

"CHUMS UNDER CANVAS!" This Week's Grand Extra Long
Story of Tom Merry & Co.

The GEM 2^d

LIBRARY



No. 959. Vol. XXX.—Week Ending July 3rd, 1926.

A MIS-FIT FOR TWO!

(An amusing incident in the long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. inside.)



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.

A BARGAIN!

IN this issue, my chums, you have the second of the Extra-long Tom Merry & Co. stories, and the second instalment of Sidney Drew's fine adventure yarn. I suppose amongst the many thousands of GEM readers there will be a few who will resent the "lifting out" of the "St. Jim's News." But even these fellows will realise that there can't be an Extra-long school story, a serial story, and a Supplement. When one feature is extended, a feature of less importance naturally has to go by the board. But my mail-bag shows that Gemites as a body care little about the displacement of the Supplement, so long as the Martin Clifford yarns are longer. One reader, in a letter to me this morning, uses this phrase: "We can't have too much of Tom Merry & Co." And he seems to be voicing the sentiments of the majority of my chums. You will like these longer school stories—that goes without saying. And let me whisper it here—I've a very good programme to take us over the next few months. The old GEM—always a popular favourite with the British boy and girl—will be found in more homes than ever now, on account of the extra length given to the school tales. That's just how it should be. Now, I want you chaps, if you will, to bag a few more new readers. I don't mean to imply that you haven't been doing that all along, I feel sure you have. But I'll make a bargain with you. You make an extra determined effort during these next two months to enrol some of your non-reader pals under the GEM banner, and I'll demonstrate my appreciation of your efforts with something much more to your liking than mere words—something you will be able to enjoy just as much as you do the Tom Merry yarns. I won't disclose my end of the bargain more than that at this stage, but you can take it from me that my appreciation will be in the form of something jolly interesting and attractive. Now, pile in, chums!

FREE GIFTS!

As so many of you fellows read the "Magnet" and "Popular," our topping companion papers, I must make mention here of the superb Free Gifts given away with each issue of these two papers next week. Free Gifts are always acceptable—I like them myself! And these Gifts are really worth having. In the "Magnet," then, next week, readers will find a grand cut-out stand-up action photo of G. G. Macaulay, the famous Yorkshire cricketer. The photo shows Macaulay about to bowl, and is vigorous, and clearly defined. It will look just fine in your own den. In the "Popular" is given away Free a similar cut-out photo depicting J. S. Ryder, the Australian batsman. Both these Free Gifts are printed in two colours, and are made to stand up. And, listen here, readers of these two papers will have the unique opportunity of collecting a representative set of England and Australia's leading exponents of the willow and ball, for these Free Gifts will be given away for a number of weeks. Do you, then, my chums, step in and make sure of bagging these handsome gifts. It's the chance of a lifetime. Remember, they start with next week's "Magnet" and "Popular."

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"HONOURS EVEN!"

By Martin Clifford.

A book-length story of Tom Merry & Co., relating their further adventures under canvas, and introducing Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood. A winner all the way!

"A PHANTOM THRONE!"

By Sidney Drew.

Another grand instalment of this powerful tale of International intrigue.

"CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!"

Another topping little poem by the St. Jim's Rhymester, in which he describes how a new boy is met at the station. Order your copy of the GEM early, chums.

Chin, chin,

YOUR EDITOR.

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TUCK HAMPER AND MONEY-PRIZES AWARDED FOR WIT.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

GOOD OLD GLAMORGAN!

FAME!

"No man is so well known as he thinks he is," once said Caruso, the world-famed tenor. "While motoring in a quiet country district," continued the great singer, "my automobile broke down, and I sought refuge in a farmhouse while the car was being repaired. I became friendly with the farmer, who asked me my name, and I told him it was Caruso. The farmer leapt to his feet, and seized me by the hand. 'Little did I think I would see a man like you in this here humble kitchen, sir!' he exclaimed. 'Caruso! The great traveller, Robinson Caruso!'—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to F. A. Shaw, 61, Pontypridd Road, Porth, Rhondda, Glam.

QUITE TRUE!

Dealer in second-hand clothes (to assistant): "We can't mark this suit 'Fashionable.' It's too shabby." Assistant: "No, but you might put on the ticket 'Very much worn!'"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Alfred Nield, 58, Augustus Street, Brook's Bar, Manchester.

TACTLESS!

Brown: "When Jones starts arguing he loses all tact." Smith: "How is that?" Brown: "Why, last night he told an opponent, who is lame, that he hadn't a leg to stand on; another, who squints, that he was sorry he didn't see things as he did; and a man who stammers, not to hesitate in giving his opinion!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. F. Nash, 50, Brighton Road, Godalming, Surrey.

AN UN-KNEES-Y JOB!

Passing a hand over his forehead, the tired drill-sergeant stopped for breath. "No," he said, looking at the new knock-kneed recruit, "you'll never make a soldier. Look at you now! The top halves of your legs are standing to attention, while the bottom halves are standing at ease!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to William Mabin, 15, Crosby Street, Belfast.

A POSER FOR THE P.O.!

Constable: "What's the idea of racing through this town at sixty miles an hour?" Speed-merchant: "Well, you see, something's gone wrong with my brakes, and I'm trying to get home before I have an accident!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Humphreys, 78, Bradshaw Brow, Tonge, Nr. Bolton, Lancs.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

A FORTNIGHT UNDER CANVAS FOR THE WHOLE OF ST. JIM'S! Even lordly and dignified Sixth Formers become "boys" again at the prospect of going to camp, whilst Tom Merry & Co. cheer Dr. Holmes' announcement with great gusto!



CHUMS UNDER CANVAS!

A Topping Long
Complete Story of
Tom Merry & Co.,
dealing with their
adventures at Windy-
ridge Camp.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. D'Arcy's Dilemma!

"BAL JOVE! I must have overslept!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, sat up in bed with a start.

The morning sunshine was streaming in at the high windows of the Fourth Form dormitory; but, save for Arthur Augustus, the dormitory was deserted. All the fellows were up, and dressed, and down in the sunny quadrangle.

Really, there was no incentive to lie in bed on such a morning, when the little world of St. Jim's seemed to be fairly humming with joy and life.

Even Baggy Trimble, the laziest fellow in the Fourth, had risen with the lark, and was basking in the radiant sunshine.

It was a very important day for St. Jim's—a day which stood out from all the others in the calendar. For summer camp was to commence on this day. The majority of the fellows had packed their luggage, and sent it off in advance to Windyridge, a delightful spot on the Sussex coast, where the tents were already pitched, in readiness for the boys of St. Jim's.

It was not to be a holiday exactly. Lessons were to proceed as usual. But everybody agreed that lessons in the open air amid new surroundings would be far nicer than swotting in a stuffy Form-room.

Recently there had been a conference of headmasters from various inland schools, including St. Jim's and Rookwood; and it had been decided that a fortnight in summer camp would prove highly beneficial to the health and well-being of the boys. It would also enable certain necessary repairs to be carried out. It was inconvenient for workmen to be on the premises whilst the boys were there; but with everybody away in camp, the repairs could be executed without let or hindrance.

The wise and venerable headmasters had unanimously agreed that summer camp was the proper caper—though they had used a rather more dignified expression.

As a rule, the St. Jim's fellows were not interested in the counsels of headmasters. But they had been interested on this occasion, and when Dr. Holmes had announced that St. Jim's would migrate to Windyridge for a fortnight, there had been great excitement and enthusiasm. The fellows had sighed for the day—and now the day had come!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was just as excited and enthusiastic as everyone else. He had, in fact, wakened as early as five o'clock. He had roused his chums, Jack Blake and

Herries and Digby, but they had drowsily told Gussy to go to sleep, and not disturb them in the middle of the night.

Finding no one to talk to, Arthur Augustus had dozed off again. When the rising-bell clanged out, he failed to hear it.

Jack Blake had shouted to his elegant chum to turn out, and Gussy had murmured, in his sleep:

"All wight, deah boy! I will wise in a few moments."

That had been twenty minutes ago, and Gussy had not yet risen. In the meantime, his schoolfellows had dashed through their ablutions, and gone trooping down into the sunshine.

Arthur Augustus, wide awake now, blinked round the dormitory in a startled way.

"Gweat Scott!" he ejaculated. "I shall be late for bwckkah!"

Even as he spoke the breakfast gong boomed through the House.

Arthur Augustus jumped out of bed with alacrity. Undoubtedly he would be late for breakfast. That was not likely to be regarded as a heinous offence, on this particular morning, when there were to be no lessons. At the same time, Arthur Augustus was hungry. And the prospect of his eggs and bacon being cold and greasy was not pleasant.

As a rule, the swell of St. Jim's dressed slowly and with meticulous care. But he meant to get a hustle on now. His clothes were lying in a neat and orderly pile on his locker. Arthur Augustus grabbed at them in feverish haste.

When he thrust his legs into the trousers, Gussy had quite a shock. His trousers usually fitted him to perfection—Arthur Augustus being very particular about that sort of thing. He had no use for baggy trousers, or trousers that were too long, or too short, or too tight. They had to fit perfectly, to satisfy the sartorial requirements of Arthur Augustus.

But they did not fit perfectly now. Far from it. The trousers into which Arthur Augustus thrust his legs were not only extremely baggy, but they were several inches too long.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, in blank dismay. "Whatevah has happened to my bags?"

Something had happened to them. Of that—as the gentleman in "The Gondoliers" observed—there was no shadow of doubt, no possible probable shadow of doubt, no shadow of doubt whatever!

Either the trousers had stretched and widened during the night, or the legs of Arthur Augustus had shrunk! Certainly

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the trousers were an appalling misfit! Gussy blinked down at them in a state of utter stupefaction. It took him fully half a minute to realise that the trousers were not his own.

Arthur Augustus frowned darkly.

"Some wotten pwactical jokah has been at work—" he began.

Then he picked up the silk shirt, and the jacket and waistcoat, and examined them. They were very elegant garments, cut in first-class style. But they were not Gussy's! They seemed to belong to a much taller and broader fellow.

Had Arthur Augustus been able, by taking thought, to add a cubit to his stature, and had he been broader in the beam, to use a nautical phrase, the suit would have fitted him to perfection. As it was, however, the garments, although elegant and well-tailored, were quite unsuitable for the swell of St. Jim's.

"How vewy annoyin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It is a pwactical joke, wight enough. That ass Lowthah—or some othah funny ass—has swopped my clothes with somebody else's. It is most exaspewatin'! I am late for bewkkah, as it is, an' this widiculous jape will delay me still furthah!"

Arthur Augustus paused for a moment in uncertainty. Then he buttoned the long, baggy trousers, and dived under the bed for his trunk. Fortunately, Gussy had not sent his trunk to camp in advance, like most of the fellows had done. It was under his bed, and it contained half a dozen suits, Gussy's wardrobe being a very extensive affair.

Frowning with annoyance, Arthur Augustus dragged the big yellow trunk into view. He opened it in great haste and plunged into its interior and dragged out a number of garments.

A fresh shock was in store for the swell of St. Jim's. An inspection of the garments revealed the fact that they were not his. They belonged—like the suit which Gussy had found on his locker—to a much bigger fellow.

"Weally, this is too bad!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I twust I can take a joke as well as anybody, but there are limits. Oh deah! What am I to do now?"

Arthur Augustus was on the horns of a dilemma. His own clothes were not available, and his Form-fellows were all in the dining-hall.

A spare suit of Cardew's, or Blake's, or Levison's, would have fitted Gussy very well; but he could not help himself to another fellow's clothes without first getting permission. Besides, most of the fellows' spare suits were already packed up.

His own clothes seemed to have been exchanged with those of one of the seniors. But which senior? There was nothing on the clothes to show to whom they belonged. The tailor's name was there on the collar of the jacket; merely that and nothing more.

There were two courses open to Arthur Augustus. Either he must wait in the dormitory till the other victim of the jape turned up, and the clothes could be swopped back again; or he must don the clothes of the unknown senior and go down to breakfast in them.

Being extremely hungry, Arthur Augustus decided on the latter course.

When he had washed and dressed the appearance of the swell of St. Jim's was decidedly comical. It was as if a small boy had donned his father's clothes for a lark.

Gussy's shoes were so big that they resembled boats. This defect, however, was covered by the trousers, which were so long that they overlapped the shoes.

Gussy's waistcoat, instead of being light-fitting, hung upon him like a sack. And the jacket, large and spacious and loose-fitting, was like an overcoat.

Gussy's collar was much too wide for his slender neck; and altogether his appearance was utterly ludicrous. He surveyed himself in a full-length mirror and was agast.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Gussy. "I can't possibly show up in the dinin'-hall like this. I look like a beastly scarecrow, bai Jove!"

But Gussy was hungry, and hunger breeds desperation. The prospect of going without breakfast was not to be contemplated.

Fortunately, the practical joker had left Arthur Augustus' dressing-gown, hanging over the bed-rail. The swell of St. Jim's saw it and donned it eagerly. It would effectively hide the shortcomings of his appearance.

Many precious moments had been wasted, and Arthur Augustus dashed breathlessly from the Fourth Form dormitory and down the staircase. He was hoping that some thoughtful fellow would have placed a cover over his eggs and bacon to keep it warm.

Arthur Augustus fairly streaked round the corridors towards the dining-hall.

From another direction somebody else was making a hurried dash to the hall. It was Cutts of the Fifth.

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Like Arthur Augustus, Cutts was garbed in a dressing-gown. There was a very wrathful expression on his face, and his hands were tightly clenched. Indeed, Cutts of the Fifth was in a state bordering on dementia.

Senior and junior almost collided outside the door of the dining-hall.

Cutts glared at D'Arcy, and D'Arcy stared at Cutts.

"What does this mean, you young rascal?" shouted the angry Fifth-Former. "Have you pinched my togs?"

"Weally, Cutts—"

"Yes, you have!" roared Cutts, suddenly wrenching apart the lapels of Gussy's dressing-gown. "That's my jacket and my waistcoat! And you're wearing my bags, too! I'll make you smart for this, you—you young villain!"

Arthur Augustus screwed his celebrated monocle into his eye and looked with haughty disapproval at the incensed Cutts.

"Pway calm yourself, Cutts!" he said, with dignity. "If you had a gwaïn of intelligence, you would see that we have been the joint victims of an asinine jape. I did not take your clothes; I found them on my lockah!"

"And I found yours on mine!" hooted Cutts. "How did they come there—that's what I want to know?"

