning, while the hapless swell of St. Jim's was sprinting his hardest for the school, with the vengeful Pilcher hard on his tracks.

CHAPTER 2.

A Surprise for Study No. 6.

"IT'S Gussy!"

"Something's up!"

"Put it on, Gussy!"

There was a group of fellows chatting by the gateway of St. Jim's when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in sight there.

Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Trimble of the Fourth, were there, debating in low tones whether it would be safe to drop in at the Green Man that afternoon for a little game—that being Racke & Co.'s favourite way of spending a half-holiday. Near them stood Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House, also in discussion; but they were discussing whether it should be cricket or the river that afternoon. All the juniors stared at Arthur Augustus as he came lagging up the road in the bright sunshine, with a good deal of dust on his handsome new summer overcoat.

They wondered what he was doing it for; but they were enlightened when Pilcher hove in sight in pursuit.

"Running away from Pilcher!" said Trimble, with a fat chuckle. "Rotten coward!"

"Funk!"

"Coward!" bellowed Crooke.

Arthur Augustus' face was already crimson with exertion, but it grew a little redder as he heard that insulting greeting.

He panted up to the gates.

"What's this game, Gussy?" demanded George Figgins. "Have you gone off your rocker?"

"That awful beast is aftah me—"

"Well, go for him, then."

"Funk!" hooted Racke.

Aubrey Racke was very pleased to be able to hurl that opprobrious epithet at the swell of the Fourth. D'Arcy's lofty contempt for him and his shady ways had stung Racke very frequently, and this was his chance. Arthur Augustus turned a scornful eye upon him.

"You are undah a misapprehension, Wacke!" he gasped.

"Funk!"

"Oh cwumbs, heah is that beast!"

Pilcher was closing in on his victim, and Arthur Augustus did not stop to explain further. He bolted into the quadrangle, whither Pilcher could not venture to follow him.

D'Arcy sprinted on to the School House, and gasped with relief when he found himself within the walls of that ancient building. His new coat was safe at last!

Pilcher sent a yell in at the gates after him, and then beat a strategic retreat, as George Figgins came out to make inquiries. Figgins could have dusted the road with Pilcher, and he was quite prepared to do so. But the village youth, content with having chased the swell of St. Jim's home, retreated in haste.

"Well, this is a go!" remarked Fatty Wynn, in great disgust. "Fancy a St. Jim's fellow running away from a chap like that."

"Just like the School House!" said Figgins disparagingly. "If it wasn't for the New House this school would be nowhere."

"Blessed if I catch on," said Kerr. "Gussy isn't a funk. He will get chipped about this."

The Scottish junior was right on that point. Racke & Co. were following Arthur Augustus to the School House, chuckling with glee. This was "one up" against Study No. 6, and the amiable youths meant to make the most of it.

Arthur Augustus had disappeared when they entered the School House, but they found Blake and Herries and Digby, his study-mates in No. 6, at the foot of the staircase. The Fourth-Formers were looking up the stairs with puzzled expressions.

"Seen D'Arcy, you chaps?" grinned Racke.

"Yes; he's just bolted upstairs," said Jack Blake, in perplexity. "What's the matter with him?"

"Frightened!" said Racke.

"He, he, he!" came from Trimble.

Blake turned a grim look on the cad of the Shell.

"What's that?" he asked. "Gussy frightened? What of?"

"Pilcher!"

"Is that a joke?"

"Not at all," grinned Racke. "Pilcher chased him to the gates, and D'Arcy bolted in like a scared rabbit. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Trimble, in great enjoyment.

"It's a fact," chuckled Crooke.

"Never seen a chap so scared in all my natural! I've heard that No. 6 is a fightin' study. This looks like it—I don't think."

Jack Blake pushed back his cuffs.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired politely.

Racke and Crooke backed away simultaneously. They did not want it anywhere.

But the sight of Mr. Railton, the

Housemaster, in the distance reassured Aubrey Racke. With Mr. Railton in view Study No. 6 could not proceed to "handling."

"It's true," said Racke, "and you can scowl as much as you like, but it's true. D'Arcy ran away from Pilcher like a rotten funk—"

"It's not true!" growled Herries.

"In fact, it's a rotten lie!" said Digby.

"Lots of fellows saw him," sneered Racke. "Figgins & Co. of the New House were there when he came scampering in. Talbot saw him, too—he was close by—and Kangaroo. I can tell you, you'll hear a good deal more about it. I call it a disgrace to the school."

"Yes, rather!" said Crooke.

"Awful!" said Trimble. "I'd have protected Gussy if he'd asked me, but running away like that—really, you know, it's the limit. Awful disgrace for St. Jim's."

Blake clenched his fists hard; but Mr. Railton, in conversation with Mr. Latham, stood too near at hand; it was impossible to reply to Racke & Co. as they deserved. Blake turned round to the stairs.

"Come on, you fellows," he said abruptly.

Herries and Digby followed him up the staircase. They were in a puzzled mood.

Study No. 6 was occupied by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy when they reached the celebrated apartment. The swell of St. Jim's had his new coat off now, and was carefully brushing it with an ivory-backed brush. Careful as he had been with that coat, it had collected up a good deal of dust, and D'Arcy was anxiously removing every speck of it. He was so busily engaged that he did not even look up when his chums came in.

They regarded him rather grimly.

"Well?" said Blake.

"Well, deah boy?"

"Racke says you've run away from Pilcher of Rylcombe."

"Wacke is a wottah."

"And that Pilcher chased you to the school gates!" growled Herries.

"Yaas."

"Is it true?" howled Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My only hat! And what do you mean by it, then?" roared Blake, in great wrath.

"I meant to save my new coat from damage, deah boy."

"Your c-c-coat!" stuttered Blake.

"Yaas. I could not thwash Pilcher without damagin' my coat, and natuwallly I had to avoid the cheeky wottah."

"You—you—unspeakable idiot!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you understand that the whole school will be cackling at you for running away from a village kid?"

"I should certainly wefuse to be cackled at, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "If anyone should have the foolish impertinence to cackle at me, I shall give him a fearful thwashin'!"

"After putting your new coat safely away, I suppose," said Digby, with deep sarcasm.

"Yaas, of course."

"Well, Racke and Crooke and Trimble are cackling already, and the whole house will be cackling soon," grunted Blake. "Nice for this study, ain't it?"

"Aftah I have thwashed my coat, Blake, I will thwash Wacke and Crooke and Trimble, and that will set the mattah wight."

"Fathead!" said the three Fourth-Formers together.

"I wefuse to be called a fathead!"

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Pway don't bothah me while I am bwushin' my coat. I will attend to less important mattahs latah!"

"Ass!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Dummy!"

"Wats!"

"Chump!"

"I wefuse to make any weply to these oppwobwious epithets, Blake. I wegard them as bein' in the worst of taste!"

"Fathead!"

"I wefuse to say a word!"

"Ass!"

Blake & Co. left the study with that, and Arthur Augustus continued to brush his coat. That important matter occupied his noble mind to the exclusion of all less important things.

CHAPTER 3.

The List of Offenders!

"WACKE—" "Hullo!" "Twimble—" "What—" "Cwooke—" "What the thunip—" "Mellish!"

Blake & Co. had returned to Study No. 6 for tea, bringing the Terrible Three of the Shell with them. Arthur Augustus was sitting at the table with a stump of pencil in his noble fingers, a sheet of impot. paper before him. His aristocratic brow was wrinkled, and he appeared to be deep in meditation.

"That is four!" he said. "There were Figgins & Co., too, and Talbot and Kangawoo—and I think I noticed Goah and Levison and Cardew neah at hand. Howevah—"

"Is that a game?" asked Tom Merry. "Bai Jove! And there were you three—pewwaps I had bettah put you on the list."

"Making a list of guests for a feed?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy. I am makin' a list of fellows I am goin' to thwash!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Leave us out!" urged Manners. "Spare us on account of our youth, Gussy!"

"Weally, Manners—"

"What about tea?" queried Herries.

"Nevah mind about tea now, Hewwies. We have the honah of the studay to considah," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"But these fellows have come to tea—" began Digby.

"Yaas, but—"

"Don't mind us," said Tom Merry gravely. "If it's a question of the honour of the studay, we can stand down."

"Couldn't the honour of the studay survive on its own till after tea?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Why haven't you got the fire going, Gussy?" demanded Blake.

"Nevah mind the fiah, Blake. I am not in a hawwy for tea."

"I am, ass!"

"Wats! The question awises," said Arthur Augustus, fixing his eyeglass upon the Terrible Three, "do you wegard me as funkay in wunnin' away frow Pilchah to save my new coat?"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"If you do, I am goin' to thwash you," explained D'Arcy. "I am goin' to thwash ewevy fellow who weguards me as funkay. I wegard it as bein' up to me to do that. I am makin' a list, you see, and I am goin' to deal with the wottahs in turn. Pilchah I shall have to leave till to-morrow, when I am goin' to put on some old clothes and call on him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to cackle at, The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 662.

deah boys. I wequiah to know your opinion on this subject, and whethah I am to put you on my list or not," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"If you put us on the list," said Tom Merry thoughtfully, "you'd better put us down last."

"For what weason, deah boy?"

"Otherwise, you won't survive to reach the end."

"Weally, you ass—"

"I say, I'm hungry!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I thought we'd come here for tea," said Herries. "If it's going to be a jaw-bone solo by Gussy—"

"It isn't," said Blake decidedly.

"Shove something on the fire, you chaps. Gussy's new coat will do!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Get busy!" said Blake. "Can't you see we're hungry, Gussy? Stow your jawing-tackle, old chap; you're not in the House of Lords yet!"

"Wats! This mattah has got to be settled—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I insist—"

"Rats!"

In spite of Arthur Augustus' insistence the important matter was not settled—tea coming first. Arthur Augustus bottled up his indignation as best he could till the spread was on the table. Then he was allowed to go ahead with "chin-wag," while the other juniors attended to more solid considerations.

"Now, you fellahs, I wequiah to know whethah you are goin' on my list," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Leave us out," said Tom Merry.

"You can't be allowed to stretch us on the hospital bed before the football's over. You know what a terrible fellow you are when you are roused, Gussy."

"Yaas, watah! I should be sowwy to have to thwash you, Tom Mewwy—"

"You would, if you began!" agreed the captain of the Shell.

"But I insist—"

"Pass the provender, Gussy!"

"Bothah the pwovendah. Do you fellows think—"

"Never!"

"Hardly ever!" said Lowther.

"I wish you would be sewious ovah a sewious mattah. Do you fellows think that I displayed want of couwage in dealin' with Pilchah?"

"Only a want of sense," said Lowther.

"Is that satisfactory?"

"I wequiah an assuwwance—"

"You must go to the insurance people for that."

"Pway do not make wotten puns, you uttah ass—"

Monty Lowther glanced round the table.

"Is Gussy always as polite as this to visitors?" he inquired.

"Bai Jove! I beg your pardon, Lowthah, as you are a visitor in this studay. But pway undehstand that if you were not a visitah I should wegard you as an uttah ass. I will take it for gwanted that you fellows are not undah a misapprehension as to my weasons for avoidin' a wew with that checky wasal Pilchah. I will not put you on the list!"

