

SCHOOL HOUSE AGAINST NEW HOUSE!

The

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LIBRARY

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Every Wednesday.

October 8th, 1921.



THE START OF THE GREAT SCHOOL BATTLE!
(Figgin & Co. v. Tom Merry & Co.)

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

Of course, a great number of my readers overseas have not yet seen the "St. Jim's News." When they do see the clever little supplement, they will find many of their questions answered. In scores of letters I find the predominating wish is to have more information about St. Jim's, the old buildings, etc., but, more especially, concerning the characters, their unofficial interests, along with fresh sidelights on their tempers. But there is a lot more than this. The charm of the "Gem" is that every week you find yourself amongst old friends. If you're trying a new comic stunt, without knowing it is funny, "Skimmay" sitting at his desk writing about "isms." Monty Lowther rolling off puns, some ancient, some as fresh as the morning, and Tom Merry keeping order. The St. Jim's crowd is

a pretty decent crowd, not even excepting Towser, for Herries' dog means well. If he does worry Mr. Ratcliff that is Ratty's own fault.

There was a letter this week from a reader of fourteen years' standing; he is only twenty now, and he means to keep it up, so you see the fine old paper appeals to readers of all ages; another asking whether the stories are true. True to life they are. Somebody else is looking ahead, and asks for a double number at Christmas. Well, his wish will be granted. More news of this great event later. It seems ungrateful to turn away from all the subjects hinted at by far-seeing correspondents, and speak of our weekly programme, but it is really just as well to deal with the business in hand, and the present is our main affair, after all.

There never was a time when the fascinating yarns of St. Jim's were

followed more closely. They "got there." Gussy reuses more interest than ever he did, so do George Figgins & Co., and the same with Blake and the others. If Cardew drops out for a week or two there is trouble, and I receive letters written in vexation of spirit, asking me whether I have forgotten Cardew's action in the story, "The Heart of a Hero," and the "St. Jim's Swimmers," and why such a grand character is allowed to stand aside? Grundy's popularity is well known, but never better than when the mighty George Alfred is eclipsed for a time.

Next week there will be another splendid story dealing with the School House and New House battle, and the first instalment of our great adventure serial, "The Valley of Surprise." Get the "Gem" early. There will be a record demand for this issue.

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWER TO READER.

ARCHIE GILLIES (Strathaven).—Herbert Skimpole collects birds' eggs, but does not meet with much success, because as he obtains fresh supplies, George Gore smashes them for him. I cannot

provide you with the name and address of any of my readers who collect eggs at present. Tom Merry plays centre-forward, or outside-right at footer. He is a clever batsman at cricket, but excels himself at wicket-keeping. Kit Wildrake collects anything from a stray lion to a cheery fag, with his lasso, while the most successful things Skimpole has been known to collect are thick ears. Aubrey Racke is the richest boy in the Shell;

Lumley-Lumley, Harry Hammond, and Cardew in the Fourth. Glyn is not a day boy like Brooke, because Glyn's people pay full fees for him to board and lodge at the college. Also, because his father's residence, near St. Jim's, is only occupied at certain months in the year. Brooke's people only pay for tuition. Your idea of mounting our art plates in an album is top-hole.

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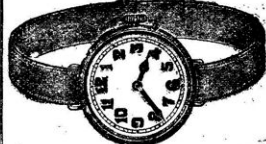
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FIGGINS on the WARPATH

A Grand Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Very Mysterious.

"MASTER D'ARCY?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

The youth who addressed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a tattered little urchin of about ten. But Arthur Augustus might have been speaking to the heir of a dukedom to judge by the gracious politeness of his reply.

He stopped, and bestowed a benevolent smile upon the tattered youth. Blake and Herries and Digby stopped also. The four Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's were taking a little stroll out of the gates before tea, when the tattered youth emerged from a hedge and intercepted them.

"You Master D'Arcy?" asked the lad, eyeing the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yaas."

"I've got a letter for you, then. I've been told to 'and it to you into your own 'ands."

"All wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "You can hand it ovah."

Arthur Augustus extended a slim and delicate hand for the letter, which the tattered youth produced from inside a coat about eleven sizes too large for him.

Blake & Co. looked on rather curiously.

It was rather unusual for a letter to be delivered to a St. Jim's junior in this way, and they were a little surprised.

"Any ansawah, my boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, as he took the letter.

"Not that I knows on, sir."

And the tattered lad, touching his cap, disappeared through the hedge again, leaving Arthur Augustus with the letter in his hand, and his chums regarding him inquiringly.

"Well, what the thump does that mean?" inquired Jack Blake. "Who's sending you giddy, mysterious letters in this way, Gussy?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I weally do not know, Blake."

"You don't know who's sent you that letter?" demanded Herries.

"I haven't an ideah, deah boy."

"Jolly queer!" said Digby.

"Yaas, it stwikes me as wathah queeah," assented Arthur Augustus.

"It's more than rather queer—it's thumping queer!" said Blake. "Racke of the Shell has little notes sometimes from the bookie at the Green Man—"

"Bai Jove! I twust you do not suppose that I should weceive a note from a bookmakah, Blake?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Well, it's jolly odd! Let's see what's in it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Open it, fathead!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus was feeling in his waistcoat-pocket.

"I seem to have left my penknife indoors," he remarked.

"Can't you stick you thumb into the envelope?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I have novah opened an envelope by stick-in' my thumb into it, and I should not like to begin now," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps one of you fellows could lend me a penknife?"

Jack Blake grunted; but he produced a penknife, and Arthur Augustus carefully slit open the envelope.

The letter he drew from it was written on pink paper, and there was a delicate scent to it.

Arthur Augustus unfolded the letter, and glanced at it, whilst his chums watched him in great curiosity.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well?" demanded three voices in unison. "Pway don't wowwy deah boys. I haven't wead the lettah yet."

Arthur Augustus proceeded to read the letter. Blake and Herries and Digby watched him in growing astonishment.

There were varying expressions upon the noble countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he perused the letter, and not one of them escaped the watching eyes of his chums.

He looked astonished first—then keenly interested—then astonished again—then he smiled—and then—amazing to relate—he blushed—and then he smiled and blushed simultaneously.

"Bai Jove!" he said finally.

"Read it out," said the amazed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's not a secret, is it?" asked Digby.

"Not exactly a secret, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cautiously. "But if you fellows will excuse me, I would wathah not wead this lettah aloud."

"And supposing we won't excuse you?" inquired Blake.

"Then I would wathah not wead it out, all the same, deah boy."

"Look here—"

"Bai Jove! It's close on tea-time!" said Arthur Augustus, glancing at his famous gold ticker. "Let's huvway in, deah boys."

"What's the hurry, all of a sudden?"

"Well, I have to go out aftah tea, you know."

"I don't know," said Blake. "And you can't go out after tea, as it will be dark and the gates will be locked."

"I shall finish wathah early, Blake."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Huvway up, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus started for the school gates at quite an unusually rapid pace. Before following him, Blake & Co. stared at one another in blank surprise.

"What the thump does all that mean?" demanded Blake.

"Has somebody made an appointment with the ass in that letter?"

"Looks like it," grunted Herries.

"Then why can't he say so?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"May, as well go in to tea," remarked Dig sagely. "I'm hungry."

Blake & Co., considerably mystified, followed their noble chum in at the gates. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was already striding across towards the School House at a great rate.

Figgins & Co., the cheery trio of the New House, were lounging about the gateway, and Blake noticed that they were looking after Gussy, with grinning faces.

"Hallo, what's the merry joke?" asked Blake, stopping.

George Figgins started a little, and looked round at him. Fatty Wynn and Kerr became grave at once.

"Joke!" repeated Figgins.

"Yes. What were you grinning like a Cheshire cat for?" asked Blake, staring at the New House juniors suspiciously.

"Thinking of the way you played footer in the last House match, old chap," answered Figgins affably.

"You cheeky ass!"

"Same to you, old bean, and many of 'em!" said Figgins cheerily.

"Never mind these New House bounders," grunted Herries. "Let's get in to tea."

The School House juniors hurried on towards their House, and Figgins & Co. grinned again, and from grinning they proceeded to chuckling, and from chuckling they burst into a yell of laughter. Evidently Figgins & Co. were in possession of

some excellent joke, which they had not seen fit to impart to the School House fellows. Jack Blake glanced back from the School House, and observed the trio in a state of great merriment.

"Those New House rotters have got something on," said Blake morosely. "Something up against the School House, I'll bet my hat!"

"Oh, let 'em rip!" said Herries. "I'm hungry!"

And the chums of the Fourth proceeded to Study No. 6, in the wake of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in quest of tea.

CHAPTER 2.

Thanks from Figgins.

"TRY Study No. 6!" suggested Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry and Manners nodded thoughtfully.

The three Shell fellows were looking very serious-looking like fellows, in fact, who had a rather deep problem to solve.

They had! There was a dearth of cash in Study No. 10 in the Shell. And it was tea-time.

Shortness of cash and tea-time coming together came as an unhappy coincidence.

After football practice the Terrible Three were very hungry, and also late for tea in Hall, another unhappy coincidence.

They had looked in at Kangaroo's study, but Kangy was finished, and his supplies were finished, too. They had dropped in on Talbot, but Talbot was out, and Gore was out also; and Skimpole, though beaming with good-humour and hospitality, had nothing to offer but some remarks upon the subject of evolution and the origin of species, culled from the latest work of his favourite author, Professor Balmy-crumpet. So the Terrible Three sat Skimpole on the hearth-rug, and wedged the professor's volume down the back of his neck, and retired from the study, hungrier than when they had entered it, and leaving Skimpole in a state of great astonishment.

Then they looked in on Grundy; but George Alfred Grundy greeted them with the question as to whether he was to be played in the forthcoming football match with Rookwood; and Tom Merry's reply in the negative completely knocked on the head any prospect of getting asked to tea in Grundy's study. The Terrible Three were, in fact, followed by a stream of eloquence from Grundy as they retreated.

And then Monty Lowther suggested Study No. 6 in the Fourth, a celebrated apartment in which the Terrible Three had frequently enjoyed hospitality. And Tom and Manners assented.

"Any port in a storm," said Tom Merry. "If only they haven't had tea yet—"

"I think they went out of gates," said Lowther. "Anyhow, let's try. If we can't raise a tea there we shall have to hunt up your minor, Manners, and sponge on the Third."

Manners made a grimace.

"I think I'd rather miss tea," he said. "The feeds in the Third Form are a bit worse than famine, as a rule. Let's try Blake's study."

The Shell fellows hurried along to the Fourth-Form passage, and looked in at the door of Study No. 6, which was half-open.

The study had only one occupant just then.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. That noble youth was standing before the looking-glass, carefully arranging a beautiful tie. There were no signs of tea in the study.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Hallo, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus, without turning his head. He was evidently deeply concerned with the set of that necktie.

"Had tea?"

"Not yet, Tom Merry. How do you like this tie?"

Arthur Augustus turned round from the glass now.

"Ripping!" said Tom Merry. "Top-hole, in fact. Are you going to have tea in the study?"

"Yaas; I think so. Would you wear a diamond pin or a plain gold one with this tie, Tom Merwuy?"

"Both, old chap! Are you going to ask three hungry and stony deserving youths to tea?"

"Bai Jove! Impossible!"

"Impossible to ask us to tea?"

"No, no; impossible to wear both tie-pins at once, dear boy. Do you think the diamond looks all right on this pale bronzed green?"

"Both the tie! We want tea."

"Pewwaps the plain gold one would be bettah," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pewwaps she would think the othah one wathah conspicuous."

"She!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"I—I mean—"

"Are you going down to the bunshop?" queried Manners.

"Give my kindest regards to Miss Bunn."

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"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Hallo, here's the rest of the family!" said Tom Merry, as Blake and Herries and Digby came along the passage.

"Blake, old infant—"

"Hallo, what do you Shell-fish want?" inquired Blake.

"Tea!" said Manners.

"Hoarken unto our tale of woe!" said Monty Lowther.

"No grub, no tea, no tin—"

"You've come to the right shop!" said Blake hospitably.

"We've got a tin of salmon—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And two tins of sardines—"

"Bravo!"

"And a three-pound cake—"

"Hurrah!"

"And a bag of apples, and some tarts—"

"Come to my arms, beamish boy!" sobbed Monty Lowther.

"And some more, too," said Blake, with great satisfaction.

"Three kinds of jam—"

"And marmalade—"

"And a pot of jelly!" said Digby.

"Do I sleep, do I dream, or are visions about?" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"Corn in Egypt, in the leanest of lean years! Blake, old son, I always loved you as a long-lost brother! Have you been raiding the stores at Wayland, or burgling the larder?"

"I've had a remittance," explained Blake. "We've been on rather short commons, and now we're spreading ourselves a bit."

"A bit!" said Manners. "A lot, I should say! We'll help you spread!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I was going to ask you chaps!" chuckled Blake. "Gussy, stop fiddling with that silly decktie and help lay the table!"