"They must have been swopped duwin' the night by some silly pwactical jokah," said Arthur Augustus.

Cutts gave a snort.

"I'll jolly well raise Cain about this!" he said, between his teeth. "If I find out who played this trick, I—I'll lurs him!"

"It is certainly vewy annoyin'—" began Arthur Augustus.

"Annoyin'?" bellowed Cutts. "It's monstrous—ot-rageous!"

The Fifth-Former was almost dancing with rage; and he had not troubled to moderate his voice. Indeed, so powerful was his bellow that it would have put the joint efforts of Stentor of old and the Bull of Bashan in the shade.

Suddenly the door of the dining-hall was thrown open, and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, frowned out into the corridor.

"Cutts! D'Arcy!" he exclaimed. "How dare you create a disturbance outside this door?"

"I—I—" stuttered Cutts.

"We—we—" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Step into the hall, both of you, and give an account of yourselves," said Mr. Railton sternly.

Cutts and D'Arcy followed the Housemaster into the hall, and there was a buzz of astonishment from the assembled throng of breakfasters.

It was a very unusual spectacle—in fact, it was almost unheard-of—for fellows to turn up to breakfast in their dressing-gowns. And the entry of Cutts and Arthur Augustus caused quite a sensation. Knives and forks were promptly lowered, and the two newcomers were the cynosure of all eyes.

"Now, Cutts!" said Mr. Railton sharply. "What is the meaning of this?"

CHAPTER 2.

Brotherly Correction!

GERALD CUTTS did not reply for a moment. He was too furiously angry.

Like Arthur Augustus, Cutts had overslept that morning. Had he awakened at rising-bell, he would have discovered the change of clothing, and there would have been time to put things right.

But the "blade" of the Fifth had been out late overnight, his society having been in demand at the Green Man, in Rylcombe. He had not returned to St. Jim's until midnight, and consequently he had overslept.

On his locker Cutts had found a suit of clothes much too small for him. In his trunk he had found several suits of clothes, all too small for him. And gradually it had dawned upon him that his belongings had been exchanged during the night—or, rather, during the early hours of the morning—with those of a junior.

Cutts had wanted his breakfast just as badly as Arthur Augustus. He had therefore decided to don the suit of clothes which he had found on his locker, and he had done so—to the detriment of the clothes. The seams of the jacket had split underneath the arms; and the tight-fitting waistcoat had burst its buttons. The trousers, which fitted Cutts like a pair of acrobat's tights, came to a full-stop half-way down his calves, revealing an inordinate length of purple sock. As for the shoes, Cutts had been quite unable to wear them, and his feet were now encased in slippers. His collar seemed likely to throttle him, and it threatened at any moment to slip its moorings, so to speak.

Realising that he could not appear in hall looking like a fellow whose tailor had shamefully stunted him in his sizings,

Cutts had donned his dressing-gown over his attire. Then, breathing threatenings and slaughter, he had hurried down to the dining-hall, and had encountered D'Arcy of the Fourth outside the door.

On entering the hall at Mr. Railton's behest, Cutts glared around at the sea of grinning faces.

Some of the fags were fidgeting, and there were chuckles from the juniors. Even the usually staid members of the Sixth Form were looking amused.

"Come, Cutts!" said Mr. Railton sharply. "I wish to know why you are late for breakfast; why you created a disturbance outside the door; and why you have had the temerity to appear in your dressing-gown?"

Cutts struggled to find words.

"If I may be allowed to speak, Mr. Wailton—" began Arthur Augustus.

"You may not, D'Arcy! I will interrogate you after I have questioned Cutts. Now, Cutts!"

"Some young villain—" began Cutts wrathfully.

"What!"

"Some young scoundrel in the Lower School has played a rotten trick on us, sir!" fumed Cutts.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Pray moderate your language, Cutts!" he said sternly.

"Are you implying that a practical joke has been perpetrated upon you and D'Arcy?"

"Yes, sir! And if I get hold of the practical joker, I—I'll jolly well—"

"Cutts! You appear to forget whom you are speaking to. Remove your dressing-gown, at once! And you, D'Arcy!"

"Oh cyums!"

"At once!" insisted Mr. Railton.

Very reluctantly, Cutts and Arthur Augustus removed their dressing-gowns. When they had done so, there was an outburst of laughter, which grew in volume from a titter into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My, only aunt!" gurgled Monty Lowther, of the Shell. "Did you ever see such a pair of giddy freaks?"

"No, never!" said Tom Merry, with a grin.

"Gussy's bags remind me of those two towns in France," went on Lowther. "They're Touloung, and Toulouse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Railton.

Even the Housemaster, however, found it difficult to repress a smile, as he viewed the extraordinary spectacle of Cutts in a junior's clothes, and D'Arcy in a senior's. There was a twitching of Mr. Railton's lips, and he seemed to have difficulty in checking his risibility.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured. "Why, you are wearing each other's clothes! This is—ahem!—a most ludicrous situation."

"May we go and change, sir?" muttered Cutts, with a crimson face.

"One moment, Cutts! I must call upon the author of this practical joke to stand forward. The boy who exchanged D'Arcy's clothes with those of Cutts will step out!"

There was a brief pause, followed by a movement from the fags' tables.

Walter Adolphus D'Arcy, the irrepressible minor of Arthur Augustus, responded to Mr. Railton's command. Half-defiantly, he marched down the centre gangway of the hall. Cutts fixed him with a baleful glare, and Arthur Augustus eyed him with stern reproach.

"So it was you, D'Arcy minor?" said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir!" was the bold reply.

"You exchanged these clothes during the night?"

"Early this morning, sir."

"With what object?"

"It was simply a joke on Cutts and Gussy, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton grimly. "I do not approve of these 'jokes,' as you call them, D'Arcy minor. Had you played this prank during the normal period of the school routine, I should have punished you severely. As, however, the school is going into camp to-day—"

Wally D'Arcy brightened up hopefully.

"I think it will best meet the case if I leave your punishment in the hands of your major."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus showed his approval of Mr. Railton's decision by nodding his head. Cutts, however, was far from satisfied.

"If you will leave the young rascal to me, sir—" he began.

"It isn't necessary, Cutts," said Mr. Railton coldly. "D'Arcy major is quite capable. You will now go and exchange your clothes."

Glad enough were Cutts and Arthur Augustus to escape from that sea of grinning faces. They fairly darted to the door, followed by many chuckles.

A quarter of an hour later, when breakfast was over, Cutts and Gussy returned to the dining-hall. Mr. Railton

had instructed the cook to prepare them a hot breakfast, and this consoled them, in some measure, for their trying ordeal.

Cutts consumed his meal in silence. He was furious with Mr. Railton for not allowing him to have the handling of D'Arcy minor. He would dearly have loved to make the fag bend over a chair, and give him "six" with an ash-plant. It would have been a stinging six, too—a six which would have made the humorous practical joker feel anything but humorous.

Cutts was afraid that Arthur Augustus, to whom the punishment was entrusted, would err on the side of mercy. Being Wally's brother, he would probably let him off lightly.

No such intention, however, was in the mind of Arthur Augustus. He meant to make it plain to young Wally that elder brothers could not be japed with impunity.

When he had finished his breakfast the swell of St. Jim's went along to his study and collected a fives bat. Then he sallied out into the quad to collect Walter Adolphus D'Arcy.

That cheery youth was strolling under the old elms with his faithful henchmen, Curly Gibson and Jameson.

Tom Merry & Co., the heroes of the Shell, were also strolling there, and they grinned when they saw Arthur Augustus bearing down like a wolf on the fold.

"Hallo! Gussy's on the warpath!" said Manners.

"Young Wally's for it!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Tom Merry. "If Gussy wants an assistant executioner, I'm his man. Those cheeky fags want putting in their places!"

"Go it, Gussy!" sang out Monty Lowther encouragingly.

Arthur Augustus was looking very grim. Making a megaphone of his hands, he called to his minor:

"Pway come beah, Walthah!"

It was only on very rare occasions that "Walthah" was substituted for "Wally." Arthur Augustus had to be very angry indeed to make that distinction.

Wally D'Arcy looked round, with a cheeky grin.

"First catch your hare!" was his rejoinder. And then he darted away at top speed.

An exciting chase ensued. Naturally, Arthur Augustus was fleetest of foot than his minor; but the latter was as elusive as an eel. Several times Gussy grabbed at him, but the youngster wriggled free.

"Walthah, you young wascal! Come an' take your punishment!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!"

The swell of St. Jim's had to invoke the assistance of Tom Merry & Co. before the recalcitrant Wally was finally captured.

"Got you!" gasped Arthur Augustus triumphantly. "Thank you, deah boys! Would you mind standin' by, in case the young wascal twies to bolt again?"

"Not at all!" grinned Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus took a businesslike grip of the fives bat.

"Pway touch your toes, Walthah!" he commanded.

"Rats!"

Wally D'Arcy struggled in his major's grasp; but it was useless. Tom Merry & Co. gently but firmly held him over, and then the fives bat came into play.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Arthur Augustus wielded the fives bat with tremendous vim. The village blacksmith, swinging his heavy sledge, was not in the same street with Gussy at that moment.

Wally D'Arcy acknowledged the receipt of each whack with a lusty yell. He wriggled and squirmed under the sturdy strokes.

Having laid on "six"—almost as painful a six as Cutts of the Fifth would have administered—Arthur Augustus desisted from his exertions. He adjusted his monocle and regarded the squirming Wally.

"Now that justice has been done, I twust you will think twice before playin' such a widiculous jape again!" he said sternly.

"Ow-ow-ow!" gasped Wally. "Yow!"

Justice had certainly been done—in fact, Wally D'Arcy considered that justice had been very much overdone! Even Tom Merry & Co. were mildly surprised at the severity which Arthur Augustus had shown. They had imagined that Gussy would have contented himself with merely flicking his minor.

But the hoax which had been played upon the swell of St. Jim's, and the subsequent annoyance and inconvenience—to say nothing of the chase Wally had given him in the quad—had not put Arthur Augustus in a very merciful mood. He had not spared the rod—or, rather, the fives bat; and he hoped that the salutary lesson would do his minor good. These young brothers must be dealt with firmly and forcibly, and taught to respect their majors.

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instead of making them the butts of their japes and wheezes. Such were the reflections of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

So far from teaching Wally a salutary lesson, however, the only effect which the punishment had upon him was to make him determined to play a further jape upon his major at the very first opportunity!

Wally was smarting, but unrepentant.

CHAPTER 3.

Off to Camp!

ST. JIM'S was as busy as a beehive that morning.

All was hustle and bustle, and commotion and animation, in preparation for the departure to Summer Camp.

The scenes in the various studies and corridors, and in the sunny quadrangle, were reminiscent of breaking-up day. And the fellows seemed just as excited as if they were about to start their summer holidays.

Most of the luggage had been sent off in advance on the previous day; but there was still a lot of clearing-up to be done, and the fellows pitched into their various tasks with eager zest.

From the Sixth Form—the Palladium of the school—down to the Third, which Monty Lowther styled the kindergarten, there was great excitement, and everybody was in the gayest spirits. It was cheering to reflect that nightfall would find the St. Jim's fellows under canvas at Windyridge, a wild but beautiful spot on the Sussex coast.

The camp train was leaving Rylcombe at four in the afternoon, and all the fellows had instructions to be at the station in good time.

From dinner-time onwards a constant stream of fellows flowed out of gates. Kildare and Darrell and Baker, of the Sixth, were among the early departures. They wore Norfolk jackets and grey flannel trousers, and they smiled serenely as they strode out of gates.

After an interval, Cutts and Gilmore and St. Leger, of the Fifth, swaggered down to the gates in their "nutty" attire.

Then came a whole crowd of juniors, laughing and chatting in great good humour as they took part in the general exodus.

Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third were early away, of course. They had arranged a feed at the bunshop in the village before catching the camp train.

The Head and the masters—with the exception of Mr. Railton, who stayed behind to see everybody off the premises—strolled out of gates together. Dr. Holmes looked more human and approachable than usual. In gown and mortar-board, he was a most majestic personage. In a grey, comfortably-fitting lounge suit and a trilby hat, Dr. Holmes was not nearly so awe-inspiring.

Even the masters seemed to be infected with the camping-out spirit, for they were smiling genially. Mr. Linton and Mr. Lathom were, in fact, fairly beaming. Even Mr. Ratcliff's usually sour visage wore the ghost of a smile.

By half-past three, nearly everybody had "trekked" to the station.

Six juniors lingered on the School House steps, fidgeting impatiently. They were Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell; and Jack Blake and Herries and Digby, of the Fourth.

They were waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They had been waiting for him, in fact, for some time; and they were still waiting.

The swell of the Fourth was busying himself in the dormitory—pluming and preening himself, as Monty Lowther sarcastically observed.

On great occasions such as this, Arthur Augustus always believed in being well dressed. The greater the occasion, the more magnificent was Gussy's attire. Most of the fellows were content to wear the most free-and-easy garb for camping-out purposes. Not so Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry looked rather anxious as the school clock chimed the half-hour.

"That frabjous dummy will make us lose the train if he doesn't hustle!" growled Tom.

"He's been in the dorm long enough to dress himself a dozen times over!" snorted Blake. "Just like Gussy, to keep us hanging about like this!"

"We'll give him another two minutes, and if he isn't down by then we'll go and root him out!" said George Herries.

The two minutes passed, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy failed to show up.

Mr. Railton came out of the School House with a travelling-rug over his arm. He glanced at the waiting juniors.

"You had better be getting down to the station, my boys," he said kindly. "Time is short now."

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"We're waiting for D'Arcy, sir," explained Tom Merry. "Is he not ready yet?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Railton frowned slightly.

"Go and tell D'Arcy that he must start for the station without delay," he said. "We cannot keep the train waiting for his benefit. It is timed to leave punctually at four."

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry.

And the six juniors turned into the building and headed for the Fourth Form dormitory; while Mr. Railton proceeded on his way to the station, satisfied that the juniors would follow on in a few moments, and probably catch him up.

Tom Merry & Co. fully expected to find Arthur Augustus putting the finishing touches to his toilet. They were surprised and wrathful and dismayed to find that the swell of St. Jim's was not half-way through.

Clad in striped trousers and silk shirt, Arthur Augustus was standing beside his bed, gazing reflectively at a choice assortment of fancy waistcoats, and unable to make up his mind which to choose.

"This canawy-coloured one is vewy smart," he murmured,

"but the one with the purple bordah—"

"Gussy!"