"I breathe again!" murmured Lowther, helping himself to D'Arcy's egg. There were seven eggs on the table when tea began, and six had disappeared. But Arthur Augustus was too occupied to attend to such matters. Lowther attended to it for him.

"Wacke, Cwooke, and Twimble and Mellish," said Arthur Augustus, conning over his list. "I must also speak to Talbot and Kangawoo and Levison, and Cardew and Goah—"

"Poor chaps!"

"I twust they will be able to satisfy me; otherwise, I shall thwash them all wound. Now I will have tea!"

Arthur Augustus glanced round the table.

There was a cake to follow the eggs, and the last fragments of the cake were vanishing.

"Bai Jove! Where is my tea?" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"In your cup, fathead!" answered Blake. "It's cold, and there isn't any more; but there it is!"

"Yaas; but I want somethin' to eat—"

"Oh, I thought you were taking it out in chin-wag," said Blake cheerfully. "There's nothing left for you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"If you put pleasure before business, you have to take the consequences, you know," remarked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"I wegard you as a set of funnay wottahs," he said. "I mean, I wegard Blake and Hewwies and Dig as a set of funnay wottahs. As you otah fellows are guests, I will not express my opinion of you, as it would not be a flattewin' one!"

And with that Arthur Augustus walked, tealeas, out of the study. He was followed by a chortle.

"We'd better go after him and see that he comes to no harm," grinned Blake. "He can tackle Racke as often as he likes, but he's not going to damage himself on Talbot. Come on!"

And the six juniors followed the swell of St. Jim's, with the kind object of seeing that he did not tackle the more formidable personages on his list.

CHAPTER 4.

On the Warpath!

"GET out!" That was Aubrey Racke's remark, as, after a polite tap at his study door, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in.

Tea was over in Racke's study, and he had taken a pack of cards from a drawer of the table for a game with his study-mate, Cwooke. At such moments Racke did not like being interrupted. And Racke was in a bad temper, too. He had essayed, after all, to pay a visit to the Green Man that afternoon, and at the very gate he had been spotted by Kildare of the Sixth. Kildare had received with total scepticism Racke's explanation that he had only intended to sit on the gate to rest; and as he had his ashplant with him, the St. Jim's captain had given Racke two cuts, there and then, and sent him home to the school. Which naturally had not improved Aubrey's temper—never very good—especially as he had very important business with Mr. Banks at the Green Man.

Racke scowled at Arthur Augustus as he told him to get out. But the swell of St. Jim's, instead of getting out, came in.

"I am sowwy to intewwupt you, Wacke—"

"Well, stop doing it!" snapped Aubrey. "There's the door!"

"But I have somethin' to say—"

"Travel!"

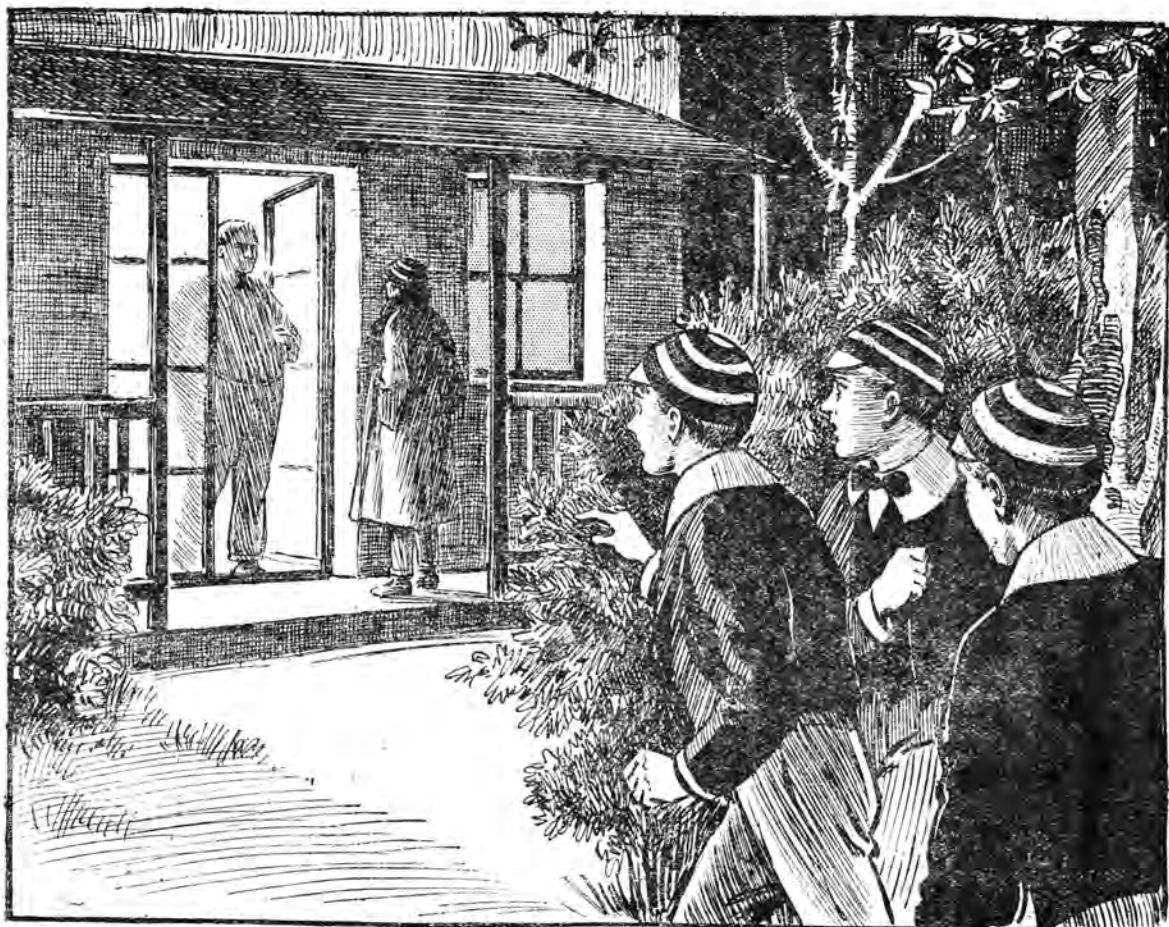
"I feah, Wacke, that I must wefuse to twavel until I have said what I came to say," said Arthur Augustus, with undiminished politeness. "This aftahnoon—"

"Cheese it!"

"You were pleased to make some oppwobwious wemarks upon my conduct—"

"Ring off!"

"Hintin' that I was avoidin' Pilchah frow motives of wewwehensible chawactah—"



On the veranda at the back of the inn the juniors caught sight of the grey coat again, and from the gloom a husky voice came to their ears — the voice of Mr. Banks, the bookmaker. "Good-evenin', sir! I was expectin' you sooner. Trot in!" The French windows closed behind them. (See page 13.)

"Is he wound up?" said Crooke.
"I am comin' to you next, Cwooke; but pway allow me to deal with Wacke first. You chawacterised me as a funk, Wacke—"

"So you are!" growled Racke. "A rotten funk!"

"You wepeat that offensive wemark?"

"Funk!"

"Vewy good!" Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs. "Will you come into the gym, Wacke, or behind the chapel, or shall I thwash you heah? I desiah to meet your wishes in ewevy possible way."

Racke exchanged a glance with his chum. Arthur Augustus was on the war-path, but it had not occurred to his simple mind that he would not meet with fair play in Racke's study. The two Shell fellows jumped up and advanced upon the swell of St. Jim's together.

"Bai Jove! One at a time, you know — Oh cwumbs — Wescue!"

The door was kicked wider open, and Tom Merry & Co. crowded in. It was just as well that they had followed their noble chum, as it happened.

"Hallo! Two to one!" exclaimed Blake, and he seized Gerald Crooke by the collar in a powerful grasp.

"Wescue, deah boys—"

Tom Merry collared Racke at the same moment. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was relieved of both his assailants, and he stood gasping.

"Bai Jove! I am vewy glad you fellows drooped in," he remarked. "Those feahful wottahs don't know any-

thin' about playin' the game. Pway leave Wacke to me, Tom Mewwy; I am goin' to thwash him. You can go on wubbin' Cwooke's nose in the fendah, Blake, till I have thwashed Wacke, and then I shall be weady for him."

Jack Blake continued that agreeable occupation, to an accompaniment of fiendish yells from Gerald Crooke.

Tom Merry released Racke, who eyed the invaders of his study savagely. Arthur Augustus put up his hands.

"Are you weady, Wacke?"

"Get out of my study!"

"But I'm goin' to thwash you for callin' me a funk," explained D'Arcy. "You were full of fight a minute ago, deah boy. I twust it has not all evaporated now that you are not two to one!"

"Looks like it!" grinned Herries.

"Shall I touch him up with my boot?"

"Yaas; pway touch him up, if he does not come on, Hewwies!"

"Keep off, you cad!" howled Racke.

"Go it, then!"

"Pile in, Racke!" chuckled Dig. "If Gussy's a funk, you oughn't to be so unwilling to tackle him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus advanced to the attack, and Racke had no choice in the matter. He had to put up his hands.

He should have had a good chance, but he lacked the courage that dwelt within the noble breast of the swell of St. Jim's. Racke was a more formidable antagonist than Pilcher, but he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. But as there

was no help for it, he stood up savagely to the swell of the Fourth, hitting out.

Arthur Augustus was surprised, and pained, by a heavy thump on his noble nose, which made him stagger back, seeing a larger number of stars than were generally visible indoors.

Racke was quick to follow up his advantage. He jumped forward, hitting out furiously, and D'Arcy caught another with his chin, and a third with his forehead. He bumped against the study wall, with Aubrey Racke attacking him hotly.

"Buck up, Gussy!" roared Lowther.

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Pile in!"

"Gwoooogh!"

Arthur Augustus defended himself rather wildly for a few moments, and then recovered, and sailed in.

Racke's brief success was at an end.

The swell of St. Jim's drove him across the study under a ruin of blows and round the table, Racke fighting savagely.

Tom Merry & Co. stood back out of the way, looking on—Blake sitting on Crooke's head in the fender.

A drive which caught Aubrey Racke on his prominent nose laid him on the carpet at last; and Arthur Augustus politely stood back to give him plenty of time to rise.

By this time the passage outside was crowded with juniors of the Fourth and the Shell, looking into the study with great interest. There was a cheer for Arthur Augustus as Racke went down.

Gussy waited for a full minute, but the cad of the Shell remained on the carpet gasping for breath.

"I do not want to hawwy you, Wacke," said Arthur Augustus, at last, "but will you be kind enough to wise and let me get on thwashin' you."

"Ow!"

"Lemme gerrup!" came Crooke's muffled, furious voice from under Jack Blake.

"Gussy ain't ready for you yet, old top," answered Blake.

"Are you finished, Wacke?"

"Ow! Yes!" gasped Racke.

"Do you withdraw your wascally imputation on my chawactah?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I am sowwy, Wacke, but unless you withdraw your statement and apologise for callin' me a funk, I shall have to go on thwashin' you," said Arthur Augustus, gently but firmly. "Pewwaps one of you fellows will oblige me by yankin' him up by the eahs."

