

IS YOUR NAME AMONGST THE PRIZEWINNERS? RESULT OF OUR STUPENDOUS "FOOTBALLERS' NAMES" CONTEST!

HANDSOME PRIZES FOR GEM READERS!
OVER 1,690 PRIZES WON BY READERS!

IN this competition the total of entries received far exceeded all our estimates, and the task of adjudication has been a very big one.

As will be seen by the following results, considerable numbers of competitors tied in the different grades, and a partial rearrangement of prizes has, therefore, been necessary. The full value of the original prize list has, of course, been awarded.

As no competitor was successful in sending us an absolutely correct solution, the three competitors who came nearest with two errors each head the list, and the First Prize of £100 and the Second Prize of £50 have been added together and divided among them. These winners are:

W. S. COWAN, 34, Plasbet Grove, East Ham.

Mr. W. STANLEY, 50, Market Road, Nantyglo.

Mr. W. WESTON, 22, Radnor Road, Weybridge, Surrey.

Forty-five competitors, each with three errors, came next in order, and the number of Motor Cycles offered has been increased to forty-five, which are awarded to the following:

A. J. Avery, 121, Scovell Road, Borough, S.E. 1.

Mr. A. E. Bailey, 18, Duke Street, Harle Syke, near Burnley; Mr. G. T. Barrows, 10, Stones Road, Epsom, Surrey; Mr. P. W. Batsford, 189, Springfield Road, Chelmsford; J. G. Brewer, 210, Well Hall Road, Eltham, S.E. 9.

Mr. T. Carlyle, Rock Road, Oundle, Northants; Mr. J. Clason, 9, Werbergh Street, Dublin; A. E. Cookson, 18, Irvine Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool; R. Courbrough, 80, Thistle Street, South Side, Glasgow.

Mr. C. H. Denley, 63, Suffolk Place, Porthcawl, S. Wales; P. L. Digby, 61, Whitney Road, Leyton, E. 10.

Mr. W. L. Ellis, 2, Bagot Street, Wardley Lane, Swinton, Manchester; Mr. R. G. Everitt, 2, Linton Crescent, Hastings.

Mr. G. Farquhar, c/o Mrs. Spiers, 91, Wellfield Street, Springburn, Glasgow; L. Field, Melanethon, Rosebery Rd., Felixstowe.

Mr. J. Gimblett, 41, Kelvin Grove, Gateshead-on-Tyne; Mr. H. Gooden, 1, Langshaw Street, O.T.A., Manchester; Mr. H. Gwyn, 3, Kingston Road, Sketty, Swansea.

Mr. F. Hall, 13, St. John Street, Whitechurch, Sale; Mr. V. R. Hampson, 263, Pendlebury Road, Pendlebury, Manchester; Mr. C. E. Heavens, 6, William's Passage, West Ealing, W. 13.

Mr. F. H. P. Jack, 21, Tudor Road, East Ham, E. 6.

Mr. G. Lee, Hope Cottage, School Road, Hampton Hill.

J. J. Marsland, 85, Dale Street, Burton-on-Trent; Mr. R. Mills, Ewhurst Green, near Hawkhurst, Sussex.

L. J. North, 9, Charles Street, Cambridge; Mr. J. Norton, 14, Bellasis Street, Stafford.

A. A. Port, Rose Villa, 2, Harold Road, Sittingbourne.

W. Radford, 94, Kendall Road, Colchester; Mr. T. Reid, 5, Newark Street, off Woodhouse Lane, Wigan; Mr. J. Richmond, Glen-ryle, The Mead, Darlington; Mr. F. Richardson, Fire Station, Horsham, Sussex; Mr. D. Rees, 48, Glanmor Road, Llanelly, S. Wales; J. O. Roper, 12, Serby Rise, Carlton Road, Nottingham.

W. Shuttleworth, 33, Main Street, Hornby, Lancaster; Mr. A. Smith, 106, Burnt Oak Road, Gillingham, Kent; J. A. Stevens, 21, Great Hermitage Street, Wapping, E. 1.

Mr. J. Thompson, 88, Foyle Road, London; THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 840,

derry; Mr. A. W. A. Thornton, 19, Orchard Place, Rushden, Northants; Mr. A. E. Tyers, 46, Leopold Street, South Wigton, Leicester; G. A. Tyrrell, 65A, Murray Road, South Ealing.

Mr. A. Wade, 6, Braham Street, Long-sight, Manchester; Miss L. Walker, 73, Cedar Grove, Sefton Park, Liverpool; Mr. W. J. Wichard, 8, Henry Street, Gilfach Goch, Glam; Mr. E. Wenham, 6, Boulogne Cottages, East Peckham, Paddock Wood, Kent.

In the third grade, two hundred and fifty-two readers qualified with four errors each, and to these winners, Gramophones, Wireless Sets, Football Outfits, etc., have been awarded.

H. H. D. Abrahams, Keswick; F. Adams, Rushden; S. Adams, East Sheen; T. Adamson, Furlong Road, N. 7; F. D. Allen, Cardiff; J. Allsop, Newcastle-on-Tyne; E. Allen, Urmoston; G. Ambrose, Kilburn Park; G. E. Argent, Old Oak Estate, W. 12; W. Armytage, Methley; W. Aston, Worcester.

Miss M. Barber, Ealing; C. Bark, Knealsall; E. Beard, Redditch; G. Beard, Kempston; W. P. Beard, Cinderford; E. Beardwood, Hoyland; W. Beattie, Hulme; Miss H. E. Bell, W. Stanley; A. R. L. Bennett, Burton-on-Trent; F. Benstead, Kennington, S.E. 11; J. Berry, Haworth; C. Bowen, Swansea; L. Bramley, Witnecote; F. Bristow, Perton Stoke; E. Brooks, Morecambe; A. Brotherton, St. Annes-on-Sea; D. Bryan, Peckham; W. A. Bryan, Rye.

R. A. Camp, Gt. Baddow; W. H. Chapman, Enfield; H. Chessell, Manor Park; Miss M. Clarke, Belfast; S. G. Cleary, Belfast; C. H. Coleman, Woolwich; A. J. Cook, Walthamstow; J. Coombes, Gosport; G. Coulbeck, Cleethorpes; J. A. Courtney, Peckham; W. G. Craue, Kidderminster; H. Cryer, Leeds; R. Cunliffe, Preston; E. Curtis, Conisburgh.

W. E. Dalbey, Ipswich; T. W. David, St. Clements; E. L. Davies, Ealing; R. Davies, Pontypridd; R. J. Davies, Walton; A. H. Darbyshire, Dover; Mrs. C. Dary, Kingswood; B. J. Dawkins, Handsworth; J. M. F. Dawson, Stoke Newington; J. J. Dee, Edge Hill; A. E. Delmage, Peckham Rye; H. Spencer Dicks, Bromsgrove; H. D. Diron, Erdington; E. Drake, Egremont; G. H. Duff, Watworth; G. G. Dyer, Seaford.

R. Ellis, Nuneaton; R. C. Ellis, Plumstead; G. J. Ellis, Manchester; W. Evans, Luggie-bridge; F. Everson, Walsham-le-Willows.

R. V. Faraday, Bostall; H. Farrar, Northborough; J. Fassbender, Rathmines; G. E. Farknall, Leicester; E. N. Fox, St. Albans; P. Furlong, Glasnevin.

H. Gibson, Nuneaton; B. R. Gimson, Leicester; H. C. Glover, Paddington; C. Goodall, Congleton; A. Goodison, Deepcar; D. Gordon, Bournemouth; W. Gough, Monmouth; J. Grant, Coventry; A. S. Green, Sudbury; S. Guest, Cradley Heath; W. F. Greeves, King's Lynn; R. B. Griffiths, Cricklewood; A. W. Gunter, Exebridge.

W. Haddock, Littlethorpe; J. E. Hadfield, Keswick; C. H. Hauman, Drumcondra; R. J. Hannay, Edinburgh; H. Harker, Beeston Hill; G. Harris, Blantyre; L. Harris, Pontypridd; T. E. Harris, Birmingham; A. Harrison, Kippax; R. E. Harwood, Nottingham; S. Basson, Dudley Hill; S. Hayward, Sale; H. Heard, Manchester; R. Hebbes, Desborough; T. Henry, South Hindley; J. Hemmings, Birmingham; T. Henry, Ebbw Vale; A. Herd, Cowdenbeath; G. Hickman, Openshaw; R. Hinde, Cleveleys; A. Holmes, Balsall Heath; L. C. Howard, Maldon; E. Hudson, Litherdale; J. G. Humphries, St. Helens; D. Yorkie Hale, Newcastle; W. K. Hutchins, Southend-on-Sea.

G. Illingworth, Carlton; L. L. Ingham, Searborough.

Miss M. Jacob, Rijenbeck; B. Johnson, Old

Hill; T. S. Johnson, E. Peckham; Miss D. Jones, Aberystwyth.

J. Keelan, Drogheda; Miss D. King, Merton Park; H. L. King, Portsmouth; H. Kinnerley, Eccleshall; C. Kirk, Stoke Hammond; G. Kitchener, North Road, N. 7; A. Knight, Newport.

J. Lambert, Derby; J. B. Ledsham, Whitechurch; E. D. Levien, W. Kensington; H. R. Lewis, Manselton; R. Lidquister, Victoria; W. G. Lock, Battersea; W. G. Longhurst, Ockham; S. Luck, Wollaston; Miss D. Ludam, Bradford.

G. Main, Dabston; Miss G. Margetts, Coalville; T. Marsh, Elton; P. Marston, Sherwood Rise; A. Martin, Smallthorpe; Miss T. Martin, Glencobunckle; A. Master, St. Helens; A. S. Matlock, Fleckney; J. May, Sale; G. Mayhew, Enfield; W. McClarron, Hull; R. Meredith, Gloucester; J. Merritt, Holywood; G. Mills, E. Hereford; E. Minshall, Macclesfield; H. Moncrieff, Doncaster; T. Rees Morgan, Roath Park; W. H. Morris, Leicester.

A. Nattrass, Radford; W. Nelson, Battersea; A. Nicholls, Plumstead; Miss E. Nixon, Hanley.

G. R. Offiler, Long Eaton; C. Ogden, Oldham; L. Osborne, Manton; S. G. Osborne, Brixton; R. C. Owen, Cricklewood.

Miss P. Pagson, New Catton; N. Parker, Anfield; A. Pate, Heaton Norris; F. W. Patterson, W. Battersea; H. Pearson, Smallbridge; J. Peck, Brockley Road, S.E. 4; L. Penbery, Plumstead; Mrs. C. Perks, Oldbury; G. W. T. A. Perry, E. Dulwich; D. Phillips, Denton; J. Philipson, Nottingham; C. H. Phipp, Woodborough; Miss M. Pinney, Sidmouth; Miss A. Potter, Drakefell Road, S.E. 4; Miss W. Potter, Drakefell Road, S.E. 4; H. B. Powell, Lyde; V. Priestley, Rippenden; O. Pritchard, Merthyr Tydfil.

A. Race, Owlerton; R. L. Rankin, Ashington; F. Read, Lansdown; M. Rees, Leicester; C. W. Reeve, Tooting; G. Rice, Chiswick; H. Robinson, Bedford; E. W. Rogers, Teignmouth; A. Rolt, St. John's, S.E. 3; J. Rothwell, Chadderton; F. Rowe, St. Clements; F. Rawley, Leeds.

R. F. Simons, Haddenham; H. Sampson, Keighley; A. E. Sargent, Gorse Hill; C. Seymour, Earl's Court; F. Shelley, Stafford; L. F. Sherwood, Myddleton; R. H. Shipley, Brockley; H. V. Siddall, Parkgate; H. E. Simpson, Tamworth; W. Simpson, Harrogate; F. Singleton, Sturminster Marshall; J. G. Smart, Hackney, N.E.; C. B. Smith, Benwell; G. Smith, Coventry; W. D. R. Smith, Monmouth; P. Smith, Farnale; J. A. Smith, Sherwood; H. Spanner, Walton; J. R. Spencer, Treherbert; H. G. Southwell, Islington; J. Stammers, Ro'ness; W. Sunning, Belfast; H. Sweeting, Sparkbrook.

J. P. Talbot, Muswell Hill; H. W. Taplin, Walthamstow; S. F. Taylor, Blum; C. H. Taylor, Thornton Heath; W. Teclmer, Sunderland; H. Tetlow, Bolton; C. E. Thomas, Convil Elvet; M. Thomas, Aberlady; G. R. Thomson, Plymouth; H. Thompson, Stanley, near Derby; W. J. Thompson, Belfast; G. Tillett, Ipswich; Mrs. R. Todd, Leatherdale Street, E. 1; E. Townsend, Poplar; Miss G. Trutt, Cymerau.

W. E. Upton, Walsall.

C. Vessey, Marble Bridge.

A. G. Wallace, Dartford; J. Walsh, Drogheda; W. Walsh, Evesham; R. Wallis, Bishopston; E. Waudby, Leicester; A. Wardle, Pendlebury; A. Warren, Shobury-ness; Miss E. Watkins, Hereford; A. J. Watts, Penzance; K. G. Wheatley, Gloucester; R. Wheaton, Neale Street, Camberwell; Miss E. White, Sheerness; F. White, Bostall; D. P. Williams, Hull; E. F. Williams, Teignmouth; A. P. Wilson, Meadowfield; H. W. Wilson, Baldoek; J. Wood jun., Delph; W. F. Wright, Brynmill; A. R. Wyle, Birkenhead.

N. Yarrow, Sacriston; S. Yates, Church Gresley; A. T. E. Young, Luton; R. E. Young, Carlston-on-the-Hill.

The fourth group of prizewinners totals one thousand three hundred and sixty-four. Each of these sent solutions with five errors, and consolation prizes of Cameras, Books, etc., are being despatched to them. We regret that it is not possible to publish the names of all these winners, but the complete list may be seen at The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

(Continued on page 26.)

LUCK IS DEAD AGAINST GRIMES, THE VILLAGE GROCER'S ASSISTANT, WHO THROUGH NO FAULT OF HIS OWN GETS "SACKED." THE SYMPATHETIC ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY COMES TO THE RESCUE, HOWEVER, AND THE RESULTS WHICH FOLLOW ARE AS AMAZING AS THEY ARE MIRTHFUL.



GUSSY'S GROCERY STORE!

An Extra-Long Amusing
Story of the World -
Renowned Tom Merry &
Co. at St. Jim's.

BY FAMOUS
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Rough on Grimes!

"GWEAT Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, riding on his cycle from St. Jim's towards Rylcombe, gave utterance to that sudden cry, and jammed the brakes on hard.

He dismounted, and looked in amazement across the fields to his right.

"Bai Jove! Somebody is bein' attacked by a gang of wuffs and—"

The afternoon stillness was disturbed by a cry of pain. A number of rough-looking fellows—evidently some of the hooligan element of Rylcombe—had a young fellow in their clutches, and they were maltreating him unmercifully.

The victim of this cowardly attack was hitting out at his assailants and putting up a plucky fight; but the odds—four to one—were too much for him. He was in dire straits when D'Arcy stopped his machine in the Rylcombe Lane.

The swell of St. Jim's clenched his fists hard, and his eyes gleamed. Even his monocle seemed to glimmer with wrath. "Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "The awful wottahs! They are four against one, and— Oh, gweat Scott! It's Grimes!"

D'Arcy gave a start on recognising the roughs' victim as Grimes, the village grocer's assistant.

Grimes, seeing the St. Jim's junior at the same instant, gave an appealing cry.

"Elp, Master D'Arcy! They're ruinin' my things, and—"

"I'm comin', deah boy!"

Pushing back his cuffs and jamming his monocle tighter into his eye, the swell of St. Jim's charged across the fields to the small bridle-path where Grimes was struggling with his brutal assailants.

The toughs turned on hearing D'Arcy's footsteps, and the ringleader—a huge, rascally-looking lout—gave a scoffing laugh.

"Haw, haw, haw! Look wot's comin', mates! A blinkin' tailor's dummy, and— Yah! Ow! Wot the— Yaroooooh!"

Biff!

D'Arcy's right landed on the burly fellow's jaw next minute with a force that might have been imparted by a sledge-hammer. Its recipient gave a dismal howl, and, reeling

backwards crashed over into a clump of thick, prickly brambles.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now, you wottahs," said Arthur Augustus, between his teeth, "come on, bai Jove!"

"Down 'im!" howled one of the gang, rushing at D'Arcy. Crash!

Gussy brought the hooligan up sharp with a well-planted uppercut on the nose, and another on the chest. The two other ruffians rushed in, their fists going like mowing-machines, but the noble swell of St. Jim's dodged nimbly and hit out straight from the shoulder.

Biff! Wallop! Thud!

Grimes, with a glad cry, leapt to D'Arcy's side, and, although one eye was half closed and his mouth was bleeding, he backed up his rescuer in a very able manner.

The roughs howled, and gave ground before this determined onslaught.

The ringleader was still reclining ungracefully in the bramble-bush. The other three found D'Arcy and Grimes more than a match for their terrific efforts.

"Yaroooooogh!" roared one, as Gussy's left jabbed on his jaw. "Oh crumbs! Oooogh!"

"Wow-wow-wow!" wailed the burly fellow next to him, going down beneath a smashing right-hander on the ribs.

"Yah! Wow! Woooooop!" yelled the third, with the doughty Grimes punching grimly at him with flying fists.

"That's wight, deah boy—give it to 'em hot!" gasped Gussy, dropping another of the toughs with a terrific punch between the eyes. "Heah comes the othah chap out of the bush! Take that, you wottah—and that—and that!"

"Yaroooooogh! Yah! Wow!"

Two of the toughs sprang up, and, dodging Gussy and Grimes, took to their heels and disappeared.

D'Arcy and the grocer's boy, fighting shoulder to shoulder, then waded into the other two and smote them hip and thigh.

The hooligans' howls of wrath and anguish rang out loudly on the afternoon air.

At last they had had enough. Gasping and moaning dismally, they turned and fled, leaving their caps behind them. "Huwah!" gasped Gussy. "We've won, deah boy!"

D'Arcy picked up his topper, which had fallen in the fray, dusted it carefully, and put it on his head. He then adjusted his monocle, and gave Grimes a cheery grin.

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"Well, that's got wid of those wuffians, bai Jove!" he said. "Jollay fortunate I happened to come along, Gwimes!"

"I'm very much obliged to you, Master D'Arcy," said the grocer's boy gratefully. "I reckon they'd 'ave made mince-meat of me if you 'adn't chipped in. Oh crumbs! Look at my basket!"

Grimes regarded his delivery basket in deep dismay.

The basket was lying on the ground, trampled out of shape. Its sides were burst in, and the handle broken away. The groceries it had contained were scattered about the footpath, and were utterly ruined. Eggs were smashed, and butter and cheese trodden to a pulp. Sugar and tea were mixed in a ghastly mass on the ground, and tins of condensed milk and preserved fruits had been trampled on, burst open, and their contents despoiled.

Grimes' face was a picture of dismay as he surveyed the ruin.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped. "Look at the groceries, Master D'Arcy! Wot will Mr. Sands say?"

"Jollay wotten luck, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "But surely Sands won't make a wot about it! When you explain to him that you were attacked by a wascally gang of wuffians—"

"It's no good, Master D'Arcy," said Grimes, shaking his head miserably. "This isn't the first time I've 'ad the groceries ruined. Roker, the ringleader of the toughs, and 'is gang 'ave made a mark of me for a long time. They're always waylayin' me and settin' about me. Four times durin' the last three weeks I've 'ad to go back to Mr. Sands with the groceries I 'ad to deliver all ruined. Sands thinks I'm to blame, for fightin' with the rotters, an'—an' he said yesterday that if it 'appened again 'e'd sack me."

"What uttah wot!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "It isn't your fault, Gwimes, and—"

"But Mr. Sands doesn't look at it like that, Master D'Arcy," said the grocer's boy quietly. "Business isn't any too good lately, an' 'e's gettin' very bad-tempered. Roker knows that, an' 'e's been doin' this purposely—to get me the sack. I've never done Roker any 'arm, Master D'Arcy. 'E's just taken a dislike to me, that's all."

"I know you're true blue, Gwimes!" said D'Arcy vehemently. "I have always had the highest wegard for you, deah boy, an' I'm vewy deeply concerned in this howwid affair. I'll see that you have your wights! I'll come along to Mr. Sands myself and explain things to him, bai Jove! As a fellow of tact and judgment, I shall probably be able to put things wight. Don't wowwy, Gwimes; I'll look aftah you!"

"Which I'm very much obliged, Master D'Arcy," said Grimes.

"Pway don't mention it, deah boy!" said Gussy graciously. "I wegard you as a friend, Gwimes, and I make a point of always standin' by my friends. Pick up the basket and some of the things, and I'll come along to Mr. Sands with you now!"

Grimes dutifully picked up the basket, and replaced some of the ruined groceries in it.

The grocer's boy had a respect for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that almost amounted to worship. The swell of St. Jim's, although a scion of a rich and famous family of noblemen, was not a snob, and he was on terms of close friendship with Grimes. Gussy's friendships took no count of rank or riches. Grimes was well known to the other boys of St. Jim's, and was liked by all the decent fellows, but to Grimes' mind there was nobody in the whole wide world to compare with the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Weady, Gwimes?" asked Gussy.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"Then come along, deah boy!"

D'Arcy and Grimes walked to the Rylcombe Lane, and then made their way together into the village, the noble swell of St. Jim's wheeling his bicycle, and Grimes carrying his battered basket.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Sands is Unreasonable!

MR. SANDS, the grocer, was standing by the counter of his little shop in the Rylcombe High Street when Grimes and D'Arcy entered it. His eyes opened wide on seeing the basket Grimes was carrying.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed.

D'Arcy raised his topper.

"Good-aftahnoon, Mr. Sands!" he said. "Wathah wippin' weathah for this time of the year—what?"

Mr. Sands ignored Gussy altogether.

He glared at his young assistant and at the basket and at the ruined groceries within.

"Grimes," he spluttered, "you little rascal! Then you've been fighting again!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Grimes miserably. "I couldn't help it. Roker, and the others set about me unexpectedly. I tried to dodge 'em, but—"

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"Pway allow me to explain, Mr. Sands," said Arthur Augustus. "Gwimes has been the victim of a gwoos and wuffianly attack by a numbah of young wascals belongin' to this village—"

"Look at the basket!" hooted Mr. Sands. "Look at the groceries! They're all done in!"

"Yaas, I'm afwaid the gwocewies have suffahed somewhat as a result of the fwacas, Mr. Sands," said Gussy. "But that makes no difference."

"Makes no difference!" howled the infuriated Mr. Sands. "Thirty bobs' worth of provisions ruined, and my customers waiting for delivery! Makes no difference! Why, you—you—"

"Pway calm yourself, my deah sir!" said Gussy pacifically. "The wegwettable spoilin' of the gwocewies makes no difference to Gwimes' responsibility. I assuah you, Mr. Sands, that no blame whatevah attaches to Gwimes."

Mr. Sands gave a snort. He was evidently in a most irascible mood.

"I do blame Grimes," he snapped. "I have warned him about this before. Grimes is sacked!"