Six incensed voices roared the name from the doorway.

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He did not even look round. He was so absorbed in the contemplation of the fancy waistcoats that he was quite oblivious to everything else.

"The yellah one is vewy attwactive, but it is wathah loud," murmured the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gussy, you ass—"

"Gussy, you burbling jabberwock—"

The yellow waistcoat might have been rather loud, but it could not have been louder than the exasperated shouts of Gussy's chums.

Arthur Augustus dignified to look round at last.

"Pway do not wear at me in that mannah, deah boys! I'm just wondahin' which of these waistcoats will be the most becomin'—"

"And we're just wondering when you'll be comin'!" said Monty Lowther. "Are you aware that it's turned half past three, you chump?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"If you're not ready in a brace of shakes," roared Manners, "we shall lose the train!"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"It is uttally imposs for me to be weady in a brace of shakes. Mannahs. First of all, I have to choose my waistcoat—"

"Oh, we'll do that for you!" said Tom Merry in exasperated tones. And he strode towards the bed on which the waistcoats were ranged in a row. He picked up the first which came to hand—a vivid yellow creation. "Come on, Gussy! Get your arms through this!"

"But I am not sure that I pwefer the yellah one, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ass! There's no time to pick and choose. Give me a hand, Blake. If we leave the frabjous dummy to dress himself, he won't finish till the cows come home. So we'll finish his toilet for him!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake, with alacrity.

Arthur Augustus protested volubly, but his protestations were in vain. Tom Merry grabbed one of his arms, and Jack Blake the other, and they thrust them through the arm-holes of the waistcoat. Whether Gussy preferred the yellow waistcoat or not, he had to have it. His chums had made his choice for him.

Blake buttoned the waistcoat, and Tom Merry seized a jacket, and Monty Lowther produced a shining silk topper, and Herries crammed the surplus waistcoats into Gussy's trunk.

"We shall have to get Taggles, the porter, to see about sending the trunk off," said Herries. "It ought to have gone yesterday. No time to cart it down to the station now."

"I wefuse to twavel without my twunk!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"We shall be lucky if we travel at all," growled Tom Merry. "It looks any odds on our losing the train."

"We can catch anothah—"

"Fathead! There isn't another for an hour! Come on, Gussy! Get a hustle on!"

"You are wumplin' my jacket, Tom Mewwy—"

But Tom Merry had no time for minor considerations of that sort. He hustled Arthur Augustus into his jacket, and Monty Lowther crammed the silk topper on to Gussy's head, and Herries slammed the lid of the trunk. Arthur Augustus was then rushed willy-nilly from the dormitory and down the stairs.

Time was flying fast, and the prospects of getting to the station in time were growing more and more remote.



"Got you, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, holding firmly on to Wally's collar. He turned to his grinning chums. "Would you mind standin' by in case the young wascal tries to bolt?" "Not at all!" grinned Tom Merry. The swell of St. Jim's took a business-like grip of the fives-bat. (See Chapter 2.)

The swell of St. Jim's was fairly whirled across the quadrangle. He struggled and he protested and he declared that he was only half dressed; but he was borne along like a leaf in a gale.

There was a brief pause at the school gates, where Taggles the porter was instructed to see to the despatch of Gussy's trunk. Then Tom Merry & Co. rushed in whirlwind fashion through the gateway, and down the dusty road. Arthur Augustus, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, accompanied them!

CHAPTER 4.

The Joys of Travel!

"LOST it!" panted Tom Merry.
"Only just!" gasped Manners. "But we've lost it, right enough!"

The seven juniors, with Arthur Augustus in their midst, rushed on to the little platform of Rylcombe station just in time to see the tail-end of the camp-train disappearing round a curve.

It was one minute past four. The St. Jim's "special" had started almost punctually to time. It had not waited for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his escorts.

Mr. Railton was aware that there was another train in an hour, and he had doubtless decided that the juniors could safely be trusted to travel down to Windyridge on their own.

Tom Merry & Co. halted, panting from their exertions. They looked at each other, and they looked at Arthur Augustus; and their looks were expressive.

"And luck, young gents!" said a grinning porter. "Missed it by an 'air's breadth, so to speak."

"And now we've got to wait a whole blessed hour!" snorted Jack Blake. "All through that chopheaded chump, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, bump him!" said Manners, in tones of great exasperation.

Arthur Augustus backed away in alarm, as his school-fellows closed round him.

"Do not dare to lay a fingham on me——" he began.

But the juniors did dare. Six pairs of hands were laid upon the elegant person of the swell of St. Jim's, and he descended to the dusty platform with a bump and a roar.

"Yawoooooh!"

Bump!

"You feahful wottahs——"

Bump!

Thrice in succession Arthur Augustus smote the platform. The bumping did not improve his personal appearance. His jacket and trousers were powdered with dust; his collar had broken loose, and his silk topper had bowled along the platform, and lost much of its pristine splendour.

Arthur Augustus tottered to his feet and limped away to retrieve the topper. He dusted it carefully with a handkerchief, and set it on his head. Then, screwing his monocle into his eye, he glared at the avengers.

"You uttah wottahs! You have assaulted me in a most wuff an' wepwehensible mannah!"

"We meant to!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"I have a vewy good mind to administrah a feahful thwashin' all wound!" said Arthur Augustus truculently.

"Rather a tall order, old top," grinned Lowther. "Shouldn't try it on, if I were you. We don't want to strew the hungry churchyard—I mean platform—with your bones!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

On reflection Arthur Augustus thought better of his threat to distribute "feahful thwashin's." He adjourned to the waiting-room and adjusted his collar and dusted himself down.

Tom Merry & Co. were feeling happier now. They had

lost the train; but the bumping of Arthur Augustus had afforded them a solatium.

"We've got an hour to kill," said Manners. "No fun in cooling our heels on the platform. Let's go and have a feed at the bunshop."

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus rejoined his schoolfellows, and as he accompanied them to the bunshop, he showed them quite plainly that he was very angry. But his wrath endured but as the twinkling of an eye, and under the genial influence of jam-tarts and ginger-pop he recovered his usual good humour.

The time passed quickly enough, but Tom Merry & Co. were determined not to miss the next train, and they were on the platform in good time.

"Now we're off at last!" said Digby, when they were settled in a carriage. "How far is it to Windyridge?"

"A good way," said Tom Merry. "And we've got a four-mile tramp at the other end."

"Help!"

"If it wasn't for Gussy—" began Blake.

"Oh, give Gussy a rest," said Tom Merry, good-humouredly. "He delayed us an hour, and he's had his punishment; and so long as he behaves himself for the rest of the journey, we'll forgive him!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! You speak as if I were a refwactowy kid!"

"Well, aren't you?" said Monty Lowther, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The train rumbled out of the station, and Rylcombe and St. Jim's were soon left far behind. The juniors chatted gaily of the treats in store for them—morning lessons in the sunshine, with discipline considerably relaxed; cricket and bathing in the afternoons, interspersed with long rambles along cliffs and foreshore. Then there would be the delight of sleeping under canvas, and feeding in spacious marquees; and the hundred-and-one other delights dear to the heart of the schoolboy camper. The conference of headmasters which had ordained these things had shown a degree of wisdom which juniors did not usually associate with headmasters. Some of those grave and reverend seigneurs were rather inclined to be killjoys; but they had turned up trumps on this occasion.

The St. Jim's juniors had the carriage to themselves for a good stage of the journey; but at one of the little halts down the line a portly farmer got into their carriage. He was a heavily-built, florid-faced son of the soil, and he beamed jovially at the juniors. Then he sat down heavily, and there was a crunching, crackling sound.

"My heye!" ejaculated the farmer in astonishment.

"My toppah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are sittin' on my toppah, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The farmer lumbered to his feet with a grunt of apology. He rose too late, however, for the damage had been done.

Gussy's topper was no longer a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. It was flattened out like a concertina. Fourteen stone of human solidity had descended upon it, and no topper was proof against that crushing weight.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the battered topper and roared. The farmer looked at it, and shook his head sadly, like a doctor pronouncing life extinct. Arthur Augustus looked at it, and groaned dismally.

"It's your own fault, Gussy!" said Herries. "You shouldn't have left your silly topper on the seat for somebody to hatch. You should have put it on the rack!"

"My toppah!" moaned Arthur Augustus. "It is uttably wuined!"

"You've got another in your trunk," said Blake consolingly.

"But my twunk is not heah; you would not let me hwing it."

"That's so; I forgot. But it won't matter if you turn up in camp without a topper, Gussy. You ought never to have brought it. Campers-out don't go strutting around in toppers!"

"I must buy another!" said Arthur Augustus decisively. "I should not dream of turnin' up in camp in a hatless condish. I shall get out at the next big stoppin'-place an' buy another toppah."

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Imbecile!"

But Arthur Augustus was not to be turned from his purpose by those epithets. To arrive topperless at the camp was not to be thought of.

"Which I be main sorry," said the red-faced farmer, sitting down again.

"That's all wight, my deah sir. It was not your fault. As Hewwies wemarked, I should have put my toppah on the wack."

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The train rumbled on its way, and the calamity was forgotten in the discussion of more important matters.

Gussy's hatless plight, however, recurred to him when the train came to a standstill with a grinding of brakes, and a stentorian porter bawled into the juniors' carriage:

"Horsham!"

Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet.

"I can get a toppah heah, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "A town like Horsham ought to boast a high-class hattah!"

"Sit down, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "No time to go on a giddy shopping expedition!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the porter, who was lingering at the carriage door.

"How long does the twain stop heah, portah?" he inquired.

"A quarter of an hour, sir!"

"Wippin'! That gives me ample time to buy a toppah."

Arthur Augustus opened the carriage door and stepped out. His chums exchanged glances, and they tacitly agreed to accompany the swell of St. Jim's to the hatter's. If he went alone, his dilly-dallying would probably cause him to exceed the time limit and miss the train. With his schoolfellows present, however, Arthur Augustus would have to hustle.

"Are you comin' along, deah boys?" inquired the swell of St. Jim's. "Good! We shall pwobably find a hattah's just outside the station."

In this, however, Gussy was disappointed. Horsham Station, like the majority of provincial stations, was not situated near the shopping centre of the town. And the main street was a long way off.

"Hon for it!" said Tom Merry tersely.

And the juniors ran.

The sight of seven schoolboys dashing pell-mell into the sleepy old town astonished the passers-by. But Tom Merry & Co. were not concerned with the sensation they were making. Their one aim in life at the moment was to get to a hat-shop, and to get back to the station before the train went on its way.

"Here we are!" panted Blake suddenly.

And he caught Arthur Augustus by the arm and whisked him into a hatter's.

"Trot out your toppers," said Blake to the assistant. "We're in a tearing hurry!"

A number of top-hats were promptly produced for Arthur Augustus' inspection. And six breathless juniors urged him to "back up."

Such a momentous matter as choosing a topper, however, could not be carried through in a second. And Arthur Augustus spent a good many seconds before he hit upon a topper which would not disgrace his noble head. He examined himself critically in the mirror and turned to the assistant.

"This one will do, I think," he said. "You needn't w'ap it up; I'm goin' to wear it now."

"Very good, sir!"

"Can you change a tennah, deah man? I have nothin' smallah."

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other; and clicked their teeth with vexation. Arthur Augustus seemed to be doing his best to delay the proceedings as much as possible. His chums thought of the waiting train, and they looked at their watches.

"We shall have to whizz back to the station like streaks of greased lightning!" said Lowther. "If we lose our train, goodness only knows when there will be another!"

The shop assistant had to go several doors along the street in order to change Gussy's ten-pound note. He seemed an unconscionable time, though, in reality, he was only three minutes. Those three minutes, however, made all the difference.

The juniors pelted back to the station at top speed. They hoped for the best, but they feared the worst. And their fears were well-founded.

As on the previous occasion, they arrived at the station just in time to see their train disappearing in the distance.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That's fairly done it!"

It had! And when the juniors were informed that there was not another train for an hour and a half their feelings were too deep for words.

"Gussy again!" growled Jack Blake. "We shall get to the camp about midnight—if we're lucky!"

"It is weally vewy annoyin'!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "The twain ought to have waited for us."

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Bump the born idiot!" roared Manners.

But Arthur Augustus sought sanctuary in the refreshment-buffet, where, owing to the fact that ladies were present, it was impossible for Tom Merry & Co. to bump his noble person as it richly deserved to be bumped.

CHAPTER 5. The Seven Sleepers!

"STORMCLIFF!"

Tom Merry, who was on the point of dozing off in a corner seat of the railway-carriage, sat up with a jerk.

"Tumble out, you fellows!" he said. "This is the station for Windyridge!"

Six sleepy juniors rubbed their eyes and rose wearily to their feet.

After numerous delays—for which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the South Down Railway were jointly responsible—the St. Jim's travellers had reached the end of their railway journey. But they were not yet at their destination. A four-mile tramp lay ahead of them, and the prospect was anything but pleasant.

the camp," said Digby. "And we don't even know the way. Oh, dear! What a life!"

"All Gussy's fault!" snorted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "You're like a flock of gagging geese! Let's inquire the way to the camp, and then step it out and get the beastly walk over!"

The juniors handed in their tickets, and Tom Merry was about to inquire of the collector which was the way to Windyridge when he caught sight of a stationary vehicle standing outside the station. It was a taxicab.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Tom. "Here's a taxi!"

"I knew it!" said Arthur Augustus. "I had a sort of pvesentiment—"

"Dry up, Gussy! Let's bag the taxi before somebody else does!"

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

No. 1.—Morning Lessons.

Long rings the morning lesson-bell.

Beloved by swots and scholars
To others it is like a knell.
It gives them dumps and
doubles,

And rank by rank, and file by file,
We troop into our places:
And seldom will you see a smile
Illuminate our faces!

A buzz of voices may be heard,
But few seem pleased or keen;
Then Mr. Linton, like a bird,
Comes fluttering on the scene.
"Silence in class!" he thunders
out.

"Lessons will now commence!"
He is obeyed without a doubt—
The silence is intense!

First lesson is a drear affair;
It's either Greek or Latin.
We drive poor Linton to despair—
Few languages we're "pat" in.
And impositions fly around
Like snowflakes in a gale;
From schoolboy knuckles comes
rebound,
With many an anguished wail!

Then comes the welcome morning
"break."

And at Dame Taggles' shop
We perch on stools and munch
her cake

And quaff her ginger-pop.
The tuckshop buzzes with the
sound

Of cheery schoolboy voices;
Pastries and cakes are handed
round,
And everyone rejoices!