"Weally, Blake—"

The Terrible Three beamed with satisfaction. They had come along to Study No. 6 as a last resource, and behold, they had found it a land flowing with milk and honey! Many a time they had had their little rows with Blake & Co., but now they beamed with affectionate regard.

"Never mind Gussy!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'll lay the table."

"We'll help!" said Manners. "Blake, old infant, you're a giddy Trojan! I tell you what I'll do, Blake—I'll take your photograph when I get some new films for my camera, and I'll do my very best to make it good-looking."

"What?"

"I—I mean, I'll do full justice to your good looks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly owl!"

"Hallo!" roared Herries, in a voice that rang through the study and the passage outside as he threw open the door of the cupboard. "Hallo! Why—what—where's the grub?"

"The grub?" repeated Dig.

"It's not here!"

"What?" roared Blake.

"What?" gasped the Terrible Three.

Blake rushed across to the cupboard. The last time he had looked into it he had seen a handsome stack of supplies for an uncommon spread. And now—

Salmon and sardines, cake and tarts, three kinds of jam, all were gone—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream! The cupboard in Study No. 6, like the celebrated one that belonged to Mrs. Hubbard, was bare!

And in the place of the tuck, for which six hungry pairs of eyes searched in vain lay a half-sheet of impot-paper, with a message scrawled on it:

"MANY THANKS!"

(Signed) G. FIGGINS."

CHAPTER 3.

Catching Tartars.

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at that brief message from Figgins of the New House—they looked at it, and they looked at one another.

"Figgins!" stuttered Blake.

"Fuf-fuf-Figgins!" gasped Herries.

"It's a House raid!" groaned Digby. "The grub's gone! Every dashed crumb! Why, those cheeky New House rotters—"

"Sold!" said Monty Lowther, with a deep groan.

"Oh dear!"

"Why, I—I'll scalp 'em!" roared Blake. "They— they must have kept an eye on us at the tuckshop, and— and bunked in here after we put the stuff in; that's why they were chortling at the gate!"

"That's why!" said Herries dismally.

"We're going to get it back!" bawled Digby.

Blake gave a snort.

"Get back grub from Fatty Wynn!" he snapped. "Get butter out of a dog's throat! Do you think Fatty's left a dashed crumb of it by this time!"

"The—the fat villain—"

"Dash it all, even Fatty can't have negotiated such a cargo yet!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's cut over to the New House and see! If they've scoffed the tuck we can scalp them, anyhow."

"Yes, rather!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll make 'em sit up, anyhow."

"An hungry!" mumbled Dig.

"Hungry isn't the word!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm famished! I could almost eat Baggy Trimble! Let's go over and mop up the earth with those New House bounders, anyhow, and see if there's anything left."

"Come on, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus was carefully parting his hair before the glass. He glanced round.

"Did you address me, Blake?"

"Yes. We're going to raid the New House."

"Weally, you know—"

"All hands on deck!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Join up, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head.

"I am afraid—" he began.

"Afraid!" roared Herries. "Afraid of the New House bounders?"

"I am afraid—"

"Yah! Funk!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Come on, you silly ass!"

"I am afraid I cannot join in a waid at pwsent," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "It would wumple my clobbah, you know. Leave it till latah, deah boys."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're going now, and you can back out if you like, you silly image!" said Blake, crushingly.

"I refuse to be called an image, Blake. And I stwongly advise you not to go until I am weady to come with you; you are bound to come a cwopphal if I am not with you."

"Come along with us!" bawled Herries.

"Undah the circe, deah boy, it is impos. I have been dwessin' myself vewy carefully, and you see—"

"Bump him!" snorted Herries.

"Bai Jove! Hands off, you uttah asses!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "If you wumple my clothes—yawwoooooh!"

The chums of the School House were not much concerned about Gussy's elegant clobber just then. They collared the swell of St. Jim's and bumped him on the hearthrug. Then they rushed out of the study, leaving Arthur Augustus on the rug gasping for breath.

"Gwoogh! You frightful wuffians! Oh cwwubs! I will give you a fearful thwashin' all wound!" roared Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

But Tom Merry & Co. were already out of hearing. Arthur Augustus picked himself up and carefully dusted and brushed his elegant "baga." Then he gave the final touches to his tie, his collar, his waistcoat, and his cuffs, and walked elegantly out of the study.

Meanwhile, Tome Merry & Co. were speeding down the staircase, and they came out into the quadrangle with a rush.

There was great wrath among the School House heroes. True, they had often raided the New House, and many a time they had bagged a "spread" from their old rivals. But that did not alter the fact that Figgins & Co. had to be dealt with severely for their unexampled nerve in raiding Study No. 6. And the juniors had a faint hope, too, of recapturing at least a portion of the raided feed.

There was no sign of Figgins & Co. in the quadrangle; they had gone into the New House. And the six School House juniors sprinted across to the New House to look for them.

An open raid in the enemy's country like this was rather a risky enterprise, for in their own House Figgins & Co.

had unlimited reinforcements close at hand. But the School-House fellows were too exasperated to think much about that. And they hoped, too, to take Figgins & Co. by surprise with a sudden onslaught.

They crowded into the New House, and found no one to gainsay them, and hurried up the stairs. They were reckless, but they were rather anxious not to meet Mr. Ratcliff, the House-master, or any of the New House prefects. With great relief, they found themselves in the Fourth-Form passage, and they stopped at Figgy's door.

"They're not expecting us, anyhow!" whispered Tom Merry. "Stand ready, you chaps! Rush in as soon as I open the door!"

"You bet!"

The captain of the Shell threw the study door open suddenly, and the six School-House juniors rushed in.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Blake.

Then there was a sudden surprise. Figgins & Co. were in the study; and so were Redfern and Owen, Koumi Rao and Pratt and Digges of the Fourth, and French and Thompson and Jimson of the Shell. Figgins & Co. had been expecting that visit, after all, and they had prepared for it. The study was fairly crammed with New House juniors; and the School-House fellows rushed right into the trap.

"Here they are!" roared Figgins.

"Collar 'em!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The scene that followed in Figgy's study was wild and whirling. The School House invaders put up a terrific fight. But the odds were two to one, and they were hopelessly outnumbered. For fully five minutes the study resembled a Bolshevik conference. And then, one by one, whizzing juniors began to leave by the doorway—hurled out on their necks. Blake was the first to land, then came Tom Merry, then Manners, and they rolled over one another in the passage. Lowther joined them on the floor, and then Herries, and last of all, Robert Arthur Digby, fighting gallantly to the last, with his nose streaming red, and his collar streaming out of the back of his neck. Six dusty, dishevelled and disordered youths rolled breathlessly on the floor; and from Figgy's study came a shout of triumph and merriment.

"Exit the School House!" chuckled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



The swell of the School House struggled frantically, spluttering inside the sack; but he struggled in vain. A faint sound came to his ears through the sack, which was suspiciously like a chuckle. "Swear on your knees never to see Gwendoline again, or you die the death of a dog," said a deep bass voice.

"Kick 'em down the stairs!" shouted Pratt.

"Give 'em some more!"

"Hurray! Get on with it!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not wait for any more. They had awakened a hornet's nest, and they realised that they had had enough. A dozen more New House juniors were gathering in the passage, while Figgins & Co. poured out of the study after the defeated invaders.

"Hook it!" gasped Tom.

There was clearly nothing else to be done. Six dishevelled youths scuttled down the stairs, followed by howls of laughter and catcalls and hoots. And more laughter greeted the unhappy six when they escaped into the quadrangle and sadly sought the shelter of their own House.

"Looks to me like a New House win!" chuckled George Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rather fancy we're cock-house of St. Jim's!" chortled Fatty Wynn. "And what a spread it was, too! So kind of them to stand it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr looked at his watch.

"Time we were off!" he remarked. "We shall miss our appointment if we don't get a move on—and we mustn't disappoint Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co., after hastily removing the traces of that exciting scrap, strolled out of the New House and out of the gates, while Tom Merry & Co., dusty and breathless, limped into Study No. 6 in the School House and gasped for breath, and grunted, and groaned, and for quite a considerable time looked and felt as if they found life not quite worth living.

CHAPTER 4.

The Letter from Gwendoline!

"O H dear!"
"Oooooooh!"
"Groooh!"
"Ow! wow!"

The remarks in Study No. 6 were perhaps not very intelligible, but they were expressive. It was a good half-hour before the hapless juniors began to feel that an earthly existence was not, after all, a delusion and a snare.

But that time they were feeling better, and Tom Merry was even able to grin, rather ruefully, over the disaster.

"After all, we fairly asked for it!" said the captain of the Shell, philosophically. "Of course, Figgy knew well enough that we should be after his scalp for bagging our feed."

"And he was all ready for us!" said Blake dismally.

"Oh dear! I want a new nose! Ow!"

"Wow!" said Herries feelingly.

"And that cheeky blighter Gussy got clear of it all!" exclaimed Digby indignantly. "Gussy ought to have been with us."

"He wouldn't have been any good," groaned Manners.

"Still, he ought to have backed up," said Blake warmly.

"Like his thumping cheek to have an engagement out of doors when the study is on a raid! I'll jolly well snatch him baldheaded when he comes in!"

"Hallo! What's this?" said Herries suddenly.

He stooped and picked up a pink sheet of note-paper from the hearthrug. There was a faint and delicate scent to it, and it was written on in a very small, feminine-looking hand.

"Somebody been dropping billets-doux about your study, Blake," said Monty Lowther.

Blake glanced at it.

"Can't belong here," he said. "Oh—ah—yes— Why, that must be the note that was handed to Gussy this afternoon! It was pink. He's dropped it in the study, the ass."

"When we bumped him, I fancy," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"It's from a lady, I should say," chortled Monty Lowther. "Has Gussy been falling in love again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The thought of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in love had a cheering effect on the juniors. Arthur Augustus had been in love before, and more than once; and his comrades had always found him exhilarating at such times. George Herries was staring blankly at the note.

"This is a catch!" he said.

"A what?" asked Tom.

"Somebody's pulling Gussy's leg," said Herries with conviction. "A girl wouldn't write this sort."

"Gussy was born to have his leg pulled," remarked Blake.

"May be a New House catch. Let's look!"

Blake took the pink note and started reading it out. It began:

"Dear Loved One."

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"Oh, my only hat!" interrupted Tom Merry.

Blake paused a moment.

"A fellow can't read another fellow's letter," he said. "But this must be a spoof—and we're bound to look after Gussy. He's not responsible for his actions, you know. If anybody is pulling his silly old leg, it's up to his pals to see that he comes to no harm. You chaps agree?"

"Yes, rather!" said Digby.

And the Terrible Three nodded assent. It was agreed on all hands that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would not have been grateful for their kindness in this respect; but that could not be helped. Jack Blake restarted on the letter, and read it out to the finish. It was really a very interesting letter.

"Dear Loved One,—Am I bold in thus addressing you? If I am, forgive me! I have seen you—but never yet have we spoken! O why, why did my eyes ever fall upon your fatal beauty? Grant me one word—one word only! Every day at five o'clock I will wait by the old oak in the School Coppice, and hope that you will come. Only one word—one glance! That is all that is asked by your unhappy admirer. Do not breathe a word of this."

"GWENDOLINE."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Who the merry dickens is Gwendoline?"

Blake snorted.

"New name for a New House boulder, I imagine," he answered. "That rubbish can't be serious. It looks like a girl's handwriting, but Kerr of the Fourth can put in any fist he likes in a letter. It's a spoof, of course; and that howling ass Gussy has swallowed it!"

"And that's where he's gone!" exclaimed Tom.

"You bet!"

"That's why he was so particular with his necktie," gasped Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The awful ass—"

"That's why he wouldn't show us the letter!" snorted Herries. "And that's why Figgins & Co. were chucking at the gate—it wasn't on account of bagging our spread. They'd seen that kid hand the note to Gussy, and knew that he was hooked!"

Jack Blake frowned deeply.

That touching epistle from Gwendoline might impose upon the simple and unsuspicious mind of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but it was not likely to impose upon the other fellows in Study No. 6.

"Queer thing that any infant of six could pull Gussy's leg, and not half try!" said Blake in deep disgust. "If I'd got a letter like this—"

"Or I—"

"growled Herries.

"You wouldn't be likely to," chuckled Tom Merry. "It's only Gussy who's likely to get this kind of merry epistle. And he's actually gone to keep the appointment."

"Kept it before this!" said Digby.

"I wonder what's happened to him."

"The thumping ass!" It's a New House stunt, of course—that's why they've asked him to keep it dark. They knew we'd smell a rat fast enough."

"Yes, rather!"

Blake jumped up.

"He's not back yet," he said. "Let's hike along to the coppice, and see what's happened to the howling ass. He's our chum, though he's a born idiot. Come on!"

"What about tea?" asked Dig.

"Oh, blow tea!"

"But I'm hungry—"

"Rats!"

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

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Blake, and he led the way from the study, and Dig and Herries followed him. The Terrible Three exchanged glances. They were hungry—quite hungry—in fact, seriously hungry. But they felt that it was up to them.

"Come on!" said Tom.