"Weally, Mr. Sands, if you will be weasonable—"

"I won't be weasonable!" howled Mr. Sands. "I—I mean, I won't argue with you any more. Clear out, both of you!" Grimes, with a nervous look at D'Arcy, walked to the door.

But D'Arcy stood firm, his eyes glinting with wrath.

"Mr. Sands, I ask you once more to be weasonable," he exclaimed. "I am afwaid you are lettin' your tempah gain the mastery of your common sense."

"What—what?" stutted Mr. Sands.

"Pway contvol yourself, my deah sir. I wegard you as an unweasonable, hard-hearted tywant, bai Jove, to dismiss Gwimes for somethin' that wasn't his fault. I demand that he be weinstated immediately!"

Mr. Sands seemed to choke.

"You—you demand! Oh, my 'at!" he gurgled.

"Yaas, I demand that Gwimes be given back his situation," said D'Arcy firmly. "I twust you won't considah it a pwesumption on my part to point out where you are in the w'ong, but undah the cires—"

"Why, you—you insolent little scoundrel!" burst out the village grocer, in a voice pent with rage. "You—you impertinent young scamp, to come in here, into my own shop, to dictate to me! Why, I—I—I—"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Get out!" howled Mr. Sands wrathfully. "Do you hear! Get out, or I'll throw you out!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "I wefuse to be thwown out! I—Oh! Yaw! Gweat Scott! Hands off, Mr. Sands! Yawoooooooooogh!"

The infuriated Mr. Sands wasted no more time on words. He resorted to deeds. He made a rush at Gussy, grasped him by the scruff of his noble neck, and proceeded to propel him towards the shop door.

D'Arcy roared and struggled.

"Yawoooooooooogh! Yah! Welease me, you wottah! Gwoooogh! Oh deah! Ow-ow! Mr. Sands, I shall be undah the painful necessity of givin' you a feaful thwashin'—yow-wow!—if you do not welease me this instant! Oooooo!"

"Outside!" howled Mr. Sands, struggling wildly with the swell of St. Jim's. "I'll teach you to come in 'ere, with your high-falutin' talk! Get out!"

Mr. Sands and Gussy waltzed through the shop doorway, clasped in each other's embrace. Grimes stood on the pavement, looking aghast.

At that moment six schoolboy figures ran across the road and gazed on the scene in astonishment. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "It's Gussy!"

"Scrapping with Sands!" gasped Blake, in a faint voice.

"What the dickens has our prize chump been up to now?" Bump!

Mr. Sands and Gussy crashed into a box of eggs, and D'Arcy, losing his balance, sat down heavily in the centre of the box, with Mr. Sands on top of him.

Scrunch!

"Bai Jove!"

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

Scores of eggs burst beneath Gussy as he fell into the crate. The luckless swell of St. Jim's reclined ungracefully in a horrible, clammy mass of added eggs. And from some of those eggs there arose a rather overpowering odour, indicating that the label on the box—"Fresh Eggs"—did not apply to all of them.

"Whew!" gasped Monty Lowther falling back rather hastily. "What a niff! Gussy's in a mess now, and no giddy error!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Sands struggled up. He gazed in horror at his crate of eggs, in which Gussy was wallowing. Then, with a wild



"Outside!" howled Mr. Sands, struggling wildly with the swell of St. Jim's. "I'll teach you to come in 'ere with your 'igh-falutin' talk! Get out!" Mr. Sands and Gussy waltzed through the shop doorway, clasped in each other's embrace. Grimes stood on the pavement looking aghast. At that moment six schoolboy figures came dashing across the road to ascertain the cause of the trouble. They were Tom Merry & Co. (See page 4.)

shriek, he dashed forward and dragged Gussy out of the crate.

"You little rascal!" howled Mr. Sands. "You've ruined my eggs! Look at 'em! You—you—"

"Gwoooogh! Oh deah! Yow!" gurgled Gussy. "You pushed me in, you wuff wottah! Oh, bai Jove! I do feel howwible! Is my clobber in a vewy feahful state, deah boys?"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the rear view of Arthur Augustus—and they wept! They had to hold each other up for support in their merriment. Gussy's lovely clobber was smothered with the yolks of scores of eggs, and fragments of egg-shells clung lovingly to him. The aroma was emphatic, to say the least of it.

Grimes was fairly doubled up with laughter.

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

"Haw, haw, haw!" guffawed the villagers, in high delight.

Mr. Sands was beside himself with wrath. He danced in his shop doorway.

"You little scoundrel!" he screamed. "I'll have the law on you! I'll make you pay for those eggs! I'll—"

"Gwoooogh! You feahful maniac, Mr. Sands! It was all your own fault!" gasped Gussy, wiping his monocle and jamming it into his eye. "This serves you wight, bai Jove! You should have listened to weason! If you hadn't been such a heartless wottah in sackin' Gwimes—"

"Don't let me see him near my shop again!" howled Mr. Sands, trembling with rage. "Nor you neither! If I do, I—I won't be responsible for my actions!"

With that Mr. Sands gave Gussy a homicidal look and disappeared into the interior of his shop.

D'Arcy gazed round at his hilarious chums. It dawned upon him that his intervention had made things rather worse for Grimes, if anything.

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see any cause whatevah for mewwiment!" he said severely.

"Don't you, Gussy?" sobbed Blake. "You should look behind you, then. Oh dear! This is prime! Ha, ha, ha!"

Grimes came forward with Gussy's topper.

"I'm awfully sorry, Master D'Arcy," he said. "It's all through me, and—"

"Wats!" retorted D'Arcy warmly. "Don't be an ass,

deah boy! I mean to stick by you, Gwimes, and see this thing through. I should advise you to have nothin' more to do with that wottah, Sands, but to twansfer your services to some othah employah."

Grimes gave a rueful grin.

"I only wish I could, Master D'Arcy," he said. "But there ain't any jobs goin' nowadays. Trade's bad everywhere, and I look like bein' out of work for a long time, unless Mr. Sands take me back."

D'Arcy looked distressed.

"Bai Jove! That's wotten, deah boy! But nevah mind, Gwimes. Wely on me to see things put wight. I'll see you latah. I weally must get back to St. Jim's now. I'm in a feahful mess, and I look uttably widic in my pwesent state!"

Gussy raised his topper politely to Grimes, and walked on. Tom Merry & Co. followed, and a laughing crowd brought up the rear.

"Poor old Gussy!" gasped Blake. "You'll have all the dogs after you in a minute, old chap. Those eggs niff!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy grasped his cycle, leaped into the saddle, and pedalled furiously away in the direction of St. Jim's. He left his chums and the villagers in hysterics of mirth.

He did not stop until he reached St. Jim's, where he devoted the next half-hour in the bath-room, indulging in a thorough clean up and a change of raiment.

CHAPTER 3.

Thinking Things Out!

GRIMES' dismissal from the service of Mr. Sands weighed heavily on D'Arcy all that evening. He was really concerned about the village grocer-boy's plight.

Gussy had thoroughly made up his mind to stand by Grimes through thick and thin. And when Gussy made up his mind wild horses would not drag him from his determination!

Next morning, when lessons were over, he left St. Jim's and went down to Rylcombe.

"Pewwaps old Sands is in a more reasonable fwame of mind this mornin'," murmured the swell of St. Jim's to himself as he walked along the old-fashioned High Street. "I weally must put things wight for Gwimes. The poor chap has to support himself, and if he doesn't obtain employment he'll be stony bwoke an' starvin'. I won't see Gwimes in that howwible pwedie, bai Jove! Oh, hallo, Gwimes, deah boy!"

"Grimes himself was standing on the corner near Mr. Sands' shop, looking very miserable. His face brightened considerably when he saw the swell of St. Jim's."

"Good-morning, Master D'Arcy!" he said respectfully, raising his cap.

Gussy raised his topper with all the politeness that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, and shook hands with the grocer's boy.

"I'm just goin' along to have a word with Mr. Sands, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "As a fellow of tact and judgment, I shall probably be able to put things wight this mornin'."

Grimes shook his head dolefully.

"I've just been to see Mr. Sands myself, Master D'Arcy," he said. "I asked him to let me have my job back and deduct so much a week from my wages to pay for the damage that's been done. But it's no go. Wot do you think? Roker 'as got my job."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "That wottah who set upon you when workin' for Sands!"

"Yes; 'e's wormed 'is way in some'ow, Master D'Arcy," said Grimes miserably. "'E's years older than I am, of course, but Roker never did do much for 'is livin'. Roker's a bad egg, Master D'Arcy, that's wot 'e is!"

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

He walked boldly into Mr. Sands' shop, and came face to face with the huge, beetle-browed Roker and Mr. Sands.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Sands," said D'Arcy, pretending not to have noticed the unwelcome glare that the grocer gave him. "I twust you will see your way cleah to weconsidah your decision about my friend Gwimes. I considah—"

"Grimes' situation has been filled, and you will oblige me by getting out of my shop!" snapped Mr. Sands.

"But weally, my deah sir—"

"Roker, turn him out!"

"Ahem!" coughed Roker, blinking uncertainly at the elegant swell of St. Jim's. He did not seem at all enthusiastic about obeying his employer's order.

"Woker had bettah not werset to violence, othahwise I shall considah it my dutay to give him a feahful thwashin'!" said Gussy warmly. "Howevah, I will go, Mr. Sands; but I will just make this wemark in goin'. You will wue the day that you tweated poor Gwimes so shamefully! The youngstah is undah my pwotection, and I'm goin' to see that he doesn't suffah, bai Jove!"

With that D'Arcy elevated his aristocratic nose high in the air and marched out of Mr. Sands' shop.

"Well, any luck, Master D'Arcy?" asked Grimes eagerly, meeting the swell of St. Jim's outside.

"Sands seems determined not to have you back, I'm afwaid, Gwimes," said D'Arcy. "But don't wowwy, deah boy. I'm standin' by you, wemembah!"

He pressed a ten-shilling note into Grimes' hand, and, with a kindly nod, he walked away.

"Oh, Master D'Arcy," exclaimed Grimes huskily, "I—I can't accept—"

But Gussy was hurrying, for it was nearly dinner-time, and he had only ten minutes in which to get back to St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus did not go straight back, however.

He went first to the post-office, and sent off a wire to Lord Eastwood, his noble pater, then he hurried into the local printer's and gave a rapid order.

He arrived back at St. Jim's in rather a breathless state, and Mr. Railton gave him a severe look as he dashed into the dining-room.

Gussy appeared to be very thoughtful during dinner, and he did not eat much. Baggy Trimble had Gussy's share of the pudding and dessert.

Even when the Fourth assembled in the Form-room for lessons D'Arcy seemed to be preoccupied. He did not take much notice of Blake & Co's conversation, so wrapped up was he with his own thoughts.

Mr. Lathom entered the Form-room, looking rather grim. The Fourth was rather a troublesome Form, and they had been slacking lately.

The first lesson—Latin—commenced. Arthur Augustus' thoughts dwelt not upon the lesson, however. Mr. Lathom's eyes glinted when he saw the swell of the Fourth seated with his chin resting on his hands, gazing before him abstractedly.

"D'Arcy!" rapped the Form master.

Gussy did not seem to hear.

Blake leaned forward and stealthily inserted the business end of a pin in his chum's aristocratic leg.

"Yawwoogh! Yah! Oh cwumbs! Oooop!" roared Gussy, giving a jump.

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"D'Arcy!" rapped Mr. Lathom, "What is the matter? Aren't you well?"

"Bai Jove! I'm all wight, sir!"

"Then kindly pay attention to the lesson, D'Arcy!" rapped Mr. Lathom sternly.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Blake and several others gave Gussy queer glances.

They soon discovered that some weighty matter, quite foreign to lessons, was occupying their noble chum's brain, for Gussy, no sooner had Mr. Lathom turned his attention to Baggy Trimble and the intricacies of the ablative absolute, relapsed once more into a reverie.

"Gussy!" whispered Blake. "Better look at your book, old man!"

Arthur Augustus was brought up sharp several times by Mr. Lathom, and by the end of the lesson he had amassed six hundred lines in inpositions for not paying attention.

History came next, and as Mr. Lathom was taking revision, which consisted of asking questions round the class, D'Arcy again found an opportunity of letting his mind wander back to the mysterious subject that was occupying his mind.

When it came to D'Arcy's turn to be questioned the swell of the Fourth was deeply abstracted. He did not see Mr. Lathom glare at him, and he did not see the warning glances of his anxious Form-fellows.

"D'Arcy, what did Sir Walter Raleigh bring back from America that had never been seen before in England?" rapped Mr. Lathom.

Gussy gave a start on hearing the Form master's voice.

"Oh! Er—baked beans!" he murmured.

Mr. Lathom fell back as though electrocuted, and a hush fell on the Fourth Form.

Blake looked at Gussy in alarm, wondering whether his chum's brain had turned.

"D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Lathom at last.

Gussy jumped so violently that his monocle dropped to the end of its cord. He groped for it and replaced it in position. Then he blinked at Mr. Lathom in dismay.

"Oh cwumbs! You—you were talkin' to me, sir!" he gasped.

"Yes, D'Arcy. I asked you a question!" replied Mr. Lathom between his teeth. "And the answer you gave was as ridiculous as it was impertinent, D'Arcy! What do you mean by it?"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "I—I'm fwightfully sowwy, sir. I was labouwin' undah a misappwehension. I—I mean, I must have been day-dreamin'—"

"So you were day-dreaming, D'Arcy, when you should have been paying attention to the lesson!" rapped Mr. Lathom. "Pray what had baked beans to do with your day-dreaming, D'Arcy?"

"Nun-nothin', sir, weally."

"I presume, D'Arcy, that you were dreaming of baked beans?" demanded the Form master icily.

"Ya-as, sir!" gasped Gussy.

"D'Arcy, were I to permit myself to stoop to slang, I should say that I would give you beans!" said Mr. Lathom in cutting tones. "Come here!"

D'Arcy stepped to the front, and received four cuts from Mr. Lathom's stoutest ashplant, laid on with all the force that the Form master could muster.

The luckless swell was gasping when he returned to his place.

"There, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom grimly. "Perhaps that will keep you awake!"

The lesson proceeded.

D'Arcy did not day-dream again, although at several periods a thoughtful expression crept over his face.

When lessons were over and the Fourth trooped out Gussy was surrounded.

"Now, you blithering idiot, what does it mean?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"When a chap starts gassing about baked beans in history lesson it's pretty certain that he's off his rocker!" said Cardew. "Where do you feel the pain most, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I haven't any pain at all! And I uttably wepudiate the suggestion that I am off my wockah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus with considerable heat. "I wufuse to speak to you asses!"

With that Gussy walked away in high dudgeon.

He fetched his topper and gloves from Study No. 6, and a few minutes later he left St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.

Gussy's Great Wheeze!

"DOES Mastah Gwimes live heah, ma'am?"

Arthur Augustus was standing at the door of a very humble tenement house in the poor neighbourhood of Rylcombe, and he addressed himself to an unkempt, slatternly-looking woman who had answered his knock.



"Did you read the notice on my gate?" roared the angry-looking man. "'No hawkers, no circulars!' Get away with your confounded bills!" "Weally, my deah sir," protested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Gr-r-r-r-rrrr!" Arthur Augustus turned on his heels and fled as a fierce-looking dog dashed out of the hall and darted at him. "Yawwooooh! Keep that howwid dog away, sir!" he gasped. (See page 9.)

Chivalrous as ever, Gussy had raised his topper and bowed politely to the lady, who seemed thunderstruck, not only at the elegant appearance of the visitor, but at his gallantry.

"Lawks!" said the lady. "Which you gave me quite a turn, you did! So you're a-wantin' of Master Grimes, young gent?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Straight upstairs—first door on the right—and mind the pram in the passidge!" said the good lady.

Gussy walked into the musty-smelling house, squeezed by the perambulator, in which a baby was crying loudly, and walked gingerly up the stairs.

He tapped on the first door on the right.

"Come in!" said a boyish voice.

D'Arcy entered.

Grimes, who was seated at the table in the humbly furnished room poring over a book, jumped up in great confusion.

"Oh, Master D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "I—I didn't expect you—"

"That's all wight, deah boy!" said Gussy cheerfully. "I thought I'd give you a knock up as I particularly wanted to see you!"

"Has Sands promised to take me back?" asked Grimes eagerly.

"No, wathah not, deah boy!" said Gussy. "Look heah, Gwimes! I've been thinkin' things ovah, and I've decided to set you up in business on your own, and make you independent of old Sands!"

Grimes blinked at his aristocratic visitor in amazement. "My 'at!" he gasped faintly. "Set me up in business! Wot business, Master D'Arcy?"

"In the gwocewry business, of course!" said Gussy. "I wegard it as my duty, as a friend of yours, Gwimes, to stand by you in your hour of twouble and see to your future welfare. Bein' only a youngstah, you need the guidin' hand of a fellow of tact an' judgment, you know!"

Grimes grinned.

"That's verry kind of you, Master D'Arcy," he said. "But you shouldn't. I mean, I don't deserve—"

"Wats!" said Gussy. "I'm goin' to set you up in business, I say. Now, I noticed this mornin' that theah's a shop to let wight opposite old Sands' stores in Wylcombe High Street. That's what gave me the ideah, you know. I pwopose we went that shop, fit it up as a gwocewry store, and wun it in opposition to Sands. That would make the old boundah open his eyes, bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's suggestion made Grimes open his eyes, too.

"Corks!" he gasped. "D—do you mean it, Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! Of course I mean it, deah boy!"

"But—but it will cost pounds and pounds!" exclaimed Grimes. "I haven't any money—"

"Don't wowwy about monay affairs, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "I'll pwovide the capital to start the business with. I wired to my patah this mornin'. I shall have to supervise the thing, of course, as you are wathah inexperienced to take the full responsibility of wunnin' a business."

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"We will wun this business as a payin' concern!" said the swell of St. Jim's enthusiastically. "I wathah pwide myself on my keen judgment an' foresight. In the long wun we'll make the business pwoduce huge pwofits, deah boy, and, pwwwaps, latah on, you will be able to open bwanches in othah towns—who knows?"

Grimes' eyes glistened eagerly.

He had infinite trust in D'Arcy, who was his idol. His voice was husky as he spoke.

"Master D'Arcy, it—it seems too good to be true!" he said. "I'm nothin' to you—just a common errand-boy, and—"

"Don't be a sillay chump, Gwimes!" said D'Arcy severely. "Just come along with me, and we'll see about the shop!"

Grimes accompanied Gussy into the Rylcombe High Street. The empty shop opposite Mr. Sands' grocery store was

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small, but appeared to be ideal for D'Arcy's sensational purpose. There was a bill in the window giving the address of the agent to whom the letting of the shop had been entrusted. D'Arcy noted the address, and he and Grimes wended their footsteps to the house agent's office next door to the railway-station.

Mr. Letts, the house agent, evinced great surprise when the swell of St. Jim's intimated that he wished to rent No. 49, High Street, Rylcombe.

"My friend heah and I are about to open a gwocawey store," said Gussy in explanation. "Pway what went do you wequiah for the pweimises?"

"The rent of the shop is very nominal—a pound a week, Master—er—D'Arcy," replied Mr. Letts.

"That's wippin'! Heah's three weeks' went in advance!" Gussy took out his pocket-book, which was well filled with notes.

He handed the astonished house agent three pounds.

Ten minutes later D'Arcy and Grimes walked from the house agent's office, legal tenants of No. 49, High Street, Rylcombe.

D'Arcy had the key and the receipt for the rent.

"Heah we are at our shop, deah boy!" he said cheerfully, as they arrived at the empty premises. "Wathah a wippin' little place—what?"

"Wot-ho!" said Grimes, in huge delight.

Gussy opened the door, and he and Grimes went in.

The interior of the shop was dusty, and papers and miscellaneous lumber bestrewed the floor. But D'Arcy and Grimes did not pay much heed to that. They beamed with gratification when they saw that the shop was complete with a counter and a goodly number of shelves all round the walls.

"Bai Jove! This will suit us down to the gground, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, wiping the dust off his monocle. "All we have to do now is to clear up, get our stock in—and there you are!"

"My word! You—you're a brick—a real brick, Master D'Arcy!" said Grimes, looking with adoring gratitude at his aristocratic benefactor.

"Wats!" retorted Gussy. "And pway wefwain fwom addwessin' me as Mastah D'Arcy, Gwimes! I do not wegard you as an infwior, but as a fwend. Besides, we're partners now, bai Jove!"

"Thank you, Master D'— I mean, yes, quite so. Wot shall we call the place?"

"I have already decided on the title, and I have given an order for bills to be pwinted!" said Gussy. "We shall dis-twibute those bills all ovah Wylcombe—to all Sands' customers especially. This establishment will be called the Direct Supply Gwocawey Stores. How's that, deah boy?"

"Top-ole!" chuckled Grimes. "My heye, won't old Sands 'ave a fit when we do open?"

"Yaas, wathah! We'll sell our pwovisions at the cheapest possible pwices, and captuah all his twade!" said the swell of St. Jim's enthusiastically. "We'll put him wight out of the wunnin', bai Jove! All faiah in love and war, you know! Sands showed no considewation for you, deah boy, so we will have no considewation for Sands. I had always wegard Sands as a most respectable and worthy gentleman, but I feah that my confidwence was misplaced. We'll fight the old boundah tooth an' nail!"

"Wot-ho!" chuckled Grimes. "I know where to get our stock—from the Wholesale Provision Company, at Wayland. They supply Sands, and a fine profit 'e makes on 'is things, too!"

"That's toppin'!" said Gussy. "You know all the wopes of the pwovision twade, Gwimes, so your suggestions will be useful. I have been thinkin' of some things we shall want for a start. The latest ideah in business is to push one particular line, in ordah to attwact twade for othah stuff. So I pwopose we push baked beans!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em, Master D'Arcy!" grinned Grimes.

D'Arcy and Grimes between them made out a list of the stock they would require. Grimes, having worked at Mr. Sands' shop, knew exactly what to get. The list having been completed, D'Arcy left Grimes to tidy up the shop whilst he went along to the telephone at the village post-office.

He rang up the Wholesale Provision Company at Wayland, and explained that he was opening business at 49, High Street, Rylcombe, as the Direct Supply Grocery Stores, and gave the list of the things he wanted. He gave the names

of Lord Eastwood and Dr. Holmes as references, and this satisfied the firm of provision merchants. They took Gussy's order, and promised that the goods should be delivered the next day. They also undertook to supply D'Arcy with advertising matter relating to the goods he was going to sell.

Half an hour later Gussy left his shop in the High Street and wended his footsteps back to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

Nothing Like Advertising I

"I SAY, Gusey, here's a parcel for you!" said Talbot, when he entered the School House. "It was delivered by a boy just now."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed D'Arcy, taking the parcel.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy!"

He went upstairs to Study No. 6.

That famous apartment was empty, Blake, Herries, and Digby being at tea with Tom Merry & Co. in Study No. 10.

D'Arcy had no thought for tea. He opened the parcel, and his eyes gleamed with satisfaction. It contained a stack of freshly-printed memos, headed, "THE DIRECT SUPPLY GROCERY STORES!" and also a bundle of leaflets, on which the following appeared:

"THE DIRECT SUPPLY GROCERY STORES!"