The interval is short and sweet:
French lesson then commences;
Grammar comes next, and it's no
treat

To tackle "moods" and
"tenses."

More impositions come our way,
More rappings with the cane;
And under Linton's sovereign
sway
We work with might and main!

Then comes at last that welcome
word,

Two syllables of bliss;
Of all commands we've ever heard
Nothing can beat "Dismiss!"
Into the sunshine's genial smile

We rush, with eager faces,
Freed from the Form room for
a while
To seek more pleasant places!



The hour was late, and darkness brooded over the countryside. From the near distance sounded the roar of the sea.

Tom Merry & Co. were weary and travel-stained. Many hours before they had set out from St. Jim's in cheery spirits; but they were anything but cheery now. Jack Blake was tired and irritable, George Herries was fretting at the long tramp along the coast which awaited the party, and even Monty Lowther's buoyant spirits were subdued. Monty was mournfully whistling the tune of "Show Me the Way to Go Home!"

The seven juniors tumbled out of the carriage on to the ill-lit platform.

"If we are lucky, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "we shall find a taxi waitin' outside to take us to the camp."

"You're an optimist!" growled Jack Blake. "They don't have taxis in those outlandish parts. And even if they do, every self-respecting taxi-driver has gone to bed by this time!"

"We shall have to rely on Shanks' ponies to take us to

The taxidriver saluted the party of juniors as they emerged from the station.

"Taxi, young gents?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "Will you take us along to the camp at Windyridge?"

The driver nodded, and started up the engine. And the weary juniors clambered into the vehicle. It was a tight squeeze for seven, but they didn't mind that discomfort. They were only too glad to be spared the nightmare of a four-mile tramp along an unknown shore in the darkness.

"This is about the first bit of luck we've had to-day," said Manners. "We shall be in camp in a few minutes, and then—"

"Sleep, gentle sleep!" quoted Lowther. "I agree with the jolly old Ancient Mariner when he says that sleep is a blessed thing, beloved from pole to pole."

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured Arthur Augustus, drowsily. "I am so uttably fagged, deah boys, that I can hardly keep my eyes open."

The taxi rolled away through the darkness, along the

narrow, rugged shore road. It was too dark for the juniors to see much of their surroundings, but from one window they could faintly discern the heaving swell of the sea; and from the other they had a glimpse of Sussex Downs, towering majestically against a background of dark clouds.

The taxi had the road to itself, and it ate up the four miles in a matter of ten minutes. Finally, it slowed up at the entrance to a large meadow, in which rows of white tents gleamed ghostly in the gloom.

"The end of the trail!" said Jack Blake, with a sigh of relief. "Here's our camp!"

"Hurrah!"

The taxi-cab disgorged its occupants, and the juniors yawned and stretched themselves.

Arthur Augustus nobly volunteered to pay the fares of the entire party. Perhaps Gussy realised that their belated arrival at the camp was largely his fault; and he was anxious to make amends for the inconvenience he had caused to his chums.

The driver pocketed the fare—plus a handsome tip—and bade the juniors good-night. Then he reversed the taxi, and drove away, in rather precipitate haste, which might have aroused the suspicions of Tom Merry & Co., had they been their usual alert selves.

But the juniors were not concerned with the abrupt departure of the taxi-driver. Their one desire, at the moment, was to get to bed—and sleep.

Very still and peaceful the encampment looked, as they entered it. Masters and boys, it seemed, had retired for the night.

There was nobody on sentry-go; nobody to direct the late arrivals to their tents.

"We had better report to Mr. Wailton first, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"Ass!" snorted Tom Merry. "How can we report to Railton, when we don't know which is his tent?"

"Bai Jove! I didn't think of that."

"In any case, I expect Railton's sleeping the sleep of the just, by now. There's not a sign of life."

"Better try and find our tents," yawned Manners. "Personally, I feel like bagging the first empty one we come to. I'm fairly whacked!"

The juniors started on a tour of inspection. They passed between the long white rows of tents, peering in at each.

All the tents appeared to be occupied. There were four or five fellows in each, sleeping with their feet towards the tent-pole. It was too dark to distinguish the faces of the sleepers.

At last, however, Tom Merry discovered an empty tent. He untied the cords at the entrance, and rolled back the canvas flaps, and beckoned to his companions to enter.

"There are only three beds here!" said Herries.

"Can't be helped," said Tom Merry. "Too much fog to hunt any further. Let's all turn in here, and make the best of it. We'll draw lots for the three beds, and the losers can sleep on the tent-boards. It's a warm night, and anyway we're too tired to care about a little discomfort."

The seven juniors crowded in to the tent. Lots were drawn, and the privilege of sleeping in the beds was secured by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Manners, and Digby. The lucky three divested themselves of most of their clothes, and turned in. The other four utterly weary, flung themselves down on to the bare boards. As Tom Merry had said, they were too tired to care.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" yawned Monty Lowther, drowsily. "This is the end of a perfect day—I don't think! I sha'n't want any rocking to-night. Good-night, all!"

"Goo'-ni!" murmured Manners, from between the snug blankets.

In a very few moments, the seven exhausted juniors were in the arms of Morpheus. Their last waking wish was that they might slumber in peace until the reveille awakened them to a new day.

That wish, however, was not destined to be gratified!

CHAPTER 6.

A Rude Awakening!

"**B**EASTLY dark!" grunted Mark Carthew, of the Sixth Form at Rookwood.

"Impossible to see a hand's turn!" growled Knowles.

"And if we start flashing electric-torches in the middle of the night, one of the beaks might see us," said Catesby.

The three bad, bold blades of the Rookwood Sixth were returning to their camp.

Rookwood was one of the schools which had been represented at the conference of Headmasters; and the Rookwooders had adjourned to the summer camp for a fortnight.

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Their camping-ground was situated on the Sussex coast, barely a mile from the encampment of their St. Jim's rivals.

Already, the Rookwooders had been in camp several days, having started their fortnight earlier than the St. Jim's fellows.

The official time for "lights out" in the Rookwood camp, was nine o'clock—a ridiculously early hour, in the opinion of Carthew, Knowles, and Catesby. Being members of the Sixth Form, and prefects into the bargain, they considered it perfectly scandalous that they should be sent to bed at nine like small children.

But Carthew & Co. had no intention of knuckling under tamely to the rules of the camp. At Rookwood, they frequently ventured out of the gates after lights out; and they saw no reason why they should not continue their merry antics in camp. They had discovered a rather dingy hostelry in the village, known as the Lobster Smack; and the landlord, realising that the blades of Rookwood had money to burn, had raised no objection to their visiting his premises after closing-time, for the purpose of playing billiards and cards. Business was not very brisk, at the time, for few holiday-makers found their way to Windyridge; and the landlord had no intention of turning away three very promising-looking customers—three black sheep, in fact, who were simply asking to be shorn of their superfluous cash!

The landlord had nothing to fear from the law; for Windyridge was one of those sleepy old places which had not moved with the times. It had no picture palace, no pier, and no policeman.

And so, shortly after lights out, Carthew and his companions had broken camp, and made their way over the dark fields to the village. They had anticipated a pleasant evening at the Lobster Smack, and they had had one. But they had paid dearly for their pleasure; and as they wended their way back to camp at midnight, their pockets were considerably lighter than when they had set out.

Carthew had lighted the way with his electric-torch, until they drew near the camp. But he had clicked the light off now, and slipped the torch into his pocket.

The three seniors needed to walk very warily, in order to get back to their tent without awaking any of the masters. If their nocturnal excursion to the village were to get to the Head's ears, there would be short shrift for Carthew, Knowles, and Catesby. The rules of the school were meant to be duly observed, not only at Rookwood, but in camp. Certainly Dr. Chisholm would not have approved of three of his prefects breaking camp after lights out.

"Mind how you go!" murmured Carthew, as they groped their way into the slumbering encampment. "Thank goodness there are no night-sentries to challenge us! That's a little detail that the Head overlooked. I daresay they've got sentries over at the St. Jim's camp."

With great difficulty the trio picked their way between the white rows of tents. They had to pass a good many in order to reach their own; and among those they had to pass were the Head's, and Mr. Dalton's. And Mr. "Dicky" Dalton, the master of the Rookwood Fourth, was a very light sleeper.

Catesby nearly brought calamity upon himself and his companions when he tripped over a tent peg in the darkness, and went sprawling.

"Ow!" gasped Catesby.

"Clumsy fool!" hissed Carthew. "Why don't you look where you're going?"

Catesby staggered to his feet, with a snort.

"How do you expect a fellow to see, when it's as black as pitch?" he growled. "I've flattened my nose in the beastly mud! Ow!"

"Dry up, for goodness' sake!" muttered Knowles. "Do you want to wake the beaks, you burbling idiot?"

The seniors paused, and listened anxiously for a moment. Apparently, however, nobody had been disturbed. They pressed on through the darkness.

"Here we are!" muttered Carthew, at length. "This is our tent—the third from the end of the row."

"Thank goodness!" breathed Catesby. "I'm feeling fagged out, and fed-up into the bargain!"

Carthew untied the cords at the entrance to the tent, and rolled back the canvas flaps.

"We're safe now," he said. "No harm in having a light on the situation."

He drew out his electric-torch as he spoke, and flashed it into the interior of the tent. Then he started back, with a low cry of astonishment.

"Great pip! I—I must have made a mistake. This can't be our tent; there's a whole crowd of fellows sleeping here."

"What!" exclaimed Knowles, peering over Carthew's shoulder into the tent. "Oh, my hat!"

He broke off in utter amazement, on catching sight of



The heavily-built, florid-faced farmer beamed jovially at Tom Merry & Co. and sat himself down in the corner seat of the compartment. There was a crunching, crackling sound. "My heya!" he ejaculated, in astonishment. It was followed by a sudden shriek from Arthur Augustus. "My toppah!" he cried, jumping to his feet in alarm. "You are sittin' on my toppah, bai Jove!" (See Chapter 4.)

seven recumbent forms. Three were in bed; the remainder were lying huddled on the tent-boards, fully-dressed.

"What's all the palaver about?" demanded Catesby, irritably. He had not seen, as yet, what his companions had seen. "Of course this is our tent, Carthew! It's the third from the end, between Bulkeley's tent and Neville's. You say there's a crowd of fellows sleeping here?"

"Come and look!" said Carthew.

Catesby squeezed his head into the aperture, and saw, and wondered.

"Well, of all the nerve!" he ejaculated. "Some of those cheeky fags must have bagged our tent, for a lark. Switch the light on to their faces, Carthew, and let's see who they are. Young Silver and his pals, I expect."

But the searching ray of the electric-torch did not reveal the faces of Jimmy Silver & Co., the heroes of the Rookwood Fourth. The light glimmered upon faces which were unfamiliar to the three seniors, for a moment.

One of the faces, however, was recognised by Carthew, after an interval. He identified the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had often been a visitor to Rookwood.

Carthew fairly gasped.

"G-g-good gad!" he muttered, in utter bewilderment. "These are not our fellows at all—they're St. Jim's kids!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I can recognise young D'Arcy—and—and Merry——"

"Then we've come to the wrong camp?" gasped Knowles.

"Of course not, fathead! It's these kids who have come to the wrong camp—either by accident, or else by design, to play a jape on us."

Carthew's electric-torch was still glimmering on the faces of the sleepers. The light travelled from one face to another, and in no case did the sleeping juniors stir. They seemed to be sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion—as, indeed, they were!

For some moments, the three Rookwood seniors could only

stand and stare. The discovery of the seven St. Jim's juniors, sound asleep in their tent, had knocked them all of a heap.

"Here's a pretty go!" grumbled Knowles. "What are we going to do about it?"

"Do? Why, bundle them out neck-and-crop, of course!" said Carthew, angrily. "The—the young rascals! This is their idea of a jape, I suppose?"

"We shall have to chuck 'em out, of course," said Catesby. "But we mustn't kick up too much of a shindy. Better wake them, and tell them to go quietly. We can deal with the young scamps another time."

Carthew nodded, and stepped into the tent.

The seven juniors took up a great deal of room, and there was scarcely a square inch of space available. It was not surprising, therefore, that Carthew should step upon the sensitive toes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The flashing of the electric-torch had not awakened the swell of St. Jim's; but Carthew's heavy shoe succeeded where the torch had failed.

Arthur Augustus came out of his slumber with a yelp of anguish.

"Yawoooooh! Some clumsy ass has twodden on my toes!"

"Shut up!" hissed Carthew. He was fearful lest Arthur Augustus' anguished yelp had been heard by the occupants of the other tents.

The swell of St. Jim's sat up abruptly. His cry had awakened his tent-fellows, and they sat up, too, blinking drowsily in the light of Carthew's electric-torch.

"What the thump——" began Tom Merry, in great surprise.

"It's a raid!" muttered Jack Blake, in alarm. "Turn out, you fellows!"

Then Blake caught sight of Carthew's tall figure, and he gasped.

"Why, it's Carthew, of Rookwood!" he exclaimed. "What the merry dickens are you doing in our camp, Carthew?" Carthew looked grim.

"It's I who should be asking that question!" he replied. "What do you young rascals mean by bagging our tent?" "Your—your tent?" stuttered Tom Merry.

Carthew scowled. "Drop that!" he snapped. "Don't pretend you're not aware that this is the Rookwood camp!"

The St. Jim's juniors, still heavy with sleep, stared at Carthew in a fuddled sort of way. Behind Carthew, they saw two other Rookwood seniors, seeking admission to the tent. And they wondered whether they were dreaming.

But it was no dream; it was painful reality! This must obviously be the Rookwood camp. Had it been the St. Jim's camp, three Rookwood seniors would not have dreamed of raiding it at dead of night. Jimmy Silver & Co. might have done so, for a spree; but sprees of that sort were never indulged in by seniors.

Slowly, very slowly, it dawned upon Tom Merry & Co. that they had come to the wrong camp!

Carthew & Co. could see that their astonishment was genuine, and that their dismay was very real. It was by accident, and not design, that the St. Jim's juniors were in the wrong camp.

Tom Merry & Co. were fairly flabbergasted. They had expected, on retiring to rest after their arduous travels, to sleep soundly till morning. To be suddenly awakened at midnight, and told that they were in the wrong camp, came as a terrific shock to them.