"Certainly!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pleased!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of laughter from the passage, and Manners and Lowther took one of Racke's ears each, and helped him to his feet.

"You rotters! Ow! Wow!" howled Racke.

"Are you weady, Wacke?"

"Haug you!" snarled Racke. "I'm done!"

"I am afraid I cannot let you off, Wacke, until you have expressed your wegwet for callin' me a funk."

Racke gave the swell of St. Jim's a Hunnik look.

"I—I—I'm sorry!" he stuttered.

"You withdraw your imputation upon my couwage?"

"Yes!" snarled Racke.

"Vewy good," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "You may now stand aside, Wacke, and I will deal with Cwooke. Blake, will you be kind enough to get off Cwooke's head?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake rose to his feet, and Crooke scrambled up, crimson with rage.

"Are you weady, Cwooke?"

"I'm not goin' to fight you, you silly owl!" growled Crooke. "Get out of my study!"

"Am I to undahstand that you apologise, Cwooke?"

"You can understand what you like! Get out!"

"I feah that that is not sufficient. I have no desiah to soil my hands on a bad chawactah like you, Cwooke, but unless you withdraw your obnoxious remarks, I am bound to give you a feahful thwashin'. Will you have the kindness to put up your hands?"

"I—I—I apologise!" stammered Crooke.

"Vewy good. Gentlemen, we are finished heah. We will now proceed to call upon Twimble and Mellish."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. left the study, and Racke kicked the door shut savagely after them. The two black sheep of the Shell stared at one another, Crooke rubbing his head, and Racke his nose.

"The rotters!" growled Crooke. "My hat! You look rather a sight, Racke!"

"So would you, if you'd had the pluck to put up your hands, as I did," hissed Racke.

"You didn't keep them up long, at any rate," sneered Crooke.

"I'll make those cads pay for this, somehow!" muttered Racke. "Oh, my nose! Ow, my eye! Ow-wow-wow! Hallo, what's that?"

The door opened suddenly, and Trimble

of the Fourth bolted into the study, with alarm in his fat face.

"I—I say!" he gasped.

"Get out!"

"That beast D'Arcy is after me!"

"Outside!"

Racke seized the fat junior by the collar, flung him out of the study, and slammed the door after him. And the hapless Trimble rolled fairly into the arms of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 5.

Seeking Satisfaction!

"TWIMBLE—"

"Yaroooooh!"

"You fat wasc—"

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't!" howled Trimble. "Leggo! I wasn't! I never did! You leggo, you beast! Help!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble, I wequiah an apology—"

"Oh, is that all?" gasped Trimble, in great relief. "I'll apologise with pleasure, old chap! I'd do anything for an old pal like you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus released the fat junior.

"That will do, Twimble. I am vewy glad you are not puttin' me to the twouble of thwashin' you!"

Baggy Trimble was more glad than Arthur Augustus. He scudded away at once, very relieved to get out of the affair so cheaply. Tom Merry & Co., very hilarious by this time, proceeded to Study No. 2 to look for Percy Mellish. They found that youth in a very uneasy mood, and not at all inclined for warfare.

"Mellish—" began Arthur Augustus.

"It's all right!" said Mellish, with a feeble grin. "Only pulling your leg, Gussy! Of course I know you ain't a funk."

"Bai Jove! That is more than I can say of you, Mellish! Howevah, I accept your apology."

And, to Mellish's great relief, the swell of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Now what about prep?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I have seweral othah fellows to call on, Blake," he answered. "There is Talbot, and Goah, and Kangawoo, and Levison and Cardew—"

"Is this game going on all the evenin'?" asked Herries.

"I do not wegard it as a game, Hewries," said Arthur Augustus severely. "It is a vewy sewious mattah. Howevah, you fellows can go and do your prep, if you like."

But Tom Merry & Co. decided to let prep stand over while they accompanied Arthur Augustus on the war-path. Fortunately, there were no more thrashings to be administered. Talbot of the Shell laughingly assured Arthur Augustus that, so far from regarding him as a funk, he looked upon him as a very paladin, and Gore said "Hear, hear!" to all Talbot's remarks. This was very satisfactory; and Kangaroo, who was next called upon, declared that when he saw Gussy running away from Pilcher he took it as evidence of unusual and remarkable courage on his part—an explanation which puzzled Arthur Augustus considerably, but which he had to take as satisfactory. Then the party proceeded to Study No. 9, in the Fourth, where they found Levison and Cardew and Clive at prep.

Prep in Study No. 9 was interrupted by the arrival of the numerous party, and there was a chortle when the object of the visit was announced.

"Ass!" was Levison's remark.

"That is not a weply to my question,

Levison," said Arthur Augustus. "Do you think—"

"I think I want to get on with my prep."

"But do you think—"

"I think you ought to be getting on with yours."

"Yaas. But do you think—"

"Is he understudyin' the little brook, and going on for ever?" asked Levison.

"My dear chap," said Cardew. "We think you ran away from Pilcher from the very highest possible motives. Is that satisfactory?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weady, Cardew—"

"Now, suppose you travel, and let us get our work done?" suggested Clive.

"I am sowwy, Clive, but I wequiah to be satisfied. Did you think—"

"No!" howled Clive.

"You did not think I was funkay—"

"I didn't think about you at all," said the South African junior.

"Bai Jove!"

"Same here," said Cardew blandly. "Antonishin' as it may seem to you, Gussy, there are times—rare occasions—when fellows do not think about you at all. Strange, but true."

"Bai Jove!"

"And we're really not interested in the matter at all," continued Cardew. "In fact, not to put too fine a point upon it, we're bored."

"Wats!"

"And if you'll get on the other side of the door—" added Levison.

"Wats!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

However, he got on the other side of the door.

"And now for Figgins & Co.," he remarked. "Will you fellows come oveh to the New House with me?"

The Terrible Three grinned, and walked away to their study. It was high time for prep. Blake put his arm through that of his noble chum.

"You're coming to Study No. 6, old chap," he said. "We're not going to have a row with Latham in the morning because you want to play the goat. Come on!"

"But Figgins—"

"Bother Figgins! This way!"

"I wefuse to come, Blake, until—"

"Take his other ear, Dig!"

"What-ho!"

"Yawwooh! You uttah wuffians—"

"March!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus was escorted into Study No. 6. There, after a series of emphatic remarks to his chums, he consented to give his attention to prep, and once more all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 6.

A Startling Discovery!

"HOW does my nose look now?"

"Like an over-ripped plum,

old top!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

Crooke grinned as Aubrey Racke gave his nose another rub. The cad of the Shell was showing signs of the combat with Arthur Augustus after all the trouble he had taken to remove them.

"I'll make that rotter pay for this, somehow!" muttered Racke, scowling at his reflection in the glass.

Crooke continued to grin. A French philosopher has declared that there is always something pleasing in the misfortunes of our friends; and certainly Gerald Crooke appeared to be rather entertained by the damage his chum's features had sustained.

It was the day following the adventure with Pilcher and Arthur Augustus' visit to Racke's study. Twenty-four hours had not done much good to Racke's nose, which was still swollen and red.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Racke at last. "I'm goin', all the same."



The three grinning juniors surrounded Racke, and stopped him as he reached the oak. "Naughty!" said Monty Lowther, wagging an exasperating finger at Racke. "Breaking bounds, what?" "Mind your own business!" said Racke savagely. (See Page 12).

Crooke raised his eyebrows. "To the Green Man?" he asked.

"Yes. Are you coming?"

"No fear!" answered Crooke promptly. "And you're a fool to go. Kildare caught you there yesterday—"

"Yesterday isn't to-day!" growled Racke.

"You've made him suspicious," said Crooke. "If you'd any sense, you'd keep clear of the place for a few days, at least."

"I can't! I've got to see Banks. The race comes off to-morrow, and I've got to see him first."

Crooke shrugged his shoulders. "I'd let it slide, then," he said. "It's too jolly risky. If it came out about your little games at that show—"

And with that he left the study.

"I'm going!" said Racke.

Aubrey Racke was not feeling quite easy in his mind as he crossed the quadrangle towards the gates. It was not yet lock-up, and there was no reason why the Shell fellow should not take a stroll out of gates if he chose—and he intended

to be extremely cautious on this occasion in approaching his destination.

Business—very serious from Racke's point of view—called him to the Green Man to interview Mr. Banks, and the risk had to be taken. But Racke, who was well aware of what would happen to him if his manners and customs came to the knowledge of the Head, was feeling very uneasy. More than once the eye of suspicion had been turned upon him; and only yesterday the head prefect of St. Jim's had caught him. But the risk had to be taken, and Racke went on doggedly.

"Racke!"

Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth were chatting near the gates as the junior came by, and it was Kildare who called to him. Racke gritted his teeth as he turned towards the captain of the school.

"Yes, Kildare?" he muttered.

"Where are you going?" asked Kildare, fixing his eyes very keenly on Racke.

"Only for a stroll," faltered Racke.

"You can take your stroll in the

quadrangle," said Kildare. "Keep within gates, Racke."

"But—but I—"

"You hear me?" snapped Kildare. "You're not to be trusted, Racke, and I warn you to take care, or you'll get into trouble. That's all. Go back!"

There was nothing for it but to submit; and Racke turned back, almost pale with rage. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, dressed much less nobly than usual, passed him, going down to the gates. Kildare took no notice of him; the swell of St. Jim's sauntered out unchallenged. Racke cast a bitter look after the Fourth-Former, and went sullenly back to the School House.

Gerald Crooke, who was loafing on the steps, met him with a grin.

"N.G.?" he asked.

"I'm going, all the same," muttered Racke. "I'll hook it after call-over."

"It's lock-up then—"

"I shall manage it. You'll see."

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"Well, you're an ass!" commented Crooke. "I wouldn't take the risk."

At calling-over there was one junior who did not answer to his name. It was D'Arcy of the Fourth.

Mr. Railton, who was taking the roll, repeated the name, and as the customary "Adsum" was not forthcoming, he marked Arthur Augustus down as absent.

"Where is that duffer?" Blake growled, as the juniors came out of Hall. "That means fines for him."

"He went out after tea," said Dig. "At least, I believe so. He said something about seeing Pilcher—"

"Fathead!" said Blake. "Why couldn't he let Pilcher wait till a half-holiday? But perhaps he's dropped in on his tailor; and if the man's showing him something new in trousers, he's forgotten time and space and everything else, and won't be back till bed-time."

"What about looking for him?" asked Herries.

"Gates are locked."

"We could get out—"

"Prep!" said Blake.

"After prep, if he hasn't come in, then?"

Jack Blake nodded.

"Right-ho! If he isn't in by then, we'd better look for the silly chump, or there will be trouble for him."

And Blake & Co. hurried to Study No. 6 to get through their prep as early as possible, rather worried about the absence of their noble chum. It was not a light matter to miss evening call-over, when the school gates were locked; and if Gussy's absence were prolonged, it might mean a caning instead of an imput. And, although Blake & Co. applied to Gussy what that noble youth would have called "opprobrious remarks," they were concerned about him, all the same.