NOTICE TO ALL RYLCOMBE RESIDENTS!

A Long-Felt Want Supplied! Good Groceries at Last! Local Housewives and Others will be Glad to hear that No. 49, High Street, Rylcombe, has been taken over by

THE DIRECT SUPPLY GROCERY STORES,

and that this establishment will shortly open for the sale of High Class Provisions at Popular Prices.

NOTE THE ADDRESS! DON'T BE MISLED! 49, HIGH STREET!

Right Goods at the Right Price! Full Weight! No Sand in the Sugar! No Water in the Jam!
We Defy All Rivals! Give us a Trial!

THE PEOPLE OF RYLCOMBE WILL BE WELL SERVED AT LAST!

Note!—We have no connection with any Inferior Stores already in the High Street. You will find us right OPPOSITE TO SWINDLING!

Be well advised. Purchase all your Butter, Eggs, Bacon, Cheese, Jams, etc., from THE DIRECT SUPPLY GROCERY STORES!

BAKED BEANS A SPECIALITY!"

"That's wippin', bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "The pwintahs were vewy pwompt. I took the wisk of ordewin' these befoah I had definitely wented the shop, but things are all wight, thanks to my foresight an' judgment. Now, these bills have got to be distributed. Theah's no time like the pwesent, and I think I'll start wight away."

With the parcel tucked under his arm, Arthur Augustus cycled away from St. Jim's.

Arriving at the little shop in the village, he found Grimes there, and all in order.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, with an approving look round. "You must have been workin' jollay hard, Gwimes! What do you think of these bills, deah boy?"

Grimes chuckled when he read Gussy's circular.

"Top-ole!" he said. "I suppose these 'ave got to be shoved in people's letter-boxes!"

"Yaas, that's the ideah!" said D'Arcy. "And I pwopose we start at once, deah boy."

"Right-ho!" said Grimes cheerily. "I'll do it, Master D'Arcy. You could 'ardly go round Rylcombe stickin' bills in letter-boxes. Better leave that to me."

"Wats!" retorted the noble swell of St. Jim's. "I'm goin' to take my share of the work, Gwimes. I'm not a slackah, bai Jove! We'll each take half of these circulars, and we ought to be able to throwoughly papah the neighbourhood in a vewy short time."

"Oid right, Master D'Arcy."

"Make out a list of Sands' customahs, deah boy," said Gussy. "I'll see that they have a bill, bai Jove!"

A few minutes later D'Arcy and Grimes called forth from the little shop in the High Street, each with a goodly bundle of bills under his arm for distribution.

They had decided as to which streets each should "work."

Gussy mounted his cycle and rode away.

When he reached his "area" he dismounted, and, leaving his cycle at a greengrocer's shop to be looked after, he walked away, first presenting one of the bills to the astounded greengrocer.

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY.....PRICE 2s

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 840.

"Now for business, bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. He went from house to house and slipped one of the circulars in each letter-box.

Many of the addresses that Gussy went to were those of Mr. Sands' customers. He put two bills in each of those.

The aristocratic bill-distributor soon attracted attention. People stared out of their windows when they saw Arthur Augustus coming to their front doors, and they gasped in amazement when they found that he had only come to distribute bills.

Children in the streets also wondered mightily when they saw Gussy's elegant figure going from door to door, and they followed him curiously.

Arthur Augustus soon found that he had a band of village urchins accompanying him on his rounds.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, stopping and adjusting his monocle. "Pway wun away an' play, you childwen! Theah's nothin' to be given away!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the urchins. "Where did you get that 'at, young toff?"

"Look at 'is winder!"

D'Arcy strutted away in deep indignation and proceeded with his bill distributing. But, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, his followers increased in numbers as he went on, and they hung on like leeches.

D'Arcy stopped again, outside the house of one of Mr. Sands' customers, and glared at them.

"Weally, you interfewin' little wuffians, I weseuse to have you follow me about like this!" he said heatedly. "Wun off!"

"Garn!" retorted one facetious urchin. "You don't own the road, Cuthbert!"

Gussy went red and hastened through the gate of the house in order to deliver a bill.

But no sooner had he reached the porch than the front door opened, and a big, angry-looking man strode forth.

"Did you read that notice on the gate?" he roared. "No hawkers, no circulars! Get away with your confounded bills!"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Here, Bruno, seize him!" snapped the man, looking behind him.

"Gr-r-r-rrrr!"

A fierce-looking dog dashed out of the hall and looked hungrily at Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Keep that howwid dog away, sir! Dogs have no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs and—Yawwoogh!"

Gussy fled down the garden path as Bruno darted at him.

He fairly ripped open the gate, and, hurtling through, slammed it behind him.

Gussy, in his precipitate flight, lost his footing outside the gate and he came down with a crash. Leaflets went flying in the wind, and his topper fell off. This was immediately seized on by the urchins, who, using it in the manner of a football, commenced to dribble it about in the road.

Gussy jumped up in great wrath.

"Gweat Scott! My toppah! You little wuffians, let it alone!" he screeched.

He made a dive after his topper, but it was heftily kicked away to the opposite side of the road. Gussy dashed after it, in company with the laughing horde of children, and so began an exciting game of "catch" with Gussy's topper.

"Ho! Wot's all this?"

P.-c. Crump, the local arm of the law, rolled down the street, and on seeing him the village urchins took alarm. They disappeared in a twinkling, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lying in the middle of the road surrounded by his scattered leaflets and with a badly battered topper in one hand.

"Oh, ewumbs! Bai Jove! The little wottahs! Gwoogh! Oh deah!" gasped the luckless swell.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed P.-c. Crump. "Which you seems to 'ave 'ad a rough time of it, Master D'Arcy."

Gussy groaned, struggled to his feet, and picked up his leaflets.

Many were despoiled, so he threw them away. His battered topper he set straight on his head.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "It's all though that wottah settin' the dog on me! Were it not for that fewocious animal, I should weturn and wemonstwate with him! Gwoogh! Thank goodness those little wottahs are gone!"

Gussy proceeded on his way.

He distributed several more bills, and then called for his cycle, as it was time for him to be returning to St. Jim's.

He intended making one more call on his way back—to the house of Colonel Pepworth.

The colonel's house was a large one, standing back from the road on the outskirts of Rylcombe.

Arriving outside, D'Arcy set his cycle against a tree and walked through the gate.

It was now dark, and as he approached the house he saw a stealthy figure moving in the shadows down the area.

Instantly suspicious, D'Arcy quickened his pace. Arriving

at the top of the stone steps that led down into the basement of the house, D'Arcy saw a burly figure tampering with the lock of the kitchen door.

As soon as he heard the St. Jim's junior arrive the other swung round, with a guilty exclamation, and looked up.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "It's Wokah!"

Roker scowled up at him.

"What are you doin', you wottah?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Wot's that to do with you?" snarled the hooligan, with an attempt at bravado. "If yer wants to know, I'm deliverin' groceries for Mr. Sands!"

He had a basket at his side which contained groceries.

Gussy looked hard at Roker as that worthy, mounting the steps, brushed past him and disappeared hastily into the road.

D'Arcy descended to the basement, and soon discovered that there was nobody in. The servants evidently had the evening off.

"Wokah was twyin' to get in through the window, and I weckon he was up to no good, bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy to himself, as he pushed a circular under the basement door.

He inserted another in the house letter-box, and then rode back to St. Jim's, thinking of Roker and his mysterious conduct at the colonel's house.

CHAPTER 6.

The Grocery Store Opens!

THE next day Arthur Augustus received a letter from his pater, enclosing sufficient cash to enable him to make a start in the grocery business. Lord Eastwood expressed some doubt in his letter, however, as to his wisdom in backing Gussy in such a venture.

D'Arcy, much to his chums' wonder, spent most of his leisure time that day in Rylcombe.

Wednesday followed, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and Jack Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. were putting in the afternoon at footer.

They were surprised, on looking for Gussy, to find him in Study No. 6, busy arranging his necktie in front of the looking-glass.

"Gussy, you mysterious idiot, what about footer?" demanded Blake.

"I'm not playin' this aftahnoon, deah boys!" replied Arthur Augustus. "I have somethin' far more important to think about."

"You blithering ass! Come down to footer!" snorted Herries.

"I suppose you're mashing some fair charmer in Rylcombe?"

"Weally, Heweries, I weseent that wemark!" said Gussy heatedly. "I wepeat, deah boys, that I cannot come down to footah this aftahnoon. It's no use arguin', because I'm as firm as a wock!"

"As obstinate as a mule, you mean!" growled Blake.

"Oh, well, let the fathead go his own way, kids. He'll want us to get him out of trouble sooner or later!"

"Wats!"

With that expressive remark the swell of St. Jim's put on his topper and left Study No. 6. He made his way down to Rylcombe.

He had, as a matter of fact, fixed that afternoon for the grand opening of his grocery store. By dint of much labour on the part of both himself and Grimes, the little shop had been got ready for business.

D'Arcy had not mentioned his scheme to his chums as yet; for one reason, he knew that they would make fun of it; and for the other, that he wanted his grocery store to be a little surprise to them.

No. 49, High Street presented quite a smart and business-like appearance.

The name, "The Direct Supply Grocery Stores," was painted large over the shopfront in glaring yellow characters. The windows displayed an imposing array of provisions of all descriptions. There were boxes of currants, huge tins of biscuits, eggs, cheeses, and stacks of tins of sardines and preserved fruits, among other things.

Pasted on the windows were highly-coloured advertisements of Shaker's Oats and Pestle's Milk and Bournbury Cocoa and Slipton's Tea, and other commodities that were for sale inside.

"Bai Jove!" chuckled Arthur Augustus, standing opposite his little store and rubbing his hands in satisfaction. "The place looks weally whippin' in daylight! I wondah what old Sands thinks about it?"

He peered into Mr. Sands' shop, and saw that worthy glaring across the road at the new rival establishment. The Rylcombe grocer did not look very pleased at the idea of the Direct Supply Grocery Stores, opening right opposite him!

"Hallo, Gwimes, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, as his young partner came up. "Eweythin' weady for openin'?"

"Wot-ho!" chuckled Grimes.

They crossed the road and entered the little shop.

Mr. Sands, watching from his shop window, almost fell

down when he saw Grimes unlock the door and enter, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy following behind him!

The interior of Gussy's Grocery Store presented a very neat and orderly appearance.

Sawdust bestrewed the floor, and leaning against the counter were sacks of rice, haricot beans, and oatmeal. Crates of eggs and boxes containing provisions were arranged round the walls. The shelves were well filled with all manner of boxes and bottles and jars and tins. There was a glass case on the counter in which soaps and other articles were displayed. The counter also had on it a pair of scales, a measure, and stacks of tins of cocoa, tea, and coffee for effect.

Gussy took off his topper and his Eton jacket, and put on a nice white apron. Grimes also put on an apron. Then two crates of eggs were placed outside the shop door, and a large board hung from the top of the doorway, announcing:

**"THE DIRECT SUPPLY GROCERY STORES
NOW OPEN!"**

BEST GOODS AT ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES!

STEP INSIDE FOR VALUE!"

Gussy's Grocery Store was open!

Arthur Augustus looked out, and saw, to his great satisfaction, that a large number of people—mostly ladies—had gathered round the shop. They had evidently been attracted there by the leaflets.

The first customer to enter the shop was a tiny, grubby-faced urchin, wearing a bowler hat that had evidently once belonged to his father or a brother. He carried a huge jug minus a spout.

"Good-aftahnoon, my little man!" said Arthur Augustus politely. "Pway what can I get you?"

"Penn'orth o' treacle!" said the little man, with a stare at Gussy from under his huge hat.

Gussy took the jug, and went to the barrel where he kept the treacle. He opened the tap and filled the jug.

"My heye!" gasped Grimes. "I say—"

"Heah you are, sonny!" said D'Arcy.

The youth paid the penny, took the jug, and blinked.

"Corks!" he said. "Some penn'orth, this!"

Next minute he dived out of the shop, frightened lest D'Arcy should change his mind.

"That's a beginnin', deah boy, although wathah a small one!" said Gussy cheerfully, as he put the penny in the till.

Grimes thought that the end would not be far away, if D'Arcy continued on the same lavish lines, but he thought far too much of Gussy's feelings to say so.

A tall, rather grim-looking lady was the next to enter. She carried a shopping bag, the sight of which caused the eyes of the youthful shopmen to sparkle.

"Good-aftahnoon, madam!" said Gussy politely. "Can I get you anythin'?"

"I want some gammon rashers," said the lady. "About a pound."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gussy took down a gammon and commenced to slice it up. The lady watched him with glinting eyes.

"Don't cut 'em so thick, young man!" she snapped. "I said rashers—not doorstep!"

"Bai Jove! Vewy well, ma'am!" gasped Gussy.

He was cutting rashers that were quite a quarter of an inch thick.

Grimes came to his rescue and cut the bacon, whilst Gussy weighed out some butter and lard and put six eggs in a bag. Tea, coffee, and currants were next ordered, and promptly supplied. Gussy wrapped them all up neatly and loaded them in the lady's bag.

"That will be eight shillin's and elevenpence, ma'am," said D'Arcy. "Is theah anythin' else I can get you? I have some pwime cheese, and I can highly wecommend our baked beans! No home is complete without baked beans. Supposin' your husband comes home late aftah his work, what ought you to give him? Beans, bai Jove!"

"Nonsense!" snapped the lady. "I have no husband!"

"Oh!" said Gussy. "Well—er—ahem!—why not twy baked beans yourself? Theah's nothin' like baked beans to keep you fit, and pweserve the bloom of youth even in advancin' age—"

"Boy, you are impertinent!" exclaimed the lady angrily. "I don't want any baked beans. Give me my change!"

D'Arcy did so, and the lady stalked out of the shop. Gussy blinked after her, and Grimes grinned.

"Somethin' seemed to upset her, Gwimes," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I wegard her as a most unweasonable female, bai Jove!"

Next moment three children came into the shop, and they were followed by four more. The children were carrying jugs and jam-jars and bottles, and each had a penny.

"Penn'orth o' treacle, please!" they all chorused together.

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"Oh, my 'at!" gasped Grimes. "That kid you sold the treacle to 'as spread the noose about that ye're givin' a jugful o' treacle for a penny! That's done it! 'Ere comes some more of 'em!"

Numerous other juveniles entered with jugs and other large containers.

The children clamoured for their pennyworths of treacle, and D'Arcy hastened to serve them. He filled the jugs and the jam-jars and the bottles. By the time all the children had been served the barrel of treacle was empty, and there was no more treacle in the place, except that which Gussy had spilled down his beautiful trousers.

"Sold out of twecale alweady, bai Jove!" chuckled the swell of St. Jim's. "Business is pwetty bwisk, Gwimes!"

Grimes grimaced. A barrel of treacle had been disposed of for the magnificent total of one and a penny!

The youthful shopmen soon had all their time occupied, however.

Gussy's leaflets had had their effect, and a number of local housewives came along to give the new grocery stores a trial.

D'Arcy worked like a Trojan in weighing up butter, cheese, sugar, and other provisions. Grimes enjoyed himself to the full.

And, standing at his shop door opposite, Mr. Sands watched the proceedings with a face that was purple with wrath and jealousy.

Roker was with him and his hands were working convulsively.

The Direct Supply Grocery Stores seemed to be doing a roaring trade!

Arthur Augustus, quite new to serving in a shop, was very liberal with the weight he gave. His customers noticed it, and mentally registered their decisions to come again!

When the opening rush was over, D'Arcy and Grimes were able to enjoy a breather.

"We've taken over ten pounds so far, deah boy," said the noble swell. "Not so bad for a start, bai Jove!"

"Wot-ho!" grinned Grimes. "Look at old Sands across the road! 'E's tearin' 'is 'air!"

Grimes and Gussy went to the door of their shop, and smiled sweetly at Mr. Sands across the road.

"Arternoon, sir!" called Grimes. "'Ow's trade these days?"

Mr. Sands' shop had been empty all the time, and Grimes knew it. Mr. Sands shook his fist furiously at his ex-errand-boy.

"You little rascal!" he roared. "Trying to take the bread-and-butter out of an honest tradesman's mouth!"

Mr. Sands was positively beside himself with rage.

The afternoon wore on, and trade at Gussy's Grocery Store continued to be brisk.

Towards tea-time the number of customers diminished. D'Arcy and Grimes were standing in the shop, discussing the success of the new venture, when there was a tramping of feet outside, and Roker walked in, followed by a number of rowdies.

"Oh, bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy, scenting trouble immediately. "Look out, Gwimes!"

Roker stalked up to D'Arcy, feeling brave now that he was backed up by all his cronies.

"Now, my buck, wot about it?" he demanded threateningly. "Wot do you mean by this? Settin' up in hoppelosition to my employer—eh? Think you'll make 'im close down, an' throw me out o' work! I can see yore game, an' I'm going to stop it! You've gotta close this place—see?"

"Bai Jove! I shall do no such thing!" exclaimed Gussy, his eyes glinting. "We have as much wight to wun a gwocewy store as Sands, and—"

"Then you ain't a-goin' to stop this tomfoolery?"

"I wufuse to have this business chawactewised as tomfoolery!" retorted D'Arcy. "Kindly wemove yourselves fwom this shop, or—"

Crash!

With one swoop of his hand Roker knocked down a stack of tins of preserved fruit from the counter. This was the signal to his fellow-hooligans. The rascals commenced to hurl over everything they could lay their hands on. In a trice Gussy's Grocery Store became the scene of wild pandemonium.

"Gweat Scott! You feahful wuffians!" cried D'Arcy, pushing back his cuffs. "I'll give you all a feahful thwashin'!"

Roker and two others grasped D'Arcy and pulled him over. He struck out with his fists, and landed several telling blows on the toughs. Grimes pluckily picked up a broom and commenced to strike out with it.

The toughs howled, but Grimes' sudden rush angered them still more, and they closed in with ugly looks.

"Wreck the whole bloomin' issue!" snarled Roker.

"Crump is on 'is beat down by the Rhyl. We've got the place to ourselves. We'll show this young dandy wot's wot! Pile in, mates!"



Whiz! Wallop! Crash! Tom Merry & Co. gathered up eggs from the boxes outside D'Arcy's shop and, using them as ammunition, pelted the fleeing hooligans. Their aims were true, and the eggs burst in great profusion on the persons of Roker & Co. Then other ammunition followed, and soon the air was alive with whizzing eggs and flour bags. "Yoogh! Yah! Stoppit!" yelled Roker & Co. (See this page.)

The mates "piled" in.

Gussy and Grimes shouted and struggled, but all in vain. Against such odds they were powerless.

A number of startled urchins gathered outside to watch the excitement.

Roker & Co. proceeded to despoil everything they could lay their hands upon.

The fracas was just about at its height when Arthur Augustus, fighting on the floor in Roker's grip, saw some juniors in St. Jim's school caps on the opposite side of the road, and he let out a loud yell:

"Wescue, St. Jim's! Help— Yooooooogh!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. halted.

The football match was over, and they had come down to the village to look for Gussy.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Blake. "That was Gussy's foot! Where did it come from!"

"There's a rumpus going on in that grocery shop over there," said Tom Merry. "He might— Oh, my only hat! There's Gussy in there! And young Grimes! They're being mauled by hooligans! This way, kids!"

The St. Jim's juniors dashed across the road and piled into the little shop. They beheld a scene of havoc and ruin, and saw Gussy, his apron ripped to shreds, fighting with the rascals on the floor, whilst Grimes was making plucky attempts to beat back the hooligans with the broom.

Tom Merry & Co. did not wait to inquire the reason for Gussy being in the shop. They saw their noble chum in distress, and they went to his rescue with fists flying.

Biff! Crash! Wallop!

"Yaroooooogh!"

"Look out, mates!"

"Whoooooooogh!"

The hooligans fell back under the unexpected attack.

Tom Merry & Co. gave them no quarter. They drove them round and round the little shop. Roker & Co. went tumbling over the boxes they had pulled down on the floor. They sprawled over in great confusion, howling. And when they got up again they were pounced upon by the plucky school-boys and given a thorough drubbing.

"Hawwah!" cried Arthur Augustus, joining in the fray with both his fists busy, while Grimes was performing Trojan work beside him. "We'll give it to the wottahs now, deah boys! Take that, Wokah, you cad!"

Biff!

"Yooooooogh!"

Roker & Co. felt that they had had enough at last.

They fought their way to the door of the little shop, and hurtled out into the High Street in confusion. Once out in the open air they took to their heels and ran.

"Sock it to 'em!" panted Tom Merry. "Plenty of eggs here!"

"What-ho!"

Whiz! Wallop! Crash!

Tom Merry & Co. gathered up eggs from the boxes outside, and, using them as ammunition, pelted the fleeing hooligans. Their marksmanship was true, and the eggs burst in great profusion on the persons of Roker & Co.

"Yoogh!"

"Yah! Stoppit!"

Whiz! Crash! Thud!

Other ammunition was forthcoming in the shape of battered bags of flour.

The air in Rylcombe High Street was soon alive with whizzing eggs and flour-bags.

The flour-bags burst when they struck, and the toughs were smothered by the contents. They disappeared down side turnings amidst the laughter of the village populace, their condition being truly weird and wonderful to behold.

Tom Merry & Co. crowded back inside the shop and looked at Arthur Augustus.

"Well, Gussy, what does this mean?" demanded Blake.

"What the merry thunder are you doing here, anyway?"

"Gwimes and I are partners in this business, deah boys," replied the swell, wiping the dust from his monocle. "This is our gwocewy-store, you see."

"Gug-good heavens!"

"Gussy's Grocery Store!"

The juniors were overwhelmed with amazement. They looked at Gussy and at Grimes and at the shop, and then at each other like boys in a dream.

"Well, carry me home to die, somebody!" said Monty Lowther, in a faint voice. "What will Gussy do next?"

"Weally, deah boys, theah is nothin' to be so surprised about," said D'Arcy.

He then explained to his chums how he came to be in the grocery business with Grimes.

Tom Merry & Co. recovered from their surprise and chuckled.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the band!" gasped Blake. "Gussy, you're a giddy knock-out! So this is your secret? How long do you reckon you'll keep this show running?"

"Bai Jove! I twust that the business will remain heah permanently!" said D'Arcy, with great warmth. "Of course, I'm only supewintendin' things until Gwimes gets his hand in. Then I shall hand ovah the management to him, and Gwimes can cawwy on on his own. This is weally intended to be Gwimes' business, you see. Sands sacked him, you know, and I pwidge myself that this is wathah a good idea of mine to set Gwimes up in opposition to that old boundah!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, you've made a good start, anyway!" he said.

"Gussy, old man, you're an ass, but a good ass. We wish you luck!"

Tom Merry & Co. then lent a hand in tidying up the shop.

"Thanks awfully, deah boys!" said Gussy. "Pewwaps I can wely on you for some custom? I can recommend our bacon—it's weally pwime! Our eggs, too, are as fwesh as—

as daisies. Baked beans a speciality, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors good-naturedly made several purchases. They were served with great civility and despatch. They gathered up their parcels and prepared to leave.

"What about this cheese, Lowthah?" asked D'Arcy.