"I can see what has happened, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at length. "That taxi-drivah must have made a mistake—quite an excusable mistake, in the cires. If you wemembah, Tom Mewy, you requested him to dwive us to the camp. You did not specify which camp. The Wookwood fellows are campin' hereabouts, as well as us. They've been heah some little time, in fact. An' the dwivah natuwallly thought you meant the Wookwood camp."

Tom Merry gave a groan. "I suppose this means that we shall have to clear out—"

he began. "Of course!" cut in Carthew. "You don't suppose we're going to let you stay here for the rest of the night, do you?"

"But we're simply dog-tired!" said Manners. "I can't help that. You'll have to clear out, and go along to your own camp. And don't make a row, for goodness' sake! There's been enough noise already."

Very reluctantly, the St. Jim's juniors prepared to quit. Only three of them had to dress; the others had been sleeping in their clothes.

"We've not the remotest idea where the St. Jim's camp is," said Tom Merry. "Could you direct us, Carthew?"

The Rookwood senior nodded. Now that he knew that the presence of the St. Jim's juniors in his tent had quite an innocent explanation, Carthew's feelings were somewhat mollified. But he was anxious to see Tom Merry & Co. off the premises as speedily as possible. If one of the masters should discover them in the Rookwood camp, there would be awkward inquiries, and Carthew & Co. would be called upon to explain what they were doing up and dressed, at that hour of the night.

The St. Jim's juniors seemed to sense what was passing in Carthew's mind, and they turned out with the minimum of noise.

When they were ready, Carthew piloted them through the darkness to the camp exit. Meanwhile, Knowles and Catesby turned in.

"Follow this path," directed Carthew, "for about half a mile. Then you'll come to a five-barred gate, leading into a cornfield. Cross the field, and the field beyond it, and you'll see your camp."

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry.

He and his chums were genuinely grateful to Carthew; for, had the Rookwood prefect refused to direct them, they would have been in a hopeless plight.

Carthew gruffly bade the juniors good-night, and made tracks for his tent.

Tired out as they were, the St. Jim's juniors did not relish their mile walk through the darkness. Never had a mile seemed so interminable. At long last, however, they came in sight of their own encampment.

"Home at last!" said Monty Lowther, with a deep sigh of relief. "We've lost our beauty-sleep; but we sha'n't be disturbed any more to-night, thank goodness!"

The seven juniors groped their way towards the camp entrance.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

A voice rang through the darkness. It was the familiar voice of Talbot of the Shell.

Talbot was doing duty as night-sentry. A number of juniors had volunteered to act in this capacity, each doing

duty for two hours during the night. Talbot had just relieved Harry Noble, the Australian junior.

The seven juniors stopped short as Talbot's challenge rang out.

"St. Jim's here!" replied Tom Merry. "Hallo, Talbot, old chap!"

"Pway don't shoot us, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"We are friends!"

Talbot laughed.

"I'm not armed—except with a cricket-stump," he said. "So you fellows have rolled up at last! Where on earth have you been?"

"We'll tell you the tragic tale in the morning," said Tom Merry. "Show us to our tents, there's a good fellow, we're simply whacked!"

"This way," said Talbot. "Railton's been jolly anxious about you. He stayed up till nearly midnight, and before he turned in he gave instructions that the sentry was to report to him when you fellows arrived."

"See us to bed first, and report later," yawned Jack Blake. "Gosh! I feel as if I could sleep the clock round."

Talbot escorted his schoolfellows to their tents, and Tom Merry & Co., their troubles over at last, were indeed thankful to turn in. Talbot then awakened Mr. Railton, and reported that the seven absentees had arrived in camp.

The Housemaster had spent a very anxious evening, on account of the missing juniors, and he was greatly relieved by Talbot's news. Naturally, he wanted an explanation of Tom Merry & Co.'s belated arrival. But that would have to wait till the morning.

Talbot resumed his sentry-go, and all was still and silent in the St. Jim's camp.

CHAPTER 7.

The Morning After!

TOM MERRY awoke, and sat up in bed with a yawn.

Manners and Lowther were still sleeping soundly. Jack Blake & Co., in the next tent, were also still in the arms of Morpheus.

Tom stretched out his arm and untied the tent fastenings, and looked out.

It was a glorious summer morning. The St. Jim's camp was buzzing like a vast beehive. Fellows were hurrying to and fro, some carrying buckets of water for their morning ablutions, while others were busying themselves with tidying their tents, and putting their blankets out to air. Some distance away, Figgins & Co. of the New House, had pitched wickets, and were indulging in early morning cricket practice. The whole scene was one of life, and bustle, and animation.

Tom Merry had not had his full quota of sleep. He was tempted to take another forty winks. But he mastered the desire, and, stretching out his leg, he awakened Manners and then Lowther by prodding them in the vicinity of their ribs.

"Wake up, you fellows! It's morning—and a topping morning at that!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!" yawned Lowther.

"Seems like the middle of the night to me!" growled Manners. "What's the hurry, Tom? They won't mind us lying in for a bit, after what happened last night."

"Rats! We are not going to start slacking in our old age. Let's get our towels and costumes, and go for a dip in the sea. Nothing like an early morning dip to cure that tired feeling!"

Tom Merry started to dress, and his chums, knowing they would get no peace if they continued to lie in, reluctantly followed his example.

"You fellows awake?"

Jack Blake hailed the Terrible Three, in stentorian tones, from the next tent.

"Yes, rather! We're thinking of going for a dip," replied Tom Merry.

"Same here," said Blake. "But I can't persuade these lazy beggars to turn out. Herries is still snoring, and Dig says he's too tired, and Gussy won't budge. I'm the only Grandpa Kruschen in the family."

"Weally, Blake!" protested Arthur Augustus in drowsy tones. "I considah it is uttally widic to go wushin' down to the sea, when we are all fagged out. I am sure that Mr. Wailton will have no objection to our lyin' in, seein' that we didn't awwive heah till the small hours of the mornin'."

"Certainly I have no objection, D'Arcy!"

It was the deep, pleasant voice of Mr. Railton, who had just come along to the juniors' tents to inquire into their belated arrival at the camp.

"Good-mornin', sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Good-morning, sir!" came a respectful chorus from the Terrible Three in the next tent.

Mr. Railton returned the juniors' salutation.

"I was exceedingly anxious about you last night, my boys," he said. "I have no doubt you can give me a satisfactory explanation of your late arrival. You would not, I know, have deliberately caused me anxiety."

"Of course not, sir!" said Tom Merry. And he proceeded to furnish the Housemaster with full details of their overnight adventure.

Mr. Railton smiled when Tom Merry had finished.

"I quite understand, Merry," he said. "After sundry delays on the railway journey, you were inadvertently taken to the wrong camp by the taxicab-driver. You appear to have suffered a good deal of discomfort, though you seem none the worse for it this morning. However, I have no objection to your remaining in your tents for an extra two hours, if you wish. The boys who volunteered to act as sentries during the night have been given that concession, and, in the circumstances, it should also be extended to you."

"Thank you, sir!" said Jack Blake. "But we're thinking of going for an early morning dip."

"Speak for yourself, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "Personally, I'm goin' to take another forty winks."

"Slacker!"

Mr. Railton laughed, and strolled away, leaving the juniors to settle the matter for themselves. The Terrible Three, clad in flannel trousers and cricket shirts and white canvas shoes, set out in quest of buckets of water. They discovered where the water supply was situated, and came back to their tent with brimming buckets. After plunging their heads into the cool, clear water, they felt much more alert and wide-awake.

Jack Blake and Herries and Digby followed their example, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained obstinately in bed.

While they were performing their ablutions, the juniors were bombarded with questions by their schoolfellows, who were naturally curious to know what had happened overnight. They had to describe their misadventures at least a dozen times, till they grew heartily tired of it.

"Let's buck up and get down to the sea!" said Tom Merry. "I'm fed-up with answering these footling questions."

"Same here," grunted Manners, towelling himself vigorously. "Hallo! Here comes Gussy's minor, and two of his playmates from the kindergarten."

"Clear off, you fags!" commanded Jack Blake.

Wally D'Arcy, and Gibson and Jameson, their faces as radiant as the morning sunshine, approached the juniors' tents. The three fags were chuckling, and they seemed to be in possession of a priceless joke.

"Top of the morning!" said Wally D'Arcy cheerily. "Where's old Gussy?"

"Still stewing in bed," growled Blake.

"The awful slacker! After all the trouble I've taken to bring him up in the way he should go!" said Wally reproachfully. "Still, I expect he's a bit weary, after coming in so late. Tell us what happened to you last night, you fellows."

"Run away and pick flowers!" said Lowther.

"But we're dying to hear all about it!" persisted Wally. He poked his impudent face into Blake's tent, where Arthur Augustus was still reclining between the blankets. "Good-morning, Gus!"

"Good-mornin', you young wascal!"

"Do tell us what happened last night!" pleaded Wally. Arthur Augustus explained.

"We had a vewy distwessin' expwience, Wally," he said. "We didn't awvive at the station till late, havin' lost two twains. Then we asked a taxi-dwivah to take us to the camp, an' he took us to the w'ong one. We spent half the night at the Wookwood camp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for wibald hilawity," said Arthur Augustus with a frown. "If you an' your fwienahs had been in our places you would not have felt at all humowous about it, Wally."

But Wally D'Arcy and his chums appeared highly amused. They chuckled in chorus.

"What happened when you got to the Rookwood Camp?" inquired Curly Gibson.

"We got into a tent which belonged to three seniahs," said Arthur Augustus. "They were out on the wazze, or somethin'. Anyway, their tent was empty, an' we took it. I was wudely awakened, at midnight, by Carthew tweadin' on my toes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' it came as a gweat shock to us to find that we were in the w'ong camp. Of course, we had to cleah out an' come an' heah. But I wepeat, it is not a mattah for mewwiment. If you don't stop cacklin', you young wascals, I will turn an' administrate a feaful thwashin' all w'ound!"

Whereat Wally D'Arcy & Co. laughed more heartily than ever. Wally, in fact, seemed to be tickled to death.

Tom Merry & Co. glared at the hilarious fags. They could not quite see where the joke came in; and they felt strongly inclined to lay violent hands on Wally D'Arcy and Gibson and Jameson, and to bump the merriment out of them.

"Oh, what a jape!" gurgled Wally.

"It worked like a giddy charm!" grinned Curly Gibson. "That taxi-driver played up like a trump, and no mistake!" said Jameson.

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the fags in blank amazement. And Arthur Augustus, from inside the tent, uttered a startled exclamation.

"Bai Jove! What do you mean by those wemarks, you young wascals? Are you suggestin' that our unfortunate expwience last night were the w'esult of a jape?"

A further chorus of chuckles was the only response to that question.

Tom Merry & Co. stared harder than ever at the fags. Until now, they had imagined that their overnight misadventures had been merely the result of a misunderstanding. They had supposed that the taxi-driver, in taking them to the wrong camp, had made a genuine mistake. Not for one moment had it crossed their minds that the whole affair was a put-up job, plotted and planned beforehand by the young rascals of the Third!

Even now it seemed almost incredible that the seven juniors had been the victims of a Third Form jape.

And yet, why were the fags so excessively mirthful about it? The other fellows had been mildly amused on hearing of Tom Merry & Co.'s misadventures; but they had not thrown themselves on the grass and kicked up their heels, neither had they cackled in chorus for five minutes on end.

Slowly it percolated into the minds of the juniors that Wally D'Arcy & Co. had played a gigantic jape upon them.

The expressions on the faces of Tom Merry & Co. became almost ferocious.

"They've tumbled to it at last!" chortled Wally D'Arcy. "Run for it, kidlets!"

And the three fags sprinted away at top speed.

"After them!" roared Tom Merry.

"Collar the young sweeps!" hooted Jack Blake. "They—they've had the awful nerve to jape us! They must have bribed the taxi-driver to take us to the wrong camp!"

Tom Merry & Co. fairly pelted after the fleeing fags. Wally D'Arcy and his fellow-conspirators ran like the wind; but the juniors, with fury in their faces, caught them within fifty yards.

The fags struggled to free themselves, but they had no chance in six pairs of muscular arms. They were frog-marched back to the juniors' tents, and they realised that they were "for it." After the jape came the reckoning!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had scrambled into his clothes. He poked his head out of the tent, and surveyed the three captives very sternly through his monocle.

"You uttah young wascals! You have had the amazin' audacity to play this wotten jape on your supewiors!"

"Bow-wow!" said Wally cheekily.

"I pwesume you were the wingleadah of this affair, Waltha?" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Right on the wicket, old top!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked positively Hunnish.

"He's admitted it!" said Manners excitedly. "Great pip! To think that we've been japed like this by a parcel of fags!"

"They deserve to be reported!" said Tom Merry grimly. "To my mind, it was going beyond the limits of japing. Just think of what we had to go through last night! If Railton knew about this—"

"So you're going to sneak?" said Wally D'Arcy scornfully.

"Nothing of the sort! We're going to deal with you ourselves. You're going to get the biggest bumping you've ever had in your little lives!"

"Rather!" said Blake grimly.

The juniors were as good as their word. They were very angry at the discovery that they had been the victims of a fags' jape; and, like the prophet of old, they felt that they did well to be angry.

The bumping of Walter Adolphus D'Arcy and his two confederates was carried out with great vigour and thoroughness. They had had a good many bumpings in the course of their bright young lives, but never had they been bumped so soundly and severely as on this occasion. Several times in succession, they smote the unsympathetic turf; and their yells fairly awakened the echoes.

Arthur Augustus was the only junior who took no active part in administering justice. He watched the proceedings from the tent, nodding his head in grim approval.

When the proceedings were over, and the three fags tottered to their feet, Arthur Augustus saw fit to deliver a homily to his minor.

"I am extremely angwy with you, Waltah—"

"Ow!"

"I am so angwy, in fact, that I find it difficult to choose my words. Not content with playin' that widiculous jape on me, at St. Jim's, when you swopped my clothes with those of Cutts, you have now played anothah disgwaceful pwanik—an' a more sewious one this time."

"Wow!" said Wally.

"I demand an apology, Waltah," went on Arthur Augustus. "If you are prepared to apologise, I may find it possible to ovaohook the mattah. But if you fail to make a humble apology—"

"Well, what then?" asked Wally, forgetting his physical discomfort in his curiosity.

"I shall wefuse to have anythin' more to do with you while we are in camp!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I shall withdwaw my bwothahly pwotection—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"An' leave you to fight your own battles. I shall not even speak to you, Waltah! I shall ignore your vewy existence."