And the Shell fellows followed the Fourth-Formers from the School House. In a few minutes they were speeding down the lane to the coppice, wondering very much what they would discover there, but quite certain that it would not be Gwendoline!

CHAPTER 5.

Meeting Gwendoline!

"B Al Jove! Not heat yet!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy murmured the words as he glanced round him in the shady coppice.

The school coppice, as it was called, was about ten minutes' walk from the gates of St. Jim's. It was a quiet and secluded spot, and on summer evenings was sometimes haunted by pairs of lovers from the village; and occasionally it was visited by fellows who had a fight on. On this

afternoon in late autumn it was very shady and dusky and quiet. Arthur Augustus stopped under the old oak, and smiled as he looked round in search of Gwendoline.

A request from a lady would have dragged Arthur Augustus anywhere. And the fact that the lady was smitten by his fatal beauty was, of course, an additional incentive in this case. The owner of fatal beauty was bound to be kind and considerate to its hapless victims.

Arthur Augustus was prepared to be very kind to Gwendoline, and to soothe the lovelorn young lady to the utmost of his power.

That the pink, scented note was not genuine was a suspicion that had not even occurred to his noble mind. Gwendoline had asked him to breathe no word—and he had breathed no word. He had only arrayed himself in his most killing attire, and arrived early to meet Gwendoline.

But Gwendoline wasn't there. Arthur Augustus waited five minutes—ten minutes—listening anxiously for a footstep in the coppice. But there was no footstep.

"Wemarkable!" murmured D'Arcy, at last. He could not help wondering what was detaining the lady. Gwendoline only wanted one word—one glance—according to the statement in the pink letter, and she had already wasted time enough for no end of words and glances.

But Arthur Augustus did not think of departing. It was up to him to see Gwendoline through. At least, he felt that he was bound to remain upon the spot, and give Gwendoline a chance—until the school gates were locked. He was not quite sure whether chivalry demanded that he should miss lock-up and cut call-over. He was sure, however, that Mr. Raiton, his Housemaster, would not regard Gwendoline as a sufficient reason for missing call-over; and he sincerely hoped that Gwendoline would turn up in time to let him return to St. Jim's before his name was called from the roll.

He looked at his watch several times, and paced up and down under the big oak. Then he leaned against the gnarled old trunk and waited. It occurred to him that perhaps he had mistaken the time of the appointment, and he felt in his pocket for the letter. It was not there!

"Bai Jove! I must have dropped it in the studay!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "How vevy wotten! But I am almost suah of the time! I will give the deah young thing until lock-up, anyhow."

And he waited; but the dear young thing did not appear.

But suddenly, from behind the old oak upon which the swell of St. Jim's was leaning, a large open sack came swooping—so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that it was down over Gussy's head before he knew what was happening. Some unseen person had crept silently behind the oak, and reached round it, and bagged the unsuspecting Gussy—bagged him completely! The sack went down over his shoulders, and Gussy's noble head and silk hat were inside it; and Gussy gasped and spluttered in wild surprise.

"Gwooooh! Oh, bai Jove! What feahful wottah— Gwooooh!"

He clutched at the sack to throw it off. But two pairs of hands were upon him the next second, and he was held on either side; and a third pair of hands held the sack, and drew it down more tightly over him. The swell of the School House struggled frantically, spluttering inside the sack; but he struggled in vain.

"Welease me! Gwooooh! Oh cwumbs! Yawwooh!"

There was no sound from the kidnappers—in words, at least. Gussy could only hear an occasional panting breath. His arms were held, as if in a vice, down to his sides, and the sack was pulled lower, till the neck of it was round his waist. Then a rope was run round it and knotted, and Gussy was a helpless prisoner, with his arms inside the sack, and his silk hat crunched down uncomfortably over his eyes.

"Gwooooh!"

He was released now, and he staggered wildly away from the tree. He could see nothing; the sack shut out all view. He strove to drive his elbows through it, careless now of his nobby jacket; but he strove in vain; the sack was too strong for him.

"You feahful wuffians!" Arthur Augustus' voice came muffled from the

sack. "Welease me! I will give you a feahful thwashin' for this! Gwooooh! I am neahly suffocat'n! Oh deah! Who are you, you awful wottahs!"

"Silence!" came a deep bass voice.

"Wats! I wefuse to be silent!"

"Silence! What are you doing here, in this haunted grove?" came the deep voice.

"Wubbish! It is not a haunted grove. I am heah to meet somebody!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I ordah you to welease me at once, you awful beasts!"

"Are you hero to meet Gwendoline?"

"Yaas, you wottah!"

"Aha! You are in the hands of your rival!" said the deep voice, deeper than ever now. "Base catiff—"

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to be chawactewised as a catiff!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I do not know what it is, but I wefuse to allow you to call me anythin' of the kind. I wegard you as a wank outsidah!"

A faint sound came to his ears through the sack, which was suspiciously like a chuckle. But the deep bass voice went on at once:

"Swear on your knees never to see Gwendoline again, or you die the death of a dog!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"To your knees!"

"Wats!"

"Put him on his knees, my trusty minions!"

"Bai Jove! Mind my twousahs!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as he was bumped down on his knees in the grass.

Again there was a sound like a chuckle.

"Now swear—"

"Wats!"

"Prick him with your dagger, Giorgio!"

"Yawwooh!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as something sharp touched his leg. It felt more like a pin than a dagger; but it was undoubtedly sharp.

"Listen, base catiff!" said the deep voice. "Gwendoline shall be mine! Already she lies a captive in the moated grange. Swear never to attempt her rescue!"

"I wefuse—"

"Or this my trusty dagger shall be deep imbrued in thy heart's blood!" hissed the unknown.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Swear—"

"Help!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Wescue! Help!"



Three juniors had to lean on the door of the crowded study for support while they supped; and there were three started ejaculations as it was suddenly pushed open from outside. A cup of coffee descended on the floor with a crash—the cup reaching the floor, and the coffee being distributed chiefly over waistcoats and trousers. "I say you chaps— Trimble blinked in. "Get out!" shrieked Levison.

There was a sound of footsteps in the coppice, and a voice called. Even through the sack Gussy recognised Blake's voice.

"Gussy—"

"This way!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Help! Wescue!"

"My hat! Hook it!"

Arthur Augustus heard the sounds of his persecutors fleeing through the coppice, in one direction, while footsteps approached from the other. He knew that his chums were at hand, and he stumbled to meet them, and bumped into a tree and rolled over, with a muffled roar.

"Gwoogh! Help! Wescue! This way, deah boys! Wescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Here he is!"

"Gussy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue—"

The rope was cut, and the sack jerked from Gussy's head. He sat up dazedly, and a battered copper rolled in the grass. Six School House juniors were round him, laughing; but of his persecutors no trace was to be seen. They had vanished through the coppice.

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah!" yelled Arthur Augustus indignantly.

But Tom Merry & Co. evidently thought that it was. They roared and yelled, till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"Where's Gwendoline?" roared Blake. "Did Gwen bundle you up in that sack, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry & Co. roared again.

CHAPTER 6.

Nice for Arthur Augustus!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY scrambled to his feet. He was dusty from the dusty interior of the old sack, and his natty "clobber" was in rather a sad state.

But for once Arthur Augustus did not think of that. Even his elegant clobber took a second place to the peril of Gwendoline. He groped for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and scanned his comrades with great indignation.

"You uttah asses—" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah, I tell you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been tweated outrageously—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A young lady is in feahful pewil—"

"Gwendoline?" sobbed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Tom Merry & Co.

"Pway let me explain!" gasped Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "I—I came here to—to—to—"

"To meet Gwen!" sobbed Blake. "We know all about it, old top; we picked up Gwen's letter in the study—"

"Bai Jove! You had no right to look at it, Blake. How-eh, I will not tweat you severely on that account, as it has led you to come to the wescue. I was seized here by three feahful wuffians armed with dagga—"

"Daggers! Oh, my hat!"

"They are keepin' Gwendoline a pwisonah—"

"Eh!"

"Where?" gasped Tom Merry.

"In the moated gwange—"

"The which?" yelled Monty Lowther.

"The moated gwange—a moated gwange somewhah," said Arthur Augustus. "They wanted me to sweah not to attempt her wescue. Of course, I wescued to do anythin' of the sort. I am goin' to wescue her or pewish in the attempt!"

"Rescue whom?" shrieked Blake.

"Gwendoline, of course."

Blake threw himself into the grass, and kicked up his heels, almost in hysterics. Tom Merry leaned against the old oak and sobbed.

"I fail to see any weason whatevah for this wibald mewm-wit!" shouted Arthur Augustus hoily. "A young lady is in feahful pewil. I call on you to wally wound to the wescue. Those wuffians—"

"What ruffians?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Those feahful wuffians you wescued me fwom! Did you see anythin' of them befoah they cleahed?"

"Oh dear!" sobbed Tom Merry. "We saw them!"

"What were they like?" asked Arthur Augustus eagerly. "We are bound to twack them down, deah boys, and wescue Gwendoline from the dauncen in the moated gwange!"

"Like?" bebbled Blake. "Oh dear! They were remarkable like Figgins & Co. of the New House!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't you catch on, you ass?" roared Herries. "Those fellows who put you in the sack were Figgins & Co.!"

"Wubbish!"

"Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn!" spluttered Tom Merry. "They got away before we could collar them, but we saw them plainly enough!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the School House juniors. His celebrated monocle dropped from his eyes in his amazement.

"Figgins & Co.!" he gasped at last.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Impos!" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "One of them pwicked me with a dagga—"

"A pin, more likely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but they said Gwendoline was a pwisonah in a moated gwange!" babbled Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you—are you quite suah that—that they were Figgins & Co. of the New House?" stammered D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha! Quite!"

"The awful wottahs! Then—then they must have been pullin' my leg!"

"Has that just dawned upon you?" asked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"The feahful wottahs! I will give them a feahful thwashin' all wound!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "I wegarad such a joke as bein' in the vewy worst of taste—especially as I was heah to meet a young lady, who has not yet awvived. Pewpaws you fellows had bettah wetcure from the scene."

"Eh?"

"You see, Miss Gwendoline would hardly care to see a crowd of fellows when she awwives!" explained Arthur Augustus.

Blake shrieked.

"You howling ass, there isn't any Gwendoline! It was one of the New House rotters wrote you that note, and tipped a kid to hand it to you. If you'd shown it to us, we'd have told you so at once!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus said "Wats!" but he said it half-heartedly. It was beginning to dawn upon his noble brain now that he had been spoofed, and that Gwendoline's right name was probably George Francis Kerr, of the Fourth Form and the New House of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

"You'll be the death of me yet, Gussy!" he said. "Come on, you fellows! There's just time to get in before lock-up!"

"But—but weally—" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Come on, ass!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus cast a last look round the coppice. Perhaps he still hoped against hope that the letter had been genuine, and that Gwendoline would come tripping along to keep the appointment. But there was no sign of her, and the swell of St. Jim's followed his chums as they started for the school.

Tom Merry & Co. were chuckling all the way back; but Arthur Augustus did not chuckle. The humour of the affair seemed to be absolutely lost on Gussy. His noble face was crimson, and it was growing more and more crimson every moment, as he realised more and more clearly how his aristocratic leg had been pulled by the sportive youths of the New House. The School House fellows had just time to get in before Taggles closed the gates, and they were still chuckling as they headed for the School House. On the steps of the School House D'Arcy minor of the Third was waiting, and he called to his major.

"Hallo, Gus!"

"Weally Wally—"

Figgins left a message for you ten minutes ago," said Wally, staring at his major. "What's the matter with your chivvy, Gus? You're as red as a turkey-cock."

"Wats!"

"Well, Figgins left a message," said Wally. "He says, if you want to see Gwendoline, you can call at the New House. Blessed if I understood what he was driving at; but he said that the message was important."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

Arthur Augustus did not reply to his minor, or even thank him for delivering George Figgins' important message. He hurried into the School House with a burning face, leaving Wally of the Third staring.

"What on earth's the matter with Gus, you fellows?" exclaimed the astonished Wally. "Who the thump's Gwendoline, anyhow?"

"Gwendoline, my dear youth," said Monty Lowther, "is like the celebrated Mrs. Harris, in Dickens—there ain't no such person."

And Tom Merry & Co. followed Gussy in, leaving D'Arcy minor very much puzzled. Arthur Augustus' face was still burning when he answered "Adsum" to his name at calling-over, and after call-over he hurried away to Study No. 6—

probably to hide his blushes. But he was soon followed there. For Tom Merry & Co. had missed their tea, and that raised the question of an early supper—the earlier the better; and the burning question to be solved now was, not even vengeance upon the New House, but where supper was to come from for seven famished School House juniors.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins Takes a Hand.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked exceedingly sheepish when the six juniors came into the study. But, to his great relief, they did not proceed to chip him on the subject of Gwendoline. For the moment Gwendoline was a back number.

"We can't wait till supper-time," said Tom Merry, as they came in. "I'm famished, for one—"

"Me, for two!" said Lowther.

"And we're all stony!" said Blake dismally. "Not that that makes much difference, as the tuckshop is closed now."