"Pewwaps you would pwefere to have it sent?"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Monty. "Give it my name and address, and it will come home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. left the Direct Supply Grocery Stores and wended their way homeward to tell the glorious news of Gussy's latest venture to all St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Goes Canvassing!

TAP!

Dr. Holmes, the venerable Head of St. Jim's, looked up as that tap sounded at his study door. In response to his grave "come in," the door opened and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered.

He gave a cough.

"May I encroach upon your time for a few minutes, sir?" he asked. "I have come on a vewy special mattah—"

"I am always willing to help or give advice, D'Arcy," replied the Head. "What is your trouble?"

"Ahem!" coughed Gussy. "I have come to wespectfully solicit ordahs for gwocewies—"

"Bless my soul!"

"On behalf of the Diwect Supply Gwocewy Stores, of which I have the honah to be a partner," proceeded the swell of the Fourth impressively. "I can assuah you, sir, that the goods we supply are of the vewy best quality, and pwices are weally wock-bottom. I twust you will favah us with a twial ordah, sir?"

"D'Arcy!"

"Fwesh eggs at tuppence each, sir, and they're weally good! Othahs at thwee-ha-pence each. I can highly wecommend our bacon, sir, and our high-quality teas are unwivalled for strength and flavah! We have a special line in daiwy buttah, and our pwime cheeses will need no wecommendation aftah you have once twied them. We are makin' a special offah in baked beans—"

"Dear me! D'Arcy, what does this mean?" Dr. Holmes

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rose from his chair and peered in amazement at the swell of the Fourth over the rims of his gold-rimmed eyeglasses.

"Is this an absurd practical joke, or—"

"Wathah not, sir! I twust you will not considah it a liberty on my part, but if I can book an ordah fwom you I shall be extremewly obliged. The Diwect Supply Gwocewy Stores undahakes to deliver all goods the same day as ordahed. I hope you will give us a twial, sir. Pewwaps you will be interestwed in our jams and pweserved fwuits—"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "D'Arcy, I fail to understand. How dare you come to me soliciting orders for—for groceries! Can it be that you have taken employment in a provision stores?"

"I am helpin' a young fwend of mine to make a livin', sir," said Gussy warmly; and he explained.

Dr. Holmes' grim features gradually relaxed into a smile.

"Dear me! D'Arcy, you are a most extraordinary youth!" he exclaimed at length. "I have never heard of such a thing. Your motive is certainly good, but—but for a schoolboy and an errand boy to commence business as provision dealers—"

"A little pwactical encouagement is all we wequiah, sir, to make the thing a going concern!" said Gussy diplomatically. "Now, may I book an ordah, sir?"

Dr. Holmes smiled, and good-naturedly gave D'Arcy an order.

Gussy wrote it down in a very businesslike way in a little notebook, and promised that the goods should be delivered that day.

He left the Head smiling broadly.

"So far, so good!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's, as he wended his way down the passage. "I have already booked several things for Mrs. Kebble. The matwon is a good sort. Now I think I'll do some canvassin' in the Sixth, bai Jove!"

Gussy went along to the Sixth Form passage, and he knocked at Knox's door.

The surly prefect glared at D'Arcy when that noble youth entered.

"Good-mornin', Knox!" said Gussy. "Are you wantin' any gwocewies?"

"What!" said Knox, knitting his brows.

"I wepwesent the Diwect Supply Gwocewy Stores of Wylcombe. All goods of the best quality, and pwices low. How about some baked beans, deah boy? That's our special line."

"My hat!" gasped Knox. "You cheeky young sweep, to come here canvassing for orders—"

"Weally, Knox, a twial will convince you of the quality of our goods," said D'Arcy firmly. "I wecommend our fine teas and daiwy buttah. Pwime home-cured bacon and—"

"So you want an order, do you, D'Arcy?" said Knox, his eyes glinting.

"Yaas, wathah! Nothin' too small or too large. All ordahs executed the same day an' delivahed fwee!"

"Right-ho!" said Knox. "Deliver me two hundred lines by bed-time this evening, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Knox—"

"Nothing too small or too large!" grinned Knox. "Make it five hundred. Deliver to-day, you know, or there'll be trouble!"

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Gussy. "Look heah—"

"Now get out!" snapped Knox, reaching for his cane.

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed indignantly, but a prefect's word was law, so he gave a haughty sniff and departed.

Knox had given him an order—but not of the sort he wanted!

Arthur Augustus called next at Kildare's study.

The stalwart skipper of St. Jim's roared when D'Arcy solicited orders for his grocery store. Kildare listened sympathetically to the story of Grimes' dismissal and Gussy's reprisal on Mr. Sands, and he gave the amateur provision dealer an order for jams and biscuits.

Great was the amusement among the great men of the Sixth at D'Arcy's new role. Most of them good-naturedly followed Kildare's example, and gave Gussy's Grocery Store a trial.

The swell of St. Jim's was not quite so fortunate in the Fifth.

Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger were at home, having a quiet smoke and a little game of cards when Gussy called.

They cut the junior short in his dilation on the merits of his goods. A knob of coal struck Gussy on the nose, and a cushion, hurled by St. Leger's unerring aim, thudded forcibly on his fancy waistcoat.

Gussy saw a pat of butter coming his way, and he skipped hastily out of Cutts' study.

Lefevre was more reasonable, and humorously ordered one nutmeg and an ounce of carraway seeds.

D'Arcy solemnly booked the order and proceeded on his rounds.

The whole school was soon roaring over Gussy's venture into the grocery trade. St. Jim's seemed to regard it as a great joke. Arthur Augustus was very serious about it, however.

Directly lessons were over that morning he went down to the village.

Grimes was on duty in the grocery store, and business was still quite brisk.

"Sands ain't arf in a wax, Master D'Arcy!" grinned his young partner. "E's been makin' faces at me across the street all the mornin'. More people come to this shop than to 'is. And some of Sands' customers 'ave been 'ere, too. I talked 'em into transferrin' their custom to little hus!"

"That's wippin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "We'll do Sands pwopahly in the eye, bai Jove! I'm goin' out to do some canvassin'. I've already booked a nambah of ordahs fwom St. Jim's."

"Fine!" chuckled Grimes.

Gussy left the shop, and, seeing Mr. Sands standing in his doorway opposite, he raised his topper.

Mr. Sands shook his fist at his schoolboy rival.

D'Arcy smiled and walked on.

He had a list of Mr. Sands' customers, and these he determined to call upon. D'Arcy had infinite faith in his own tact and judgment.

The house of the gentleman with the dog he gave a wide berth.

But most of Mr. Sands' other customers received a visit from the aristocratic swell of St. Jim's. They listened to the schoolboy canvasser in surprise, and no little amusement. He received several rebuffs, having doors shut upon him at some places, and being peremptorily ordered away from others.

But on the whole D'Arcy was well satisfied with the result of his canvassing.

His little notebook contained a good list of orders by the time he made his way back to the little shop in the Rylcombe High Street.

Grimes was still busy serving, much to the anger of Mr. Sands opposite.

He chuckled when Arthur Augustus showed him the list of orders he had obtained.

"That's top-ole, Master D'Arcy!" he said. "But wot about deliverin' 'em? There must be somebody 'ere to look after the shop—"

"Leave the delivewin' of the goods to me, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "I've got an ideah! Don't wowwy: the Diwest Supply Gwocewy Stores will live up to its name!"

And Gussy, with a genial nod to Grimes, walked out into the High Street and returned to St. Jim's for dinner.

CHAPTER 8.

Delivering the Goods!

"SISTER ANNE, do you see anyone coming?"

Monty Lowther gave expression to that remark.

It was early afternoon at St. Jim's, and most of the fellows were thinking about tea.

D'Arcy had rushed away directly lessons were over. His chums guessed his destination, and chuckled. Gussy had no time for affairs at the school, now that he was running a grocery store! He had been chipped all day long; it was, in fact, the standing joke of the school.

Tom Merry & Co. were standing at the top of the School House steps when Monty Lowther made his remark.

The juniors looked towards the gates, and then they gasped. Riding a carrier tricycle through the school gates was the aristocratic figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, resplendent as usual in fancy waistcoat, topper, and spats.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed unbelievably at this apparition. They began to doubt the evidence of their own eyes.

"Wh-what the merry dickens—" gurgled Blake. "I'm seeing things! Visions is about! Kids, that can't be Gussy riding that carrier tricycle!"

"It is!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"Hold me up, somebody!" spluttered Monty Lowther. "This is more than I can bear!"

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling!"

Arthur Augustus rang the bell on his carrier as Carly Gibson walked across his path. Carly turned, and, seeing the swell of the Fourth, almost fell down.

He beckoned to Wally D'Arcy, who was talking to Joe Frayne not far away. The hero of the Third went limp when he saw his major.

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!" gurgled Wally. "Look at old Gus! Riding a giddy tradesman's carrier! My only sainted Aunt Jane!"

D'Arcy stopped the carrier tricycle at the base of the School House steps and dismounted.

"Heah we are, deah boys!" he said cheerfully. "I've bwrought the gwocewies!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!"

The name of Gussy's Grocery Store was inscribed large upon the sides of the carrier tricycle. Arthur Augustus opened the top of the carrier and took out a large basket laden with goods.

"Your sausages, Tom Mewwy," he said, handing the Shell captain a parcel. "A jar of stawbewwy jam for you, Blake, and a tin of sardines for Hewwies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared.

Fellows gathered from far and near, and when Arthur Augustus was seen with his carrier tricycle, delivering groceries, a chorus of laughter arose.

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and looked round severely.

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see any cause whatever for wibald laughin'!" he said.

"We can!" howled Blake. "Gussy, old man, you'll be the death of me yet! Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy struggled up the School House steps with his basket, and went indoors to deliver the goods.

Whilst he was gone Wally D'Arcy and a horde of his fellow fags came up.

"Well, I never thought I should bring up my major to this!" said the hero of the Third, wiping away an imaginary tear. "Anyway, kids, what price a ride round on this giddy carrier?"

"What-ho!" chorused the fags.

Wally sat in the saddle, and Carly Gibson, Paget, and Jameson clambered on the carrier. Wally ground at the pedals, and away they went!

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

Wally & Co. were riding merrily round the quadrangle when Arthur Augustus reappeared at the top of the School House steps with his empty basket. His aristocratic visage took on a look of blank surprise when he saw his cheery minor riding his chums about on the carrier tricycle!

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "What feahful check! Wally! Wally, you little wascal! Stop!"

He dashed down the steps, and gave wild pursuit to the carrier tricycle. Wally looked back and dug at the pedals for all he was worth. He led his major a strenuous race-round the quadrangle before he gave out! Then he and his fellow-fags jumped off the tricycle and scudded away!

"Gwoogh! Oh deah! Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, grabbing the vehicle. "Wally, I will deal with you latah, you little wascal! Gwoooogh!"

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

D'Arcy mounted the saddle, set his topper straight, adjusted his monocle, and rode away from St. Jim's in high dignity.

He left his schoolfellows in hysterics of mirth.

"The silly chumps!" he murmured indignantly to himself as he pedalled the carrier tricycle down the Rylcombe Lane. "I wogard them as fwabjous asses, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus made several calls, delivering groceries to his customers. Smiles greeted him everywhere he went. Such an aristocratic errand-boy had never been seen, and his appearance created great amusement.

He was riding into Rylcombe when some youths he knew well appeared. They were Gordon Gay & Co. of Rylcombe Grammar School.

The Grammarians blinked in amazement at Gussy.

"My hat!" ejaculated Gordon Gay. "Gaze at it and weep, my sons! It is the One and Only from St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Monk, Harry Wootton, and Carboy in chorus.

Gussy passed them with a sniff. He stopped at a house a little farther on to deliver some groceries.

While Gussy was talking to the good lady of the house, Gordon Gay crept up to the carrier tricycle and chalked these words in large letters on the front:

"PLEASE THROW SOMETHING!"

Then the Grammarians walked on, whistling, and looking quite innocent of any guile.

Gussy left the house, mounted the saddle, and pedalled away in blissful ignorance of Gordon Gay's little joke.

It came as a rude shock to him when, approaching a group of yokels standing by a farm-cart, loaded with mangel-wurzels, he saw them stare at the front of his carrier, grin, and then reach up to the contents of the cart.

"Please throw something!" roared one of the yokels.

"Anything to oblige a gent. 'Ere goes!"

Whiz!

"Yawwoooooh!" roared Gussy, as a huge mangel-wurzel struck him amidships. "You wuff wottah! Oooooooop!"

Mangels came flying at him thick and fast. He was subjected to a perfect barrage as he rode past the cart. With one hand holding down his topper and his other hand steering the tricycle, he pedalled furiously down the lane, and at last got out of range.

"Gwoogh! Bai Jove! The wascals!" gasped the luckless swell. "For two pins I'd go back and admintah a feahful thwashin'! Yow-wow! I wondah why they thwew those things at me in that uttally unpwovoked mannah!"

He rode on and reached the village streets.

Pedestrians laughed loudly when they saw him coming, and numerous missiles came his way. D'Arcy couldn't account for it at all. His ride through Rylcombe was like running the gauntlet. All manner of things were hurled at

him. An over-ripe tomato struck him in the nape of his neck and, bursting, disported itself down his back. A muddy chunk of turf dented his topper and left a mark where it had struck.

"Oh-deah! Gwooooh! This is awful!" he gasped, arriving at last outside his little shop, at the door of which Grimes was standing. "Gwimes, deah boy, I've had a most frightful time!"

"My honny 'at!" exclaimed Grimes, blinking at the front of the tricycle. "No wonder. Look 'ere, Master D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus' mouth opened wide when he saw the words chalked on the carrier.

"Bai Jove!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" guffawed the villagers.

Mr. Sands was chuckling from his shop across the road, evidently in huge enjoyment of the joke.

Gussy wiped away the chalk marks with a beautiful cambric handkerchief, and, bestowing a haughty look upon the laughing villagers, he stalked into the shop.

"Weally, Gwimes, I'm wathah fed-up with delivewin' the gwoocwies!" he gasped. "I think we'll employ somebody to go the wounds."

"As you please, Master D'Arcy," said Grimes dutifully.

A little later a notice appeared outside the Direct Supply Grocery Stores. It bore these words:

"ASSISTANT WANTED TO DELIVER GOODS!"

Arthur Augustus and Grimes, both in neat aprons, were busy serving the customers when a gentleman of rather seedy appearance, and smelling strongly of intoxicating liquor, walked into the shop.

"Good-afternoon!" said Gussy, turning to the newcomer, after serving a little girl with some pickles. "Pway, what can I do for you, sir?"

"Which I've come to apply for the job, young gent," said the seedy one.

"Oh, yaas!" said Gussy, looking rather dubiously at the applicant. "What qualifications have you?"

"A wife an' seven starvin' children, mister!" said the seedy gentleman mournfully. "Which I thought as 'ow you'd give me a chance to feed the wife an' kids, sir. I'm an 'ard-workin' cove, straight I am!"

"Bai Jove! You have a wife and seven youngstahs to support!" gasped D'Arcy. "Then you certainly need a job, deah boy. Gwimes, I think we'll employ this unfortunate man."

"Ahem!" said Grimes.

He had his doubts as to the veracity of the seedy gentleman's statements, but he would not offend D'Arcy for the world by questioning his judgment.

"What name?" asked D'Arcy.

"Dodger, sir—'Enry Dodger."

"Vewy well, Dodger. Considah yourself engaged. Your duties will be to delivah gwoocwies, take ordahs, an' make yourself genewally useful. Your salary to commence with will be, shall we say, five pounds a week?"

"My heye!" gasped 'Enry Dodger, clutching the counter for support. "Five bloomin' quid a week!"

"Do you accept the offah, Dodger?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yessir," said Dodger, with great alacrity.

"Vewy good! Gwimes, pack up those othah parcels in a basket. Dodger can commence his duties at once."

"Pardon my askin', sir, but could you manage to let me 'ave somethin' on account?" asked 'Enry Dodger, in a pathetic voice. "It's only for the wife and kids I asks it, honest! Just a trifle to buy 'em some bread."

"Certainly, Dodger! I entirely approve of your thought for your poor wife and children. Heah's a pound, deah boy. I must say you are a cweedit as a husband and a fathah, bai Jove!"

"Thank 'ee kindly, sir!" said Dodger, taking the Treasury note eagerly in his grubby palm.

Five minutes later the new assistant went forth from Gussy's Grocery Store with a basket of provisions to deliver. His first place of call was the Blue Pig public-house, in Rylcombe High Street. He was in there quite fifteen minutes, and his footsteps were very unsteady when he emerged. And, strange to relate, the people at the Blue Pig were not customers of the Direct Supply Grocery Stores at all, so that Mr. 'Enry Dodger's visit there was curious, to say the least of it.

CHAPTER 9.

Ructions at the Store!

TOM MERRY & Co. looked into Gussy's shop next day. Arthur Augustus and Grimes were still going strong. There was no lack of customers, and Mr. Sands, standing forlornly in his shop doorway opposite, wore a very dejected look.

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"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake cheerfully. "How's trade?"

"Wippin', deah boy!" said the swell of St. Jim's from behind the counter. "Can I serve you with anythin' in the gwoocwies line? Canned hewwin's are cheap to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. 'Enry Dodger was sorting out parcels in a corner of the shop, in preparation to delivering them by cycle carrier.

Tom Merry & Co. looked rather askance at Gussy's seedy assistant.

"Do you employ him to hold down the cheese, Gussy?" inquired Blake, in a soft voice.

"Pway don't be funny, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "Dodger is a most deservin' case. He has a wife an' seven children to support."

"He's been drinking," observed Tom Merry, when Mr. Dodger had gone away on the carrier tricycle. "I reckon he's taken advantage of your good nature, Gussy, and spoofed you!"

"Wats!" was D'Arcy's emphatic, if inelegant, retort.

Tom Merry & Co. left Gussy's store a little later, and wended their footsteps towards the Rhyl.

As they were strolling along the towing-path, talking of footer matters, Monty Lowther suddenly caught sight of Gussy's carrier tricycle among the trees.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, when Monty pointed this out. "That's rummy. Old Dodger or Dodger, or whatever his name is, ought to be delivering groceries. I had my doubts about that merchant from the first moment I saw him. Let's have a look and see what he's doing."

The St. Jim's juniors crept softly over to the trees, near where the carrier tricycle was standing. They heard rough voices as they approached, and they suddenly came upon a clearing in the trees, through which they saw Gussy's assistant talking to Roker.

Mr. Dodger and Roker were standing some distance away from the carrier tricycle. Mr. Dodger was drinking from a bottle that Roker had evidently supplied him with. Two of Roker's companions were hovering suspiciously near the tricycle. One had a basket full of provisions.

"I wonder whether they are robbing the carrier while that intoxicated old reprobate is being held off by Roker?" murmured Blake grimly.

"The basket has Mr. Sands' name printed on it," said Tom Merry, with a puzzled frown. "Roker is working for Sands, you know, so perhaps the groceries in it belong to Sands. Anyway, this looks jolly queer."

The juniors darted back into cover, for at that moment Mr. Dodger turned to the carrier tricycle and ponderously mounted the saddle.

He rode off, steering a very wobbly course along the towing-path, indicating that he was somewhat under the influence of potent liquor.

Roker & Co. walked into the wood, laughing coarsely, as if in enjoyment of some huge joke.

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded on their way.

"I wonder what's in the wind?" said Manners. "Those rotters were up to something, that's evident."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I think we ought to warn Gussy," he said. "Let's go back and tell him."

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

The juniors retraced their footsteps to Gussy's little store in the High Street.

The swell of the Fourth and Grimes were serving two ladies, but when the customers had gone Tom Merry told Gussy of what they had seen.

"The affair looked jolly fishy to me!" said the Shell captain. "Personally, I don't think Dodger is to be trusted, Gussy."

"Dodger is all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I must admit, deah boys, that I have noticed a weakness for dwink in him. But I'm much obliged for what you have told me. I will keep an eye on Dodger, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. remained in the shop, chatting to Gussy.

Half an hour later an indignant-looking lady stalked into the shop, carrying a paper which contained a yellow, greasy substance. She thrust it right under D'Arcy's nose.

"Smell it!" she rapped shrilly.

Gussy had no alternative but to smell it. He drew his head back hurriedly and made a grimace.

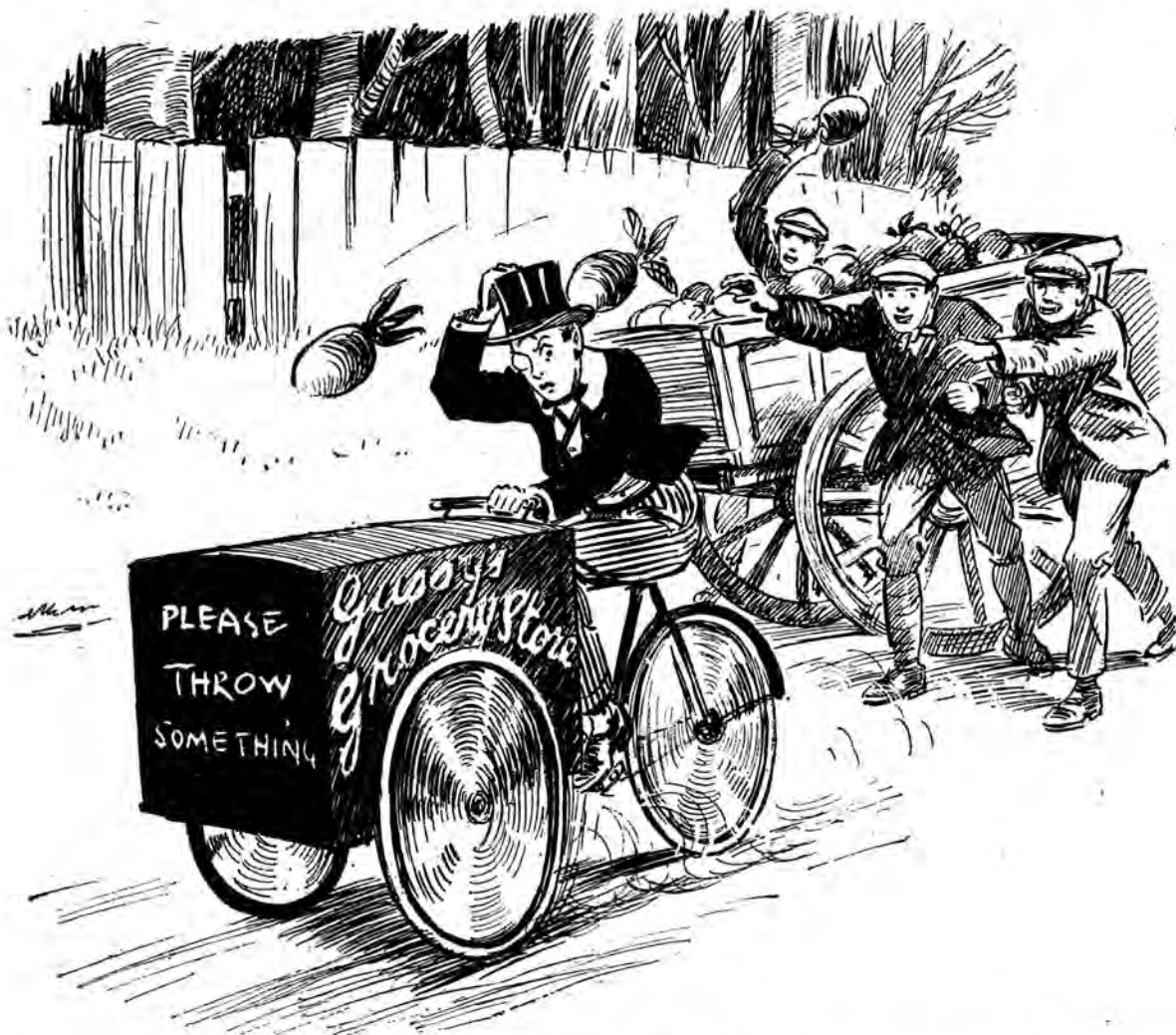
"Groooh! Deah me! What a positively howwid odoah!" he gasped.