Arthur Augustus fondly imagined that such a dreadful threat would have the immediate effect of extracting an apology from Wally. But he imagined a vain thing. As a matter of fact, his threat had precisely the opposite effect! It made Wally determined not to proffer an apology. The scamp of the Third felt that he could get along very well, without the "brotherly protection" of his major. And if Arthur Augustus chose not to speak to him, and to ignore his very existence, that would not worry Wally. He would be only too pleased, in fact, to be permitted to go his own way. His major Gussy was quite a decent sort, in Wally's opinion, but he was inclined to be fussy and interfering. And nothing would have suited Wally better, while in camp, than to be free from the unwanted chaperonage of Arthur Augustus.

"I am waitin', Waltah!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "An' I do not pwopose to wait an indefinite time. Unless you apologise at once—"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"If you dare to say 'Wats!' to me, Waltah—"

"More rats!" growled Wally. "Go and boil your head, you ass!"

Arthur Augustus compressed his lips. He was very angry indeed; seldom, in fact, had his chums seen him so angry.

"Vewy well, Waltah! I wegard you as an incowwigible young wascal! As you wefuse to apologise for the wotten twick you played on us, I have nothin' furthah to say to you!"

"The last word!" murmured Monty Lowther, with a grin. It was, indeed, the last word, so far as Arthur Augustus was concerned. He retired abruptly into his tent; and Wally D'Arcy & Co., still sore from their bumping, but still as impenitent as ever, limped away. And Tom Merry & Co. collected their towels and costumes, and sallied forth to the seashore, leaving Arthur Augustus alone, like Achilles of old, sulking in his tent.

CHAPTER 8.

Camp Cricket!

TOM MERRY & CO. thoroughly enjoyed their morning dip. The sunlight sparkled on the sea; the waves were dancing fast and bright.

There was no sea-bathing at St. Jim's; and the "briny" made a delightful change from the placid River Rhyl.

The juniors were warned, before taking their dip, to keep close to the shore. The old boatman who gave them this warning explained that there were treacherous currents and submerged rocks some distance out. Tom Merry & Co. were thankful for the warning. They were strong swimmers, and but for the timely caution they would have swum straight out to sea and perhaps found themselves at the mercy of a current, or in collision with one of the rocks that was not visible at full tide.

After the dip they sprinted back to the camp, arriving just in time for breakfast.

The meal was served in the spacious dining marquee. The kitchen staff had come down to camp with the rest of the school, and, in spite of the rather primitive cooking arrangements, they had prepared an excellent breakfast of steaming eggs and bacon, with toast and marmalade to follow.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the fellows who had done sentry duty during the night breakfasted later than their schoolfellows, by special arrangement.

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Morning lessons were conducted in the spacious meadow adjoining the St. Jim's encampment. Rows of forms had been set out in circles, and a Form master stood in the middle of each grassy arena to conduct operations.

By comparison with the stuffy Form-rooms at St. Jim's, morning lessons were a delight. The masters were unusually genial and tolerant; and they winked an eye at many things which would not have been permitted at St. Jim's. Impositions were doled out very sparingly; in some Forms no imposts were awarded at all. As for the cane and the pointer, neither was in evidence that morning.

The Shell, under Mr. Linton, and the Fourth, under Mr. Lathom, found morning lessons very pleasant. Indeed, for once in a way, lessons seemed to be a pleasure rather than a penance.

At half-past twelve classes were dismissed, and the St. Jim's fellows were free to do as they liked for the rest of the day, provided they turned up punctually to meals.

During the interval between lessons and dinner, Tom Merry sent a message over to the Rookwood camp by



Tom Merry & Co. sat up, blinking in the glare of the electric "It's a raid!" muttered Jack Blake. "Turn out, you fellows doing in our camp?" "What do you young rascals mean?" stuttered Tom.

Toby, the page, inviting Jimmy Silver & Co. to come over and play a cricket-match in the afternoon.

The challenge was accepted with alacrity; and at two o'clock Jimmy Silver and his merry men arrived at the St. Jim's camp in their flannels, and carrying cricket-bags.

Although they had only been in camp a few days, the Rookwood juniors were as brown as berries. Tanned by their exposure to wind and sun, they looked remarkably fit. Tom Merry & Co. gave them a warm greeting.

"I thought you fellows would be game for a match," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you have all your afternoons off, like us?"

"Yes, rather!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're having the time of our lives in camp!"

"You look as fit as fiddles, deah men!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I twust, for your own sakes, that you

are feelin' in good form. Othahwise, we shall send you back to your camp, with your tails between your legs!"

"You've some hopes!" grinned Lovell of Rookwood. "It's going to be a match between Redskins and Palefaces; and the Palefaces will be licked to a frazzle!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the brown-faced Rookwooders.

"Where are we going to play, Merry?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"This way!" said Tom. And he escorted the visiting team to the spacious meadow in which morning lessons had been held. It was an ideal venue for a cricket-match, the turf being as level as a bowling-green.

The wickets were pitched, and Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth graciously consented to act as umpires.

No time was lost in getting to business. Tom Merry spun the coin, and Jimmy Silver called—correctly.

"We'll bat!" said Uncle James, by which sobriquet Jimmy Silver was known to his Rookwood chums.

Tom Merry led his men into the field, and Jimmy Silver and Lovell, padded and gloved, and looking capable of

dogged. When twenty runs appeared on the score-board Jimmy Silver and Lovell were still together.

While the field was changing over, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy beckoned to Tom Merry.

"These Wookwood beggals are playin' wathah well," remarked the swell of St. Jim's. "They are bweakin' the back of our bowlin'. I suggest, Tom Mewwy, that you let me believe eithah Blake or Wynn."

"Ass!" said Tom. "We don't want to make the Rookwood fellows a present of the match!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'll put you on to bowl as a last resource, Gussy, if it becomes necessary," said the captain of the St. Jim's eleven, with a grin.

"I wedge that remark as oppwobwious, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity and warmth.

"Trot into your place, Gussy! You're holding the game up. We shall take a wicket before long, I don't doubt."

Tom Merry's prediction was early fulfilled. Arthur Augustus returned to his place at point, and when Jimmy Silver cut his next ball hard and clean, a hand shot out like lightning, and the fast-travelling ball plopped fairly into the palm of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"I take back all the unkind things I said about you, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "That was a ripping catch!"

Arthur Augustus flushed with satisfaction; and Jimmy Silver walked back to the marquee which served as a pavilion.

After the dismissal of their star batsman, it was confidently expected that the Rookwooders would collapse. But they did nothing of the sort. Runs came readily, and the score rose by leaps and bounds.

All the Rookwood men did well. Lovell made 20 before Fatty Wynn spread-eagled his stumps; Raby and Newcome carried on the good work; and the three Tommies—Tommy Dodd, Tommy Doyle, and Tommy Cook—batted freely and forcefully. The "tail" wagged to some purpose, too, Teddy Grace and Kit Erroll hitting away in light-hearted style, as if the St. Jim's bowling were very sorry stuff.

The bowling was quite good, as a matter of fact, and Tom Merry varied his attack like a good general. But it was a batsman's wicket, and the Rookwood men made hay while the sun shone, so to speak.

They were all out at last, for the useful total of 159.

Tom Merry made a grimace as the players adjourned to the refreshment-marquee for tea.

"One hundred and sixty to win!" he observed. "It's a tall order."

"If Gussy will make a century, I'll promise to make one, too!" said Monty Lowther. "Then we shall pull it off all serene, and it won't matter if the rest of the team get duck's eggs!"

"If Tom Mewwy will agree to put me in first, I will promise to do my best to make a century," said Arthur Augustus.

"If the match lasted a century, you might do it, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "But as we've only got two hours—"

"Do you wish me to administer a thwashin' in the presence of our guests, Jack Blake?" demanded Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"Nunno!" gasped Blake, pretending to be very much alarmed, and taking refuge behind Tom Merry and Monty Lowther.

"Then pway wefwain fwom makin' asinine remarks!" said the swell of St. Jim's.

Under the genial influence of tea, peace was restored. And when the cricketers emerged from the refreshment marquee, the sun was still shining brilliantly over the St. Jim's encampment and over the distant sweep of cornfields.

St. Jim's started on their formidable task with great resolution. Tom Merry took Arthur Augustus in first, to open the innings, and they batted briskly from the outset. It would be a race against the clock, if St. Jim's hoped to win; and Tom Merry was too good a sportsman to play for a draw. Win or lose was his motto.

The runs mounted merrily, and the score was at 25 before Tom Merry left, bowled off his pads by Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Augustus was still going strong. He was, in fact, playing the game of his life. At the start of his innings he had on two occasions narrowly escaped being caught, and he was now profiting by those escapes, and laying on the willow good and hard. Jack Blake backed him up loyally.

When Arthur Augustus had gone in to bat, his minor Wally had hailed him with a loud "Quack, quack!"—thereby intimating that he expected his major to make a duck's egg.

Arthur Augustus had looked right through his minor, and walked on, true to his resolve that he would have nothing more to do with the recalcitrant Wally while they were in camp.

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"What the thump—" began Tom Merry, in great surprise. "Now, it's Carthew, of Rookwood! What the merry dickens are you doing our tent?" said Carthew grimly. "Your—your tent?" (See Chapter 6.)

making a century apiece, walked briskly to the wickets.

Fatty Wynn, the demon bowler of St. Jim's, opened the attack; and Fatty was in fine form.

Jimmy Silver needed to have all his wits about him, and a keen pair of eyes into the bargain, to cope with the Welsh junior's uncanny deliveries. He was hard put to it to keep his end up, but he fairly collared the last ball of the over, and banded it to the leg-boundary.

"Well hit, sir!" roared the onlookers.

Jack Blake was bowling at the other end, and Lovell opened very cautiously against him. Blake was not such a deadly bowler as Fatty Wynn, but when in form he had been known to skittle out a side like rabbits. He found his length almost at once, and Lovell could take no liberties.

However, Rookwood's opening pair settled down to play a steady game. Their batting was not brilliant, but it was

So far from making a "duck," Arthur Augustus had collected 24 of the best, and he was still going great guns.

Blake batted well, but he was not too comfortable against some well-pitched bowling, and he left after making a dozen. Figgins followed on, but it was not Figgy's lucky day. He was caught and bowled by Lovell without adding to the score; and Figgins looked quite glum as he walked out.

Dick Redfern followed Figgins, and Reddy gave an exhibition of fireworks, hitting up twenty runs in hurricane style. But he was brilliantly caught on the boundary by Teddy Grace, who had to race nearly twenty yards to make the catch.

The 100 was hoisted shortly afterwards, and St. Jim's had only four wickets down. Things were looking decidedly hopeful.

"I've never seen old Gussy in such grand form!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That extra forty winks this morning must have done him good. Oh, well hit, sir!"

With a mighty drive, Arthur Augustus landed the ball on the top of the marquee. It rolled off the sloping canvas, and Grundy of the Shell obligingly stopped it with his head. There was a ripple of laughter, and an anguished roar from Grundy.

Talbot was now partnering D'Arcy at the wickets. Talbot was one of the most reliable batsmen on the St. Jim's side, and he rendered yeoman service now.

The faces of the Rookwooders grew longer and glummer, while the faces of the St. Jim's fellows grew brighter and cheerier, as they realised that they were within measurable distance of victory.

Talbot was beaten at last, and Harry Noble, who followed, had wretched luck, being "lbw" off the first ball he received. But Monty Lowther, the next man in, played up in his best form.

Rapidly rose the score, and, although Jimmy Silver tried all his wiles and artifices, and changed the bowling repeatedly, no more wickets were taken.

"Only ten wanted!" said Tom Merry, at length.

"And Gussy only wants ten for his century!" said Blake. "Jolly good luck to him! We're always chipping him, and pulling his noble leg, but he's the giddy salvation of the side to-day!"

"Yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver gripped the ball grimly and started a fresh over. There was a feeling that this would be the last over of the match; and so it proved. Ten runs were wanted to give St. Jim's the victory, and to complete Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's century. And it was Arthur Augustus who had the bowling.

He drove the first ball over the head of mid-on, and the batsmen crossed—twice. The second ball also went for two. The third was a real corker, and Arthur Augustus stopped it dead within an ace of his wicket. The next ball was also a blank, for Jimmy Silver was putting all his "beef" into it. But the fifth ball was sent speeding away through the covers, and two more runs were added to the tally.

Only four wanted now!

It was the last ball of the over, and the excitement was tense.

Jimmy Silver seemed to twist himself round like a catherine-wheel as he delivered that fateful ball. It flashed down the pitch, and Arthur Augustus advanced to meet it, and drove it with all his power. Away went the leather—away and away—and Teddy Grace, though he pelted after it at top speed, could not prevent it crossing the boundary-line.

It was the winning hit. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had gained that dearly-cherished honour among cricketers—the coveted century!

It was a proud moment for the swell of St. Jim's. His schoolfellows swarmed on to the pitch, and took him on their shoulders and carried him off in great triumph.

"Well played, Gussy, old top!" piped the shrill voice of Wally D'Arcy, as the procession passed him.

But Arthur Augustus' happy face clouded over for a moment, and he looked fixedly ahead, ignoring his minor's congratulations.

Had Wally chosen to apologise for the jape he had perpetrated overnight, his apology, though belated, would probably have been accepted. But the scapegrace of the Third had no intention of apologising. And Arthur Augustus, though he was not the sort to bear malice, was resolved to stick to his guns, and to have nothing more to do with Wally until that refractory young rebel "came round," and tendered a humble and contrite apology.

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CHAPTER 9.

A Night Adventure!

"NOTHING doing!" said Monty Lowther, with a yawn.

"Everything's quiet," assented Tom Merry. "We've patrolled the blessed camp for over an hour, and nobody has gone out or come in."

Tom Merry and Lowther were acting as night sentries. Rather rashly—for both were badly in need of sleep after their exhausting experiences of the previous night—they had volunteered to keep guard from ten o'clock until midnight. Perhaps they anticipated that their duties as sentries would prove rather exciting; but they had been sadly disappointed. Nobody had attempted to break into the camp; and nobody had attempted to break out of it. So far from being exciting, sentry-go was proving a very dull business. The St. Jim's camp slumbered peacefully under the starry sky; and there was not a breath stirring.

Tom Merry and his chum came to a halt under a big oak-tree on the outskirts of the camp. It was a sultry night, and they were beginning to feel the effects of their loss of sleep the night before.

"Let's sit down for a bit," suggested Lowther.