"Those New House brutes made a clean sweep while they were about it," remarked Herries, staring into the desolate study cupboard. "Not a giddy crumb left!"

Arthur Augustus looked up.

"I am wathah hungry," he remarked.

"We shall have to raid somebody," said Tom Merry. "What about rushing Grundy? He's generally got a lot of stuff in his study. He's a cheery ass. He wants to play footer against Greyfriars in the next match. Suppose we fine him a feed for six, as a punishment?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"All your fault, Gussy!" said the captain of the Shell. "We should have fixed up something before call-over, if you hadn't been mooning after Gwendoline!"

"Wats! I was going to make a suggestion—"

"Don't bother," said Blake. "What we want is supper!"

"I have an invitation to an early supper—"

"Oh, good! Can you pass it on to a chum?"

"It is like this, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been asked to a feed in Study No. 9—Levison, Clive, and Cardew, you know. I understand that Cardew has had a large hamper from Lord Weakness, and as he is a distant relation of mine, he has very kindly asked me to the feed. Levison asked me to bring a friend, if I liked, or a friend or two."

There was a general brightening of faces in Study No. 6. Cardew's handsome supplies from his wealthy grandfather were well known, and the thought of a large hamper of tuck made six hungry mouths water just then.

"A friend or two!" said Blake thoughtfully.

"Yas"

"Could that be stretched into meaning a friend or six?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"Any port in a storm," said Manners. "Gussy, you can trot along to Study No. 9, with your friend or two. I'm your friend. In fact, if you stand me a supper, I'm your friend for life."

"You can look on me as a long-lost brother," said Lowther. Arthur Augustus nodded.

"I think that pewpaws Levison & Co. will not expect seven chaps to drop in to suppah," he remarked. "But let's twy it on."

"Hear, hear!"

"It is a mattah for some tact and judgment," added Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I will drop in first with Blake, and mention that anothah chap or two will be comin'. Then you fellows can drop in one at a time. That will be bweakin' it gently."

"Good!"

And Arthur Augustus walked along to Study No. 9, in the Fourth, with Jack Blake. Study No. 9 had a rather festive appearance. Ralph Reckness Cardew, Sidney Clive, and Ernest Levison, were all there. The hamper was in the corner of the study, but most of the good things had been transferred from it to the table. Levison & Co. greeted the guests cheerfully and hospitably.

"I twust we are not too early, dear boys?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Not at all!" said Clive.

"Just in time," said Levison of the Fourth. "I'm expecting the other gues every minute!"

"The—other guests?" said Blake.

"Yes; my minor Frank's coming, and he's bringing his pals, Reggie Manners and Wally D'Arcy."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus and Blake could not help exchanging a glance. There were eight chairs in the study, most of which had evidently been borrowed for the occasion. But by the time Tom Merry & Co. arrived, a great many more would be needed. It had not occurred to Gussy's noble brain that probably there would be numerous other guests at the feed,

and his heart misgave him a little as he thought of Herries and Digby, and the Terrible Three.

"Anybody else comin', Levison?" he asked, rather faintly.

"Clive's got a guest—"

"I've asked Kit Wildrake, the Canadian chap," said Clive.

"Quite a little party!" remarked Cardew. "Hallo, here come the Third Form merchants!"

Levison minor and Reggie Manners and Wally came into the study. The three fags looked newly brushed and combed, in honour of the occasion. Joe Frayne of the Third could be seen lurking behind.

"Trot in, kids!" said Levison.

"Mind if we bring Frayne in?" asked Wally.

"Not at all!" said Study No. 9, with one voice and great politeness. And Joe Frayne came in grinning.

"We shall have to get some more chairs from somewhere," remarked Levison. "Cut along the passage, Clive, and see what you can bag."

"Right-ho!"

Clive left the study, and while he was gone, Tom Merry drifted in. Levison and Cardew looked at him. They were hospitable, and they liked Tom Merry. But they were beginning to feel that the resources of the study were going to be rather severely taxed.

"I asked Tom Mewwy, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "You mentioned that I might bring a friend or two."

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" said Cardew.

"Thanks!" said Tom.

Manners and Lowther glanced in at the doorway.

"Twot in, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus, a little faintly. "I asked these two chaps, Cardew, as you said I might bring—"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Co-come in, you fellows!"

Manners and Lowther came in. Sidney Clive returned with three chairs, and he seemed a little surprised at the addition that had taken place since his departure to the numbers of the supper-party. Levison made him a sign, and he departed in quest of more chairs.

Herries and Digby strolled into the study.

There wasn't much room in Study No. 9 by this time for strolling, as a matter of fact; it was more like wedging.

Arthur Augustus looked rather sheepish, and his voice faltered.

"I—I asked these fellows, Cardew—"

"Oh!"

"As you mentioned that I might bring a friend or two, you know—"

"Ah! Yes! Of course!"

Wildrake of the Fourth was the next in. When Sidney Clive returned with two more chairs, there was some difficulty in introducing the chairs into the study, and still there were not enough for the crowded visitors.

"Never mind the chairs," said Jack Blake. "I can sit on the fender, for one."

"I can sit on Gussy's knees," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Mind my twosahs!"

"We—we—we are awfully glad to see you all, of—of course!" gasped Levison. "I—I hope the grub will go round!"

A fat face blinked into the study doorway, and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth bestowed an ingratiating grin on Study No. 9.

"I hope I'm in time?" he remarked.

"Oh, my hat!" said Levison. "Did you ask Trimble, Gussy?"

"Certainly not! I should not be likely to ask Trimble!"

"Did you, Frank?"

"No jolly fear!" answered Levison minor.

"Get out, Trimble!" roared Levison of the Fourth.

"Look here, you know—" protested Baggy.

"Kick him out!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Baggy Trimble was promptly ejected. Every member of the supper-party felt that there were enough present, without Trimble. There was by this time a horrid doubt whether or not the "grub" would go round. With Trimble there, that doubt would have become a certainty; the grub wouldn't have gone round. So Trimble was ignominiously ejected into the passage, and the door was closed on him.

It was rather warm in the study now. There were three Shell fellows—eight of the Fourth, and four of the Third. Junior studies at St. Jim's were not cabined, cribbed, and confined by any means; but certainly they were not built to accommodate fifteen fellows at once. So far as numbers went, the No. 9 supper-party was a great success; but in other particulars there were, perhaps, some drawbacks.

But the numerous party played up manfully, and they handed things round to one another, and kept up a determined good-humour. Three juniors had to lean on the door for support while they supped; and there were three startled ejaculations as it was suddenly pushed open from outside. A cup of coffee descended to the floor with a crash—the cup

reaching the floor and the coffee being distributed chiefly over waistcoats and trousers.

"I say, you chaps—" Trimble blinked in.

"Get out!" shrieked Levison.

"I was going to tell you—"

"Squash him!"

"Figgins—"

Crash! A jam-tart flattened on Baggy Trimble's fat face, and he gave a howl and jumped back into the passage.

"Groooh!"

"Lock the door!" said Levison. "There isn't much room for the door to open here."

And Manners turned the key in the lock. Through the keyhole came Baggy Trimble's wrathful howl:

"Yah! Rotters! I sha'n't tell you now! Groooh!"

"Bunk off!" roared Herries.

"Yah!"

And the supper-party went on, with the door locked. It was over rather earlier than had been anticipated; the supplies vanished at an alarming rate before so extensive an onslaught. Tom Merry & Co. felt a little better; but they were ready for supper in Hall, by the time supper was finished in Study No. 9. The study was growing uncomfortably warm; and Levison & Co., though very polite, could not help betraying slight signs of restiveness. The Terrible Three were the first to take their leave.

"Thank you fellows awfully!" said Tom Merry. "Never enjoyed a supper so much in my life!"

"What-ho!" said Manners. "We'll clear now. Thanks, no end!"

Monty Lowther unlocked the door. He pulled the handle, but the door did not open.

"Something wrong with this lock," said Lowther. "Get back into the room, you chaps—any ass got his hoof against it?"

"It's jammed!"

"Somebody holding it outside, perhaps!" said Blake.

"That chump Trimble—"

"Trimble!" roared Tom Merry. "Are you there, you fat duffer? Let go the door at once, you chump!"

"He, he, he!"

"Let go!" roared Lowther.

"He, he! I'm not holding the door!" chuckled Trimble. "It's screwed up!"

"What?"

"You wouldn't let me tell you that Figgins came along," said Trimble, with great enjoyment. "I spotted him, and I'd have warned you. He, he, he! Thought I was after your measly supper, didn't you? He, he! I say, you'll never get out of that study. Figgins' driven in three gimlets—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And broken off the handles!" continued Baggy Trimble cheerfully. "They'll never be got out!"

"Gammon!" howled Blake. "Where would Figgins get a lot of gimlets from?"

"He got them out of your tool-chest in No. 6."

"Oh!"

"And you let him!" roared Tom Merry.

"He, he, he! You wouldn't let me tell you—"

"You fat villain—"

"He, he, he!" Baggy Trimble seemed very much amused. "He, he, he!"

"Cut off and get somebody to open the door, Trimble!"

"Catch me!" chuckled Trimble. "Perhaps you'll ask a chap to a feed another time! He, he, he!"

And Baggy Trimble rolled away, chortling. And in Study No. 9 fifteen fellows looked at one another, with feelings that could scarcely have been expressed in words.

CHAPTER 8.

Shut In!

CLINK!

A pebble rattled on the window-pane.

Ernest Levison stepped to the window and looked out into the dusky quad. It was long past dark now, but light from lower windows illuminated a patch of the quadrangle, and in the patch of light, three fellows could be seen, recognisable as Figgins & Co. of the New House.

They looked up at the window of No. 9, and George Figgins waved his hand. Immediately the window was crowded with heads.

"Hallo, up there!" shouted Figgins.

"You cheeky rotter!" bawled Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's cock-house of St. Jim's?" yelled Figgins.

"We are!" chortled Kerr and Fatty Wynn. "We are—we are—we are!"

"Bai Jove! You cheeky wotah, Figgins—"

"Hallo! Is that Gussy? How's Gwendoline of the moated grange, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Arthur Augustus jerked his head back quickly from the window. He did not want to hear anything about Gwendoline or the moated grange.

"Isn't there anything to chuck at those cheeky rotters?" muttered Cardew, biting his lip.

"Here's an apple," said Wally of the Third. "It's a bit overripe—"

Whiz!

The apple came down from the window with a sudden swoop, and it landed on George Figgins' upturned, grinning face.

To judge by the way it squashed over Figgins' features, that apple certainly was a little overripe.

"Oooooooh!" spluttered Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins & Co. jumped back out of range, Figgins wiping his face frantically with his handkerchief.

"Groooh! Horrid rotters!" gasped Figgins.

Whiz! Whiz! Crash! Several more missiles came swooping down from the window. But the New House trio were out of range now, and they were careful to keep out of it.

Levison slammed the window shut.

"No good talking to those New House rotters," he said. "We've got to get that dashed door open. It's time for Frank to turn up for prep with Mr. Selby, nearly."

"There'll be a row if we're late for prep," said Wally of the Third. "I say, you fellows must be awful asce to let Figgins dish you like this. This kind of thing wouldn't happen in the Third!"

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Herries.

"I guess we've got to get that pesky door open," remarked Kit Wildrake. "We shall be chortled to death over this. Seems to me the New House is licking this House all along the line."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaws that is because our leadah is a Shell chap!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I have thought several times that for real leadership the fellows ought to apply at Studay No. 6 in the Fourth."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake, with emphasis.

"Something in that," said Digby. "You're leader, Tom Merry, old infant. Would you mind leading the way out of this giddy study? It's time for prep, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry grunted, and tried the door. But the door refused to budge. Three gimlets had been driven to the hilt, piercing the door and the post, and the door was hermetically sealed. George Figgins had done his work efficiently.

"We're waiting for you, Tommy!" remarked Blake.

"Go ahead, old chap," said Manners.

"Oh, don't be asses!" said Tom warmly. "How can I get the thumping door open when it's fastened outside?"

"Who's leader?" inquired Blake blandly.

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Better howl for help," suggested Cardew. "Must, sooner or later."

Tom Merry thumped on the door. There were footsteps and voices in the passage outside, and a sound of chuckling. Baggy Trimble had probably spread the news of Figgins' raid.

"Open this door, you fellows!" shouted Tom.

"Hallo! Why can't you open it?" came the voice of Kangaroo of the Shell.

"It's screwed up—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle, you ass—help us out!"

"He, he, he!" came Trimble's fat chortle. "There's three gimlets, with the heads broken off—he, he, he! You'll never get them out."

"My hat! You fellows seem to be in a fix!" Talbot of the Shell was speaking. "Blessed if I see how these gimlets are to be got at."

"Get a crowbar, or something," said Tom Merry desperately.

"Dear me!" It was Skimpole's voice this time. "Let me look, you fellows. There is no problem that cannot be solved by a sufficiently concentrated application of the higher mental powers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole of the Shell blinked at the fastened door through his big glasses. The genius of the School House corrugated his ample brow in a frown of deep thought.