"Do you call it butter?" screeched the lady in a loud voice. "I ask you, do you call it butter?"

"Bai Jove! It's certainly buttah, my deah madam, but it's howwibly wank!" exclaimed Gussy. "But I don't undahstand—"

"Neither do I!" retorted the angry lady. "This is what you delivered to me just now for butter. Take it back! I won't have it! I'll buy nothing more from this shop!"

With that the lady slapped the odoriferous butter on the



"'Please throw something!'" roared one of the yokels. "Anything to oblige a gent! 'Ere goes!" Whiz! "Yaw-ooooh!" roared Gussy as a huge mangel-wurzel struck him amidships. "You wuttah—ooooop!" Mangels came flying at him thick and fast. With one hand holding down his topper and his other hand steering the tricycle, he pedalled furiously down the lane. (See page 13.)

counter and stalked from the shop. Gussy blinked after her in amazement, holding his monocle to his eye.

"Bai Jove! What a perfectly fewocious female!" he gasped. "This isn't the buttah I sent out, deah boys! I haven't any wank buttah in the place. I—"

Crash!
The shop door came open violently, and another lady entered, more fearsome-looking even than the first. She carried a basin, over which she had a paper held tightly. On reaching the corner the lady dragged off the paper, and there was a simultaneous gasp from Grimes, D'Arcy, and Tom Merry & Co.

"Whew!"
"Yes, you may well sniff!" exclaimed the newcomer angrily. "These are the eggs that were delivered to my house ten minutes ago! They're rotten!"

"Bai Jove! My dear madam—"
"You can have 'em back, and don't you send a bill in, for I declare I shall tear it up! Fresh eggs, indeed! I'll deal at Mr. Sands' in future!"

Gussy looked bewilderedly at his chums when the irate lady had gone.

"Gweat Scott! I am in a tewwible fluttah, deah boys!" he gasped. "I'm positive that all my eggs are fwesh!"

"Those eggs hum, Gussy, anyway!" said Blake, holding his nose. "Take 'em out, Grimes, and bury 'em!"

Grimes took out the offending eggs.

He returned to find the shop filled with angry people, and there were several more outside, clamouring to obtain admittance. All were shouting angrily at Arthur Augustus, who, standing behind the counter, presented a helpless and bewildered figure. Groceries of all descriptions were being brandished before him.

"Look at this bacon—it's bad!"

"This butter's rank!"

"D'you call this stuff sugar? It's 'alf sand!"

"The flour's stale!"

"You've given me short measure!"

These were only a few of the wrathful cries that were hurled at Gussy.

"Weally, I—I—I'm awfully sowwy! Theah must be some mistake! My dear madam—my good sir—pway take that howwid cheese away—weally— Bai Jove! I—I say, deah boys—"

Next minute D'Arcy's voice was drowned in an uproar. It seemed that all his customers who had had goods delivered had brought them back with some complaint. The good people of Rylcombe were not slow to air grievances when they had them. And, to judge by the condition of some of the goods they had brought back, they had just grievances indeed!

"Swindling young rascal!"

"Tryin' to rob 'ard-workin' people, that's wot you are!"

"Ought to be locked up!"

"Yah! Swindler!"

One irate gentleman hurled a pat of stale margarine at the luckless swell which caught on his nose! When they had told Gussy, in forceful and lurid language, what they thought of him and the Direct Supply Grocery Stores, the customers trooped out and proceeded to hold an angry meeting outside.

Looking through the window, Tom Merry & Co. saw Roker standing in Mr. Sands' shop doorway opposite, rubbing his hands with fiendish glee. Mr. Sands himself was looking in astonishment at the angry crowd that had assailed the rival shop.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "Poor old Gussy! This will ruin his trade! Gussy, you didn't send out all that horrible muck to your customers, did you?"

"No, wathah not, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus in deep distress. "I weally cannot compwehend what has happened!"

"Who was supposed to deliver them—Dodger?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

"Hark at the giddy row outside!" said Monty Lowther. "Those people will have all Rylcombe here in a tick. I—Hullo! Here's Crump!"

P.-c. Crump, looking very majestic and important, pushed his way through the crowd and rolled into D'Arcy's shop.

Behind him came an angry military-looking gentleman.

"Ho!" said P.-c. Crump. "Which I'm lookin' for a young rascal named Grimes, and—Ho! There you are!"

The constable went up to Grimes and clapped a heavy hand on the youngster's shoulder.

"Which you hare hunder harrest!" said P.-c. Crump in a loud voice. "I warn you that anythin' you say will be used as hevidence against you!"

Grimes looked startled and bewildered.

"But—but wot am I arrested for?" he cried. "I 'aven't done anything! Master D'Arcy—"

"Pway what does this mean, Cwump?" demanded Arthur Augustus, looking first at the Rylcombe constable, and then at the military-looking gentleman. "I assuah you that Grimes is innocent of any charge you—"

"Grimes delivered goods at my house last evening!" exclaimed Colonel Pepworth. "Hearing that this new shop had been opened, I decided to give it a trial. I especially wanted the provisions last night, as I was entertaining some friends, and I understand it was Grimes who left them."

"Yes, sir, I did," said Grimes. "The cook asked me in to wait, because there was another order to take back."

"You were left alone in the kitchen for over ten minutes," said the colonel between his teeth. "This afternoon I discovered that several valuable silver articles from an adjacent room were missing. The room is the one next to the kitchen. I have been using it lately as a temporary store-room for a number of curios in my collection. The silver articles were among those curios, and, being small, were easily taken. Upon ascertaining my loss this afternoon I immediately made inquiries. Suspicion fell upon you, Grimes, and I went to your lodgings, hoping to find you in. You were not there, but the landlady invited me to go to your room and look round. And I soon discovered—this!"

He held up a small antique silver ornament.

Grimes' face blanched.

"I didn't steal it, sir—'onestly!" he cried in a hoarse voice. "I found it on the steps when I came in last night! I kicked it—there's the mark on it still, sir! I intended makin' inquiries this mornin', but clean forgot about it!"

"Ho, ho! That yarn won't wash, young feller-me-lad!" said P.-c. Crump, tightening his grip on the youngster's collar. "You tell it to the magistrates, anyway! But you've got to come alonger me now!"

"But I'm not a thief!" cried Grimes. "There is some mistake—"

"My lad, I will give you a chance," said Colonel Pepworth gravely. "If you return the rest of the stolen property I will withdraw the charge made against you."

"But I can't, sir! I 'aven't got any stolen property!" cried Grimes miserably. "I swear I didn't take anything at your 'ouse, sir!"

Grimes' appeals were in vain, however.

D'Arcy indignantly protested his faith in the lad's honesty, but P.-c. Crump hustled Grimes out of the shop and along to the police-station in the High Street.

The people outside followed in a crowd, nodding knowingly to each other.

Mr. Sands opposite grinned at D'Arcy when that bewildered youth appeared at the shop doorway. It was Mr. Sands' triumph! Grimes had been arrested on a charge of robbery at the house of one of his customers. Moreover, other customers of the rival grocery store had complained of the goods that had been sent them, and had created a scene at the shop!

Mr. Sands had good cause to chuckle over the downfall of the Direct Supply Grocery Stores.

And Roker, his ill-savoured assistant, stood beside him and rubbed his hands in ghoulish triumph at D'Arcy's discomfiture.

CHAPTER 10.

Getting at the Truth!

"WELL, this takes the giddy biscuit!" said Jack Blake.

"Hard luck, Gussy!" said Manners sympathetically.

D'Arcy polished his monocle in deep distress.

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"I weally don't know what to make of ewevythin', deah boys!" he exclaimed. "First, these mysterious complaints fwom my customahs, and then Gwimes awwested on a charge of which I am positive the poor chap is innocent. What do you fellows think about it?"

Tom Merry darted a meaning look across the road.

"I reckon Roker's at the bottom of some of the trouble, at any rate," he said. "You remember how we saw him talking to Dodger this afternoon, kids? He and those other rotters with him were up to something. Hallo! Here comes Dodger!"

The carrier tricycle arrived outside. It was smothered in mud, and its off-side wheel was bent. Evidently Mr. 'Enry Dodger had had an accident.

Mr. Dodger walked unsteadily into the shop and he made a dramatic gesture.

"Which the goods is delivered, sir!" he said to D'Arcy. "Any more on account—for the sake of the wife an' kids? The nipper is wery 'ungry, and a quid's worth of grub don't go wery far, sir!"

"Bai Jove! Dodger, you are half-intoxicated!" exclaimed D'Arcy, recoiling in horror from his seedy assistant. "What have you been doin'? Do you know you have been delivewin' the w'ong goods?"

"Who said so?" demanded Mr. Dodger, turning a bleary eye on his employer. "Which I performed my dooties like a man! Like a man, sir! Which I—hic—defies contradiction! I—hic, hic—pass the bottle—wife an' nine starvin' children! Grooooooh!"

The inebriated Mr. Dodger sank down on a soap-box and went off into a doze.

"Bai Jove! Is the wascal tired, deah boys, or—"

"He's squiffy!" snorted Blake. "Fancy you entrusting your goods to an old villain like that, Gussy!"

"Dodger! Wake up!" exclaimed D'Arcy, shaking his assistant.

"Grooooooh! Whassermarrer?"

"You are discharged!" exclaimed the schoolboy grocer angrily. "Do you heah, you wascal? Pway wemove your obnoxious pwesence fwom this shop immediately!"

"Wot!" said Mr. Dodger, rising unsteadily to his feet. "Then I'm sacked! Me, with seven wives and a starvin' kid—hic! Look 'ere— Yarooooooh! Hi! Wharrer you doin'? Oooooooh!"

Tom Merry & Co. had taken a hand. They grasped Mr. Dodger and propelled him to the shop door. Monty Lowther opened the door, and then several pairs of boots were planted heftily behind the seedy person of Mr. 'Enry Dodger.

Biff!

"Yarooooooh!"

Mr. Dodger went whirling into the High Street. He landed in a heap in the gutter. He was up in a trice, however, and he ran down the High Street as fast as his legs would carry him. He did not stop, but disappeared at length between the swing doors of the Blue Pig public-house.

"Well, that's got rid of that rotter!" said Tom Merry.

"Gussy, old man, you're in a hopeless mess. It's as plain as a pikestaff now what has happened. Roker baited that squiffy bounder away from the tricycle and diverted his attention while the others got at the carrier, took out the goods you had given Dodger, and put all that rubbish in their place. Dodger was half squiffy, and consequently he knew no different when he delivered the goods. You've got Roker to thank for this!"

"Bai Jove! The feahful wottah!"

Dusk was now deepening over Rylcombe, and the lights in the High Street illuminated the gloom. Gussy lit the lamps in his shop, and he and Tom Merry & Co. sat round the counter discussing the gloomy state of affairs.

No customers came to the shop.

The Direct Supply Grocery Stores had suffered a humiliating downfall in the villagers' favour, and people requiring provisions were now dealing at Mr. Sands' shop instead.

Tom Merry, looking through the window, saw a coarse, brutal face grinning in from the street.

"There's one of Roker's gang outside!" he exclaimed swiftly. "Let's have him in and make him confess!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors made a rush through the doorway and captured the young hooligan before he had time to escape.

Roaring and struggling wildly, he was dragged into the interior of Gussy's shop, and Manners shut the door.

"Now, you rotter, you were with Roker this afternoon when he was talking to Dodger," said Tom Merry. "You've got to tell us just what the little game was!"

"There wasn't no game!" howled the struggling lout. "Lemme go, or— Yarooooooh! Yah! Yow-wow!"

"Lay him across the counter!" commanded Tom Merry. Bump!

The hooligan was dumped face downwards on the counter. Tom Merry then took a slat of wood from one of the boxes and commenced to whack vigorously.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Yaroooooh! 'Elp! Yah! Wow! Stoppit!" screeched the luckless victim.

Monty Lowther whiled away the time by lading pickles in the young rascal's hair, whilst Blake daubed some of the rank butter on his face.

"Yoooooh! Gerrooooooh! Ow-waugh! Stoppit! Gug! Gug! Yah! I'll tell!"

And then the truth came out.

It appeared that Mr. Enry Dodger was well known as a toper at Rylcombe. Roker & Co. had waylaid him and seduced him from the carrier tricycle by means of a bottle of intoxicating liquor. Roker had previously unearthed a quantity of condemned provisions from Mr. Sands' shop, and while he kept Mr. Dodger's attention distracted, his cronies had substituted the bad groceries for the goods which Mr. Dodger had to deliver to D'Arcy's customers.

"Then you were right, Tommy!" said Blake. "What a rotten trick!"

Tom Merry & Co. allowed Roker's crony to go.

Arthur Augustus had suddenly become very thoughtful.

"I say, deah boys, I've been thinkin'—" he said.

"Go hon!" said Blake humorously. "Does it hurt, Gussy?"

"Weally, you boundahs, this is not a time to indulge in wibald laughthah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Wemembah that my twade is wuined, and poor old Gwimes is locked up. Now, I've been thinkin' that Wokah may have somethin' to do with that wobbewy affaiah at Colonel Pepworth's house."

"Great pip!"

D'Arcy then related to his chuuns how he had seen Roker tampering with Colonel Pepworth's basement window on the evening that he had called to leave one of his leaflets.

Tom Merry & Co. became serious at once.

"My hat! Possibly Gussy is right!" said Tom Merry. "Roker is a rascal who wouldn't be above burglary. He's had his knife in Grimes for a long time—and especially since this shop has been open in rivalry to Sands. He might have taken those things from the colonel's house during the evening and planted one of them on Grimes—to put suspicion on him when inquiries were made!"

"Supposing Roker did as you say, Tommy—how can we get proof?" asked Manners. "Without proof we cannot openly accuse Roker, can we?"

Tom Merry set his teeth hard.

"There goes Roker—he's leaving Sands' shop now!" he said, peering through the window. "He's probably finished work for the day. Let's shadow him, and see what he does."

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

Tom Merry, Blake, Manners, Lowther, and Digby left Gussy's Grocery Store and walked down the High Street, keeping Roker well in sight.

The hooligans' leader made his way towards the river, and met one of his cronies by the old wooden bridge.

The two then plunged into the wood on the other side of the river. Tom Merry & Co. followed stealthily. Trained as Boy Scouts in woodcraft, they trailed their two quarryies with little difficulty.

They saw Roker and his companion halt by a hollow tree in the centre of the wood.

"Ere we are!" Roker was saying. "I hid the rest of the stuff 'ere, Jeffries. We'll take the things over to your pal at Langley to-night, and get what we can for them. Are you sure 'e's safe?"

"Safe as anythin'!" responded his companion. "Silas knows where to get rid of stolen stuff, don't you worry. 'E's been too fly for the cops for years, anyways!"

Roker reached into the hollow tree and withdrew a parcel wrapped in newspaper. He opened it, and the moonlight revealed a number of glistening silver articles.

"We ought to get a couple of quid for this lot—eh?" grinned Roker. "Grimes will get a couple of months, too! Haw, haw, haw! He— Oh, good 'evens!"

The rascal broke off, and his eyes seemed to start from his head as Tom Merry & Co. came from their hiding-places and swiftly collared the two.

"Now, you rotters, you're caught red-handed!" rapped Tom Merry sharply. "Hand over that parcel, Roker!"

Roker did not hand it over. The parcel dropped from his nerveless hands, and Monty Lowther picked it up.

"Hang you! Let us go!" panted the thief, struggling like a madman. "I— Yaroooooh! Ow—ow—ow!"

Bump!

He and Jeffries were hurled to the ground. In a trice Tom Merry & Co. had them bound with cord which Jack Blake had in his pocket.

"Now, you beauties!" said Tom Merry, when the snarling pair had been dragged to their feet again. "Quick march to Rylcombe Police-station. This is where you get your just deserts!"

Prod, prod, prod!

Roker and Jeffries stumbled on through the wood, Tom

Merry & Co. keeping them going with prods from behind. In this manner Rylcombe was reached.

Great was the sensation in the village when Tom Merry & Co. appeared with their two prisoners.

Roker and Jeffries were marched to the police-station, outside which an eager, curious crowd assembled.

Colonel Pepworth was still in there with the inspector, discussing the robbery at his house.

"Here's the thief, sir!" chirruped Tom Merry, thrusting Roker forward. "This other rascal was going over to Langley with him to-night to help him sell the stolen articles to a man named Silas. We caught them red-handed with the stolen property. Here it is!"

"By gad!" ejaculated the amazed colonel, as Tom handed him the parcel. "These are my things! My lads, how did you find all this out?"

Tom Merry explained.

"Grimes must be released immediately, inspector!" said the colonel when Tom had finished.

A few minutes later Grimes came out of an inner room with the inspector. There was a happy, radiant smile on his face.

"I am sorry you have been falsely accused, my lad," said Colonel Pepworth. "Perhaps this will help you forget all about it?"

He pressed two Treasury notes into the youngster's hand.

The crowd was still waiting outside. When Tom Merry & Co. explained that Grimes was innocent of the charge laid against him, and that the delivery of bad groceries by the Direct Supply Grocery Stores was also engineered by Roker, cheers arose.

D'Arcy was standing in his little shop when Tom Merry & Co. burst in, with Grimes in their midst.

"All serene, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've cleared Grimes! Roker was the thief, as you suspected, old chap!"

"Bai Jove! How wippen! I'm awfully glad, Gwimes, deah boy!"

Tom Merry & Co. told how they had followed Roker into the wood and thus discovered the truth.

"Everything will be all right in the village to-morrow, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "News soon gets round, you know. I reckon you'll soon have your customers back!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Sands Climbs Down!

TOM MERRY'S words proved true.

Much to Mr. Sands' chagrin, people began to flock to Gussy's Grocery Store again next day. Trade in that cheery establishment became as brisk as ever!

As soon as lessons were over at St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus went down to the village and took his place behind the counter with Grimes.

Mr. Sands viewed his rivals' shop in anger and dismay.

Arriving back at St. Jim's for prep that evening, Gussy found a letter waiting for him from Lord Eastwood.

"Dear Arthur," the letter ran,—"I have been thinking things over, and have decided not to encourage you any further with this mad scheme of yours in running a grocery store. The idea may be a good one, but I fail to see how it can ever become practical in your inexperienced hands. I must therefore refuse your request for more money. Take my advice, my boy, and stop before you burn your hands. As regards your unfortunate friend Grimes, I will see what I can do for him later in finding him a job.—Your affectionate Father."

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, regarding this letter in blank dismay. "Then the patah has backed out! Oh cwumbs! I wegard this as distinctly unportin' of him, bai Jove! I will wite him a vewy stwong lettah of pwotest!"

Next morning Arthur Augustus went down to his little shop in Rylcombe High Street. Tom Merry & Co. accompanied him, sympathising in his disappointment.

A fresh shock awaited Gussy at the shop.

Grimes presented him with a number of bills that had come in by the morning post. One was an account rendered by the Wholesale Provision Company, of Wayland. Another was a bill from the printer's. Another was the signwriter's little account. Yet another came from the local cycle shop for the carrier tricycle.

Gussy gazed at these in deep consternation.

"Oh cwumbs!" he gasped. "This is wathah wuff, isn't it, deah boys! I—I'm afwaid I wathah undahestimated the costs of wummin' a gwocewry business!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Theah isn't enough in the till to pay all these bills, bai Jove!" he said, shaking his aristocratic head sadly. "I weally don't know how we shall cawwy on."

"In other words, Gussy, the business is insolvent!" grinned Tom Merry.

(Continued on page 27.)

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Cyclone Sam lives well up to his name in

this thrilling, pulsating, and exciting story!



CHAPTER 1. Making Good!

IT'S a swindle! They got our money! Best the darn joint!"

As Sam Watson paused outside the tent-flap labelled "Proprietor," a mullen roar of mob fury broke across the canvas zone of fair and circus, and a fierce oath, its venom toned down, somewhat by the frightened accents of its utterance, came through the tent wall.

Sam guessed what was happening. The great looping-the-loop stunt of Carson's Mammoth Fair and Circus had hung fire. Nightly, "Sampson," the dare-devil car-driver, did his hair-raising dive of death down the narrow chute; but this time, for some reason or other not apparent, a hitch had occurred, and the farmers and their families, many of whom had driven miles to see the stunt, were getting rattled.

Still, the young Englishman concluded, this was not his concern. Penniless, and stranded in the small American town, he scented work at Carson's hands, and meant to get it. There must be some job going in the circus for a competent mechanic and driver, what with tractors and such.

"You durned fool! You've been drinking!" As Sam stepped fearlessly into the tent—though, incidentally, without invitation—the words rang out, and he saw a tall, lean, hard-looking man, grey-haired, and with a goatee beard standing over the huddled form of a stout, heavily built fellow, whose piglike face was adorned with a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles.

"I can't do it!" the other whimpered. "I daren't! My nerve's gone, and it 'ud mean death!"

"And this'll mean Hades and riot!" the tall man snapped. "The crowd's peev'd. They'll bust up my circus in a minute. And it's all your fault, you blamed bunco-steerer! You've rode that loop every night. What's the matter with yer darned nerves now? You're some dare-devil, I'll tell the world!" he added sneeringly.

So this was Carson, owner of the circus, and possible dispenser of jobs! And the other, that fat man, the renowned dare-devil, Sampson—at least, vide the posters, he was both world-renowned and fearless, despite the pitiful figure he cut now.

"I tell you, you gotta loop that loop, or, by golly, I'll—Hullo! Who the blazes are you?"

Carson broke off suddenly to eye the intruder.

"Want a job," Sam began, seizing the bull by the horns, despite the unpropitious omen.

"Then you can go plumb to Gehenna!" Carson snapped, ignoring Sam, and turned

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on the fat man, to blare: "Get that, Strom, you great stiff! Up you git!"

"And I tell you I won't! That squeak I had last night—no!" Strom—alias Sampson the Dare-devil—finished with a whining curse.

"Then dern you for a piking skunk!" the showman shouted, shaking his fist threateningly. "Who'm I gonna get to ride that loop? There ain't no one can do it, or dare do it. And they'll bust up my circus—"

"Mr. Carson, listen!" Sam sprang forward eagerly, sensing opportunity. "I'll loop that loop, if you'll let me. Give me the chance."