Blake & Co. were busy at prep when Aubrey Racke slipped into the dusky quadrangle, and scuttled away towards the school wall, in a shady spot where

the slanting oak made it easy to climb. But again Racke's luck was out. As he came along by the oak, three figures loomed up in the dusk, and he recognised the Terrible Three of the Shell. Tom Merry & Co. were taking a stroll before prep, which was unlucky for the black sheep of their Form. The three juniors, grinning, surrounded Racke, and stopped him as he reached the oak.

"Naughty!" said Monty Lowther, wagging an exasperating finger at Racke. "Breaking bounds, what?"

"Mind your own business!" said Racke savagely.

"But this is our business," said Lowther. "As good little boys ourselves, we are down on naughty little boys—"

"You silly ass—"

"And we're not going to let you play the goat!" said Lowther. "Don't you know that you mustn't look upon the wine when it is red, and the billiard-table when it is green?"

"Let me pass, you fool!"

"My dear friend," said Lowther soothingly, "we are going to save you from yourself, and yank you out of the way of temptation. Take hold of the bad boy, you chaps!"

"You—you—"

"Mine's an ear!" said Lowther, taking Racke by that appendage. "What's yours, Tommy?"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Same here!" he said, taking Racke by his other appendage. "You help him behind, Manners."

"What-ho!" agreed Manners.

"You—you—you meddling fools!" hissed Racke, almost beside himself with rage.

He clenched his hands hard; but he did not venture to hit out. When it came to hard hitting, any member of the Terrible Three was too much for Aubrey Racke.

The blackguard of the Shell was walked back to the School House in the midst of the smiling trio—not smiling himself.

They walked him into the School House, and left him there, continuing their stroll in the dusky quad.

When Tom Merry & Co. came in a little later Racke was not to be seen. They charitably hoped that he was in his study at prep, as certainly he ought to have been. Blake and Herries and Digby met them on the staircase.

"Seen anything of Gussy?" asked Blake.

"No; he can't have come in," said Tom. "We've been in the quad, so I suppose we should have seen him. If Taggles had opened the gates, he'd still be wandering."

"You ought to keep him on a chain," suggested Lowther.

Blake growled.

"We're going to look for him," he said. "I'll jolly well punch his silly nose when we find him, for worrying us like this."

The Fourth-Formers left the School House, and cautiously made their way to the slanting oak, and a few minutes later dropped into the road. The summer dusk was very deep now, almost dark. They started at a good pace towards Rylcombe, discussing their absent chum, and where he was likely to be found.

Blake uttered a sudden exclamation as they drew near to the village.

"My hat! There he is!"

Some distance ahead an elegant grey overcoat loomed up in sight. The juniors knew that coat, even in the dusk. It was the famous garment which had caused Gussy to flee from the importunate Pilcher the day before. There was no mistaking that coat.

"That's rather odd," said Herries, puzzled. "He's going towards the village."

"Forgotten a new tie and going back for it, perhaps," grinned Dig.

"We'll give him new ties!" growled Blake. "Come on!"

The juniors broke into a run after the figure ahead.

The junior ahead of them stopped at a gate under the trees by the lane; there was a click of a latch, and the grey coat vanished.

Blake halted involuntarily.

He knew that gate; it gave admittance to the path beside the Green Man, and led to the back of the disreputable inn.

"He—he—he's gone in there!" stuttered Blake.

"My hat!"

The chums of the Fourth blinked at one another.

What it was that detained Arthur Augustus they did not know, but certainly they would never have guessed that it was a visit to the Green Man public-house. They were so astounded that they could only blink and ejaculate. What they had seen was simply incredible; yet they had seen it.

"Is he—he potty?" muttered Dig at last. "Here, come on; we've got to get him out of that!"

The juniors ran on.

They stopped at the gate, and stared over it into the dark garden, but the junior in the grey overcoat was not to be seen. He had disappeared behind the house by that time.

"Shall we go in?" asked Blake, hesitating. "We—we can't let Gussy stay there playing the goat!"

"Come on!" said Herries resolutely.

They climbed over the gate, in order to attract no attention by opening it, and dropped on the weedy path inside. The path led into the garden behind the inn, shadowed by trees. On the veranda at the back of the inn they caught sight of the grey coat again, and from the

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gloom a husky voice came to their ears—the voice of Mr. Banks, the sharper, which they had heard before.

"Good-evenin', sir! I was expectin' you sooner. Trot in!"

A French-window closed.

Blake & Co. stared at one another in the gloom. They were utterly at a loss. They had had some vague idea that D'Arcy might have entered the disreputable precincts for some reason that could be explained; but the husky welcome of Mr. Banks knocked the idea on the head at once. He was expected by the sharper; the visit was a prearranged matter. It simply took the juniors' breath away.

"Well, this beats me!" muttered Herries. "Gussy—Who'd have thought—"

Blake rubbed his eyes. He really almost wondered whether he had been dreaming.

In silence the juniors quitted the inn garden. They could not force a way into the inn in search of their erring chum; Arthur Augustus had to be left to his own devices for the present. But as they tramped back to St. Jim's their wrath overflowed, and it was certain that their next interview with the swell of the school would be a painful one for the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 7. On the High Horse!

"HALLO, here's Gussy!"

"Where have you been, you bouncer?"

Tom Merry & Co. greeted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he came into the School House. D'Arcy was looking a little tired, but he gave the chums of the Shell a genial nod.

"I'm afraid I've missed call-ovah, deah boys," he remarked.

"You have, you ass!" said Manners. "You'd better buzz off, and report to Railton!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus headed for the House-master's study. He was still there when Blake came downstairs. Jack Blake had a troubled look, quite different from his usual sunny expression.

"Gussy back yet, you fellows?" he called out.

"Yes; he's with Railton."

"Oh, good!" said Blake, in great relief.

"You didn't find him when you went on his giddy trail," said Monty Lowther, with a rather curious look at Blake's clouded face.

"Oh, we caught sight of him, that's all," answered Blake.

"Why did you come back without him, then?"

"Oh, we—we came back, you know," said Blake, rather vaguely, and he moved away, so evidently to avoid further questioning that the Terrible Three exchanged glances of surprise.

"Something's up!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Looks like it," agreed Tom Merry. "Trouble in the merry family; but Blake doesn't seem to want to confide in us. Let's cheer."

The Terrible Three walked off to the Common-room, leaving Blake on sentry-go outside Mr. Railton's study. A few minutes later Arthur Augustus came out of that apartment.

Blake eyed him grimly.

"So you've got back?" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's your coat?"

"My coat? In the lobby."

"Come up to the study," said Blake.

"Yaas, I am comin' up to the study,

Blake. Is there anythin' the mattah? You are lookin' wathah like a Hun."

"I'll tell you in the study."

"Bai Jove! I hope nothin' has gone w'ong while I have been out. It is a vewy queeah thing that you fellows are always gettin' into some twouble the moment I take my eye off you, isn't it?"

"Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Blake.

"Waiton has given me a hundwed lines," said Arthur Augustus, as they went to the stairs. "I wegard that as wathah unfeelin', affah I had explained to him why I missed callin'-ovah—"

"You explained to him?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What on earth yarn did you spin him, then?"

Arthur Augustus halted, and turned to his chum, and fixed his eyeglass upon him severely.

"I fail to undahstand the dwift of that wemark, Blake," he said icily. "Are you insinuat' that I have not told Waiton the twuth?"

"I know you haven't," said Blake savagely.

"Wha-at?"

"Oh, don't glare at me like a stuck pig!" growled Blake. "Come up to the study, and let's have this out!"

"I utahly fail to compwehend you, Blake."

"Rats!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Come on, you ass!"

Jack Blake caught his chum by the arm, and marched him up the staircase. Arthur Augustus glanced at him several times in great surprise, but he submitted quietly to be led to Study No. 6.

In that famous apartment he found Herries and Digby, both with very grim expressions on their faces.

Blake closed the door, and then turned to Arthur Augustus, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Now, we want an explanation!" he snapped.

The swell of St. Jim's polished his eyeglass in a leisurely manner, and replaced it in his eye. Then he regarded his comrades with a lofty and frigid stare.

"I do not undahstand this weception," he said coldly. "You have been pleased to hint that I have not told Mr. Waiton the twuth wegardin' my absence, Blake—"

"You know you haven't!" exclaimed Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"What's the good of playing the goat?" said Digby, angrily. "You've been taking us in."

"Weally, Digby—"

"We'd better tell you at once that we saw you an hour ago or more," said Blake.

"I was not awah of that."

"I suppose not!" said Blake bitterly. "If you'd known we'd seen you going into a low pub to meet a rascally billiard-sharper—"

"What!"

"That isn't exactly the thing you could explain to Railton, is it?" added Blake, with bitter sarcasm.

Arthur Augustus stared at him.

"I fail to undahstand you, Blake. Do you mean to imply that you saw me goin' into a pub—"

"Yes; the Green Man."

"Weally, Blake—"

"You're not going to deny it, I suppose?" shouted Blake.

Arthur Augustus raised his head loftily.

"I am not goin' to take the twouble to deny it," he answered. "Howevah,

befoah I exclude you fellows from the list of my friends, pway let us have the mattah plain, so that there can be no mistake. You have an impression that I have been playin' the goat at the Gween Man, like those wottahs Wacke and Cwooke—"

"We know it!" grunted Herries.

"And you pwesume that I have told Mr. Waiton untwuths to account for my absence from woll-call?"

"Naturally!"

"I do not wegard it as natuwal. I expect you fellows, if you are to we-main my friends, to believe that I am not a liah. I am sowwy to say that I have been mistaken in you."

"What!" howled Blake.

"I am afraid that you are not actin' like a gentleman, Blake, in doubtin' a fellow's word."

"We saw you!" roared Herries.

"Pway do not wear at me, Hewwies. You are well awah that I do not like bein' woared at," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

Blake breathed hard.

"Look here, D'Arcy, you can't ride the high horse now," he said. "You've got to explain. You went to that low pub, and old Banks met you there and spoke to you, and what he said showed that you're in the habit of visiting the place. You've been taking us in, and pulling the wool over our eyes. I suppose you've been led into this, and we're willing to make allowances for you as you're such an ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake! And I have no desiah whatever to be made allowances for," answered Arthur Augustus icily. "You have made a wotten and disgwaceful accusation against me—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And you have stated that I am untwuthful. I wegard that as endin' our friendship."

"If you keep on as you've started there's an end of friendship, anyhow. We're not likely to chum with a rotten pub-baunter!" growled Blake.

"That is enough, Blake."

Arthur Augustus, with his noble nose high in the air, turned to the door. His study-mates watched him grimly.

"Well," said Blake, "what does that mean, D'Arcy?"

"It means that I have nothin' furthah to say to you, Blake. I wegard you with scorn!"

"You—you—"

"I shall take the first opportunity of changin' out of this studay," added Arthur Augustus, "and I wish you to undahstand that our acquaintance ceases from this moment, and that if you speak to me again I shall give you the cut dwect."

With that, Arthur Augustus walked out of Study No. 6, leaving his chums staring blankly at the door that closed behind him.

CHAPTER 8. Pals Divided!

"MY only hat!"

Tom Merry uttered that exclamation in tones of great surprise the following morning.

It was really a startling scene that met his gaze.

Morning classes were over at St. Jim's, and the quadrangle swarmed with juniors. Blake and Herries and Digby, of the Fourth Form, were standing by the School House steps, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out. Instead of joining his chums, Arthur Augustus passed them by, with expressionless face and cold, averted glance.