"Well?" said Talbot.

"The matter is quite simple, my dear fellow," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "The opening of this door is perfectly easy."

"That's good news," came Tom Merry's voice from within. "How are you going to do it, Skimmy?"

"My dear fellow," said the scientific Skimmy. "It is as simple as Euclid, and as clear as Einstein. The door is secured by three gimlets, which hold it with a certain force which we will call X. To overcome this force we require a greater force."

to be applied to it, which we will call Y. Upon the application of Y to X the door opens at once."

"Oh, my hat!"

"As you see, my dear Merry, the problem is easily solved. That shows the value of a scientific training of the mind—"

"But where are you going to get Y to apply to X!" howled Talbot.

Skimpole shook his head.

"That is quite a different matter, my dear Talbot, and does not enter into my purview of the problem," he answered. "However, there are many means and methods. A steam-derrick—"

"Have you got a steam-derrick in your waistcoat pocket?" shrieked the captain of the Shell.

"Nunno! The bulk of a steam-derrick, my dear Merry, precludes the possibility of conveying it within the circumscribed space of a waistcoat pocket—"

"Kill him, somebody!" gasped Tom Merry. "If it wasn't for this dashed door, Skimpole, I'd bang your head on the wall—"

"My dear Merry—"

"For goodness' sake get that door open somehow!" howled Wally of the Third. "Selby will scalp us if we're late for prep!"

"A battering-ram," said Skimpole thoughtfully. "Although an old-fashioned contrivance, a battering-ram would undoubtedly exert the superior force, which we have agreed to call Y, and would overcome the resistance of the inferior force, which we call X—"

"Have you got a battering-ram?" raved Tom Merry. "No, my dear Merry! But the absence of the contrivance to which I have made allusion does not alter the fact that—
Ow! Wow!"

Skimpole was bundled away from the door. It was evident that his scientific mind was not of much use in getting the door open. Kangaroo had fetched a big chisel from his study, and a hammer. The sound of hammering rang and echoed along the passage as the Australian junior set to work.

It was not an easy task. And the door was considerably damaged. But Kangaroo was successful, and the door of Study No. 9 opened at last.

Wally & Co. scuttled out, and ran hard for the Third Form-room. The other guests departed in a more leisurely manner. They scattered to their various studies for prep. In Study No. 10, in the Shell, the Terrible Three were still at prep when Jack Blake looked in.

"We've been dished all along the line by the New House," said Blake. "We've got to down them, or they'll crow us to death. You call yourself some sort of a leader, Tom Merry. I've just looked in to warn you that if you don't get a move on, you'll be sacked before long!"

"Heard anything more of Gwendoline?" asked Tom Merry affably, and Manners and Lowther chuckled.

"Had any more feeds bagged in your study?" queried Lowther.

"You see," said Manners, "we can keep our end up against the New House all right; only Study No. 6 lets us down."

"That's the trouble!" assented Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"Cut it out!" he said. "I tell you that the New House is scoring over us, and if you don't down them, Tommy, you'll get the chopper, and we'll elect a new leader. That's flat!"

And Jack Blake departed, and slammed the door after him by way of emphasis. Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders, and continued his work. But Manners and Lowther exchanged glances. In the presence of the Fourth-Former, they backed up their chief loyally. In their private circle, they reserved the right to call him over the coals.

"Cheeky sweep!" said Lowther. "But there's something in it, all the same, Tommy. You'll have to wake up."

"Just what I was going to remark," assented Manners. "You really must sit up and take notice, Tommy, and get a move on somehow."

"Rats!" was Tom Merry's reply.

"But look here, you ass—"

"Look here, you chump—"

"Bow-wow!" said Tom.

And Manners and Lowther grunted, and gave their attention to prep.

CHAPTER 9.

On the War-Path.

"LOTS of time for some footer—"

"But the carrier—"

"The carrier won't be here till half-past three," said Figgins.

"But—"

"Don't you worry, Fatty! The hamper will be all right."

"But—"

"Don't—"

"Anyhow, the carrier will leave it with Taggles, and we can fetch it across to the New House. Let's go and get some footer practice."

Tom Merry sat up, and looked out of the open window of the hobby club-room in the School House. Tom was alone in the club-room; he had retired to that quiet spot to finish an article for the "St. Jim's News." He had been thinking of anything but the New House fellows, when Figgins & Co. strolled past the window, chatting as they passed.

Tom Merry laid down his fountain-pen, and looked from the window. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were walking in the direction of the football-ground. It was Saturday afternoon; a half-holiday at St. Jim's. Tom Merry was due on the football-ground shortly; but he was glad now that he had sat by the club-room window to finish his article. Quite by chance, he had learned something to his advantage.

The recent defeats sustained at the hands of the New House fellows, had not been forgotten in the School House. Tom had received hints on all sides that it was time for him to get a move on, if the New House wasn't to justify its claim to be called cock-house of St. Jim's.

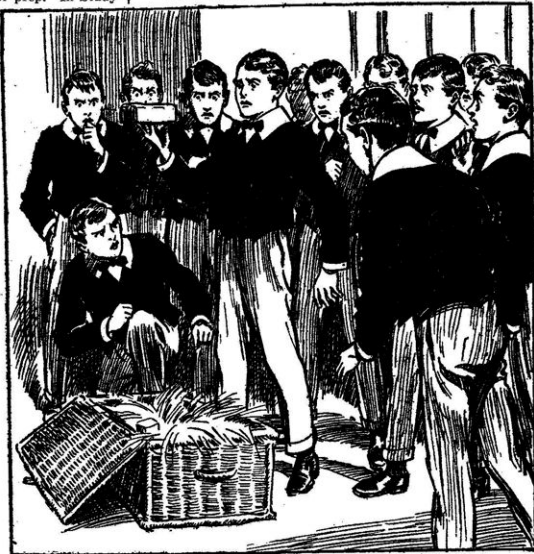
Now chance, as it were, had delivered the enemy into his hands! Tom Merry left his article for the "News" unfinished, and strolled out of the club-room.

"Hallo, here you are!" greeted Lowther, as he joined his chums in the quad. "What about footer?"

"Time we turned up," said Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We're on the war-path at present," he said. "Footer



Tom Merry removed a thick layer of ancient straw packing from the hamper. What was revealed underneath was not an array of delicacies. The first object that came clearly into view was a large brick! Tom Merry lifted it out blankly. "What on earth's that?" ejaculated Blake. "A—a—a brick!" "Great Scott!"

can stand over for a bit. We're going to give the New House a taste of the kybosh this afternoon."

"Getting a move on at last, old man?" asked Lowther.
"I shall want Study No. 6 to help," said Tom calmly.
"Let's look for those Fourth Form bouncers."

Blake & Co. were soon found. They were thinking of football, too; but they were more than ready to back up their leader in any alarms or excursions against the rival House.

"Count on us," said Blake generously. "We're going to give you a chance, Tommy. The New House bouncers have got to be put in their place. They've got to be made to sing small. If you can do it, go ahead."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a nod. "We'll back you up, de boy. I feah, howevah, that Figgins & Co. are wathah too much for you."

"They won't get me to amble to the coppice to meet Gwendoline, anyhow," retorted Tom Merry.

"Weally, you know—"

"Well, what's the game?" asked Herries. "Give it a name."

"Figgins is expecting a hamper this afternoon, by the carrier—"

"How do you know?"

"Never mind how I know," said Tom Merry calmly.

"Privates are never let into secrets by a good general—"

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"Just take my word for it, that those New House bouncers are getting a hamper this afternoon," said Tom. "It's going to be left with the porter about half-past three. Figg's gone to the footer, and he's going to call at Taggles' lodge for the hamper, after the carrier's been. We're going to bag that hamper."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, just listen to the plan of campaign," said Tom. "We three will bag the hamper from Taggles' lodge when it comes. You four will have to keep Figgins & Co. off the grass."

"We can do that!"

"Keep an eye on them on the footer-ground," said Tom. "If they keep at the footer, all serene; if they come off the ground, you chaps drop on them, and sit on them, or slaughter them—anything you like, in fact, so long as they don't come rooting round Taggles' lodge after their hamper. See?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll get the hamper into the hobby club-room," continued Tom. "We'll ask some of the fellows to a spread in that room. Figgins has good hampers, sometimes, and we'll blow the lot in a good spread. The number of the guests will depend on the size of the hamper. But we must have Study No. 9, anyhow; they deserve it, after the way we cleaned them out the other day."

"Good!" assented Blake.

"But that isn't all," went on Tom. "As soon as we've got the hamper safe in our quarters, and the company have arrived, we'll let Figg know we've got it, and he can come and look on at the feed, if he likes, through the hobby club-room window. See? Rather a bean to scoff Figg's tuck, with Figg glowering at us through the window!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What a wippin' ideah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus heartily. "You are not always such a feahful ass as you look, old chap!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Mind you don't let Figgins & Co. get away, if they show signs of coming after the hamper," added Tom.

"Rely on us!" said Blake.

And the two parties separated; the Terrible Three sauntering down to the gates to wait there for the carrier, and Blake & Co. proceeding to Little Side, to keep an eye on the New House trio.

Figgins & Co. were actively punting a ball with a crowd of New House fellows, and they did not even look at Study No. 6. When the half-hour chimed out, Figgins & Co. were still busy; and Blake exchanged a glance of satisfaction with his chums. Apparently, Figg had forgotten the hamper, in his keenness on the game, or else he supposed that it was quite safe when delivered at the porter's lodge. Meanwhile, the Terrible Three of the Shell were watching the road keenly and anxiously for Cripps, the carrier. And they smiled with satisfaction when that gentleman arrived, and a large and heavy hamper was handed over to the care of Taggles, the porter. Cripps' cart rumbled on its way, and the hamper was left standing by the lodge porch. It was a heavy weight, and Taggles did not take it inside; and he did not mean to convey it to its destination, either, unless Figgins shelled out a tip worthy of the occasion. But as it happened, Taggles was to be saved that trouble, anyhow.

"Couldn't have happened better, you fellows," murmured

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Tom Merry. "It looks thumping heavy; but we three can handle it."

"Yes, rather!"
"Rather a surprise for Figg, when he comes for it!" chuckled Lowther.

The Terrible Three cautiously approached the hamper, and lifted it. They were sturdy youths; but the weight of that big hamper taxed their strength. They grunted and gasped a good deal as they bore it away. Kangaroo of the Shell met them on the way, and lent a hand. The hobby club-room in the School House had a side door on the quad, and it was to that door that the raiders were conveying their prize. They gasped as they landed it there.

"All serene!" said Tom Merry breathlessly.

Lowther glanced round.

"No sign of those New House rotters," he said. "My hat! We've fairly done them in the eye this time."

The hamper was landed in the hobby club-room, and the door on the quad locked. The School House fellows did not mean to run any risk of a raid from the New House.

"Now cut off and tell Blake, Monty," said Tom Merry.

"You go and fetch Levison & Co., Manners, and ask two or three other fellows. Judging by its weight, there's enough in that hamper to feed a crowd."

"Right-ho!"

"And give Figg the tip!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther ran over to the football ground. Blake & Co. greeted him eagerly.

"All right?" asked Blake.

"Right as rain."

"The hampah, deah boy—"

"We've got it. Cut in!" said Lowther. "It weighs about two hundredweight—no end of stuff. I fancy this will make Figgins & Co. howl a bit."

"Yaas, wathah."

In great glee, Blake & Co. hurried off to the School House. Monty Lowther crossed over towards the New House footballers.

"Figgins!" he shouted.

"Hallo!" said George Figgins, looking round.

"Do you mind us borrowing your hamper?"

"Eh?"

"If you want to see a feed, you can stroll along to the hobby club window," said Lowther affably. "Sorry we can't ask you to the feed—dots and New House fellows not admitted, you know. But you can look on if you like."

"You've got my hamper?" roared Figgins.

"Just a few!"

"Collar him!" shouted Redfern.

Monty Lowther cut off at top speed and arrived breathless at the School House. Figgins looked at Kerr and Wynn. The three chortled.

"Looks like a catch!" said Figgins.

"It do-it does!" chuckled Kerr.

"Let's go and watch," said Fatty Wynn, his plump face beaming. "I'd like to see the dear little ones enjoying their dear little selves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite a little army of New House fellows followed Figgins & Co. from the football ground to the School House. And to judge by their grinning faces, Figgins & Co. did not feel the loss of their hamper very keenly, which was really rather surprising.

CHAPTER 10.

A Very Valuable Prize.

"B AI Jove! What a whoppah!"
"Topping!"
"Good egg!"

A crowd of School House fellows gathered round the big hamper in the hobby club-room, with exclamations of surprise and satisfaction. There was no doubt that it was an unusually large and weighty hamper, and if it was filled with tuck, the School House heroes had undoubtedly made a tremendous capture from the enemy. The news spread fast enough; Levison and Clive and Cardew arrived, and Gore and Glyn, and Julian and his chums, and half-a-dozen other fellows, including Baggy Trimble. Even Trimble was not to be denied on an occasion like this—judging by the weight of the hamper, there was plenty even for Trimble.