They sat down.

"Of course, we must keep awake," said Tom Merry.

"Of course!" agreed Lowther, with a sleepy yawn.

"Good sentries never sleep at their posts," said Tom. "We're a bit fagged, and we were silly chumps to volunteer for this stunt; but we can stick it out for another hour."

"Absolutely, old chap!"

But, although the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. Tom Merry strove manfully to keep awake and alert, but his head gradually nodded on to his chest; and so did Lowther's. It was very restful and comfortable, beneath the branches of the old oak-tree; and the two sentries soon dropped into a doze. They sat with their backs to the broad trunk of the tree, and were asleep within five minutes.

Monty Lowther would probably have slept until the relief-sentry turned up; but Tom Merry was too conscientious for that. His sub-conscious mind was at work, bidding him be up and doing; and at the end of twenty minutes he came out of his doze with a start.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "I must have dropped off to sleep! This will never do! Monty, old chap!"

There was no reply from Lowther. His head was sagging on his chest, and he was in the land of dreams.

Tom Merry rose to his feet and stretched himself, and then gave his companion a shake.

"Wake up, Monty! We're a bright pair of sentries, and no mistake, to go to sleep at our posts!"

Monty Lowther opened his eyes and blinked sleepily at his chum.

"Wass time?" he murmured.

"Half-past eleven," said Tom Merry, consulting his wrist-let-watch, which was luminous. "We shall be relieved in half an hour. Better make a tour of inspection, to see that everything's O.K. Somebody might have slipped out of camp while we've been dozing."

"Not likely," said Lowther, rising slowly to his feet.

"You never know. We'll make certain, anyway."

They proceeded to make a tour of the camp. Tom Merry flashing his electric torch into each tent. Tom was wide awake again now, and very much alive to his duties. But his companion was still heavy with sleep, and accompanied him rather unwillingly.

The senior tents were inspected first, and Tom Merry had a half-suspicion that Knox of the Sixth might be absent from his tent; Knox being a notorious night-bird. But Knox, who shared a tent with Sefton, was discovered to be fast asleep.

There were no absentees from the Sixth, nor from the Fifth. The Shell fellows were all asleep in their tents; likewise the members of the Fourth Form. Only the fags' tents remained to be investigated.

"It's hardly worth while going on," grumbled Monty Lowther. "None of the fags will be out of camp at this time of night."

"Nothing like making certain," replied Tom Merry. "It will kill time, anyway, until we're relieved."

The first tent in the Third Form lines should have been occupied by four fags—Wally D'Arcy, Carly Gibson, Jamieson, and Joe Frayne. The tent was occupied, certainly, but only by one fag.

Joe Frayne was lying in bed, wide awake, when Tom Merry flashed his torch into the tent. The other three beds were empty.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Tom, in surprise. "All alone, kid? Where are your pals?"

Joe Frayne sat up in bed, blinking in the glare of the torchlight, and looking decidedly uncomfortable. He made no answer to Tom Merry's question.

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"Where's young D'Arcy, and the others?" insisted Tom.
"Are they out of camp?"

Joe Frayne still hesitated.

"Supposing they are?" he said, after a pause. "Will you report them?"

"That depends. If they've just broken camp for a silly lark, we'll deal with them ourselves. But I must insist on knowing where they've gone. If anything should happen to them, we, as sentries, will be held responsible. Have they gone down to the village?"

Joe Frayne shook his head.

"I can see that you mean to know where they are," he said, "so I'll tell you. They've gone down to the sea for a bathe."

Tom Merry started violently.

"A bathe—at this time of night? And with a heavy sea running?"

"Yes," said Frayne. "They asked me to go, but I ain't much of a swimmer, for one thing, an' I reckon it's a mad sort of stunt, for another. So I wouldn't go."

"Sensible kid!" said Monty Lowther. "I say, Tom, those silly little asses will be running into danger! You remember what the old boatman told us this morning when we went for a dip. The currents are treacherous, and there are rocks hidden just beneath the surface. The young idiots probably aren't aware of that."

Tom Merry looked very grave.

"We must go after them at once!" he said promptly.

"Of course. Let's go and give old Gussy a shake. P'raps he'd like to come along with us, as his minor's concerned in this."

The two chums hurried away to the tent in which Jack Blake & Co. were sleeping.

Tom Merry tried to arouse the swell of St. Jim's without disturbing his tent-fellows, but in this he was unsuccessful.

Arthur Augustus was sleeping very soundly—almost as soundly, in fact, as the celebrated Rip van Winkle had slept in the Catskill Mountains. Tired out by his experiences of the previous night, and by his strenuous exertions on the cricket-field in the afternoon, Gussy proved a difficult subject to arouse. Tom Merry had to shake him violently, and bawl in his ear, in order to stir him from the thrall of deep sleep; and even then Arthur Augustus was only partially awake. He mumbled a drowsy inquiry, and blinked at Tom Merry. Lowther was waiting outside the tent.

"Turn out, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Your silly ass of a minor has broken camp, with Gibson and Jameson, and they've gone down to the sea for a dip, at this time of night!"

Arthur Augustus did not seem to comprehend.

"Bothah my minah!" he yawned. "Wun away, Tom Mewwy, there's a good chap! I'm dead tired!"

"Same here!" grunted Jack Blake, who, with Herries and Digby, had also been awakened. "Buzz off, Merry, and leave us in peace!"

"But your minor, Gussy—" persisted Tom.

"I do not want to heah anythin' about my minah," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I am no longer interested in the young scamp. I have withdwawn my bwothahly pwotection, an' he can go his own way in future."

"But don't you realise, you chump, that he may be in danger?"

Snore!

Arthur Augustus had gone to sleep again. Tom Merry gave a snort; and then, realising that precious time was being wasted, he stepped out of the tent and rejoined Lowther.

"I couldn't make Gussy understand," he said. "He seemed drugged with sleep. Let's get down to the shore; there's been quite enough dilly-dallying as it is."

"Come on!" said Lowther, whose drowsiness had left him now that he realised the possible danger to the three fool-hardy fags.

Guided by Tom Merry's electric-torch, they hurried out of camp, and raced down to the shore.

It was not a stormy night, but there was a big swell running, and the juniors could hear the low boom of the incoming tide as they sped along.

Both were feeling very anxious for the safety of the fags. Sea-bathing, at that part of the coast, was risky in the daytime. At dead of night it was trebly so.

Tom Merry and Lowther ran hard. Finally, they halted, panting and breathless, on the rough shingle of the shore. "They're in the sea!" panted Lowther. "I can hear them. And here are their togs, piled on this boulder. Let's give them a hail, Tommy."

When they had recovered their breath, the juniors made megaphones of their hands, and shouted:

"Ahoy! Ahoy, there!"

From a short distance out to sea came a cheery response.

"Hallo! What do you Shellfish want?"

It was Wally D'Arcy's voice, and Tom Merry drew a deep breath of relief. The fags were safe—up to the present, at all events.

"We've come to fetch you!" roared Lowther. "Of all the tom-fool pranks! We're going to give you a spanking apiece, and take you back to camp!"

There was a gurgling laugh from the three fags.

"You've got to catch us first!" shouted Curly Gibson.

And the young rascals, who had been bathing close inshore, now started to swim out to sea.

Tom Merry ran down to the water's edge and yelled to them:

"Come back! Come back, you mad idiots! There are treacherous currents out there, and submerged rocks into the bargain!"

"Rats!"

Evidently Wally D'Arcy & Co. thought that Tom Merry was merely trying to frighten them, and to decoy them out of the water. They went on, swimming strongly side by side.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"We must go after them!" he muttered.

"Swim?" queried Lowther.

"No; there's a boat over yonder. Give me a hand—quickly!"

A boat was beached on the shingle, high and dry from the encroaching tide. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther dragged it down to the water and jumped in. Tom grasped the oars and pulled strongly out to sea.

By this time Wally D'Arcy and his companions were a long way out. Alarmed at their own foolhardiness, they turned round and started to make for the shore. But they found that they could make no headway. They were caught, in fact, in one of the currents of which Tom Merry had warned them.

It was fortunate indeed for the three young rascals that the two Shell fellows were coming after them in a boat. They could not have battled against that treacherous current for long. Gradually, but inexorably, it would have carried them further out to sea. Even the strongest of swimmers could not have contended with it successfully.

Tom Merry pulled hard on the oars. He and his chum were in danger, no less than the three fags; for at any moment the boat might foul one of the submerged rocks. A local lad, knowing exactly where the danger-spots were, would have avoided them; but they were unknown seas to Tom Merry.

Fortune favoured them, however, and presently they drew alongside the fags, who were now thoroughly frightened.

"There's a beastly current, or something, here!" gasped Wally D'Arcy. "We can't seem to make any headway."

"It's awful!" spluttered Jameson.

"Then it's a good job we came after you in the boat," said Tom Merry grimly.

"You hare-brained young idiots!" exclaimed Lowther, whose face was quite pale. "You might have been drowned!"

The fags were struggling towards the boat. Tom Merry manoeuvred it into a convenient position, and Wally D'Arcy clung on to one side, and his companions to the other. Tom Merry shipped his oars, and helped Monty Lowther to haul the fags into the boat. Tom said nothing, but he was clearly angry. His warning about the currents had not been heeded, and five lives were being risked because of a senseless prank.

It was hard work, pulling back to the shore. Monty Lowther relieved his chum at the oars, and gradually the boat struggled clear of the contrary current. After that it was plain sailing.

The boat ran aground on the crunching shingle, and the three fags tumbled out.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther followed suit. They dragged the boat back to its place; then they turned upon Wally D'Arcy & Co. That reckless trio had now recovered from their fright; but they were a little apprehensive as to what would happen next. And they had cause to be!

"Get your clothes on!" said Tom Merry curtly.

The fags towelled themselves vigorously, and then dressed. In the meantime, Monty Lowther, rowing about on the foreshore, came across a supple piece of cane, which had been washed up by the tide. He handed it to Tom Merry.

"This will be useful for the execution!" said Monty.

Tom nodded grimly. As for Wally D'Arcy & Co. they eyed the piece of cane in great apprehension.

"Now," said Tom Merry, turning to the fags, "I'm going to give you kids a jolly good licking for giving us all this trouble. You first, young D'Arcy. Touch your toes!"

Wally's eyes flashed rebelliously for a moment. But he realised that a licking from Tom Merry would be preferable to being reported to the St. Jim's authorities. Besides, Tom Merry and Lowther had rescued him and his chums from a very serious plight; and Wally, thoughtless

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young scamp though he was, could not but feel grateful towards the two Shell fellows. The rebellious look vanished, and Wally bent down and touched his toes.

Whack, whack, whack!

Tom Merry laid on six strokes. They were powerful strokes, and the cane, after its immersion in the salt water, stung considerably.

Wally uttered no cry, but he wriggled painfully.

"Gibson next!" panted Tom Merry.

Curly Gibson took his medicine, and he yelped a little. He was not made of such stern stuff as his leader.

Jameson came last, and he hoped that Tom Merry's arm would be tired by this time. But it wasn't! Jameson's punishment was just as severe as that of his chums.

"That's that!" said Tom Merry, tossing away the cane.

"Now we'll get back to the camp; and let's hope, for your sakes, that nobody else has discovered your absence!"

Tom Merry strode away with Lowther; and the three fags, making painful grimaces, came limping after.

CHAPTER 10.

The Wilfulness of Wally.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY awoke from a troubled slumber.

The swell of St. Jim's sat up in bed, peering into the darkness, and wondering what had caused him to wake. He was vaguely worried about something; but the why and wherefore of his worry was a mystery to him for the moment.

Then he remembered Tom Merry's visit to the tent. It could not have been very long ago that Tom had come into the tent and shaken him.

Arthur Augustus had been too fuddled with sleep at the time to grasp the significance of what Tom Merry had said to him. But his mind was clearer now, and he was able to recall a part, if not the whole, of Tom's conversation.

His minor Wally, with Gibson and Jameson, had broken camp, and gone down to the sea for a bathe. And Tom Merry had pointed out, urgently, that they might be in danger. Arthur Augustus had mumbled a few remarks to the effect that he was not interested in Wally, and Wally's doings, and he had turned over and gone to sleep again.

But Gussy was wide awake now, and he was worried. He was well aware of Wally's propensity for getting into scrapes, and defying risk and danger; and he wished he had got up when Tom Merry called him.

He began to feel really alarmed for Wally's safety. Such a reckless escapade as a midnight bathe, in a treacherous sea, might well have serious results.

Arthur Augustus had declared that he would have nothing more to do with his minor, until such time as Wally chose to apologise for the jape he had perpetrated in decoying the juniors to the wrong camp. Wally had not yet apologised; he seemed to have no intention of apologising; and Arthur Augustus, true to his resolve, had ignored the young rascal's existence. He had withdrawn his brotherly protection, and left Wally to his own devices.

But he could not ignore the present situation. Wally and his friends might now be in real danger; in which event, the little feud between the brothers would have to be set on one side.

True, Tom Merry had probably gone after the wayward fags, to fetch them back to the camp; but that did not wholly satisfy Arthur Augustus in his troubled state of mind. He felt that he ought to get up himself, and hasten down to the shore.

The swell of St. Jim's turned out, and started to dress, without disturbing his sleeping chums. Then he crept quietly from the tent, and made his way out of camp, in the direction of the sea.

As he hurried along, Arthur Augustus grew more and more perturbed in his mind. Gussy had quite a vivid imagination, and he conjured up all manner of dreadful possibilities.

Supposing the venturesome fags got out of their depth, and were swept out to sea? Supposing they should suddenly strike a submerged rock, whilst swimming in the darkness?

Arthur Augustus broke into a jog-trot; his mind was a prey to the gloomiest forebodings.

Then, rounding a bend in the narrow shore road, he heard the sound of voices, and approaching footsteps.