Evidently there was trouble in the family.

The swell of St. Jim's was no longer on speaking terms with his chums. There was a rift in the lute.

Tom Merry's glance followed the elegant junior as he walked on, seemingly unconscious of the existence of the three fellows from whom, hitherto, he had seemed almost inseparable.

Then the captain of the Shell came down the steps and joined Blake & Co.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"Row!" repeated Blake vaguely.

"Yes. What's wrong with Gussy?"

"Better ask him," said Herries, after a pause.

"Trouble in the study?" asked Tom in perplexity.

"Well, yes, in a sort of way," said Blake. "Nothing that matters, you know. Nice weather to-day, ain't it?"

Tom Merry looked at him. Plainly there was trouble, and Study No. 6 did not intend to state the details. Tom Merry asked no further questions, but he followed Arthur Augustus, and ran him down under the elms, where the swell of the Fourth was pacing in solitary state. Arthur Augustus greeted him with a cheery nod.

"Nice mornin', deah boy!" he remarked.

"Oh, ripping!" said Tom. "Have you been quarrelling with Blake?"

D'Arcy's look became cold at once.

"Pway do not mention that fellow to me, Tom Mewwy," he said.

"That fellow!" ejaculated Tom.

"I am no longan on speakin' terms with those chaps, for reasons which it would be intewestin' not to state," said Arthur Augustus.

"Now, look here, Gussy, don't be an ass!" said Tom persuasively. "You're not going to keep this up. Tell your Uncle Thomas what's the matter, and let him set it right."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy, but it is quite imposs to set this mattah wight."

"You never know till you find out," urged Tom. "Can't you tell me what you've rowed about?"

"We haven't wowed, Tom Mewwy. I should wogard it as beneath my dignity to wov with anybody, especially those chaps."

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully. It was clear that there was something very much the matter, and that both sides felt a strong disinclination to explain. They did not want to wash dirty linen out of doors, as the proverb says, which was natural enough. But Tom Merry, as a friend of both parties, was concerned in the matter, and he would gladly have helped to heal the breach before it widened.

"But there can't be anything really the matter," he said.

"Yaas, watah! I am not goin' to explain, as I have no desiah to hold those fellows up to genewal contempt."

"Eh?"

"I am not goin' to say anythin' at all against them, you know, and shall certainly wefwain fwom mentionin' to anyone, even to you, old chap, that they have acted in a wotten mannah."

Tom Merry grinned.

"But they can't have done anything really rotten!" he urged.

"That is a mattah of opinion," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "When they accuse a chap of actin' in a diswaceful way, and doubt his word, I wogard it as wotten. But I am not goin' to say so, of course. I have merely dwopped their acquaintances."

"But—"

"I am sowwy I cannot tell you anythin' about the mattah, deah boy. Pway

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let it dwop. I twust," said Arthur Augustus warmly—"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you do not believe I am the kind of a chap to visit a place like the Gween Man, to play wotten games with a wascally chawactah like that howwid man Banks."

Tom Merry jumped.

"What? Of course not! But Blake can't suppose—"

"I weally cannot tell you anythin' about it, old fellow," said Arthur Augustus. "I am suah it would make you despise them, and I should be sowwy for that. Pewwaps, in the long wun, they may see the ewwah of their ways. I weally twust so."

And Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving Tom Merry staring.

"My only hat!" Tom ejaculated, for the second time.

The dinner-bell was ringing, and the captain of the Shell had to leave the matter where it stood for the present. In the dining-room, D'Arcy's seat was next to Blake's at the dinner-table. He did not exchange a word or look with his old chum; and Jack Blake was equally distant. All the juniors observed it, and by that time all who cared to know knew that there was division in Study No. 6. In fact, Blake & Co. received glances from other tables, and there was a grin of satisfaction on the face of Aubrey Racke of the Shell as he made his observations. After dinner Racke spoke to D'Arcy in the hall.

"You seem on fighting terms with your pals," he remarked.

Arthur Augustus gave him a "marble eye."

"I do not care to discuss the mattah with you, Wacke," he answered. And he walked out of the School House.

Racke grinned, and turned to Blake & Co., who were coming out.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Find out!" grunted Herries.

"That's what I'm trying to do," said Racke agreeably. "Your dear old pal has his back up, it eems."

"Mind your own business!" growled Blake.

So Racke's curiosity had to remain unsatisfied. But the rift in the lute afforded the cud of the Shell great satisfaction, though he could not divine the cause.

Blake & Co. went rather moodily into the quad, where Tom Merry joined them.

"Now, you chaps," said Tom, "don't sheer off. I'm going to speak to you. You've got the wrong pig by the ear in some way, and it's going to be set right. Savvy?"

"Ring off!" said Blake.

"Not at all; I'm ringing on. I've gathered from Gussy that you've got a potty idea that he's been pub-haunting—"

"More fool he to jaw, then!" said Herries savagely. "We're not going to say anything to get him into a row."

"It would be pretty serious if Railton or the Head got wind of it," said Digby.

"I hope that silly ass will keep his head shut, for his own sake!"

"But can't you see you're making a mistake?" exclaimed Tom. "Gussy isn't that kind of chap at all, and you know it as well as I do."

"You don't know anything about it," said Blake morosely.

"I think I do," said Tom. "I can answer for Gussy being one of the most decent chaps at St. Jim's, and you ought to be able to."

"So we thought we could till—"

Blake broke off.

"I think somebody's been pulling your leg," said Tom Merry quietly. "Is this some mischief of Racke's?"

"Racke's got nothing to do with it."

"Then who's told you—?"

"Nobody." Blake made a restless movement. "Gussy oughtn't to have said a word to you, Tom Merry. But as he's done so, it's up to us to tell you that we saw him ourselves. You needn't run away with the idea that somebody has been stuffing us up about him. We saw him."

"Oh!" said Tom. "When he missed call-over yesterday—"

"Yes."

"I know you went to look for him. And you saw him—"

"Going into the Green Man," said Dig.

"Impossible!"

"We saw him, I tell you, all three of us."

"He may have had some reason—"

"Banks met him on the veranda and spoke to him—told him he'd expected him sooner—"

"You're sure?" ejaculated Tom.

"We heard him."

"Phew!"

Tom Merry looked blank. It had not occurred to him that the chums of Study No. 6 had been eye-witnesses of Gussy's delinquency.

"But—but Gussy seems full of indignation—"

"Spoof!" growled Blake bitterly.

"When he knew we'd found him out, he tried to ride off on the high horse. He hadn't any explanation to make. Let the matter drop."

"I can't help thinking there's some mistake somewhere," said the captain of the Shell slowly.

Herries snorted.

"My dear chap, you can't think!" he said politely. And the Fourth-Formers walked away, leaving Tom Merry with a deeply corrugated brow.

CHAPTER 9.

Kerr Takes a Hand!

THAT day there was much comment upon the state of affairs in Study No. 6 in the School House.

Study No. 6 had often had its little rows, but, upon the whole, it had been a happily united family; there had sometimes been trouble, but the trouble had blown over.

This time it looked as if it was not likely to blow over, and as if the breach was to become permanent.

Arthur Augustus had requested permission to use Study No. 5 for his work; a permission that was cordially accorded. Hammond and Julian, and Reilly and Kerrish, in Study No. 5, were prepared to welcome him with open arms, though it did make rather a crowd. Blake & Co. were glad of the change; on their present terms, it was uncomfortable for the four old chums to "dig" together in one study. Their disunion led to much remark and many inquiries, to which Blake & Co. returned very brief answers. And Arthur Augustus, though intending to say nothing, unconsciously saying a great deal. Before the day was out, most of the School House fellows knew that D'Arcy's chums suspected him of "acting the goat" in the honourable manner of Racke & Co., but what were the rights of the matter nobody knew.

Some of the fellows were concerned about it, and tried to make peace—with-out success. Others were indifferent; and a few were pleased—such as Racke and Crooke, and Trimble and Mellish. The Terrible Three, of the Shell, were much exercised in their minds on the subject. At tea in Study No. 10, Tom Merry expounded his views to his two faithful followers.

"This can't go on!" he said. "There's a mistake somewhere, and as the leaders and great chiefs in this House, it is up to us to set it right."

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther. "Pass the jam!"

"Go easy on the jam," said Tom.

"I've asked a chap to tea."

"Which?"

"Kerr of the Fourth."

"What the thump do you want a Fourth-Former to tea for, and a New House bouncer at that?" demanded Lowther.

"I want his advice—he's Scotch, you know," explained Tom Merry. "I can't make head or tail of the business; but Kerr is an awfully keen chap, and I dare say he can work it out for us. I'm going to put it to him, and set his brain to work on it."

"Here he is!" said Manners.

The Scottish member of Figgins & Co. came into the study.

"Trot in, old bean!" said Tom. "Here's a chair—and tea's ready and started. I'm glad you were able to come!"

"Pleased!" smiled Kerr, as he dropped into a chair. "Fatty Wynn was awfully bucked at my being asked to tea over here. He's bagged my whack in the sosses and chips."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You said you had something to tell me," continued Kerr, as he gave his attention to the spread. "Pile in!"

"It's about Gussy. I dare say you've noticed—"

Kerr chuckled.

"All the school has, I think," he said.

"What's the row in Study No. 6?"

"Nobody knows; we want your opinion."

"Go ahead!"

Tom Merry related all he knew of the affair, and Kerr listened attentively, while not forgetting his tea.

He looked very thoughtful when the School House junior had finished.

"It's jolly queer," he commented. "Gussy is about the last fellow I'd suspect of shady games; but if Blake saw him, as he says—well, it's jolly queer! There doesn't seem much room for a mistake."

Tom looked disappointed. He had hoped a good deal from the well-known sagacity of the Scottish junior.

"Well, that's so," he agreed. "But I think there is a mistake somewhere, all the same."

"So do I, old top."

"Oh, you do?" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes—though I don't see yet where it comes in. We've got to get at the facts," said Kerr. "I'm just as keen on it as you chaps. It's rotten to see old pals falling out, and eyeing one another like bulldogs. Let's have them here and make them explain all round."

Tom Merry looked rueful.

"I don't think they'd come together," he said.

"That's easily settled. Ask them separately."

Tom laughed.

"Well, we can do that," he said. "We'll get Gussy here first, and then the other asses after tea."

And when tea was over, Tom Merry departed in search of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and soon returned with that elegant youth. Arthur Augustus was under the impression that his opinion was wanted regarding a certain new necktie in which the captain of the Shell had invested, and he came cheerfully to deliver his valued opinion. While Tom, with great gravity, was discussing neckties with D'Arcy, Monty Lowther slipped quietly from the study, and in a few minutes returned with Blake and Herries and Digby. They did not see Arthur Augustus till they were in the study, and then Lowther closed the door quickly, locked it, and took out the key. Now

that Study No. 6 had gathered, they were not to be allowed to separate.

Blake frowned.

"What's this game?" he said gruffly.

"You said Tom Merry wanted to see us, Lowther—"

"So he does."

"Bai Jove! I feah I shall have to wetiah, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Pway open that door, Lowthah."

"Bow-wow!" said Lowther.