"Good old Tommy!" said Manners. "We've done them this time, and no mistake. It's addressed to Figgins—good old Figgins! I'm sure Figg won't mind handing it over to pals like us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad, it's fastened up pretty safely," said Cardew.

"Wire as well as cord. Anybody got any wire-cutters?"

"They made sure of it," said Tom Merry complacently.

"But not quite so sure as we did."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The hamper was certainly fastened very securely; but

many hands made light work, and the School House crowd got the fastenings open. By that time several faces were peering in at the hobby club-room. That window had been left open, but there was no chance of a raid from the New House juniors outside. The sill was nearly on a level with Figgins' chin as he looked in, and there were plenty of defenders if an attack had been attempted. But Figgins & Co. did not seem to be thinking of an attack.

"So you bagged that hamper?" exclaimed Figgins. "Hallo, there's Figgy! Like to come in, Figgy?" asked Blake affably. "Just jump in, old top, do! You'll go out again so fast that it will make your head swim."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Oh, I'm not coming in," said Figgins. "Only just called to ask whether Gussy's heard anything lately from Gwendoline!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Weally, Figgins, you wotthah—" "Get that lid open," said Tom Merry. "Sorry, Figgins, old chap—but all's fair in war, you know. This is our hamper."

Figgins shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, we're not grousing," he said. "We're cock-house of St. Jim's, anyhow, and you're welcome to that hamper."

"Wats, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. Blake chuckled.

"Well, it's ours!" he said. "Turn out the stuff, you fellows. You can look on and admire, Figgy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The lid of the big hamper was open at last, and several hands jerked out the straw packing inside.

A dozen pairs of eyes looked eagerly into the hamper, in the expectation of beholding a large assortment of delicacies. Baggy Trimble's mouth was fairly watering.

"Why—what!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He removed a thick layer of ancient straw packing, which looked as if it had seen service several times. What was revealed underneath was not an array of delicacies. The first object that came clearly into view was a large brick!

Tom Merry lifted it out blankly.

"Wha-at on earth's that?" ejaculated Blake.

"A—a—bwick!"

"Great Scott!"

Lowther clutched another object out—it was a half-brick this time! Manners was the next to fish out an article, and the article was an ancient tin kettle that had evidently been gathered from a dust-heap.

By this time there was consternation.

More and more ancient and mouldy straw packing was turned out, and along with it a fine assortment of bricks, half-bricks, stones, and chunks of wood and bark. There was still a thick layer of stones in the bottom of the big hamper when the School House juniors gave it up. They

turned ferocious glares upon the grinning faces in the window.

"You spoofing rotters!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy Trimble. Baggy had a keen appetite that was equal to most things; but it was not equal to bricks and half-bricks. Even Baggy drew a line there.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "Tuck in, dear boys; tuck in and enjoy yourselves. You've bagged our hamper, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House crowd roared. Tom Merry & Co. gazed at one another with sickly glances.

That magnificent hamper had evidently been prepared by Figgins & Co.—prepared for the express purpose of being raided by the heroes of the School House. And it occurred to Tom—rather late—that that careless talk he had overheard among Figgins & Co., at the club-room window, had not been quite so careless as he had supposed. It was evident now that the astute Figgins had seen him sitting there, and had strolled in that direction, and talked in his hearing, for the special purpose of pulling his leg.

Tom Merry realised that, now! The realisation came a little too late to be of service, however.

"Go it!" chortled Figgins. "Tuck in! Take care you don't get indigestion, old tops! But tuck in, and welcome!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Figgins & Co. walked off, the New House crowd roaring with laughter.

Tom Merry looked at the hamper and at the wraithful and dismayed faces of the numerous juniors that had gathered to the spread. That spread, evidently, was not coming off now.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom, at last.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round.

"I weally considah, you chaps, that it is time this House got a new leadah. I don't want to say anythin' against Tom Mewwy, of course; but I think ewevy gentleman pvesent will admit that he is a howlin' ass, and a fwabjous dunny."

"And a silly owl!" roared Blake.

"Of all the fatheads—"

"Of all the chumps—"

"Of all the duffers—"

"Yaas, wathah! I weally considah—"

"Thanks, awfully, old bean," said Cardew satirically.

"We won't stay for the feed. Your tuck looks a little too hefty for me. But thanks no end."

And Cardew strolled out, grinning. The rest of the party followed, and every fellow, as he went, had a remark to make to Tom Merry, and not one of the remarks was of a complimentary nature. Tom's face was crimson when he was left alone with his chums.

"We—we shall have to clear all that rubbish away!" said Tom feebly.

"You can do that, old chap," said Lowther. "Perhaps it will be a lesson to you. I wouldn't say anything while the other fellows were here, but of all the crass idiots—"

"Exactly," said Manners. "I wouldn't say it before the others, but of all the fabjous, burbling dummies—"

"Look here—"

"Oh, rah!"

Manners and Lowther departed, and Tom Merry was left alone with his prize. And that evening there was animated discussion in a dozen junior studies in the School House, and the subject of the discussion was Tom Merry, and the dismal failure of that hapless youth as a leader against the rival house. But the turn in the tide was coming!

THE END.

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Edited By TOM MERRY.

WHEN D'ARCY CAME TO ST. JIM'S.

(Continued from last week.)

By COUSIN ETHEL.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the new boy, walked into the quadrangle with his top-hat in his hand. Before he had taken many steps he was surrounded by Figgins & Co., of the New House Fourth, who politely addressed him as Aubrey, and asked whether there were any more like himself at home.

"My name is not Aubrey!" said Gussy stiffly. "And I consider your questions very impertinent!"

"Do you, you potty juggins! Gimme that top!"

Arthur promptly put his hand behind him, and tried to look defiant. But Figgys wasn't in the least impressed by his looks; he jerked away the hat and looked at it critically. Deciding that it might look a trifle better if it were brushed, he requested D'Arcy to watch him. Arthur did so, and had the delight of seeing Gussy ruffle the nap up the wrong way. Figgins appeared to be a trifle agitated when he performed the operation, and the hat slipped from his hands. In recovering it, his heel accidentally went through the top, and at last in returning it to Arthur Augustus, he clutched so tightly that the brim came away in Gussy's grasp, and the rest remained in Figgins'.

"You potty coon!" said George. "You've quite spoiled a decent tile. Permit me to return it, your highness!" And, so saying, he jammed it tightly down over the new boy's ears.

"BOSHING" A PREFECT.

Later on he knocked across Mellish again, and that obliging youth said:

"Getting near bed-time, my lord! Would you like me to conduct you to your room?"

Arthur decided that he would, and Mellish turned on his heel and left the House. He pulled up at length outside the study of James Garton Hentrich, the head prefect in the New House. He knew gentle James was in the gym, and would not return to his study until rather late. Accordingly he left D'Arcy with rigid instructions that if anybody dared to come into the room, he was not to stand on ceremony, but to slosh them down with a pillow until they "got out of it."

"Wight-ho, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I will wemembah. You may go now, young fellah-my-lad!"

"Pleasant dreams!" answered Percy.

But if Arthur really did have any pleasant dreams, he had a decidedly unpleasant awakening when Mellish found him in his own room.

James and his pal Sleath came into the study together, for the purpose of enjoying a quiet smoke and a talk before retiring for the night.

They were just in the middle of a chuckle over a recent triumph when a loud noise sounded throughout the room.

"E-a-s-en-s-nore-re!"

The two seniors were on their feet in a second, Sleath suggesting that there was a fog hiddee in the room watching them!

"By Moses!" cried Monteth. "If there is, we'll stay in here!"

Then, by pulling the screen on one side, they both beheld Arthur Augustus slumbering peacefully on the senior's bed.

Monteth decided that it was quite an un-

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 715.

necessary procedure to awaken the swell of St. Jim's before commencing to "lay into him" with his stoutest cane. He just got on with the business there and then.

D'Arcy quickly awoke as he felt the lashes of the cane, and he instantaneously remembered Mellish's advice concerning intruders. My cousin gathered up his pillow, and knocked Monteth from one side of the room to the other. Then he caught Sleath under the chin and sent him hurtling on the top of Monteth. As Monteth attacked the second time, Arthur sent him reeling against the study table. This went over with a crash, hurrying books and papers and inkpot far and wide.

Then Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster, appeared on the scene, having been attracted by the noise. He requested Monteth to give an explanation.

"I found him asleep in my bed!" howled Monteth. "When I lugged him out, he buzzed a pillow at me. He's a School House kid, and he's done it for cheek!"

When Arthur had dressed himself, he was taken across to Mr. Kidd. As no explanation was forthcoming from Gussy, Mr. Kidd made it plain that D'Arcy would be severely punished unless he gave the name of the person who was responsible for the scene. This Gussy refused to do, and accordingly accepted a severe caning.

When it became known that Arthur had withstood hardship for the sake of another, it was generally decided that the swell wasn't such a bad sort after all, and when he thoroughly knew the ropes, he would be quite all right.

Next week I will tell of another experience which befell my cousin while he was still trying to find his feet in this historic school.

COUSIN ETHEL.

The Affair of the Boarding-House.

BURGLAR'S CLEVER SCHEME.

OF late the newspapers have been full of amazing exploits on the part of burglars and impostors, but the weird and wonderful case of Mr. Ratcliff takes the Banbury. It is common knowledge that Mr. Ratcliff with his revered sister spent a portion of the well-earned holiday at Shrimpton, a rising watering-place. Put in a nutshell, the astounding adventure he experienced was as follows: He met at the elegant hotel a gentleman who showed extreme interest in scholastic matters, and this stranger seems to have pumped Mr. Ratcliff as to the historic foundation of St. Jim's, and his—Mr. Ratcliff's—position at the school.

Events succeeded one another with rapidity. Both Mr. Ratcliff and his sister were charmed, and small wonder, with the versatility of their new friend, and accompanied him on many excursions about the neighbourhood, including a picnic to an old castle which has been partially restored.

The stranger led Mr. Ratcliff and his sister into the old keep, and locked them in. That is where the story of Mr. Ratcliff ends—not to start again until a couple of days later, when a guide discovered them and set them free.

Meantime, there had arrived at St. Jim's a gentleman the very image of the popular master. He was well received, and nobody suspected anything, not even his whippersnapper, until the night when he vanished with pretty well everything of value out of the Head's study, and a representative collection of silver trophies.

Alas! the holiday season has many of these sad endings. Soon after, the genuine and only Mr. Ratcliff put in an appearance, and later investigations showed how successfully he had been duped, and how greatly St. Jim's was the loser by the clever trick. So far, the police have not laid their hands on the smart impostor, who faded into thin air along with his swag.

Latest Football Results.

MATCHES PLAYED LAST SATURDAY.

By HARRY NOBLE. (Special Football Correspondent.)

Great Day for St. Jim's—Grand Triumph for the Middles—Highlife Seniors Outplayed—Shell Second Eleven Surprise—Bolsover's Bashers Slaughter Highlife—Rookwood Shell Wiped Up—St. Jim's Fifth Wreck Greyfriars Middle School Hollow.

(NOTE.—By special arrangement, the results of football matches played at the following colleges throughout the season will appear exclusively in the "St. Jim's News.")

The results of all matches played by public schools in the Southern Counties will be recorded week by week in the "St. Jim's News." A league table will appear shortly. Look out for it!

SENIOR ELEVEN.

	Final Results.
Greyfriars v. St. Jades	4 1
H.M.S. Thundercloud XI. ("Boys' Herald") v. Bagshot	3 0
Redcliffe v. Highlife	2 1
Rylcombe v. Abbotford	2 2

JUNIOR ELEVEN.

St. Jim's v. Greyfriars	2 1
Highlife v. Bagshot	3 2
Redcliffe v. Rookwood	0 1
Rylcombe v. St. Jades	2 3
Courtfield v. Abbotford	0 1

INTER-HOUSE MATCHES.

Rookwood School (Synthe & Co.) v. St. Jim's Shell Second XI.	0 12
Bolsover's Bashers (Greyfriars) v. Highlife Select (Pon & Co.)	27 3
St. Jim's Fifth v. Greyfriars Middle School XI.	2 1
Remove Second XI. (Greyfriars) v. Rookwood Fifth	3 3

OTHER MATCHES (Unofficial).

Sammy Bunter's XI. (Greyfriars) v. St. Jim's Third	0 19
Greyfriars any account (Tub. Waggs, etc.) v. Rookwood Fag Team (Algy Silver, Waggs, etc.)	13 12

Notes on Matches.—Next week I will give the names of the grounds on which the matches are played. Also the names of the goal-scorers, and a short report on each game. Don't on any account miss it. Space only permits me to make remarks about the following: Bolsover's Bashers were obviously out for trouble when they came on to the field. Pon & Co. looked equally evil. The game which followed could scarcely be described as football, for B. B. inflicted eight serious casualties, and received six. In the case of Rookwood Shell versus our Shell Second team, captained by Glynn, a weird and wonderful game took place. Two of Synthe's players were ordered off the field, and four others deserted the game of their own accord.

HARRY NOBLE.

The Queer Case of Dr. Brutell

Written By Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.