"You?" The showman started back in amazement. "Why, son, you're bughouse! You drive a car down that knife-edge chute. And around that loop, with a gap jump beyond? Twenty foot to skip in mid-air, and then clap on brakes like blue smoke when you land, or charge the wall? Sufferin' snakes! You're batty!"

Sam squared his broad shoulders. "Perhaps," he answered coolly. "Anyway, I'm game to try, if you'll promise me a job. It looks like your only get-out, anyhow."

For a long moment the showman fixed the young fellow with his steely eyes. But not a muscle in the Britisher's stalwart frame quivered; not a hair of his blond head moved. After a moment the circus proprietor whistled.

"You sure you can get away with it?" he demanded, half convinced. "I mean, if you climb that platform, and then back down, the mob'll scent a stall-off, and lynch the lot of us."

"I promise to go through with it, if you'll only give me the chance. I'm broke, and you're in a hole, Mr. Carson, so we've got to make good."

"Right! Bully for you!" Carson's hand descended on Sam's shoulder. "It's a bet, son! You shall try. And"—he swung round fiercely on Strom—"if he gets away with it, you great stiff, you're fired! By heck, you are!"

He pushed Sam before him from the tent, and a moment later the pair entered the great arena, ringed about with tiered rows of spectators. A deafening howl greeted Carson as he entered, and a wild demand of "The loop! the loop!" was chanted in rancorous unison.

Carson thrust Sam forward towards a towering spiderwork of struts and trestles spanning the arena. In the roof of the huge tent a high platform rose, from which descended a precipitous chute, so narrow that it seemed impossible for a car to traverse it.

Beyond the chute was a wide loop, not quite so high as the platform, and, as Sam could see, part of the loop was hinged, so as to drop when the car had passed, bridge a gap leading to a further trestle, beyond

which lay another space, followed by a downward raking piece, leading to earth.

"Well?" the showman demanded, as Sam eyed the outfit, and the small, narrow-track car waiting on the platform aloft.

It was suicide—sheer suicide! As he looked, Sam knew that. But, desperate and fearless, he answered with a nod almost before Carson's voice died away.

"I'm game! It's a bet!" he declared, whipping off his coat. "I'll chance it!"

A sudden hush fell over the throng as the pair scaled the ladder to the platform, where, without hesitation, Sam slipped into the driver's seat, and took the wheel in rigid hands. He gave one glance at the narrow ribbon of plank that was the chute; then—the quicker the better, he thought.

It was sudden death to try, but, with that sickening drop before his eyes, he dared not wait.

"Push off!" he ordered; and at once the attendants shoved.

Swoosh! With a heart-rending plunge, the vehicle shot on to the steep chute, barely a foot of margin on either side of its whirling wheels. Naught save a shallow rim protected the edges—a rim so narrow that the slightest swerve spelt death!

For a second the bottom seemed to drop out of everything; then, for what appeared an eternity of time, the leaping chassis swept down the narrow ribbon of track.

At the wheel Sam sat spellbound, his eyes glued to the thread of boarding. The wind whistled in his ears, as, with the speed of a falling stone, the car flew downwards; but his rigid wrists never faltered.

Thud!

With a sickening bound the tyres took the curve at the bottom. The bonnet slewed up to hit him in the face, the dim sea of staring humanity vanished, the radiator top spun over, and—

For a ghastly moment the car hung upside down, with Sam clinging to it.

It was stopping, slowing—slowing—

Gosh! It was still! Why didn't it go on? Had it stuck on the last foot of the upgrade? Why didn't it fall?

For one second—less—an agony of suspense racked him.

Then, with a startling jerk, the bonnet swung downwards, and car and driver dashed headlong down the further side of the loop.

Had the flap fallen? As he flew, Sam asked himself the question.

But a narrow gap faced him. Before he realised it, he was on it—through it.

Thud!

The front wheels bounded into the air as they took the ramp beyond, and the rear ones skidded horribly in sympathy.

They were off the track! But no. With lightning precision he forced her back to the straight, felt something fly from under

him as the car flung upwards over the gap, rocked dizzily in mid-air for another eternity, then landed, fair and square, with a spine-twisting jolt, as the dished wheels struck the planked decline beyond.

Again that sharp twist, that deadly side-spin! The machine was a demon. Its evil soul meant to kill the dare-devil driver who held it in his steel-armed grip.

But he would fight it—fight!

The end! The wall beyond! And the pace sixty!

As from a trance, Sam sprang to life. His quick hand gripped the brake lever, his foot kicked the pedal.

Crunch!

A rasp and a scream burst from the smoking brakes as he checked the leaping chassis. The bus swayed like a mad thing, pranced and skidded, while the wall flew up to meet him. Then—

The wall stopped suddenly, and Sam shot forward against the wheel, flung up by the violence of the braking. But the car was still; the ordeal over!

A mighty thunder of cheering swept the enclosure, as, leaping from their seats, the excited crowd came swarming over into the arena. But the victor of the loop was oblivious. His eyes gripped the wall in front, waiting for the crash that never came. In his ears sang the dim chant of the sea, as from a conch-shell.

Then the tide of humanity burst upon him, and, torn from his seat, Sam found himself tossed aloft upon a wave of shoulders, while the frenzied crowd swayed about him, cheering till the vault of heaven rang.

Then, and only then, did Sam realise what had happened.

He was round the loop—across the gap. He had made good!

As they set him down a mist swam before his eyes, for he was half-starved, and the strain had been greater than flesh and blood could bear. For a moment he swayed dizzily. Then, from the mist, the stout form of Strom resolved itself, and the fellow's red-rimmed eyes glared in a fierce, undying hatred.

"Curse you, you darn job-snatcher!" he blared, and shook his hamlike fist in Sam's face. "You've lost me my living! I'll get even with you for this, if I have to live to be a million to do it!"

CHAPTER 2.

Treachery!

THE Monster Fair had moved on, and with it Sam Watson. Strom had gone also, though in another direction, for Carson had been as good as his word. The Loop King had been dethroned, and another—Sam—reigned in his stead.

Sam had not wished to oust Strom, but the showman insisted. Strom's nerve once gone was, Carson argued, gone for good. The fellow was drinking, and henceforth useless. So, since it would do Strom no good to refuse the perilous post offered, Sam had accepted it, glad of his luck.

Carson, too, had cause for self-congratulation. He had got the young Englishman at one-third the salary he had been paying to Strom, though Sam did not know this till later. Had Sam suspected that this, rather than a regard for Strom's neck, had induced the circus owner to make a change, the newcomer would not have felt so elated.

So night after night Sam dared the perils of the deadly loop, till his nerves grew dull as steel wire, his eye as true and quick as gunsight, his wrists as strong as iron girders. His apprenticeship in the motor trade he had already served. What he did not know about pilotship was not worth knowing.

In time he came to feel this, unassuming as he was by nature. So when at last the show camped outside San Diego, on the coast of Southern California, within a stove's throw of practice for the Californian Cup, the spirit of unrest seized upon his hitherto contented mind.

The Blue Riband of the world of Western motor-racing, the great road speed contest, attracted Sam as nothing else had done. As he watched the monster racers career round the dusty course, his heart grew green with envy. A British team of three cars—the Cyclops—was entered, and he envied the lucky fellows who had the honour to champion the dear Old Country's cause on the sun-scorched roads of California.

He had always longed to take the wheel in some great road-race such as this. If he could brave that baffling loop night after night without a falter, what could he not

do on the open road with a thunderous, pulsating racer beneath him?

It was the day before the race itself, and the champions were indulging in one last practice. Sam had stationed himself beside the road to watch, and watch he did, till the last moment available to the racers struck. He was just about to turn away, when one of the speedsters, an American Wasp, drew up by an adjacent corner, so, anxious to view the chassis at close quarters, he walked towards it.

As he drew close, a stout figure got down from behind the wheel, and simultaneously Carson appeared from behind some bushes.

"Got everything fixed?" a familiar voice demanded, and Sam halted. The stout man was no other than Strom, the discharged stunt-artist. What was Strom doing at the wheel of No. 20, the crack Wasp racer, and talking to Carson, the man who had sacked him, above all people?

Some instinctive caution bade Sam pause as he saw Carson nod.

"Good!" Strom went on. "That guy Jepson's late on his last round. He'll be here any minute, and all alone. There'll be no one to see—and if there is they can't prove a thing, it'll look that natural."

Jumping up into his car again, Strom made off down the road, and Carson slipped back into the bushes. Curious to know what the game was, Sam, too, got under cover and waited. What on earth was in the wind?

All too soon he was to find out!

Presently the dull roar of an approaching racer sounded down the road, and Sam craned forward. This was Jepson, the star driver for the British Cyclops team, late in finishing, as Strom had predicted. But Strom had gone, and Carson was nowhere to be seen.

"I must have misunderstood," Sam muttered dubiously, as the racer roared past; but a moment later his heart went into his mouth.

From a side road a hundred yards away a great circus tractor emerged, to swing its mighty bulk right into the path of the oncoming Cyclops.

There was a wild screaming of tortured brakes, followed by a fearful dry skid on the part of the Cyclops. Then the racer crashed headlong into the tractor, cannoned



Emerging from a side road the great circus tractor swung its mighty bulk right into the path of the oncoming Cyclops. There was a wild screaming of tortured brakes, followed by a fearful dry skid on the part of the Cyclops, then the racer crashed headlong into the tractor.

off, and finally rolled over, pitching driver and mechanic into the road. The tractor reeled slightly under the shock, but its huge weight saved it. Its front wheels gently collapsed under it, and it settled down with the quiet dignity of an elephant.

Sam raced to the spot, horrified. As he came up he was in time to see Carson descend slowly from the tractor.

For the moment Sam scarcely heeded the showman, or scarcely realised the significance of his presence. Hastening to the two still forms lying on the road, he examined them, to find the mechanic dead, and Jepson, the pilot, battered, but just alive.

Jepson, the star man of the Cyclops team! It was plain that he would never start tomorrow in the California Cup!

White with honest fury, Sam got to his feet, his eyes on Carson, who stood callously inspecting the damage to the tractor.

"You did that on purpose, you scoundrel!" he cried, remembering Strom's words. "Strom, or his employers, bribed you to wreck that car!"

"You're crazy!" the showman retorted, paling. "That gink was late round. He hadn't ought-a of done it. And d'yer think I'm such a nut I'd wreck my tractor or risk my skin that way?"

Sam's lip curled. The man on the tractor had never been in any real danger, under shelter as he was of the engine's immense bulk and weight; besides which, the steamer, which by custom remained in camp while the circus was on, had no proper purpose on the road at all.

"You lie, Carson!" Sam breathed fiercely. As he spoke he drew a fistful of coins from his pocket. "There's your dirty money! I'm through with you! And now I'm off to report this murderous business."

"You can't prove anything, you poor fish!" Carson snarled, stooping.

"We'll see," Sam answered grimly, and turned to go.

In a trice Carson whipped up a broken canopy rail, flung from the tractor in the collision, and, with a bound, threw himself on Sam.

The latter ducked, and, with a quick twist, sought to close with the showman. But the latter, jumping backwards, whirled his brass rod aloft, and as Sam sprang in, brought it down with all his might on the young man's head.

As Sam's fist shot out his feet gave under him. A mist descended before his eyes, and consciousness left him.

When he fell on to the road Carson stooped and bore him to the shelter of some bushes, then turned to meet the official car that came up, looking for stragglers.

When Sam came to he found himself alone. It was late in the day, and when he looked out on to the road, it was to find both victims and wreckage vanished.

Staggering in his feet, he took one glance at the distant circus tents, then set out towards San Diego. But when he reached the "Start" he found the officials gone, so there was nothing for it but to go on to the hotel, some way out of the city, where the Cyclops crowd had set up their headquarters.

This site was more convenient for the team than a town location, but could be reached quickly by trolley car. Sam saw one coming up, and turned to board it, when, plunging a hand into his pocket, he suddenly discovered that he was penniless. In his just fury at the showman's perfidy, he had flung every cent he had in the world at his base employer.

There was nothing for it but to tramp, and this Sam did, hoping he would sight a Cyclops tender. But he did not, and it was early evening before he reached the Cyclops' headquarters, where he asked to see the manager.

A few minutes later he found himself ushered into the presence of a tall, red-faced man, whose chief peculiarities seemed a big walrus moustache and a pleasant, easy-going smile.

"I'm Edwinson, the Cyclops manager," he announced as Sam entered. "What can I do for you, young man?"

Sam reported briefly what he had seen. Edwinson listened quietly to the recital, though his good-humoured features gradually creased in an angry frown as detail after detail followed.

But, though plainly furious, the manager was cautious. Before making any comment he regarded his informant closely, as though reading his character.

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"You're absolutely sure of all this?" he queried at length.

"I'll take an oath before a commissioner any time," Sam answered, with convincing firmness.

Edwinson clenched his fists.

"The scoundrels! I believe every word you say, young fellow, for this isn't the only thing that's happened. Jepson was our 'White Hope,' and that bus was our fastest chassis. And that's not all," he went on.

"On the way back from practice Rogers, our second man, had a peculiar accident. His mechanic had been drawn away by some bogus call, and he had to crank up the engine himself. It backfired and broke his arm, so now he's out of the race as well. From what you tell me, I don't doubt that the engine had been tampered with."

"The hounds! And they don't even stick at murder!" Sam exclaimed disgustedly. "Surely the Wasp people can't be behind this! Strom and Carson are crooks. I don't doubt. I know Carson's a bad lot, having been with him, but—"

Sam broke off as the door opened suddenly. Then he gasped, for, bold as brass, Strom strode into the room, an appearance of mock concern on his fleshy features.

"Say, Mister Edwinson, I just want to tell you how real sorry me and my folks are at this terrible accident," he began, oblivious in his haste of Sam's presence. "We'd looked forward to a real sporting contest tomorrow, but I figure now you're out of the race. And, as the chief Wasp pilot, I just felt I had to slide around and spill something appropriate."

Sam started. So Strom was the Wasp speed-king! Head pilot of the Cyclops' team's most formidable rivals! And Strom had "fixed" things with Carson, a notorious gambler!

With a quick stride, Sam reached the American, and, gripping him fiercely by the arm, swung him round.

"You low-down skunk!" he cried indignantly. "I hate a scoundrel, but I loathe a humbug worst of all!"

Strom started back, guilt in his eyes.

"Oh, it's you, you cheap circus skate!" he blustered.

"Yes, it's me, Strom! And I saw what happened out there on the course," Sam answered. "You planned that smash with Carson. Murder!"

"You lie!" he shouted furiously, and shook his fist in Sam's face. "I'll have the law on you, you blackmailer, you—"

Sam's fist flew out. It took Strom square on the jaw, and the Yankee crashed backwards amidst a wreck of chairs.

After a moment Strom picked himself up, nursing his swollen jaw, his evil eyes aflame with hate.

"All right—I'll fix you for this!" he snarled.

But Edwinson stepped forward. "I think you'd better clear out, Strom," he remarked coldly. "I, too, dislike humbugs."

Strom left the room breathing curses. A moment later Sam and the Cyclops manager were alone.

"Your report is correct," Edwinson declared, turning to Sam. "That fellow's face, when you challenged him, was enough. But we've no legal proof, and with my two best drivers laid up, the race is as good as lost. If only I could lay hands on another crack overnight we might stand a chance, but it's hopeless. There's no British racing man within a Jonsand miles—no stunt driver who could help us out."

"You're wrong, Mr. Edwinson—there is," Sam corrected quietly.

Edwinson stared at him in amazement. "Who—where?" he queried sharply.

"Here," Sam answered calmly, tapping his own broad chest. "If you'll let me handle a car to-morrow, sir, I promise you sha'n't have cause to regret it."

"You?" And Edwinson stared afresh. "But who the deuce are you, and what experience have you had to justify my handing over a crack racer to a man I've never seen in my life before?"

A coloured poster hung on the hotel wall. It showed the looping stunt of the Mammoth Circus, with the dare-devil "Samson" in his death-defying plunge.

"That's me!" Sam declared, indicating the poster. "And that fellow, Strom, was my predecessor. I've just laid one of these scoundrels out, and I'll lay him out another way to-morrow, if only you'll give me the chance. It's our only chance, for we can prove nothing, I'm afraid, on my own unsupported testimony."

For a long moment Edwinson hesitated; then he clapped Sam on the shoulder.

"By James, you've a nerve!" he cried. "But I like fellows who have nerve, and, by gosh, if you can drive a car around that suicide trap, you can drive one anywhere, I reckon. I'm going to chance it! And whether I get the sack for it or not, you shall hold a steering-wheel to-morrow in the California Cup!"

After a few questions, Edwinson took his new pilot out to the garage, where he showed him the Cyclops racer Rogers was to have driven. For some time the two men stood discussing the car, Sam familiarising himself with its special points. At length, overjoyed with his good fortune, and scarcely even now able to credit what had happened, he followed Edwinson back into the hotel, where the manager ordered drinks.

"Here's good luck to you—and us, to-morrow!" he declared, raising his glass.

But he never drained the toast. Even as he lifted it to his lips, the door opened suddenly, and Carson, his head in a bandage, entered. At his heels were Strom and two policemen.

"What's this?" Edwinson demanded, laying down his glass, while Sam stiffened.

"It means that I charge that fellow with attempted murder!" Carson snarled, pointing a lean finger at Sam. "That's him, officers! Arrest him!"

The two policemen stepped forward, closing in about Sam. Before he could utter a word, handcuffs were snapped about his wrists.

"And I charge him with assault and libel," Strom added, leering in the prisoner's face with malicious triumph. "Take him away!"

As a bolt from the blue the blow had fallen with unexpected suddenness. Sam saw the cup of success dashed from his lips before ever he had a chance so much as to sip it.

His enemies, and Cyclops, were smarter than he had suspected. They had moved quickly—too quickly. By the time he was free, the California Cup would be won—and lost!

CHAPTER 3.

A Fight for Liberty and a Cup!

PACING his cell, Sam watched the cold rays of dawn creep through the prison windows. Dull despair in his heart, and boiling indignation at the injustice that had fallen upon him, he saw with the rising sun the splendid chance that had offered slip from him with the passing moments.

Edwinson had offered bail, but bail had been refused. And though the manager had promised to procure a defence against the charge, Sam had little hopes of getting off scot-free, in view of the mass of perjured evidence that was sure to be preferred against him.

Of release before the race started there was no hope at all, and, desperate with resentment at his indignity, Sam began to fume up and down the cell like a caged tiger.

"Keep quiet, will yer?"

A surly-faced policeman appeared outside the bars of Sam's cell, which, like most American lock-ups, was simply a grill of stout steel bars.

The fellow strode up to the grill, and thrust a scowling face between the bars. So vindictive was his expression, so uncalled for his order, that Sam had little doubt but that he had been bribed.

"You murderous young gink! If you don't quit this noise I'll bash yer!"

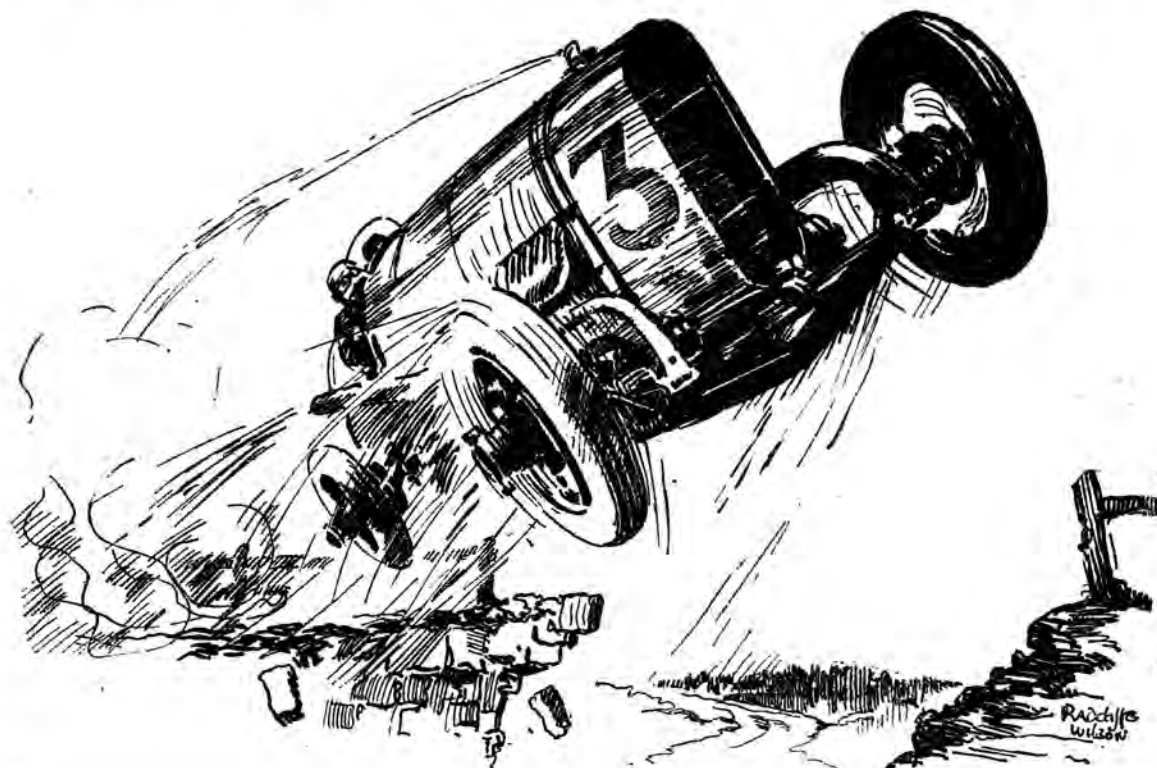
Sam shrugged, retaining a dignified silence, for he had nothing to gain by answering the other's threats. After a minute, the man turned away, but halted within a foot of the grill as a sudden muffled roar sounded in the distance.

It was the exhaust of a racer, the first note of the coming race. Some car, released from its stall after sealing, was warming up by the track, and the music of its whirling engine sent the blood coursing through Sam's veins.

A red mist swept across his eyes—a veil of desperation and anger—and a sudden astonishing determination swept him.

In a flash his strong young hands shot through the grill. They closed about the policeman's neck, dragging him, with a grip of steel, backwards against the bars.

The man's mouth opened to cry out, but Sam's fingers bit into his throat with vice-like strength, and the shout dwindled to a gurgling murmur, as the gaoler, choked helpless in his prisoner's grim hold.



Sam's steel muscles tightened, his eyes focussed keenly. There was a rush—a roar—a rattle. Then swoop! The Cyclops left the ground as it leapt the broken bridge, and for a second the rushing torrent gleamed beneath.

After a few seconds the policeman's form relaxed. It was all Sam could do to hold him up, for consciousness had left him.

But Sam had his wits about him. Gripping the man by the collar, he supported him while he searched in his pocket with the other hand. A moment later he found a bunch of keys, and, dragging them in through the bars, he sent the policeman reeling with a sudden shove.

The man spun away, to collapse in a heap on the floor, while his prisoner tried key after key to the lock with lightning rapidity. At last Sam found one that fitted, and in a trice had the door open.