"Weally, you know—"

"Look here, let us out of this, and don't play the giddy ox!" growled Herries.

"Gentlemen—" began Tom Merry.

"Rats! Open that door!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—"

"I am not on speakin' terms with those fellows, Tom Mewwy, and it is an ewwah of taste to ask me heah when they are comin'," said Arthur Augustus severely. "That's all right!" said Tom cheerfully.

"It is not all wight, Tom Mewwy. It is vewy fah fwom all wight."

"Give your chin a rest for a minute, old chap. We've got Kerr here to help you clear the matter up," said Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

"Look here—"

"You needn't grouse," said the captain of the Shell calmly. "The door's locked, and it's going to stay locked till this matter is cleared up."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Silly ass!" grunted Blake. "There's nothing to clear up. I suppose we know what we know."

"Yaas, wathah! Nothin' can altah the fact that those fellows have doubted my word, Tom Mewwy—"

"Which we ought to have taken against the evidence of our eyes, I suppose?" said Blake sarcastically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!"

"If you say 'wats' to me—"

"Rats!" repeated Blake.

"Bai Jove, I shall—"

"Order!" bawled Tom Merry. "Shut up, the pair of you! I tell you we're going into this matter—"

"Suppose you mind your own business?" suggested Herries gruffly.

"Yaas, I wegard that as a weally valuable suggestion."

"We're making this our business," said Tom calmly, "and you've got to hear reason. There's a mistake in the matter that's got to be cleared up. Blake thinks he saw you going into the Green Man last evening, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"I don't think—I know!" sniffed Blake.

"That is untwue, Blake."

"Why, you cheeky cad—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Order!" roared Lowther. "Can't you keep from singing for a minute or two, while we clear up the matter?"

"You deny it, Gussy?" asked Tom.

"I wufuse to take the twouble to deny it, Tom Mewwy. A wotten accusation like that is beneath my notice."

"Which means that he denies it, in D'Arcy language," said Kerr. "Now, the question arises—how did Blake make such a mistake?"

"Fathead!" said three voices together.

"That isn't an explanation. Now, you three fellows think that you saw Banks—"

"We know we did!"

"You saw somebody you took for Gussy?" suggested the Scottish junior.

Blake started a little.

"That's rot!" he said, after a pause.

"It was dark, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Are you sure you recognised Gussy in the dark?"

"How could we, when he had his back to us?" growled Herries. "Don't be an ass!"

"My hat! You're sure it was Gussy, though he had his back to you in the dark!" exclaimed Kerr. "Is that what you call evidence?"

"We knew his coat, of course."

"His coat! Coats are very much alike."

"Not Gussy's coat—that would be known a mile off!" grunted Blake. "It's the coat he ran away from Pilcher in. Anybody would know that coat."

"Yaas, it is wathah a distinguished coat," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "I weally do not think that coat could be mistaken for any othah coat at St. Jim's."

"Don't give evidence against yourself, ass!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Kerr looked puzzled for a moment or two.

"If you're sure about the coat Gussy was wearing—" he began.

"We're quite sure."

"What do you say to that, Gussy?"

"I say wats! I was not wearin' that coat when I went out yestahday," answered Arthur Augustus.

"We saw it!" roared Blake.

"Wats!"

"You—you—"

"I wepeat—wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "That coat has not been worn since the aftahnoon I brought it home."

The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus. Blake rubbed his nose very hard.

"Let's have the coat up," said Kerr quietly. "Where is it, Gussy?"

"In my corner of the lobby, Kerr, on a coat-hangah. But—"

"Fetch it, somebody!"

"But weally—"

Monty Lowther unlocked the door and left the study. But there was no danger now of Study No. 6 escaping; they were all interested in seeing this peculiar investigation through to the end. In a few minutes Lowther came back with the coat over his arm.

He laid it on the table. There was a daub of mud, and it was rumpled; and there was a spot on the sleeve where it had been scorched—evidently by a touch from the lighted end of a cigarette.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus blankly. "What fearful waffian has been weahin' my coat?"

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus is not Satisfied!

ALL eyes were fixed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But he seemed unconscious of it, as he turned over his precious coat—that beautiful new coat which was the apple of his eye, and which had even caused him to flee from the wrath of Master Pilcher, at the risk of being taken for a funk. The deep anguish and indignation in Gussy's speaking countenance could not be mistaken. He raised his eyes from the coat at last, and looked round.

"Some howid beast has been wearin' my coat!" he ejaculated. "Some smoky wottah—there is still a smell of smoke about it. Bai Jove, I am goin' to find that cheeky cad and give him a fearful thwashin'! Fancy a chap havin' the astoundin' nerve to wear anothah fellow's coat and make it smoky!"

"Oh!" stuttered Blake.

Herries and Digby blinked at one another in silence. It began to dawn upon them that there had been, after all, a mistake.

Kerr smiled slightly.
 "It was this blessed coat you found Gussy guilty upon?" he asked.
 "Ye-ee-es!" stammered Blake.
 "We—we knew it was Gussy's coat," mumbled Herries. "Of—of course, we thought it was Gussy inside it. What could we think?"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.
 "Gussy says he wasn't wearing the coat," said Blake slowly. "But—"
 "Hold on," said Tom Merry. "We met Gussy as he was coming in last night, and certainly he wasn't wearing the coat when he came in."

"That's so!" assented Manners and Lowther together.

"And anybody who saw me goin' out knows that I wasn't wearin' it when I went out," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully.

"Who saw you?" asked Kerr.

"Kildare of the Sixth, and Dawwel—"

"Ahem! We can't call on prefects of the Sixth for evidence. Anybody else?"

"Wacke, of the Shell," answered D'Arcy. "I wemmembah passin' him near the gates, when I went out to look for young Pilchah."

"Racke!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The name was a flash of enlightenment to him.

"Racke!" said Monty Lowther. "My hat! Racke knew Gussy had gone out without his celebrated coat; and Racke was trying to break bounds the same evening, only we spotted him and stopped him."

"Bai Jove! Is it possible that it was Wacke who had the fearful cheek to bowwow my coat?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry laughed. He had no further doubt on the subject now.

"That's it, of course," he said. "It was Racke who went to the Green Man in Gussy's coat!"

"Bai Jove! While I was lookin' for young Pilchah in my old clobber—"

"Oh," said Blake—"oh, I—I—I suppose—hum—I—I suppose it's possible, when I come to think of it—I—I—"

"We only knew him by the coat, of course," said Dig. "But—but, of course, it was Racke that Banks was speaking to on the veranda. That was just how he would have spoken to Racke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's have Racke here," said Kerr. "We can get the truth out of him."

"We'll have him here sharp enough," said Tom Merry. "Come with me, you two!"

The Terrible Three left the study, and the Fourth-Formers waited. In a few minutes there was a sound of strife and furious expostulation in the Shell passage.

Aubrey Racke came into the study head-first.

"I wewulsh to know, Wacke," exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully, "how you dare to bowwow my new coat to pay visits to your wascally associates at a low pub?"

"Hang your coat!" growled Racke.

"You uttah wapsallion—"

"I haven't hurt your coat, I suppose?" muttered Racke. "If I have, I'll pay for the damage. Bother your silly coat!"

The juniors exchanged glances.

Racke certainly had no knowledge of what was at stake concerning the wearing of the coat, or possibly he might have tried prevarication. As the matter stood, he supposed that it was simply a question of the overcoat having been borrowed without permission, which was

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not a very serious thing—excepting from Arthur Augustus' point of view.

"So you did wear the coat last night?" said Blake, with a deep breath. "It was you we saw at the Green Man?"

Racke started.

"You—you saw me?"

"Yes, you cad!" said Blake savagely.

"And we thought—never mind what we thought! You rotten pub-haunter, we saw you right enough!"

"You're not going to tell the Head, I suppose?" said Racke, with a sneer. "I borrowed the coat because it was the first that came to hand."

"That's not true," said Kerr quietly.

"You borrowed the coat because it was a well-known one, and so if you were seen sneaking out of bounds, or creeping into the Green Man, it would be supposed to be Gussy."

Racke bit his thin lip.

"You can think so if you like," he said sullenly.

"It's pretty plain," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You've been sailing too close to the wind lately, Racke, and you thought a dodge like this would be safer for you. Don't tell any more lies about it!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll pay for the coat if it's damaged," he sneered. "How much do you want, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on the cad of the Shell, with a withering look.

"I do not want any of your wotten money, Wacke. I am goin' to thwack you for your fearful cheek!"

"Look here—you fool—keep off!" yelled Racke.

"Give them room!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next five minutes were awful ones for Aubrey Racke. He escaped to the door at last, and dragged it open, and jumped into the passage. An elegant boot caught him as he went through, and assisted his flight; and Racke came down with a crash on his hands and knees.

"Bai Jove! Come back and have some more, you wotiah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

But Racke didn't. He scrambled up and fled for his study, where he bolted in, like a rabbit into its burrow, and turned the key in the lock.

In Tom Merry's study there was general satisfaction. The mystery had been cleared up; and the Fourth-Formers were discharged, as Monty Lowther expressed it, without a stain on their character.

"Jolly obliged to you, Kerr, old chap," said Tom Merry. "I thought you'd work it out somehow."

"Pleased!" said Kerr, with a grin. "Always come to the New House when you want help. We really look upon it as a duty to help poor little School House kids out of their little scrapes!"

"Rata!"

Kerr retired gracefully, followed by that opprobrious ejaculation; and Tom Merry turned to Blake & Co.

"All serene now?" he said.

Blake nodded.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I—I'm glad it's turned out we were mistaken. It's Gussy's fault for having that thundering, staring guy of a coat at all!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But it's all right," said Blake. "I'm sorry, Gussy."

"Same here!" said Hewies and Dig.

Arthur Augustus carefully adjusted his eyeglass in his noble eye, and surveyed his repentant chums.

"Vewy good," he said calmly. "I am glad you wecognise the ewwah of your ways, and I accept your apologies. I am sowwy to say that I cannot wemstate you in my friendship—"

"What?"

"Gussy—" began Tom Merry.

"I am sowwy," said Arthur Augustus, gently but firmly. "You have expwessed a doubt of my word, deah boys, and though you have acknowledged your ewwah, that does not altah the fact. There cannot be friendship without twust; and you have not twusted me."

"Look here—"

"How you fellows will get on without me to look aftah you, I weally do not know; but it cannot be helped. I am sowwy to say that I must wefuse to know you."

And with that lofty speech, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked out of the study, leaving Tom Merry & Co. staring blankly.

THE END.