A STRANGE PERSONALITY.

DR. RICHARD BRUTELL, great scientist and inventor, was one of the most respected citizens of the little Western town of Ridgeland. He was generous almost to a fault towards the poorer inhabitants of the district, and everyone loved him for his kind and gentle nature. But these trusting citizens were unacquainted with the other side of the doctor's character.

Brutell was, in fact, the victim of a strange malady which completely destroyed the balance of his nature. When these dread spells came on him he was a different man entirely, both in mind and body. His personality altered, and in place of the man with deep sympathies there stood a veritable brute—a demon.

Dr. Brutell, when in his normal state, had accomplished great things and the great honour and triumph of having discovered the secret of the double X-ray was his. By means of this discovery Brutell was able to pass through doors, walls, and other solid bodies.

The use of the double X-ray also enabled the doctor to become invisible at will, and to overcome the force of gravity. Unfortunately, however, the power to combat these various forces of Nature was an extremely dangerous weapon in the hands of such a remarkable personality as Dr. Richard Brutell. For when he was under the sway of the evil influence he was still able to retain knowledge and control of these powers.

Strangely enough, when in his normal state the doctor remembered nothing of what happened during his periods of madness. On the other hand, when under the spell of evil he had a perfect recollection of his actions when in his right mind. But Dr. Brutell was fully aware of the fact that there were times when he was the victim of some extraordinary influence.

In the quietude of his study he often sat and puzzled over this extraordinary mystery, and after a great deal of work he was successful in making a mixture, by the aid of which he was able, on certain occasions, to arrest the coming of his wicked personality. His changes from a good to an evil man were usually caused by nervous shocks, sudden storm, unsettled conditions in the weather, and similar circumstances.

In his normal self Dr. Brutell was a lover of Nature. He was walking to-day about the spacious grounds adjoining his house. The beauty of the flowers attracted his attention, and Richard Brutell bent down to make a closer study of one of the plants.

The doctor's attention was so riveted upon the object of his admiration, that he failed to notice that dark, black clouds were quickly gathering in the sky. He had cultivated his barometer before leaving the house, as he always did, but his examination failed to disclose any unsettled condition of the weather. Had there been even a slight indication, he would not have ventured out just then. Suddenly in the distance there was an ominous rumbling in the sky which made Brutell look up eagerly. The next moment he turned towards the house, and rushed away with all speed. His face was pale, and his lips were quivering.

The unfortunate man was fully aware that one of his strange mysterious fits was coming upon him. His thoughts were concentrated upon the little flask which he had left upon the table in his laboratory. Would he get there in time?

A curious fear obsessed the unfortunate man as he hastened towards the door of his home. Why he should feel this way he did not know. Brutell almost felt inclined to go at himself for running away from a thunderstorm. He pulled up, determined to make a supreme effort to overcome what he considered his own cowardice. The next moment, however, he was running again, and something sped him forward with ever increasing speed.

At last he had reached the open door of his house, and he made for the stairs leading to his study. Again that sickening feeling of horror overcame Dr. Brutell. He knew that something ghastly was about to happen to him which he should not be able to prevent.

The doctor's hand felt for the knob of his study door, but he was only partly conscious of this fact. As though in a dream he turned the handle of the door and entered, making his way towards the table where he had previously placed the flask containing the powerful mixture that might prevent the spell. A shaky hand stretched forward to grasp it, but—it was too late!

The kind, sympathetic face of Dr. Brutell changed instantly. His pleasant smile had vanished, and in its place there was an evil leering face. His personality had also altered. He was a different man entirely, and his sole desire was to engage in crime and villainy.

THE BLACK CIRCLE.

DR. BRUTELL, the leader of the band of villains known far and wide as the Black Circle, took his seat on the dais at the top of the spacious room which he had as the headquarters of the gang. On either side of him sat Hammer and Pinchers, his two lieutenants, who were named after the symbols of the villainous crowd. Each member of the Black Circle wore a black gown and a hood which completely covered the head.

The sinister crowd turned towards their leader, and waited for him to open the proceedings. The gang had a great respect for the hand to rob one of the most important banks in the district.

Brutell himself was the man detailed to do the most important work in connection with the plot. It was really a one-man job, and their leader, who undoubtedly possessed great courage and resource, would be able to carry it off successfully. The members of the gang admired "the doctor" as they referred to him.

The extraordinary powers which he possessed, and which he could always summon to his aid when the need arose, mystified every one of them. Dr. Brutell also inspired them with fear, for he stood no nonsense from any of his underlings, and he was a very dangerous man when he was routed by this fact more than one of the gang had learnt to their sorrow. Brutell addressed a few final words of advice to his two lieutenants, and prepared to go.

"Don't forget," was his parting instruction. "If I do not send word of my safety, or return to you by this time to-morrow, come to my assistance!"

The next minute the evil doctor had departed. He walked a few yards up the street, and stepped into a large motor-car which was in readiness. There was no driver, for Brutell was quite confident that he could choose a slack period of the day, and did not expect any real opposition to his scheme.

Arriving at the bank, the doctor stepped briskly out of the car, and walked unconcernedly up the steps of the bank. He had chosen a slack period of the day, and did not expect any real opposition to his scheme.

Brutell passed a messenger standing at the doorway, and entered the bank, still unsuspecting of any suspicion as to his real motive for being on the premises. In front of the doctor there was a tall iron grille or screen, the object of which was to separate the clients and the cashier and the bank. Owing to the large sums of money on the premises, a precaution of this sort was quite necessary.

The grille satisfactorily fulfilled its object of keeping the general public on the "wrong side" of the money, and all transactions were made through a small pigeon-hole, similar to the opening in a bookish office at a station.

Banks situated in a wild western district of this sort, could not afford to take any risks, for there were men who took desperate measures to secure what they coveted even at the strongest iron grille, however presented no difficulties to the extraordinary Dr. Brutell. He glanced at it for a moment. There was a flash and a roar which seemed to stupefy the amazed cashier standing near, and the next instant Dr. Brutell, assisted by his double X-ray battery, had vaulted over the strong iron barrier.

It did not take the mad doctor long to overpower the cashier, who made a feeble attempt to obstruct him and prevent him carrying out his aim. Then, gathering up several bundles of notes, the doctor made away with his rich haul.

Brutell, however, was not aware that an alarm had already been given, and that even now a large force of police were preparing to give chase. But he soon learnt this disturbing fact.

Considering that there was no need for undue haste on his part, Brutell had driven his car along at a snail's pace, and made for the shortest route possible to the headquarters of the Black Circle. But the police were not to be beaten without a struggle.

Their cyclopedic eyes were able to take short cuts which were impossible for the bigger vehicle. And whenever there was a chance the police took it.

Brutell realised that he was really up against it. He got every ounce of speed possible out of the car, and he was careering along at a break-neck speed.

Later on he glanced around again, and to his consternation, one or two of the police had made remarkable progress. He had confirmation of this when, a moment later, shots began to ring out from the revolvers of the leaders. Then a desperate idea entered the mind of the evil Dr. Brutell.

He directed his car along a route where he knew there was a sharp decline, with a sudden drop of some hundreds of feet to the ground below. Brutell was taking a tremendous risk, but circumstances forced it upon him. He knew that for a short time his car would be hidden from the view of his pursuers by reason of the elevated ground by a sheer drop away from his left.

Now was the time for him to act. Brutell slackened the speed of the car a trifle, and, standing up in the vehicle, he made a jump in the direction of an overhanging branch of a tree. The car careered along madly down the descent, and a few moments later it disappeared over the precipice.

There was a resounding crash, which was answered by a shriek of laughter from the man safely hidden in the boughs of a tree.

The noise of the motor-car falling to its destruction was so loud that it must have been heard by the direction of the police officers. The leaders made their way to the scene, and they were joined a few moments later by the rear guard. All the police followed the tracks made by the motor-car, until they came to a sharp turn, where it had taken its final plunge over the side.

The men stood together talking for a few minutes, but the doctor was unable to catch their discussion. They were evidently satisfied that the wrongdoer had been killed, and that he was mixed up in the shapless mass far below that had once been the car. Mounting their cycles they then rode away.

Brutell remained in his hiding-place aloft, for he did not deem that it would be quite safe for him to descend just yet.

(See next Wednesday's "GEM" for the amazing exploits of Dr. Brutell.)

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 715.

Adapted from incidents in the Vitagraph serial, "Hidden Dangers."

Personal Correspondence.

By TOM MERRY.

In my recent editorial I asked you all ten simple questions. Barely had twenty-four hours elapsed than letters by the dozen were pouring in from all over the British Isles. Most of us were quite excited when the first budget arrived. I have been a trifle uneasy since my first issue appeared, but everything was settled in a most satisfactory manner within a minute or so of my bursting open these welcome envelopes.

Next week in my editorial I shall probably ask a few more questions, and I only hope those among you who so readily and promptly complied with my requests will do so again. My most hearty thanks and best wishes to you, one and all.

Before I begin any personal replies, I will acknowledge the first packet of letters which reached me from Mr. Editor, and will then deal with as many as space allows:

Miss Audrey Duckham (Southport); "A Girl Reader" (Glasgow); M. Harris (Portsmouth); "Bubbles" (Brentford); Irene Davey (Port Talbot); John Greive (Kirkcaldy); J. James (Gillingham); May Barrow (Chesbury); S. B. (Palmerston); Diana Richards (Highgate); C. P. C. (Fed. Malay States); A. Balcombe (Margate); My Chum Beat (Manchester); Norman and Stanley Reed (Clapham Junction); Olive King (Harold Wood); D. B. (Nottingham); Fred Mason (Liverpool); Ethel S. (Sussex); C. F. F. Rickard (Shipley).

Miss A. D. (Southport) thinks Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison contributing to the "Gem" makes a pleasant change. She likes my latest production far better than my "Weekly," and prefers adventure yarns to other kinds. This writer holds Kerr to be her favourite character, and would prefer the next special number to deal with Mr. Raitton. Concludes her letter by saying she is having a ripping holiday, with water-shutes and diving included. You make me feel almost envious!

"A Girl Reader" (Glasgow)—I see I have two letters from you before me. Mr. Editor says he has replied to both, but would prefer me to answer your questions. No, no, Blake doesn't come from Glasgow; some where in Yorkshire, I think. Blake is certain to be one of Mr. Editor's "specials" before long. So you hold Herries as your second best character, and also like Wally D'Arcy, because they are both fond of dogs? I am glad to hear you like Miss Cleveland's chats on the old happenings at St. Jim's. She will give plenty of information about the yarns which you have missed as time goes on. Herries is quite a formidable person with his "dukes," but there are several who are his superiors. Towser is quite all right in his right place, but gives me a little trouble when he is elsewhere. One could hardly expect him to do anything but chew up everything within reach if left by himself in a schoolboy's study for long. My advice is care of this office. The Editor sent along your letter quite all right. A daily "Gem" would be a very grand thing, no doubt, but, unfortunately, Mr. Editor says it is absolutely impossible. He only knows one Martin Clifford, and to have a "Gem" come out daily he would need another five or six. D'Arcy sung "Let Me

Like A Soldier Fall." Glad you like the "Boys' Herald."

M. Harris (Portsmouth). It will be a Wednesday when you first read this, so I can conclude that you are now in the best of spirits. From the date on your letter, I have come to the conclusion that you missed the yarn in which Ernest Levison turned up quite safe and sound. The New House cuckoos all come over to the School House for lessons, but often get hustled out a good deal quicker than they come in, when "singing" time arrives! Racker & Co. are somewhat past the stage of "curing." The only effective way of talking to them is with your hat. I see you have six special favourites. And I also see you have placed the very unfamiliar name of Tom Merry first. Thanks!

"Bubbles" (Brentford).—You must be quite an old supporter if you have been reading the "Gem" since the first appearance of Valentine Outram. So Cardew is your "favori," as they say in France. He shows no tendencies whatever of reforming yet, though, of course, the fellow isn't at all that terrible risk when a reformation on his part is desired by all. Ralph says his grandfather is quite in good health, and he ought to know. Whether Cardew were broke the "Gem" or simply wallowing in funds, would not worry him in the least. I see you also like Ernest and Doris Levison. Space is running short now, so I must request you to wait until next week for the remainder of your questions.

Yours sincerely,

TOM MERRY.

(More replies next week.)

MY READERS' OWN CORNER.

2/6 is paid for each paragraph accepted.

MODESTY.

Cricketer to girl companion: "Yes, their batting was superb, their bowling splendid, and their fielding A 1." "Oh, but what was the score?" "We won."—S. Robinson, 137, Chatterlands Avenue, Hull.

THE MAN WHO KNEW THE SECRET



Look out for ANSWERS' great new autumn serial story. Two million people will read it.

THE RIGHT TITLE.

The artist was of the impressionist school, and had just given the last touches to a purple-and-blue canvas when his wife came into the studio. "My dear," he said, "this is the picture I wanted you to suggest a title for." "Why not call it 'Home'?" said the lady. "Home?" "Why?" asked the painter. "Because there is no place like it," replied his wife meekly. —Miss E. Ena Tronson, Homeleigh, Cross Street, Camborne, Cornwall.