Dragging the still unconscious policeman into the cell, he laid him full length on the biscuit-bed, secured his wrists with some handcuffs that hung from his belt, and, tearing a corner from the blanket, quickly gagged him. Then, covering the policeman with the remains of the woollen fabric, he re-locked the cell and tiptoed down the passage.

At length he reached an unbarred window looking out into a yard. No one was about, and in a trice he had the window open. Slipping across the sill, he closed the sash behind him, crossed the yard, scaled the wall, and dropped into a quiet alleyway.

The next minute he was speeding for the Cyclops headquarters. Strom had won the first round, but the match was not over yet. His liberty regained, there was still a chance, and Sam meant to make the most of it.

He expected that every moment would bring the whir of a police patrol motor hot foot after him. But nothing happened. The attention of all San Diego was focussed on the forthcoming race. Its citizens had no eyes for the panting figure that raced up to the noisy, smoke-ridden paddock, full of long, pulsating racers, that their giant engines running, seemed like greyhounds straining in the leash.

Plunging into the smoke flung out by the stertorous exhausts, Sam groped his way to where the Cyclops team stood waiting. Edwinson, anxious and worried, with them. Herbert, the first driver, sat ready; Angus, the reserve speedster, was just climbing into the spare car. The third, which Sam was to have driven, had been brought out, but its seat was as yet empty.

"I'm here!" Sam grabbed Edwinson by

the arm, and the astonished manager swung round in amazement. If Jepson had appeared on the scene he could not have been more surprised.

"But—" Edwinson began, when Sam checked him.

"I've bust gaol! There's not a second to spare! Get me a racing mask—quick, before I'm recognised!"

"But they'll arrest you!" Edwinson objected.

"They've got to lay hands on me first!" Sam retorted grimly. "Once I'm on the course that'll take a bit of doing, I give you my word! They won't get me till the finish."

"But they'll nab you then, son!"

"Let 'em! I don't care! It's the race that matters. By hook or by crook I'm going to beat that rotter, Strom, and so long as I do that, nothing else counts."

"Right!"

Edwinson dived for the Cyclops' dump, returning in an instant with a leather jacket and wide, be-goggled mask and wind helmet.

Dodging into the shelter of a car, Sam hastily donned the outfit, and, as he stepped forth, was unrecognisable. The next instant he sprang into the racer that lay waiting, and set off after the other two Cyclops machines, which had already moved up into position.

A period of tense waiting followed, while the opening departures took place. But, one after the other, the racers ahead in the line were despatched, Strom among them. Then Sam and his bus faced the starter.

"Go!"

The flag fell with a sudden swoop, and Sam let in his clutch.

R-r-r-r-p!

With a cacophonous blast of its loud exhaust, the Cyclops racer shot off the mark, and, changing up dexterously, its intrepid young driver swept on to the course.

The race was on! In it he fought not only for the Cup, but for liberty!

The first lap came and went without incident. As the vibrating speed monster thundered round it, Sam contented himself with learning his racer's paces, and with familiarising himself with the winding roadway which he had never traversed in its entirety before. He would reserve his real efforts for the latter part of the contest, he decided;

for the present, "soft pedal" was the maxim. So, when he swept past the pits again, it was with the certain knowledge that he had not made any remarkable time, and he set out on the second, grimly conscious that he had a lot of leeway to make up.

But this time his pace quickened perceptibly. No longer other cars passed him; instead, he noticed with pleasure that he began to overhaul his slower rivals, and as the moments sped his confidence grew.

Despite the tricky nature of the almost unknown course, he held the road. His bus, too, responded nobly to the calls he made upon it, and he found himself ever more and more at home with it.

But, for all this, his unfamiliarity with the Cyclops was a severe handicap; so was the fact that he had put in no practice laps before the race. His every competitor had him at a disadvantage, and it was only as he fought his way doggedly round, that for the first time he fully appreciated the almost colossal impudence of his undertaking.

It was only due to the fortunate accident that a preliminary practice lap was not called for by the rules that he owed his ability to start at all. And as he found himself balked at every turn by ignorance of best cornering speeds and gear-changing moments demanded by the idiosyncracies of the trackway, and felt himself losing precious seconds on every hill and bend, he again experienced a sense of ever-growing depression.

But Sam was nothing if not dogged, and he fought down the feeling of despair with cold determination. As the miles piled up, his excitement blazed forth, and the fierce lust for speed coursed through his throbbing veins like liquid fire.

Gone was his ever-present anxiety of arrest. The gaol, the police, and Carson—all these were forgotten, as, with the hot wind whistling past his earholes, he ploughed his way through the dense fog of whirling dust.

And so, battling grimly every yard of the course, he bore down upon the lap end marking the first half of the race. He had not yet sighted Strom, though, on the other hand, he had shown his heels to a goodly bunch of other contestants, and, to a hail

of flying sand and spluttering barks, he pulled up before the pits.

As they dumped juice into the capacious tank, Edwinton grabbed him by the elbow. "You're lying fifth!" the manager cried. "Strom's leading!"

"And the cops?"

"All quiet so far. No one knows who you are. All that's public is that we put in a spare driver at the last minute."

"O.K.!" Sam sprang back behind the wheel, and in an instant was off again.

This time he opened out in real earnest. In the ensuing mileage he must catch the leading Wasp and its unscrupulous pilot, must wipe out the interval that separated him from the front place.

Now Sam gave the roaring engine her head. He fed gas to her in lungfuls till she screamed like a thing in pain. He bucketed round S-bends and hairpins, two wheels off the ground, charged T-heads like a madman, and barged bulldozed into patches of dust-fog till the sweating mechanic at his side went numb with terror.

But the Cyclops thundered on, trembling from stem to stern as her whipping chassis, like clay in her pilot's hands, performed the seemingly impossible. Three more rivals slipped astern, and Sam felt himself to be gaining.

At every mile wreck seemed inevitable, but it did not come. Not for nothing had Sam nightly looped that deadly loop, had he plunged down that narrow ribbon of plank-ing that was the chute! His eye had grown as keen as a Zeiss glass, his powers of calculation as accurate as a micrometer, his sense of perception as acute as a spring balance.

He took chances no other man on the course had dared—and won through. He smelt bends he did not see, nosed through gaps where seemingly no thoroughfare existed, and cornered at speeds and angles in defiance of all known laws of gravitation and equilibrium till at last a yellow-and-black striped racer ahead loomed into view.

Strom!

Straining every nerve, Sam went after his rival, gaining slowly as the two racers thundered down on the finish of the last lap but one. Nearer and nearer they drew, till the Cyclops' front buffer almost kissed the rear dumb-irons of Strom's machine.

Once the American speedman glanced round, and for a brief second Sam glimpsed the grotesque leer of his goggled mask, through the smoked glasses of which flashed the momentary glint of evil eyes. Then Strom turned, and a few minutes later the two cars dashed up to the replenishing pits almost neck to neck.

Strom braked, and came to a stand before the Wasp quarters. So suddenly did he do so that Sam had all his work out out to avoid him. But, with a herculean effort, the Britisher saved a crash, and went on to his own pit, where, much against his inclination, he pulled up.

"I'd like to chance this last lap without a stop," he said, as Edwinton ran out to meet him. "But the throttle I've been giving her must have been the dickens on juice. I daren't risk it—can't afford to get stranded, out of petrol!"

"All right—only back up!" Edwinton glanced up the row of pits anxiously. "Everyone's wondering who you are. You've fought Strom to second place, and if you can get away before him, you'll be leading. That cirens man of yours is nosing around, too."

He broke off as Strom, farther down the Hue, pointed in the Cyclops' direction. And Sam, throwing a hurried glance that way, saw Carson standing beside the American driver, at his heels a policeman. The next instant the showman and the uniformed figure started towards the Cyclops' pit.

"They suspect! For goodness' sake, hurry!" Edwinton exclaimed.

The Cyclops' capacious tank was fed with juice, and Sam jumped aboard the racer just as Carson, Strom, and the policeman came dashing up.

"Got you, my lad!" cried Carson, dropping a hand upon Sam's shoulder. "So you thought you'd trick us, did you! Broke from goal, too, to do it. Put the bracelets on him."

But Sam was not to be taken so easily. Turning round smartly, his left flashed out, catching Carson full in the jaw, and sending him toppling backwards full into the arms of the oncoming man in blue.

There was a succession of gasps as the two, locked together, fell to the ground with a thud.

Sam did not wait for them to sort themselves, but set his car in motion and drove off, the mechanic swinging aboard as the car jerked forward.

Glancing behind, Sam saw Carson pick himself up, and shake his fist violently. At the same time, through the blast of the exhaust, he caught the shrill scream of a police-whistle.

The fat was in the fire with a vengeance! Where was Strom? Ah, there ahead! The Wasp had got away first during the excitement. That was its striped stern in front there, faintly visible through the upcast dust that half-obiterated the roadway.

Now for it!

Down went Sam's accelerator pedal, and the great racer shot forward with a bound. The roar of its mighty engine rose in a torrential crescendo of blasting sound as the "rev. counter" flew upwards, and the speed leaped by fives to the hundred mile mark.

But Strom's racer was going, too. He had the lead again, and his thick dust hindered. This time he was out to win at all costs; he would let nothing balk him now.

On flew the two monsters, their big, dished wheels bounding off the ground as they thudded over ruts and pot holes, slewed madly round corners, and flattened out again.

Crouched low behind the wide wheel, Sam glued his eyes on the road ahead, on the black and yellow streamline of his opponent, on the steaming radiator cap of his own bus.

Now the coupe-de-vent brass work danced and jiggered! How the steam swirled, obscuring at times all vision, while great, scalding spurts of water splashed viciously on the tiny wind-screen—and over it, to bite into human flesh as Sam and his mechanic crouched doggedly in their places.

Now the Wasp seemed to slacken—or was the Cyclops gaining, its pace rising? The speedometer—yes, the speed mounted; the interval ahead narrowed. Ever and ever the striped, bulbous back of Strom's racer drew nearer and nearer.

Now for a pass!

Sam's grip on the wheel tightened. He could feel the vibrant trembling of the steering column as he bore upon the ebony periphery of the 18-incher. Now the Wasp's back was almost on him. The dust soared past, across and around, and sand, chunks of roadway, and loose stones shot up in a hurricane from under the leader's juggernaut wheels.

Where was Strom? The dust—no, the fog—shut out everything. Sam groped blindly, his foot pressed hard down upon the quivering accelerator. The pace was terrific—he could see nothing, but would not for a second relax his grim, bulldog grip upon his quarry.

Ah! There!

The bulbous back loomed through the dust, and in a flash Sam threw in what remained, the rev. counter stirred perceptibly, and the Cyclops responded with a throaty roar.

"Mind!" The mechanic's hand grasped Sam's elbow as he shouted the warning.

The bulbous back ahead slewed suddenly, and the Cyclops' ferret nose, pushing in for a pass, was forced suddenly over—over and over, till the offside wheels brushed the road edge.

With a frantic heave, Sam locked round. For a brief second he glimpsed Strom's evil eyes through the murk, as, peering maliciously through his demon goggles, he scowled fiendishly, his thick lips parting in a grin of wicked triumph.

Then the Wasp slewed inwards, boring on the bend, till its low side all but touched the leaping Cyclops.

"You dirty hound!" Sam breathed through set teeth, and, with all his force, literally tore the Cyclops from the fatal trap Strom had set.

Bucketing and plunging, the British racer crashed up the low bank flanking the inner curve, careening drunkenly as the upcast tossed the near-side wheels, while Sam strained in a frenzy on the steering rim.

The worm gear held, but the column lashed like an aspen before the wind; the muscles of his powerful wrists throbbled beneath the strain. Then, with a wild lurch, the Cyclops slewed over the bank top, lurched madly downwards to the rugged turf beyond, hurtled all out across the melon patch that faced it, and, like a bullet at a target, smashed clean into a huge advertisement hoarding.

Crash!

To a spluttering hail of flying matchwood, the racer bashed clean through the hoarding

back, and, its occupants ducking low, dived back on to the road.

Whiz!

Strom's front dumb-irons flew out of the dust cloud, just behind the leaping Cyclops' side, as the British car swung obliquely on to the crown.

In a trice Sam stamped on the gas, the Cyclops shot forward, and, by an inch, the Wasp's ugly nose missed its aluminum streamline. Then, with a wild swing, the Cyclops straightened out—ahead!

Five miles to go! At the thought Sam's heart leaped within him. He had the lead! What mattered now, the handcuffs that awaited him, the prison cell, the fate of an escaped prisoner? The race was his if he could but hold the course! And hold it he would, in spite of all.

Then—

A sudden groan from the mechanic made him turn. The man's back was half towards him as his companion peered over the back of the bucket seat.

"The juice! The tank's ripped—strained—sprung!" The mechanic gasped the dread words. "That hoarding did it! She's leaking like a blessed sieve!"

An instant later the engine confirmed the report. A spluttering cough rasped from beneath the bonnet, and the transmission responded with a violent train of jerks, in sympathy.

"Pump like blazes!" Sam shouted. "Pump, you fool!"

And the mechanic bent forward, grabbing for the pressure pump. But though he worked desperately to revive the falling pressure in the underslung "gas" tank astern, he fought a failing battle.

Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!

The motor missed in spasmodic gasps, its asthmatic splutter now dying away as the pump won temporarily, now breaking out anew in a hectic jazz of syncopated beating.

Whirr-r-r-r!

The Wasp's ugly nose pushed by, its striped body following, and as it passed, Strom's evil, leering face gleamed triumphantly through and beneath his mask.

Then the Wasp's stern swung ahead, and Sam breathed the dust of his unscrupulous rival, his nostrils burning with the acrid fumes of the Yankee's fantail exhaust-pipe.

To be beaten now, and by a dirty trick! To be beaten, almost at the post, and at a lonely spot where no one was to see the foul that had been worked upon him! It was hard, cruel hard, after all that had been—as hard as the undoubted fact that Strom's bus was swiftly leaving the Cyclops standing.

"Gosh!" The mechanic started up suddenly, grasping for the wheels as the Cyclops gave a sudden, unaccountable swerve.

"Hands off, you idiot!" Sam brushed the meddlesome fingers away, and fought the car into control, wondering vaguely what had happened.

Then, with unexpected suddenness, the front wheels slewed again, the back swung round in a sickening swerve, and the leaping racer—she was still travelling above the sixty mark—all but turned over.

Again Sam strained up the wheel. Throttling down, he coaxed, played, and wangled, till he drew the car out of her drunken spin. Then, while she still rocked and swayed strangely, he glanced sideways.

Trees, houses, and fences were staggering. The brown earth, its bosom rippling like the surface of a quiet sea, was rent and riven.

An earthquake had burst upon San Diego!

Ahead, Strom was pulling up in a panic, but Sam cared nothing. With a shout of joy he stamped on the accelerator pedal, and the spluttering Cyclops shot forward anew. Even with the ever-weakening pressure she could make speed, and now firing on three, now on four, Sam put her head towards the finish.

Another shock; then another, but not so bad as the first. A gaping building toppled over ahead; but Sam kept on, forcing the racer across the heaving ground. Strom's car flashed by; but a fierce oath from its driver, and a burst of exhaust fire showed that, spurred on by the Britisher, the Wasp pilot was resuming the struggle.

But now the quivering ceased, and Sam sped on, hoping for the best, but expecting the worst. He could sense Strom creeping up behind, could almost detect the coming "pass," when—

"Look out!" bawled the mechanic. Ahead on the road lay a bridge, its crown

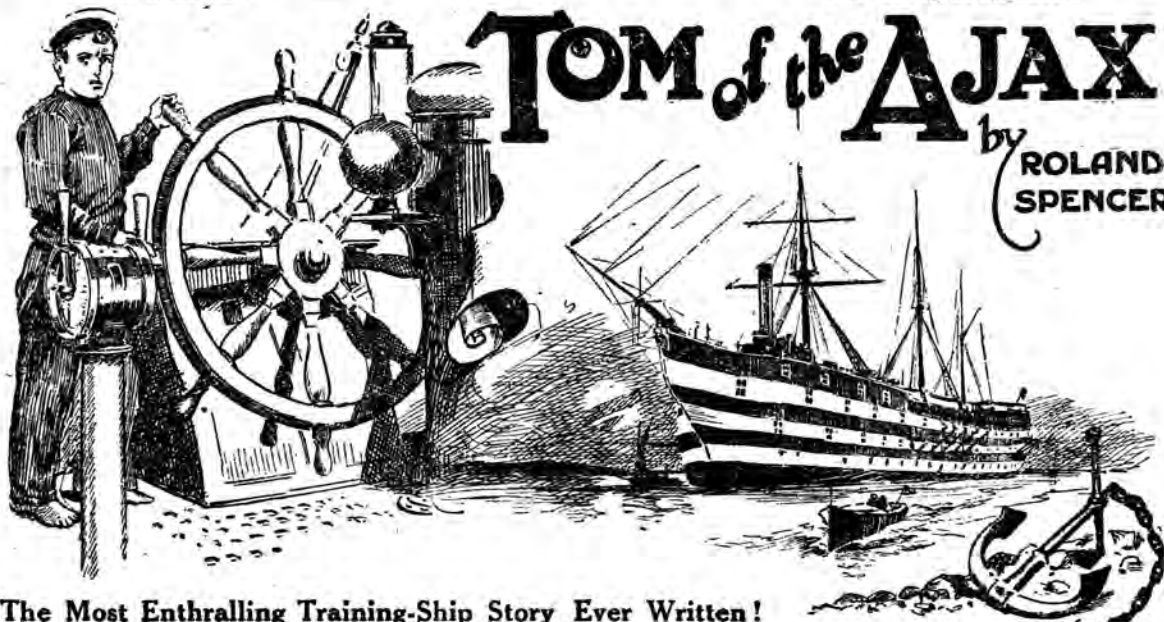
(Continued on page 26.)

Tom Gale, as well
as a hero—

—is every
bit a sportsman!

TOM of the AJAX

by ROLAND SPENCER



The Most Enthralling Training-Ship Story Ever Written!

True Blue!

NIGHT found the Ulysses with the swift-flashing light of St. Catherine's point, Isle of Wight, broad on the lee bow. The barquentine tacked there, and lay on a course south-east, making out across the Channel again.

At dawn they were well up in the narrows of the Channel. Then sail was shortened smartly, the ship brought under power, and the rest of the canvas stowed.

Steadily ploughing her way along under steam, she passed through the Downs, round the Tongue Light-vessel, and there, full before them, lay the London river, which they all knew so well.

Their time had been well-judged. The tide was just turning to flood, and at high water the Ulysses was edging in towards her mooring. Her deck was crowded with excited youngsters laughing and shouting.

"The good old Ajax—as large as life and twice as natural!" cried Tom Gale to Dicky as the two chums leaned over the port bulwark of the barquentine. "Doesn't she look fine?"

The big old training-ship, her rigging swarming with waving figures, was certainly a fine sight from the Ulysses. Every gig and jolly-boat from the mother ship was rowing out to welcome the barquentine.

"Home again!" exclaimed Dicky. "Pity the cruise is over, but it's great to be back, isn't it?"

Tom nodded thoughtfully. He was wondering—now that he was back aboard the Ajax, how long it would be before Kalche, the mysterious man with green spectacles, showed his hand once more?

"Commander Boyce wants to see you in his quarters, Gale."

Tom was sitting cross-legged on the floor of the orlop deck mending a torn shirt, with Dicky and several other Hoods, when the unexpected summons arrived. It was in the afternoon of their first day back aboard the mother ship.

Tom jumped up.

"Any idea what's in the wind?" he

asked sharply of the youngster who had delivered the message.

The messenger had no idea, and Tom set off to obey the summons. He was perturbed. Before the cruise of the Ulysses his visits to the commander's quarters had meant trouble every time. "Am I in the soup again?" he asked himself.

There was a grave look on the face of Commander Boyce as Tom entered, and the youngster's heart sank. What was the row this time, he wondered? Another training-ship boy was standing by the commander's table, with his back to the door. He turned his face, and Tom started.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM GALE, a sturdily-built youth and chief petty officer of the starboard watch aboard the famous old training-ship Ajax.

STONIKY BURR, C.P.O. of the starboard watch, a bully of the first water.

DICKY WEST is a cheerful ginger-headed youth and a staunch chum of Gale's.

Trouble arises when a mysterious, sinister man in green spectacles approaches Burr. He gives his name as **KALCHE**, and he enlists the aid of Burr in a plot against Tom Gale, without, however, giving any reasons.

Following this Tom falls an easy prey to a trick of Burr's, is disgraced, and struck off the list of boys detailed to sail on the annual cruise round the British Isles aboard the Ulysses.

A mad impulse seizes him, however, and, stealing out of his bunk at night, Tom plunges over the side of the Ajax, swims to the Ulysses, clambers aboard, and stows himself away in the chain-locker. His wild adventure comes to a sad ending, for, on reaching Harwich, he is taken ashore and delivered to the guard of an express for his journey back to the Ajax.

The train is wrecked. Tom is crawling out of the wreckage when he is rushed upon, overpowered, and carried to a car, in which he is conveyed to a lonely house on the moor. He effects an escape, however, but Kalche and his men are soon hot on his track.

With the aid of **AVALANCHE HUME**, the famous detective, Tom gains his freedom, and reaches the Ulysses in time to win the boxing contest for the "Avalanche" Cup.

Later, by overhearing a conversation between Burr, and Hemming, Gale and West solve the mystery of the painting of the Ajax's nose, for which offence Tom had been wrongfully accused.

"And you're going to keep mum about it, Tom?" asks Dicky West.

(Now read on.)

Hemming!

What did it mean? Tom strode forward and saluted, trying to conceal his trepidation. Commander Boyce nodded in response to his salute. He was a tall, handsome man, with a strong, tanned face.

The commander of the Ajax was a man of few words. He wasted no time now, but went straight to the point, true sailor that he was.

"Some time ago now, Gale," he said quietly, "you were disgraced from the position of chief petty officer of the Hood Division for an act that seemed to make you unworthy of your rank. I refer, of course, to the painting of the figurehead of this ship.

"You denied your guilt at the time, Gale," went on Commander Boyce in the same level tones. "I am sorry to say that you were disbelieved. Now, however, I know that you spoke the truth. The real offender has come to me of his own accord and owned up."

Tom's lips opened mutely. Instinctively he flashed a glance at Hemming, but the Blake fellow's eyes were on the floor. Commander Boyce held out his hand.

"I am sorry, Gale," he said simply—"more sorry than perhaps you realise. You will, of course, be reinstated at once."

Tom took the commander's hand as though in a dream.

So Hemming had turned up trumps in the end! There was grit in him, after all! Now that he had broken with Stoniky Burr the true fellow was showing up. He hardly heard the few words with which the commander dismissed him.

It was some time before Hemming appeared. His face was still white, and he dropped his eyes as Tom strode towards him with hand outstretched.

"Thanks, old chap!" said Tom quietly. "I—I—"

Hemming laughed harshly and tried to pass.

"I wonder you want to shake hands with a chap like me, Gale!" he said bitterly. "Think again!"

Tom gripped the other's shoulder and laughed as he pulled him round to face him.

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"Hemming," said Tom Gale, holding out his hand, "you've proved you're true blue. If you've ever done me any wrong, you've repaid." Hemming gripped his hand, a grip so tight that it almost hurt. He tried to speak, but no words came.