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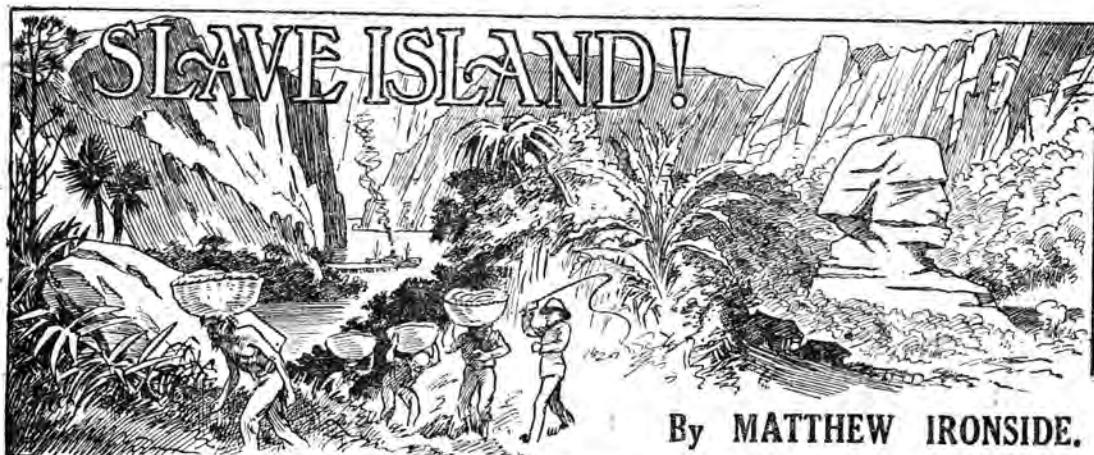
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JASPER STANDISH plans to have his revenge on his enemy, RICHARD HARMER, by kidnapping his son DICK and transporting him to SLAVE ISLAND. He makes a bargain with the owner, HANS MEPPEL, to this effect, and the Dutchman succeeds in carrying off Dick Harmer to the strange island, where he is made a slave. Here Dick meets Elaine Standish, a charming little slave. One day the two escape from their prison, and make a journey to the other side of the island. They hide in some old silver-mines, which Dick has reasons to believe belong to his grandfather, who had, many years ago, discovered the island. Suddenly the deep-throated baying of a trailing bloodhound near at hand reaches their ears.

(Now go on with the story.)

Run to Earth!

A GAIN the sonorous baying of the bloodhound rang out from the jungle, and, with his eyes desperate, Dick stared at the channel that ran into the gloomy mouth of the cave.

It was only a few yards from the spot at which they had landed after their descent from the towering rocks, and it offered the one slender chance of being able to throw the dog off the scent.

"The water—are you game to swim or wade through it into the cave and hide in the darkness, Elaine?" he asked quickly.

Remembering the crabs, the girl looked doubtfully towards the cavern-mouth and shivered.

"I mean—to go only far enough in to be out of sight of Meppel, or whichever of his hired villains are following us," the boy went on quickly, realising what she feared. "There were none of those beastly crabs there, you know. To enter the water would kill the scent for the tyke, and, in case it struck that we left when we went in there before, we could climb the ledge of rock on the opposite side when we left the water, and hide in the darkness. Do you get me?"

"Yes," the girl answered, nodding; and she started to run towards the cave.

But, even as Dick hastened after her, excited shouts from his back told him that they were too late.

Heartily wishing he possessed some sort of weapon with which to defend himself and protect Elaine, he swung round. His jaw was set hard and his hands clenched. He was fully determined to put up the best fight he could before allowing himself to be recaptured, though he saw at once that it could be of little avail.

Fully a dozen overseers, with the

gigantic Dutchman, Hans Meppel, at their head, had burst from the tangled vines and stunted bush forming the fringe of the forest.

The bloodhound, whose baying the boy and girl had heard, was straining upon a leash held by Meppel, and, sighting Dick and Elaine in the moonlight, it raised its massive head and gave tongue fiercely, excitedly, the Dutchman seeming to find difficulty in holding it in check.

Elaine, who, like Dick, had faced about on hearing the exultant cries of the trackers, wheeled round on her heels and again commenced to run.

Dick saw that she was terrified. She was plucky enough in the ordinary way, but, as the lad guessed, she had seen on many occasions with what savage cruelty the unfortunate slaves on the island who committed an offence were punished, and for the time being had lost her head.

The lad realised that it was practically useless to attempt to avoid capture now. Save for the cave, the depths of which they knew to be infested with even worse enemies, and to which there was probably no outlet, there was barren sand before them and nowhere to seek refuge.

Nevertheless, because he was anxious to keep near her side and save her from harm as far as was humanly possible, he turned and sped after her. Already, however, he had made a shrewd surmise as to what would happen; and he was right.

Meppel and his overseers had broken into a run, and now, on seeing the lad and the girl turn and fly from them, the Dutchman gave a snarl of wrath, stooped, and freed the bloodhound from its leash.

"After 'em, Fritz!" he shouted. "Goot dog! Guard 'em, poy!"

And the hound needed no further urging.

Like an arrow released from a bow, its yellowish-brown body shot in a swift lunge over the sand, and, hearing the Dutchman's tersely-shouted orders to it, and flinging a glance over his shoulder, Dick Harmer pulled up quickly and picked up a heavy stone.

The boy loved dogs of all kinds, and but for sheer necessity would not have dreamed of seeking to injure one. He thought of Elaine now, however, and, if the savage animal made to attack her, was determined to try to stun it.

It was a formidable brute—one of the largest of its kind Dick had ever seen.

Its reddish little eyes were glowing menacingly, and it was snarling deep down in its chest, as it swiftly bounded towards him.

For a moment the great dog seemed inclined to fly at Dick; then, seeing Elaine still running, it swerved to one side and made to lunge after her. With

all his might, the lad hurled the stone at the animal's head; but, as luck would have it, it just missed and, uttering a savage bay, it was quickly upon the frightened girl's heels.

Filled with horror, Dick Harmer saw her go down before it as it sprang. Meppel and his overseers, who were almost upon him, shouted threateningly to him to stop. He paid no heed, but, pressing his elbows into his sides, tore off for where the bloodhound was struggling with Elaine.

She had contrived to grip at its muscular throat with both her hands. For the moment she was forcing its foam-flecked jaws back from her face, though her strength was fast giving out, and the boy arrived at the spot only in the very nick of time to save her from being severely, if not fatally, mauled.

Her having shown fight seemed to have driven the hound into a frenzy, and as Dick raced up it turned upon him with the fury of a tiger.

Its powerful jaws snapped within an inch of his leg. Then, snarling and showing all its white, glistening teeth, it jumped full for his throat.

He leapt aside just in time, and then a strange thing happened. Before it could attack him again, Meppel yelled to it frantically to come to heel. Knowing nothing of the compact Jasper Standish had made with the Dutchman not to endanger his life, the tyrant's action surprised Dick.

He had fully expected Meppel to stand by and delight in watching the dog do its worst.

The animal crouched down, growling in disappointment; then, cringing and showing an abject fear of its brutal master, slunk towards him.

Meppel and his overseers came rushing towards the lad and the girl, and Dick clenched his fists and stepped quickly to the side of Elaine as she rose, trembling, to her feet. But he was unexpectedly rendered powerless to show resistance.

One of the overseers accurately flung a lasso as he ran. The noose snaked through the air and dropped over Dick's head and shoulders, and the man dragged upon it, pulling it tight about his arms and imprisoning them. Then a second vigorous tug jerked him from his feet, and he fell heavily upon his face on the sand.

In less time than it takes to write the pursuers had closed about them, and, as he lay, pinioned and all but helpless in their midst, Dick Harmer heard the sounds of heavy blows and a cry of pain from Elaine.

As strong hands descended upon him and he was dragged to his feet, he saw Hans Meppel lashing at her with a heavy

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6th WEEK OF OUR MAGNIFICENT NEW COMPETITION.

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THIS WEEK WE ANNOUNCE A VERY NOVEL
COMPETITION.

On the right you will find six puzzle-pictures and each of these has the last two or three letters of the word represented.

What you have to do is to fill in, IN INK, the letters which you think should go before those we publish.

For instance, Picture No. 31 has the letters "ORS" and when the correct letters are supplied, which in this case are SCISS, the word is revealed. The same thing applies to the other pictures.

This competition will run for eight weeks, and there will be two more sets of pictures for you to solve.

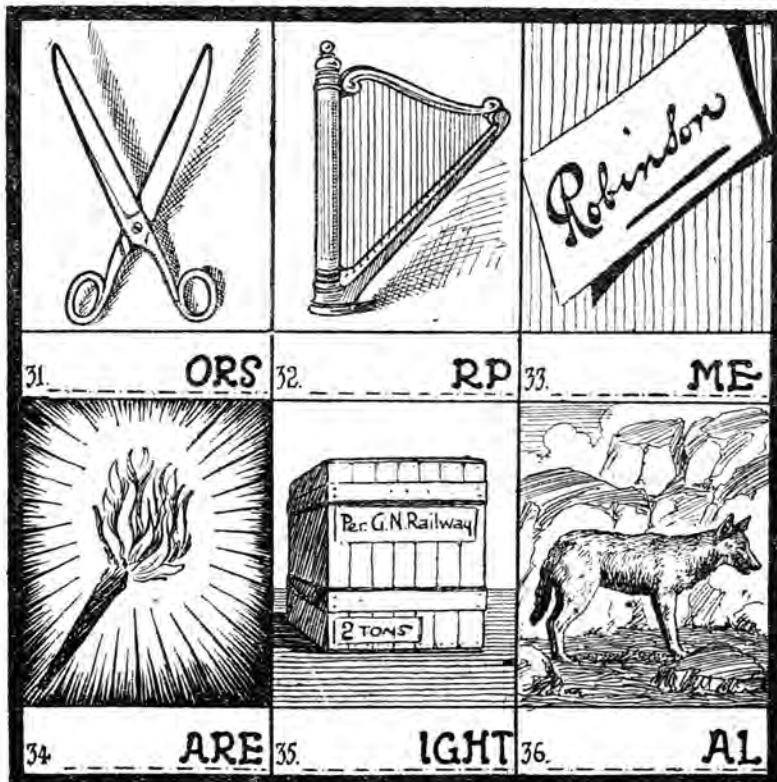
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FULL INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE GIVEN AS TO HOW
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The First Prize of 10/- a week for one year will be awarded to the sender of the eight sets of pictures which bear solutions identical with the list now locked in the Editor's safe, and other prizes to the competitors sending in the fewest number of mistakes. Competitors must bear in mind that the Editor's decision must be accepted as final and binding, and entries are only accepted on this express understanding.

You may send as many complete sets of eight puzzles as you please, but each must be submitted on a coupon taken from the "GEM," and when the time comes for sending in, sets must be made up separately.

START TO WORK NOW, BUT DO NOT SEND YOUR
EFFORTS IN UNTIL WE ASK YOU TO DO SO.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.



dog-whip he carried. He had beaten her to her knees and was belabouring her unmercifully.

"But I teach you nod to led beople oud of prison, you leedle vixen!" he panted. "Take dot—und dot! Ach, Himmel, you some trouble haf us caused! But you shall pay—pay! You 'ear?"

He accompanied every word with a cruel blow, and did not desist until the girl sank, sobbing with agony, to the sand. Her shoulders must have been a mass of weals, and even her face had not escaped the hissing lash, for Hans Meppel had troubled little how he had used it. His one aim had been to put strength behind the blows and inflict pain.

Dick struggled fiercely to break from the men who held him. As he had been compelled to watch his loyal and plucky little companion suffer, he had longed to be free and to have the means at hand to kill, for he had "seen red."

Several brutal blows from clenched fists did not deter him, and it was only when his hands were wrenched behind him and his wrists bound together with the end of the lasso that he gave up the hopeless task of trying to throw off his captors, and stood still.