THE "NEWS."

When newspapers first came out (called papers) the publishers used to print at the top of the first page the letters "N. S. E. W.," to show that the information in the paper came from all parts of the world. One day these letters were printed in a different order by mistake—"N. E. W. S." Afterwards it was decided that there was good in the error, and all the papers used "News" in the new style.—Wilfred A. Jewell, 115, Harriett Street, Cathays, Cardiff.

MUCH HANDIER.

There was a load of bricks on the football-ground, in anticipation of some repairs to the pavilion. An aged supporter of the club came up, eyed the bricks fondly for a few minutes, knit his brows as though in deep thought, and remarked to the secretary, who happened to be standing near: "You should have had 'arf bricks. They are much handier for the referee."—R. Kibble, Windrush, Grove Road, Coombe Dingle, nr. Bristol.

WHY WAS SHE THERE?

Mr. Burd, who had started out the other night with his wife to go to the pictures, suddenly remembered that he had left his coal-shed unlocked. He went back, turned the key in the lock, and put the key in his pocket. On returning, three hours later, he found a neighbour in a furious state of indignation. "What's the matter?" he asked innocently. "Matter enough!" was the reply. "Do you know that you have locked my wife up in your coal-shed?"—John Tod, Raceview, Broughshane, Co. Antrim, Ireland.

MOST UNCALLED FOR.

An aviator fell from his machine into a river, and was pulled out by a man passing by. "Oh, my preserver—my preserver!" cried the aviator. "Stow it, guv'nor!" replied the rescuer. "Don't chaff a chap because he works in a jam factory!"—George H. Randall, 93, Flaxton Road, Plumstead, S.E.18.

HIS OCCUPATION.

"The prisoner refuses to give his occupation, sir," remarked a policeman to the magistrate. "Why don't you say what you are?" asked the magistrate of the man in the dock. "'Cos it's superfluous," was the reply. "You're as bad as the police, if you'll excuse me saying so. What's the charge? Stealing two chairs and a table. There you are! What's plainer? I am a furniture remover."—S. Rowley, 102, High Street, Clapham, S.W.4.

1000 FOOTBALLS FREE

See this week's "FUNNY WONDER" for full particulars of the grand offer of 1000 footballs, and do not miss the amazingly funny "Charlie Chaplin" comedy on the front page. So sure you ask for the



FUNNY WONDER

ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY. 11d.

WHAT HAVE YOU AGAINST ME?

(Conclusion.)

NO sooner had Tom found the key than he had unlocked the door and hurried along the passage. He was surprised at first not to find Bob Peel waiting for him, but concluded that his chum had returned to the dormitory.

Tom had run across the quadrangle, escaping from the school by means of climbing a tall tree and swinging from a branch on to the top of the wall. It had been risky, but Tom did not mind taking risks.

He, too, took to the fields—for he, least of all, wanted to be seen on the main road. Any policeman seeing a school-boy abroad at this hour would promptly have marched him back to school.

Thus it was that master and boy, guilty and innocent, were within a few paces of one another.

Through the fields ran a fast stream, deep and dangerous. But Mr. Mullins, as he walked, forgot that. His only thought was of escape—of reaching Ranglely town, and entraining there. For the trains ran very late from Ranglely Junction.

But presently the sound of rushing water came to the master's ears, and he remembered the stream. He stopped quite still, scared. And then, for the first time, he heard the footsteps behind him.

He turned, and Tom Mace loomed up in the darkness.

"Who—who is that?" called the master.

Tom Mace came closer, and Mr. Mullins caught sight of his face.

"You!" he exclaimed. His face went white, for, though he had freed the lad, he had not expected to be confronted by him.

Tom Mace, equally surprised, stood quite still. For he had no knowledge of the master's departure.

"Keep away!" called Mr. Mullins shrilly, as though Tom were about to strike him. "Don't follow me! Keep away!"

This sudden meeting completely upset him. In his nervous condition he appeared to think that Tom Mace knew the whole story—that Mace was, in fact, pursuing him to obtain vengeance.

The master held his arm to shield his face, and took a step back.

"Mind!" cried Tom, springing forward. "The stream, Mr. Mullins!"

But he was too late. A splash! A shriek! And Mr. Mullins was being carried along by the roaring stream.

"Help, help!" shouted the master. "I can't swim! Help!"

For just one second Tom Mace paused, then, kicking off his shoes, he dived into the stream, and with swift strokes cut through the water to where Mr. Mullins bobbed and splashed helplessly.

And even when Tom had the master in his arms, what a struggle it was!

Mr. Mullins, fearing that this was judgment upon him, strove to pull himself out of the water by pushing Tom Mace under.

"Let me go!" panted Tom. "Don't struggle, or we shall both drown!"

The icy water closed over his head as the master kicked and struggled.

But Mr. Mullins was nearly exhausted. His struggles grew feeble and still more feeble, till at last Tom was able to take the man completely in control. Then, though nearly exhausted himself, Tom pulled the master to where he deemed the shore to be.

Mr. Mullins lay quite still, almost a deadweight, his head thrown back as though his neck were broken.

Throwing back his hand, Tom clutched a reed by the bank and hauled himself up.

It was lucky for Mr. Mullins that Tom knew something of artificial respiration, or the master would most certainly have died. But Tom's courage and effort was rewarded, for the master opened his eyes. For some minutes after that, however, he lay quite still.

But, when at last he was able to rise to his feet, Tom Mace led him towards the school. All the while the master muttered incoherently. The mental strain he had undergone since the burglary, combined with the shock of his sudden plunge into the stream, seemed to have rendered him delirious.

With the master hanging heavily on his arm, Tom reached the school and rang the bell.

What an age Potts the porter seemed in answering that summons! And, when at last he did open the gates, he took some time being convinced that Tom and the master were not burglars.

But, convinced at last, he helped Tom across the quadrangle. Together they half-led, half-dragged the master into the school through the door, which still stood open.



TONY.



BILLY KETTLE.



"HOBBY."

NEXT WEEK!

In next Wednesday's "Gem" the Great Adventure Serial "THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE" will commence. Above, you see the three heroes whose adventures every boy will follow with interest. Tell all your chums to look out for this great story.

While Tom stayed by the master, Potts ran off to the Headmaster.

Dr. Mason, alarmed and surprised, came down in his dressing-gown, and Tom Mace gave a hurried description of all that had taken place.

"Good heavens!" cried the headmaster. "You—you went into the stream after Mr. Mullins, Mace, at the risk of your own life?"

"Yes, sir," answered Tom.

"That was very brave of you, my lad," said the headmaster. "But this is no time for talking. Run him off at once and get a change of clothing, and report to me afterwards. Meanwhile," he turned to the porter, "help me take Mr. Mullins across to the sanatorium, Potts."

"Yes, sir," said the porter, touching his cap.

And, between them, the delirious master was led across the quadrangle.

Half the school had been roused by the noise, and Bob Peel came quickly to his chum's side. Tom told his chum all the news, and, at mention of the key, Bob Peel showed the greatest surprise, denying, naturally enough, all knowledge of how the key had been got to Tom.

But there was not time then for further explanations. The masters and prefects drove the juniors back to their dormitories.

The juniors, needless to say, did not sleep. The Fourth-Formers discussed the affair in awed tones and waited for the return of Tom Mace, who, in dry clothes, had gone to interview Dr. Mason.

Tom waited in the headmaster's study patiently. But Dr. Mason was a very long time in returning. The junior stood before the mantle-shelf listening to the solemn ticking of the clock.

He glanced round the study reflectively and noted the blank space where the stolen picture had been. The empty frame had been taken down, and in its place there was a distinct mark on the wall—a patch brighter than the rest of the paper, which had faded slightly.

Anxiously Tom waited, while he pondered over all that had happened since he had come to Millford. His stay there, though short, had been eventful.

And to think that he must go. Expelled! He did not for a moment dream that the Head would pardon him on account of the rescue he had effected. Expelled! Just when he had become popular—when he had won for himself the honoured position of captain of the Form.

But his thoughts were interrupted by the opening of the study door. Dr. Mason entered.

The headmaster's face was flushed, and he was trembling with excitement.

"Mace!" he exclaimed, "you are here, then? Thank goodness."

"Why, yes, sir," answered Tom. "You asked for me."

"Yes, yes," ejaculated Dr. Mason hurriedly. "There has been a great injustice done, Mace." He held out his hand. "My lad, pray accept my apology. Your innocence has been proved."

"My—my innocence!" stammered Tom. "But I don't understand, sir!"

Dr. Mason put his hands on the lad's shoulders.

"Mace," he said, "that wretched man, Mr. Mullins, has confessed all—"

"Confessed!" exclaimed the bewildered lad. "What has he confessed, sir?"

"Why, that he opened the window for Meadows," explained the headmaster. "The wretched man is nearly off his head. He confessed absolutely everything. Mace, I want you to keep secret all that I am telling you."

"I will, sir, of course."

"Then I must tell you that Mr. Mullins was once in prison—a convict. It is astounding, but apparently he gained his position here through forgery. The rogue Meadows knew this, and, using that knowledge, threatened the poor man with exposure if he did not leave a window open. Afraid to confess, Mr. Mullins allowed you to be accused. He also slipped a key under your door, so that you should go away, in order to make the case appear blacker against you, hoping also that you might not be traced again."

"Tom Mace was momentarily bereft of speech. Not for a moment had he suspected this. He had known that someone had left the window open, and he had thought of Lundy and the others—but never of Mr. Mullins."

"It is hard to credit, I know," said Dr. Mason. "But that it is the truth I do not doubt in the least. You have acted bravely to-night, Mace, and I am pleased to know that, though you were tempted, you did not fall."

He shook Tom's hand firmly.

"Now you had better go to bed—in your dormitory," he added with a smile. "But do not say anything of this to

anyone. Merely say that you have been proved innocent of the charge against you."

And Tom, like one in a dream, returned to the Fourth Form dormitory.

He found the juniors sitting up in bed, waiting to hear what had transpired.

"Cheerio, Tom!" called Bob Peel. "Wherefore that smile?"

And, considering what the juniors knew, it was strange, indeed, that Tom Mace should be smiling.

"I have been proved innocent," he said simply. "The Head is satisfied that I did not leave the window open!"

"My aunt!" shouted Bob Peel, leaping from his bed. "What news?"

He caught hold of Tom Mace and danced him round and round the dormitory.

"Let go, Bob," laughed Tom, who was nearly breathless.

"I want to go to bed!"

"Tell us all about it, first," called Smythe.

And the others echoed "hear, hear!"

But Tom Mace shook his head.

"There's nothing much to explain," he said. "Mr. Mullins is in the sanatorium. He is very ill, I think."

"But how did the Head discover you were innocent, Tom?" asked Bob Peel insistently.

Tom smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"He's satisfied that I'm innocent, and that's all I care about," he said.

And Bob Peel had to let it go at that.

I suppose, after the heroic rescue business, the Head sucked in all the lies you told him," sneered Lundy.

Bob Peel turned upon him fuming.

"And if you don't shut up, Lundy, there'll be a thick ear flying round," he said fiercely. "And I think some of you other silly asses might apologise for believing that Tom let the burglars in."

Smythe and Hill and one or two others acted upon the suggestion, and Tom smilingly accepted their apologies.

"Anyway, I suppose Tom is still the Form captain," said Peel.

Anyone want to challenge that?"

So fierce did Bob look that Lundy and Garnet, who had opened their mouths to speak, remained silent.

Bradshaw smuggled himself under the bedclothes, out of sight. He was not looking for trouble.

Bob Peel, with a grunt of satisfaction, got into bed and cheerily bade his chum "good-night."

That night both Tom and he slept well, for both were happy. Tom Mace's name was cleared, and he was captain of the Form.

Next morning Tom Mace took his place in the Form-room, to find Mr. Brown, the Third Form master, in charge.

In the sanatorium, Mr. Mullins was reported to be very ill, but no one was allowed to see him.

Later in the day a detective came to the school, and reported that Meadows had been arrested while attempting to leave the country. Bill Mace had not been concerned in the affair.

With him, the detective brought the stolen picture.

The headmaster had Bill Mace at the school and interviewed him. Frightened by the long sentence Meadows had received, Bill Mace was full of repentance, and gladly accepted a position of gardener to one of the Head's friends.

So Tom Mace's father and mother moved to Ramsgate, near to the school, and Mr. Mace became under-gardener to a Mr. Trevor. The man seemed to have sobered a great deal, and when at last the summer holidays came, Tom and he got on splendidly together.

But part of those holidays Tom spent with his chum Bob Peel, in the small Hampshire village of which Mr. Peel was rector. And they were happy days the two spent together.

"Well, you'll start the winter term with a clear sheet, Tom," said Bob Peel with a smile.

Tom nodded.

"Yes, all the fellows seemed very friendly," he said. "All except Lundy."

"Oh, blow him," said Peel. "He'll always be a snob. You'll have no one worth speaking about against you now."

And so Tom found when school restarted.

THE END.

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