"Don't be a fool, Hemming!" he said cheerily. "I knew you were true blue ever since you saved my life on the old Ulysses! And now you've proved it!"

He still held out his hand, and at last Hemming gripped it—a grip so tight that it almost hurt. His mouth was working as though he was about to speak, but no words came.

"If you've ever done me any wrong, you've repaid," said Tom. "I ought to have known you would have owned up sooner or later—"

Hemming's eyes riveted themselves on Tom's. They were wide and startled.

"You—you what, Gale? Do you mean to say that—that you knew all the time?"

Tom flushed. He would have withdrawn his words, but it was too late now.

"Yes," he answered. "I knew ever since one day when we were pointing for the Channel. Dicky West and I heard you and Burr in the bo'sun's locker. We were in the chain locker."

"And you didn't peach on me?" muttered Hemming hoarsely. There was a look of wonderment on his pale face.

"Not after that little business of the fallen spar! How could I?"

"You—you carried on, disrated—" Hemming's voice broke, and he turned his head away. "Heavens, what a cad I've been!"

The next moment he had swung on his heel and hurried off without another word. Tom stood staring after him. Then sudden footsteps behind caused him to swing round. A quick exclamation escaped him at the sight of the

smiling face of the man who was approaching with the athletic swing Tom knew so well. The youngster's eyes lit up.

"Avalanche Hu—I mean, Mr. Hume!"

For the Cup!

AVALANCHE HUME laughed as he gripped Tom's hand.

"Avalanche 'll do!" he chuckled.

The keen, forceful face of the Scotland Yard man was lit up pleasantly. It was clear that he was pleased to see the youngster, and Tom felt a glow of pride at the thought. He had learnt to worship this steady-eyed man with whom he had been through so much—the man who could laugh his cool laugh with sheer reckless daring when even death stared him in the face.

"How's things, Tom?" asked Hume. His eyes twinkled. "I've got a bit of news for you! Was just off to see the commander. I'll tell you why first. Is there somewhere where we can jaw?"

Tom led the way up to the upper deck. In a deserted corner by the poop Hume put his hand on Tom's shoulder.

"Good news, Tom. Remember that caricature that was published in the 'Fleeththe Herald'?—you know, the Ajax with a red nose—that was supposed to be sent in by you?"

"Yes!" cried Tom eagerly.

"Well, I've had experts on the job, and they say that the letter to the editor that accompanied the cartoon is a forgery. Of course, you and I knew it was all the time. They have compared

it with Kalche's writing, and say it is probable that the forgery was done by him. No doubt Burr helped him—got hold of a specimen of your signature for Kalche. It was all part of the plan to get you to run away from the Ajax. I'm glad that's cleared up. I'm here to tell Commander Boyce."

Tom grinned.

"It never rains but it pours!" he chuckled. "The chap who really painted the nose of the figurehead has just owned up—chap called Hemming. I've been made C. P. O. of the Hoods again, Mr. Hume!"

"Gad, that's good luck!" cried Hume delightedly. "So it wasn't Burr, after all? We jumped to a wrong conclusion there!"

"Yes," Tom nodded. Then he glanced around him. There were several training-ship boys farther down the deck, and a couple of officers talking on the quarter-deck, but no one near enough to overhear his next low-spoken words. "I say, Mr. Hume, now I'm back on the Ajax, what about Kalche?"

Hume's teeth clicked together.

"Look out, Tom. That's all I can tell you. We know our man—know that though he's got the cunning of a cat, he's got the determination of a bulldog as well. He'll strike again, Tom, be sure of that. I've been hard at work all the time since that affair at the house in the fens, but he seems to have vanished into thin air again as only he knows how! I'm no nearer discovering his motive in trying to get hold of you, either. That's as big a mystery as ever."

Tom's eyes held a worried shadow.

"What wouldn't I give to know!" he muttered. "It's something to do with my parentage, we know—but what? Who on earth are my parents? Who on earth am I?"

"Don't you worry, Tom. You'll know in the end as sure as a bullet. Kalche is about the most slippery customer I've come across, although I caught him once, that time years back. Well, I beat him then, and I'll beat him this second time!"

A steely look had flashed into Hume's eyes. The quality in him that had earned him the name of "Avalanche" gleamed out for a moment. Then he turned away from the bulwarks.

"That's all, Tom—watch out! He'll strike again. We can't know how. Something unexpected for sure. Watch out! And now I'm off to see the commander, with my bit of news about the forgery."

Tom descended to the orlop deck in search of Dicky West, to tell his news. He found Dicky still mending socks. The red-headed youngster looked up eagerly.

"What was it, Tom?" he cried.

"What did old Boyce want you for?"

Tom squatted down next his chum. The Hoods who were there watched him curiously.

"The chap who painted old Ajax's nose red has owned up to it," said Tom slowly. "Also, old Avalanche has found out that the cartoon I got in the soup over, in the 'Herald,' was a forgery." He could not mention Kalche's name before the other fellows, but Dicky read his chum's significant look. "In fact, I'm to be reinstated as C. P. O. of the Hoods."

A wild whoop broke from Dicky as he sprang to his feet, flinging two half-mended socks into the air in his excitement.

"Gee-whiz! Oh, fine! Topping, Tom! It's not a job I've cared about, I can tell you—specially with you wrongfully disrated all the time. This is great news—eh, you fellows?"

All the Hoods present were as enthusiastic and excited as Dicky. Though the

red-headed youngster was very popular in the division, he could never be quite the leader that Tom made. Some other fellows of the starboard watch came along the deck towards the Hood section to find out what the excitement was. The news spread like wildfire through the Ajax.

The news that Hemming was the real offender spread with it, but Hemming was nowhere to be found. And then Tom was sent for, with Dicky West, to the commander's quarters once again.

Several other officers were there, and Brown of the Hoods, the fellow who had been promoted to P. O. in Dicky's place when Dicky had stepped into Tom's shoes. Brown, Tom learnt, had been transferred to the Raleigh Division, in place of a Raleigh P. O. who was leaving the Ajax in a few days. Dicky was to resume his old position—much to his relief. The cheery, care-free Dicky had never relished the responsibilities that had been placed upon his shoulders. And Tom was officially reinstated as chief petty officer of the Hood Division.

Dicky and Brown were dismissed, and the other officers left Tom and the commander alone. Commander Boyce sat tapping the table thoughtfully with his strong fingers before he spoke abruptly.

"I have to apologise to you a second time, Gale," he said. "Mr. Hume, with whom you are acquainted, has paid me a visit, and tells me that handwriting experts declare that you did not sign the letter that accompanied an offensive cartoon that was published some time ago in the 'Fleeththe Herald.' It seems that there was a deliberate attempt to bring you into trouble on someone's part."

Again the commander tapped the table with restless fingers. He was frowning, and there was a worried look in his eyes.

"Mr. Hume has told me other things, Gale. It seems that there is some mystery in connection with your—er—parentage. You have an enemy—there's some queer mystery—"

He stopped, glancing at Gale sharply. Tom nodded.

"I can only say I hope everything will turn out all right as far as you are concerned, boy. It is a queer business, a mighty queer business. Mr. Hume is busy in connection with this, as you know. Nothing can be done as far as I can see, otherwise. You must take care, Gale, and that's all. A queer business—a mighty queer business," he repeated, half to himself. "Well, I am glad you are 'once more chief petty officer of the Hoods—no division could wish a better. You know that the contests between the divisions for the Hume Cup are to take place shortly? I wish you and the Hoods the best of luck!"

"Thank you, sir!"

And Tom left for the orlop deck feeling that all was well with the world.

There were to be five inter-division contests for the Avalanche Cup—as the boys called the Hume Cup—boxing, football, running, swimming, and boat racing.

Rivalry was running very high aboard the Ajax. Most of the divisions considered themselves to have a fair chance of carrying off the coveted cup, though it was generally considered that the Hoods and the Blakes and Raleighs of the starboard watch, and the Nelsons and Drakes of the port watch would top the list of the sixteen divisions, and have to fight it out among themselves.

But the boxing reduced the Drakes' chances badly. They were well at the foot of the list, whilst the Grenvilles, of the port watch, joined the other four

favourites at the top of the list. Tom, boxing finely for his division, succeeded in bringing his team to second place, with the Nelsons first.

The running badly blighted the hopes of the Raleighs and Grenvilles, leaving the Nelsons, Blakes, and Hoods at the top. The Blakes, in spite of the disadvantage of Burr's poor leadership, were, on the whole, good athletes, as were the Hoods and Nelsons. Excitement ran higher than ever, and when the football contest of the following week was settled, leaving the Blakes first, the Hoods seven points only below them, and the Nelsons with a bare margin of four points under the Hoods, it was clear that the struggle for the Hume Cup was to be a very close, grim fight indeed.

"Seven points behind 'em, and the gig-racing and swimming still to come!" said Tom to Dicky West, on the evening that the final football results had been settled. "We've got to catch up those seven points that the Blakes have got ahead—catch 'em up and pass 'em!"

Dicky nodded cheerfully.

"We'll do that all right, you bet!" he said. Dicky was always optimistic. "There's one thing," he added, "it's one of the three—Hoods, Blakes, or Nelsons—that'll carry off the Avalanche Cup. That's pretty sure. The Drakes are fourth, but they are something like fifty points behind the Nelsons. It'll be a miracle if they can get ahead now—a thumping miracle! But I back the Hoods any day against the Blakes and Nelsons. We've been running pretty close, though, haven't we?"

"I should say we have!" laughed Tom. "Seven points and four points difference isn't much. There's one thing, who ever does get the cup in the end will have jolly well deserved it."

The gig-racing was to take place on the following Monday. It was likely to prove the most keenly contested of all the contests for the cup, for gig-racing was one of the chief sports aboard the Ajax. By the terms of the race, the leader of each division had to cox his boat, with a crew of twenty youngsters under him. The Hoods hoped ran high. If they could hold their own in the gig-race and could overcome the Blakes and Nelsons, they would head the list, with only the swimming contest still to come. And at swimming the Hoods took some beating.

The Monday came. Tom had seen to it that every Hood was fit to a hair, and though the gigs were rather undermanned, since they could be manned by one division only, the Hoods sent their craft fairly cutting through the water

in the "heat," and did not have much difficulty in winning it.

There were four heats altogether, each held in the morning.

The final was to be held after tea, partly owing to the tides, and also in order to allow the boat crews a thorough rest for their second ordeal. Tea was a scanty meal for the four final divisions, and there was a good deal of friendly chaff between the finalists.

"Hoods get the cup? Some hopes!" sneered Stoniky Burr from the Blakes' mess table.

"About as much chance as a cat in a dog's home for the Blakes to get it, anyway!" responded Dicky West cheerfully. "I shouldn't waste your strength in rowing if I were you, Blakes—keep your breath for cheering us when we get it! We—owp!"

A pellet of bread, thrown with unerring aim, came whizzing from the Blakes' table, and Dicky stopped with a grunt as it shot into his open mouth. He choked, red in the face, and then with a great gulp the pellet of bread slid down into the darkness of the unknown. A howl of laughter went up.

"Well chucked!" grinned Tom. "But here's one for the Blakes!"

He returned the fire, and his missile took Burr well in the eye. Stoniky yelled, and the next instant bread pellets were flying through the air like hail. Tom's hair was full of it. Hemming, at the Blakes' table, was the only youngster of the two rival divisions who did not join in. But he had no option when Gale cheerfully started pelting at him. A sudden grin appeared on the Blake fellow's face. He returned the fire, and Tom, laughing, had to duck quickly.

(There will be an extra-long instalment of this splendid serial next week, chums, so don't miss it.)

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"CYCLONE SAM!"

(Continued from page 22.)

zone, wrenched away by the great quake. Below ran a gushing torrent of water; above lay a gap of twenty feet.

Baulked! But, no! With quick, indrawn breath, Sam forced the counter upwards, wrenching every ounce from his reluctant engine.

"Pump—for the love of Mike, pump!" he yelled; and his companion worked the handle like a maniac.

With a deafening roar the great racer tore up to the bridge, and, under pressure of the mechanic's frenzied toil, the spirit column rose to the greedy carburettor. For a brief space the willing engine howled in a barrage of beefy blasts, and its note rang true.

The gap! It was on him now! And, recollecting the loop, Sam's old coolness returned as if by magic. His steel muscles tightened, his eye focussed keenly. A rush, a roar, a rattle.

Swoop! The Cyclops left the ground as it leaped the broken bridge, and for a second the rushing torrent gleamed beneath. A wild sway in mid-air, a sickening interval of seeming eternity, and then—thud! The tyres took the bridge end beyond; there was a wild swerve, a miss to the brickwork by inches, as a tyre burst like a shell.

Then, as Sam spun the wheel around, the great racer straightened, to limp swiftly on her ungainly way up the road beyond, where lay the finish.

Crash! A rending sound behind rang through the rasp of the Cyclops' motor. Strom had essayed the leap, maddened by sight of his rival's pluck. But once again his nerve had failed him, and the Wasp was a wreck, its pilot senseless on the broken road.

But Sam did not look round. Coughing and choking, the Cyclops bored her way across the uneven surface, past ruined houses, fallen trees, and shattered fences. Straight down on the fleeing mob of panicky sightseers she thundered, and they split aside to leave her a passage.

The banner! Finish! With a final blast the racer lurched under the great sheet, her white-faced driver clinging mechanically to the wheel.

Sam and the Cyclops were victors! And at this the frightened multitude turned to yell appreciation till the vault of Heaven rang!

"Got you! You'd break gaol, you gink!" As Sam, half-fainting, hopped, or rather fell out of his seat, a heavy hand fell on his shoulder. A policeman, the man he had scragged at the gaol, faced him.

"All right, I'm ready!" Sam, too tired and hungry—he had had nothing but bread and water for hours—made no effort to escape.

But a dark shadow loomed across the policeman's arm, and a big man strode in. Sam recognised him as the Governor of the State, presiding over the race.

"Wait a while! Are you sure—quite sure—that you can identify this young fellow?" The Governor's grim eye focussed on the astonished "cop," and something in the great man's stern gaze, brought understanding to the officer's bewildered mind.

"I—I—no, I can't, sir!" the man muttered, reading an order in the Governor's words and manner.

"I just guess you can't, you bonehead!" the other commented; and, dismissing the policeman with a wave of the hand, offered Sam his arm.

"We all like pluck, son," he said, with a smile of encouragement. "And, by heck, you've got several tons of it! You've won the Cup, and you deserve it! By golly! You're an all-fired cyclone!"

And Cyclone Sam the victor was, from that day on!

THE END.

(Look out for a magnificent sporting and adventure story by Walter Edwards in next week's GEM, entitled: "TAKE-A-CHANCE THORNTON!" You will note it ripping!)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

My dear Chums,—There is some extra-special news this week about the Foot-balls' Names Competition. The interest taken in this great test is unparalleled, and for that reason certain additions have been made.

ADDITIONAL PRIZES!

Many notable "extras" now figure on the list. It has been decided to offer more of those splendid motor-bikes for which everybody is longing, and the same thing applies to the other prizes. This is only fair, considering the immense work which "Gem" readers have put into the business. You will see, if you study the particulars, that there are more opportunities for all competitors, and that's just what we all require.

"COCK OF THE WALK!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's "Gem" will contain an extra-special story of St. Jim's. It is a big yarn in every respect. The main interest is concerned with Tompkins. Up to now nobody has ever worried much about Tompkins. He has been one of the crowd, but there is good stuff in the fellow, obscure though he may be, and Arthur Augustus makes the discovery of Tompkins' real merit. Just like D'Arcy! The Swell of the Fourth goes through life doing good turns, and he performs a regular, downright act of charity for Tompkins when he takes the humble individual under his lordly wing.

WAITING FOR A CHANCE.

Any number of people are simply waiting for an opening to show what they are made of, and pull off something worth having. It is so with Tompkins. He may be stupid, but if he is dull, that is only because he has never had his chance. Gussy takes Tompkins in hand, and teaches him the elements of the Noble Art. In consequence, a new and brilliant era dawns for Tompkins. He becomes the champion of his own particular little set. Just how he manages it, and the magnificent part D'Arcy plays, you will see when you are lucky enough to secure a copy

of next Wednesday's "Gem," which is a topping good number all round.

A PUNISHMENT ISSUE!

The "St. Jim's News" is always as welcome as the flowers in May. Our Special Punishment Number is a corker. Nothing about thumbscrews, or, for that matter, corkscrews. The old-fashioned methods of enforcing the principles of discipline have gone out, but we get a nice study in the mystery of the handy ashlant, and lots of sound views on chastisement generally. It is a big subject. We hear of fellows taking their punishment. It belongs to them, and they have a perfect right to it. Tom Merry and his trusty aides-de-camp in the editorial sanctum of the "St. Jim's News" handle the whole theme in grand style.

A GREAT TURF SERIAL!

Look out for this! There will be full details in next week's "Gem." The story starts very soon, and will prove as exciting a yarn of the racecourse as has ever been written.

"TAKE-A-CHANCE" THORNTON!"

By Walter Edwards.

That's our choice complete for next week. To my mind, it is the raciest, crispest, and most dramatic story we have yet had from our old friend, "W. E." Thornton gets more downs than ups at the start of his career. He has trouble at school, and the chopper of expulsion falls drastically. Thenceforward Thornton plunges into boxing, and his readiness and enthusiasm carry him even farther on the route to triumph than even he in his most exultant moments could have anticipated.

THE TUCK HAMPER.

We are going well ahead in this department. As ever I am keenly on the look-out for the bright new story which brings that cheer-up feeling to the reader, to say nothing of bringing a magic hamper to the sender.

Your Editor.**LIST OF PRIZEWINNERS.**

(Continued from page 2.)

THE CORRECT SOLUTION IS AS FOLLOWS:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Set 1. | Set 2. |
| 1. Ball | 7. Penn |
| 2. Featherstone | 8. Broad |
| 3. Palmer | 9. Barnes |
| 4. Pearson | 10. Harper |
| 5. Peacock | 11. Hogg |
| 6. Milla | 12. Legge |
| Set 3. | Set 4. |
| 13. Sewell | 19. Archibald |
| 14. Lophhead | 20. (Cancelled) |
| 15. Potts | 21. Weaver |
| 16. Winship | 22. Heap |
| 17. Nash | 23. Lacey |
| 18. Page | 24. Bird |
| Set 5. | Set 6. |
| 25. Hart | 31. Splers |
| 26. Burnham | 32. M'Cluggage |
| 27. Wood | 33. Poole |
| 28. Cotton | 34. Kidd |
| 29. Walker | 35. (Cancelled) |
| 30. Wright | 36. Hill |
| Set 7. | Set 8. |
| 37. Bainbridge | 43. Plum |
| 38. Handley | 44. Middleton |
| 39. Fowler | 45. Ford |
| 40. Marsh | 46. Duckett |
| 41. Brittan | 47. Baker |
| 42. Woodhouse | 48. Maitland |

NOTE: In certain of the printed lists of names there occurred misprints which affected pictures Nos. 20 and 35, and these two were therefore disregarded in the adjudication.

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**THE STUNT
SPEEDMAN**A New Complete Sporting
Story in this week's**PLUCK**

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"Gussy's Grocery Store!"

(Continued from page 17.)

"Ya-as, I'm afraid so, dear boys!"

The doorbell tinkled, and Tom Merry & Co., and D'Arcy gasped to see no less a person than Mr. Sands enter the shop.

Mr. Sands' face was very red, and he appeared to be confused.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Sands!" said D'Arcy, raising his topker respectfully. "Pway what can I do for you?"

"Look here, Master D'Arcy, I've come to talk business!" said Mr. Sands, plunging right into the burden of his plaint. "It don't seem fair, after me being established so many years in Rylcombe, that I should have a shop setting up against me, run by my own errand-boy as used to be, and a—a schoolboy!"

"Weally, Mr. Sands—"

"It isn't fair that my trade should be ruined!" exclaimed Mr. Sands. "I suggest that we come to some friendly arrangement, Master D'Arcy. I am willing to take Grimes back into my employment; in fact, I will raise his salary by ten shillings a week!"

"My hey!" gasped Grimes from behind the counter.

Gussy's eyes gleamed.

"That is vewy good of you, Mr. Sands!" he said, after a pause. "I am perfectly agreeable to come to terms, bai Jove. This is what I suggest. I will close this shop on condition that you purchase all the stock at cost price, thus takin' it off my hands, and that you stick to your offah to weinstrate Grimes with an extra ten shillin's a week on his salary."

"Done!" said Mr. Sands eagerly. "Then that's settled, Master D'Arcy!"

"Ya-as, wathab!"

Grimes chuckled, and Tom Merry & Co. winked at each other.

Gussy had shown that, when driven to the wall, he could be as wily as anybody.

Mr. Sands and Grimes took an inventory of the stock, and a fair price was agreed upon. Gussy also sold Mr. Sands the carrier triangle for twelve pounds.

That evening the door of the Direct Supply Grocery Stores in Rylcombe High Street was closed, and two small notices appeared upon it containing these announcements:

"TO LET!"

"Business transferred to Mr. Sands, grocer, opposite."

Gussy was able to pay the bills with the shop takings and the cash received from Mr. Sands.

Next morning Grimes resumed his old duties with Mr. Sands, and there was no happier youngster in all Rylcombe than he.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was more his idol than ever before!

As for the swell of St. Jim's himself, he proudly congratulated himself that he had seen Grimes through his time of trouble, and brought him out with flying colours.

And so closed the brief career of Gussy's Grocery Store!

THE END.

(Another topping story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "COCK OF THE WALK!" By Martin Clifford. Don't miss it, chums!)

THIS WEEK'S TUCK HAMPER WINNER!

LIGHT AT LAST!

Jones had bought a motor-cycle. It was a lovely thing, for he gave £39 10s. 6d. for it. One day he went to the garage and asked for some red oil. The garage-keeper looked at him dumbfounded. "Well," he said, scratching his head, "I've bin in this 'ere job for thirty years, but I've never 'eard of red oil. Haven't you made a mistake?" "No," answered Jones, "I've not made a mistake. I want it for my back lamp!"—Sent in by A. Pearson, 62, Dumbarton Road, Brixton Hill, S.W. 2.

(Another Tuck Hamper offered this week, chums!)

DANGER SIGNALS FOR YOUR HAIR

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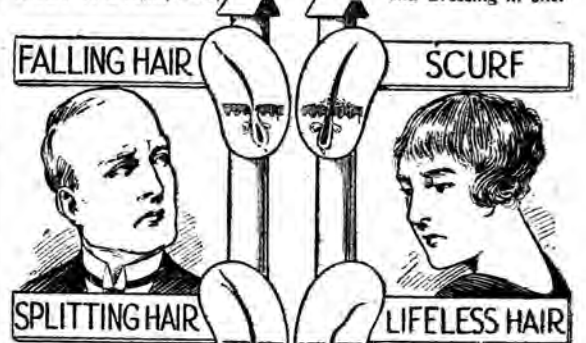
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2.—A PACKET OF "CREMEX" SHAMPOO.—This is an anti-septic purifier which thoroughly cleanses the hair and scalp of all scurf, etc., and prepares the hair for the "Hair-Drill" treatment.

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