Even then his spirit was not quelled. As he watched Hans Meppel make his last savage cut at the girl, Dick silently registered a vow that, if ever he got the

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opportunity, he would attempt to thrash the Dutchman as he had thrashed Elaine.

That it would be no easy task with a man of his Herculean strength the boy knew, but, given a whip and five minutes alone with him, he would not hesitate to try the experiment, though the Dutchman might half kill him in the end.

Hans Meppel glanced towards him, and seemed inclined to use the whip upon him. He evidently thought better of further exerting himself just then, however, and signed to the men who held him to force the boy to march.

"Bring along the girl, Jephson!" he ordered, addressing one of the overseers, whose cast of countenance suggested he was an American. "Here! Dake t'is whip und gif her some more of it, if she von't talk!"

The man nodded, caught the dog-whip, and cracked it suggestively as he strode towards Elaine. She had heard the Dutchman's words, and she scrambled unsteadily to her feet. The overseer seized her wrist, and the whole party started to march towards the jungle.

"Ve vill camp here for to-night!" Hans Meppel announced, as its fringe was reached. And, with a grim smile, he watched his men bind Dick and Elaine to two of the smaller trees.

"You 'Engleesh pig!" he leered, raising his hand, and striking the helpless boy a heavy blow in the mouth. "Don't t'ink you haf escaped mit no punishment

for running away! You shall another taste of bastinadoing haf! Ten you shall see the girl who helped you get oud of prison be made an example of in mein arena!"

He laughed callously as he turned and moved away.

"You von't vant to defy the laws of Slave Island, 'en!" he added darkly, over his shoulder. "No, py Himmel, you von't!"

And several of the overseers chuckled as he grinned at them.

The lad stood against the tree to which he was lashed, his brain whirling and his face pale. His arena! What had the scoundrel meant? he wondered.

"Was it possible," he asked himself, with a thrill of dismay, "that he intended to imitate the inhuman cruelties of the tyrants of the dim ages and sacrifice the girl to some description of wild beasts?"

That he was capable of even a crime such as that Dick felt only too sure, and his heart seemed to stand still in horror.

Hans Meppel's Arena.

JASPER STANDISH thrust aside the mosquito-nets, and sat up, yawning, as he awoke, to find Hans Meppel standing by his bedside in the magnificent chamber he had been allotted in the Dutchman's palace. It was early morning, and five days

since Dick and Elaine had been recaptured and brought back to the town. The boy—who had again been through the terrible torture of having the soles of his feet lashed with canes—and the girl were in the prison under close guard.

Standish, though his yearning for revenge had not weakened, had grown a trifle tired of seeing the boy ill-treated, and had refused to be present when Dick received his punishment for making his bid for freedom.

To tell the truth, Standish was beginning to weary of Slave Island altogether. He had pooh-poohed the idea of ever troubling again about the pleasures of life, when the topic was raised by his solicitor back in England; but, now that his revenge had taken shape, and was actually in progress, he was not sure that a life of gaiety would not appeal to him.

At all events, he had more than a sneaking yearning to visit Paris, taste of its wine, and see its lights, and, after that, perhaps a visit to Monte Carlo would help to make him forget the darker chapters of his life and be agreeable.

"Hallo!" he drawled, stifling another yawn with his well-manicured hand. "Have you come to tell me your steamer is ready to take me back to England, Meppel?"

"To-morrow, if you wish, id shall at your disposal be," the Dutchman answered. "To-day, I haf many wonderful amusements for you. Certain sports haf been arranged which vill take place in mein arena."

Jasper Standish raised his eyebrows. "In your what?" he asked, wondering if he had heard aright.

The Dutchman grinned. "Did I nod tell you dot I am monarch of all I survey on t'is island?" he asked, stroking his long beard. "Like the great rulers of Rome, I meinself am great, and crave pleasures dot resemble those dot amused such men many, many thousands of years ago."

Standish stared at him, wondering—and not for the first time since his arrival on the island—whether he were not a little insane.

"But you don't mean to tell me that you have wild beasts, and that sort of thing, and an arena where you turn them on some unfortunate wretch who has displeased you!" he gasped.

"Jah, mynheer, I do mean dot!" Meppel replied. "Mein overseers and meinself must haf some diversion. But id iss nod all done for amusement. Remember dot an iron discipline must be enforced here; for, Himmel, where should I und mein overseers be if the slaves mutinied und turned against us in a pody?"

"You mean?" Standish inquired, looking puzzled.

"Dot when a slave iss forced into the arena und killed py von or ot'er of the animals I haf, he or she haf usually been guilty of some offence against the laws the slaves should abide by, und the sight of their punishment acts as an example to the ot'ers! Tey go away from the amphitheatre awed und impressed, and fear to do as did the man or women whom t'ey haf seen die."

The Britisher felt an inclination to recoil from the man in horror and repulsion. Yes, certainly he was mad, at least in one direction—his idea of his own power of greatness—decided Standish.

"I am not sure that I wish to see the sports," he said, hesitating doubtfully before pronouncing the latter word. "However, anything for a new experience! When do they begin?"

"Almost at vonce, so dot t'ey are over before the heat grows too intense. I

game to avaken you dot you might miss nodings. I vill send the slaves to help you mid your toilet."

"Thanks!" Standish nodded, swinging his legs from the bed and beginning to unbutton the jacket of his pyjamas.

When the Britisher had shaved, bathed, and arrayed his tall figure in a freshly-laundered suit of white ducks, he made his way to the veranda of the palace, where his host was wont to take his meals.

He and Meppel breakfasted together, and Standish lingered over his coffee and cigarette, though the Dutchman was obviously all impatience to start for what he termed his amphitheatre.

"If you are ready, mynheer," he hinted at length, leaving his chair.

"Oh, if you wish!" Standish agreed, rising, too, and throwing away the end of his smoke. And he followed the burly Dutchman to the veranda steps.

Hans Meppel clapped his hands, and two burly negroes, who had been standing in charge of a couple of magnificent rickshaws under some palms close at hand in the courtyard, hastened forward with the conveyances.

Meppel waved towards the first, and stood on one side for Standish to precede him.

As soon as the Britisher had taken his place in his rickshaw, Meppel swaggered down the steps, and bumped his great person into the second. Then, at a guttural word from him, the two slaves drew the respective conveyances behind them across the courtyard and out of it into the town.

There were many signs that it was a gala day on Slave Island.

The streets through which the two men were drawn were gay with flowers and bunting, and all the overseers, resplendent in neatly-pressed white-drill suits, seemed on holiday.

Many of them had with them their wives, and some their children. On coming to Slave Island, an overseer was allowed to choose a wife from among the unmarried female slaves, and the girl or woman fortunate—or unfortunate—enough to be his choice was automatically freed.

On all sides hats were doffed and bows made to Hans Meppel, and, as he gazed upon the crowds that thronged the streets, Jasper Standish began to realise for the first time how colossal was the Dutchman's enterprise here on this lonely isle in the Pacific.

Up till now, the Britisher had only seen the overseers scattered about the island at their various posts, and had no idea of the vast numbers into which they ran. He estimated that he must have passed already quite two hundred of them, either alone or with their families.

The two rickshaws bowled out of the town, the two black slaves breaking into a run at a harsh command from Meppel.

They left the neatly-laid-out streets and clean-looking, white houses at a point where there was a sandy incline, for which everyone seemed to be making.

As the conveyances passed over the summit of this, Standish uttered an exclamation of even greater surprise.

He found himself looking down into a deep hollow, in which lay a gigantic, fenced-in enclosure, not unlike one of the bull-rings to be seen in Spain and Mexico. He little knew for what fell purpose Hans Meppel had had that arena constructed!

(Another long instalment of this splendid adventure serial will appear in next week's issue.)

The Editor's Chat.

Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Great Attractions for Next Week!

Next Wednesday I shall place before my chums a splendid programme of school, sport, and adventure stories. Included in the list will be another long instalment of our magnificent Football Serial, entitled,

"RENTON OF THE ROVERS!"

By Paul Masters.

How Jimmy Renton, in his quest for work, comes into touch with a director of a certain football club, and, later, how he accidentally falls in with an old chum who had been searching the country for him, will provide some grand reading.

There will be also a Splendid Long Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, under the title of

"THE GOLD SHOULDER!"

By Martin Clifford,

which deals with the trouble in Study No. 6 in the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's dignity has been cruelly wounded, and his dignity is his tenderest spot!

Lowther, to help patch up the quarrel, thinks of a splendid jape, which is worked successfully by Tom Merry, and in the end the clouds roll by and in Study No. 6 all is once again calm and bright!

Following on this will be another splendid instalment of our great serial of mystery and adventure, entitled,

"SLAVE ISLAND!"

By Matthew Ironsides,

wherein Dick Harmer shows his captors and Hans Meppel just how much or how little he is afraid of them, and proves the kind of stuff he is made of.

Altogether, this is a really ripping programme, and I think my chums, when they get next Wednesday's GEM, will agree that this is so.

Just lately there have been many complaints from readers who find difficulty in getting their copy of the GEM. So I must again advise all my friends to avoid this disappointment by ordering their copy well in advance.

OUR GRAND COMPETITION!

Our great new competition, full particulars of which will be found on page 18 of this issue, is attracting a lot of attention, I hear. The first prize of

TEN SHILLINGS EVERY WEEK FOR A YEAR!

is naturally the principal attraction, but a large number of other prizes will be given in addition to this. Evidently, too, a great number of my chums find it most interesting and amusing—apart from the chance of winning a splendid prize—to work out the solutions of the Puzzle Pictures as they appear every week. Now that the evenings are growing longer many an amusing, and, very likely, highly profitable hour may be spent at home puzzling over the latest GEM Competition.

NEWS FROM CARDIFF.

An interesting letter is to hand from Cardiff, where the British Association held its meetings this year. The writer says that a statement in the GEM about Liverpool having the most readers of the paper is inaccurate. Cardiff stands first.

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It is next door to impossible to get a copy on the day of publication unless it is ordered. The newsgagents sell out at once. I hope to hear from this reader again.

FOOTBALL.

Players wanted, 14-16, any positions; E. Tomlin, 17, Mimosa Street, Fulham Road, Fulham, S.W. 6. Blundell Rovers, 17-18, want away matches; Ted Williams, 48, Blundell Street, Caledonian Road, N. 7. Salisbury United, age 17, home and away matches, medium, Saturdays only; H. Phillips, 13, Lynton Road,

Kilburn, N.W. 6. Woodlands F.C. have a few vacancies, 15-18; F. Morris, 17, Raleigh Street, Islington, N. 1.

MUSIC AND PHOTOGRAPHY.

Alex. McKenny, 26, Findlay Street, Glasgow, is keenly interested in all the stories, also in music and the camera, and he would like to get in touch with readers similarly inclined.

GETTING ON.

Of course, this is not merely getting money. It is a lot better. The chap is getting on who does well with his job,

then turns to after hours and carries on at home, looking after the garden, mending the furniture, or performing any of the other odd jobs which are waiting for us all. Work is the real capital of this old country as of others. Anybody can turn his work into a gilt-edged security if he has a mind to do so.

Your Editor



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