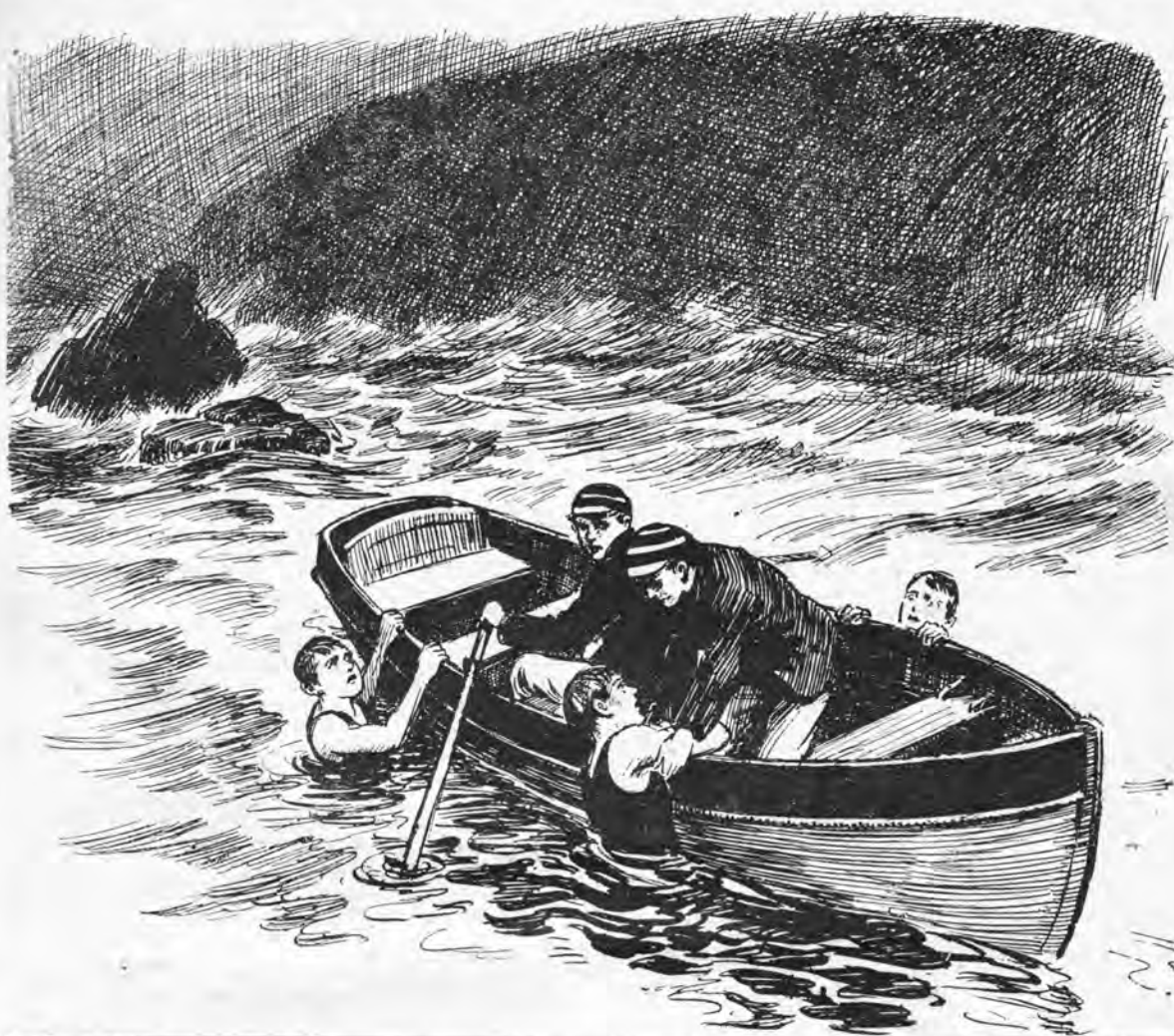
Five shadowy figures came into view.

"Hallo! Who comes?"

It was Monty Lowther's voice, hailing the solitary figure of Arthur Augustus through the gloom.

"It's I—D'Arcy," replied the swell of St. Jim's. "Is my minah with you, Lowthah?"

"Yes. It's all serene, Gussy!"



Tom Merry manœuvred the boat into a convenient position, and Wally D'Arcy clung on to one side, and his companions to the other. Then Tom shipped his oars and helped Monty Lowther to haul the fags into the boat. "You hare-brained young idiots!" exclaimed Lowther. "You might have been drowned!" (See Chapter 9.)

"Thank goodness for that!" said Arthur Augustus, in great relief. "I have been feahfully wowwied about the young wascal."

"Your minor's all right, Gussy, and so are the others," said Tom Merry, reassuringly. "But they gave us a jolly anxious time, I can tell you! We had to go after the young sweeps in a boat. They got caught in a current."

"Bai Jove!"

"We've given them a jolly good licking," said Monty Lowther, "and now we're going to put them to bed. I don't think they'll play any more pranks of this sort, in a hurry."

"Rats!" growled Wally D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus turned about, and fell into step with Tom Merry and Lowther. He frowned over his shoulder at his minor, and he noticed that Wally was walking less jauntily than usual.

"You are an uttably weckless young wascal, Walth!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You have caused the gweatest anxiety an' inconvenience to these fellows, an' to myself."

"I thought you weren't going to worry about me any more?" said Wally. "I thought you were going to let me go my own sweet way?"

"How can I help wowwyin', when you go wunnin' into dangah? It was vewy w'ong of you to bweak out of camp, in the first place. If a mastah or pwefect found you absent from your tent, you would get into a feahful wow."

"We chanced that," said Wally.

Arthur Augustus gave an angry snort.

"I considah you have behaved abominably, Walth! I am glad you have been licked. You thowoughly deserved it!"

"Go on; rub it in!" growled Wally.

All the way back to the camp, the indignant Arthur Augustus harangued his minor. And the more he "jawed" him, the more perverse and obstinate Wally became.

Instead of being chastened and contrite, and promising he would never do it again, Wally was cheekily defiant. And Curly Gibson and Jameson backed him up.

"We don't want any of your grandmotherly sermons, Gus," said Wally. "You said you wouldn't speak to me again while we were in camp; but I knew you wouldn't be able to keep your tongue quiet for long. You're wound up like a blessed gramophone!"

Arthur Augustus bristled with wrath.

"If you hadn't been punished alweady, Walth," he said, "I would box your yabs, you impudent young wascal!"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Wally. "Let's have a rest."

Arthur Augustus subsided, after that. Words were wasted on Wally, in the youngster's present mood; and his major realised that he might as well address a brick wall, for all the notice that was taken of his remarks.

Arthur Augustus was exasperated, and Wally was exasperated; and the breach between the two brothers had widened perceptibly.

The camp was reached at length, and major and minor parted without a word.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther saw the fags to their tent, and waited while they undressed and turned in.

"No more larks to-night, you kids!" said Tom Merry sternly. "Manners and Talbot are relieving us at sentry-duty, and we'll tell them to keep a close watch on this tent."

"You needn't trouble," said Wally D'Arcy. "We don't feel like going on any more adventures to-night."

"Too sore, what?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Rats!"

"You kids had better mind your p's and q's, in future," said Tom Merry. "You've had a lesson to-night, and I hope you'll profit by it."

But Tom Merry's hopes were not likely to be realised. The young scamps of the Third had had their fill of adventure, for one night; but, notwithstanding their narrow escape, they were resolved to embark on further adventures as soon as they felt like it.

Wally D'Arcy seemed to be taking an impish delight in defying his major and Tom Merry. He hated to be put under restraint, and to be chaperoned by older fellows; and the surest way to make Wally indulge in some new prank was to command him not to!

CHAPTER 11.

Lost on the Downs!

"I'M not comin', Wally!"

Joe Frayne's voice was quietly determined.

"Funking it?" asked Wally D'Arcy—though he knew perfectly well that funkling was not in Joe Frayne's line.

"No, I ain't," said Joe. "But it's a silly sort of stunt—just as silly as last night's affair. There's no sense to it, Wally."

"Why, it will be a glorious adventure!" said Wally D'Arcy, with enthusiasm. "We're going to break camp, and climb to the highest point of the downs—King Arthur's Height, it's called."

"You'll never do it," said Joe Frayne, shaking his head. "What d'you mean?"

"It's dark as pitch," said Joe, peering out of the fags' tent, "an' you don't know the way. If you go wanderin' about on the downs at this time of night, you'll stand a good chance of gettin' lost."

"Rot!" snapped Wally. "We're old hands at exploring. There's no question of getting lost. For the last time, young Frayne, are you coming, or are you not?"

"Not!" said Joe firmly.

The leader of the fags shrugged his shoulders.

"Have your own way, then. But you don't know what you'll be missing. A midnight climb will be great fun!"

"Gettin' lost won't be," said Joe Frayne.

"Cheerful sort of beggar, aren't you?" said Wally, with a snort. "P'r'aps it's just as well that you're not coming. You'd be the wet blanket of the party. Are you fellows ready?"

"Yes, rather!" said Curly Gibson and Jameson together.

The three fags had risen, and were dressing in the darkness. Joe Frayne remained in bed. Joe was surprised at Wally's intrepidity in planning another nocturnal expedition, after the painful consequences of the preceding one. But Wally, it seemed, had made up his mind to have a jolly good time during the fortnight in camp, and to hurl defiance at law and order—and elder brothers.

Joe Frayne looked greatly troubled. He knew that Wally D'Arcy could not carry on these sort of capers indefinitely. Sooner or later, the authorities would discover that Wally and his chums were in the habit of breaking camp; and then there would be serious trouble.

But it was no use trying to turn Wally from his purpose. Once he was fairly launched upon one of his wild schemes, Wally never retracted. The risk of being "spotted" by the sentries, in the act of leaving camp, and the further risk of getting lost on the downs in the darkness, merely added spice to the adventure.

"I shall keep awake till you fellows come back," said Joe Frayne.

"You needn't trouble," said Wally, disdainfully.

"You'll never get to King Arthur's Height. They say it's a stifflish climb in the day-time. An' with nothin' to guide you—"

"Wally's got an electric-torch," said Jameson.

"And we'll take some flares with us and light 'em when we get to the top," said Curly Gibson. "You'll be able to see the lights from here. Then you'll know that we've achieved our giddy object."

"I'll look out for the flares," promised Joe Frayne. But his tone suggested that he did not expect to see them—not at the top of the frowning tor known as King Arthur's Height, anyway.

"Come on, kids!" said Wally D'Arcy, cautiously untying the fastenings of the tent.

They stepped out one by one, leaving Joe Frayne to fasten up the tent.

It was a weird sort of night—very dark and very still. The atmosphere was close and stifling; heavy thunder-clouds hung in the lowering sky.

"Listen!" murmured Wally.

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A light footstep could be heard not far away—the footstep of the night sentry. The fags strained their eyes into the darkness, but they could only faintly distinguish the form of the fellow who was on guard. It was impossible to discern who it was. He was patrolling the outskirts of the camp, and gradually his footsteps died away.

"Now's our chance!" muttered Wally.

In the intense darkness breaking out of camp was an easy matter. The sentry had passed on without a suspicion, and the three fags crawled through a gap in the hedge and were soon hurrying across the fields towards the great range of downs which loomed up in the blackness.

It was an aimless sort of excursion. There was nothing to be gained by it, except headaches and weariness the morning after and the satisfaction of proving to Joe Frayne that they had climbed to the top. But it was Wally D'Arcy's idea of enjoyment. And Gibson and Jameson, though they did not altogether share Wally's enthusiasm for the expedition, had no thought of backing out.

When the St. Jim's camp had been left far behind, Wally produced his electric-torch, and they followed its gleam across the grassy fields.

Curly Gibson carried a couple of sticks, at the end of which were tied pieces of rag soaked in paraffin. These were to serve as flares when the little party reached their destination.

Despite the oppressiveness of the night, the three fags walked briskly. Wally D'Arcy, in fact, strode along as if it was a walking match, and his chums had great difficulty in keeping pace with his eager stride.

A tramp of two miles across country brought them to the foot of the downs. Thenceforward, it would be one prolonged and arduous climb.

"Better have a breather before we start the 'Excelsior' stunt!" panted Curly Gibson.

"Not tired already?" queried Wally.

"No; but we don't want to wear ourselves out at the start and make a giddy martyrdom of it. Let's squat down for five minutes."

They threw themselves down on the grass. Jameson looked anxiously at the threatening sky.

"Looks like thunder!" he remarked.

Even as he spoke, the skies were shaken by a reverberating boom. It was followed by another and yet another, and each boom was more terrifying than its predecessor.

The thunder died away like the distant growling of a giant. Then a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the scene.

Curly Gibson winced.

"My hat, that was jolly near!"

"We—we'd better get back!" muttered Jameson uneasily.

"Why?" demanded Wally D'Arcy.

"It will pelt with rain presently, and there's no shelter on the downs."

"Rats! Who's afraid of a spot of rain? And what does a twopenny-halfpenny thunderstorm matter, anyway?"

A terrific crash of thunder broke forth, and the very earth seemed to quake. It was as if old Thor, the god of thunder, resented Wally D'Arcy's remark and meant to show him that it was not a twopenny-halfpenny thunderstorm.

Then came a further series of lightning flashes, lighting up the lofty downs and the wide panorama of level pastureland which lay below.

Curly Gibson and Jameson looked quite scared. They were feeling far from happy. When Nature was in this terrible mood it alarmed them. To Wally D'Arcy, however, a thunderstorm had no more significance than a display of fireworks.

"Let's push on," urged Wally.

"No, no; let's go back," faltered Jameson.

But he and Curly Gibson were overborne by the stronger will of Wally D'Arcy. Wally had already risen to his feet and started to climb, and his chums followed very reluctantly.

The storm seemed to pass over, and the expected deluge of rain did not materialise. The atmosphere remained heavy and oppressive.

For half an hour the three fags toiled up the grassy slope of the downs. They could see King Arthur's Height frowning above them, yet despite all their toiling and climbing it seemed to get no nearer.

Then the storm broke out with renewed violence. The thunder crashed and roared overhead, the lightning darted and flashed in dangerous proximity to the St. Jim's fags.

"This is awful!" muttered Curly Gibson. "I was just thinking to myself that the storm had passed; but it's come back again."

"And it's worse than ever now!" panted Jameson. "We were fools not to go back when it started!"

"Rats!" growled Wally D'Arcy. "We're not going to turn back now that we've come this far, anyway. This firework display will soon be over."



Seven voices combined in a mighty shout. "Ahey!" Faintly through the mist came the answering hail. "Ahey!" "This way, you fellows!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The three fags were discovered at last, huddled together on the grass—a pitiful and woebegone trio. (See Chapter 12.)

And it was. But in its wake came something even worse than thunder and lightning, so far as it affected the three fags.

A thick and drenching mist began to settle over the downs, covering them as with a garment. Deeper and heavier it grew till it became almost impenetrable. And just as luck would have it, the battery of Wally's electric-torch ran out.

The three fags found themselves in dense darkness. Close together though they were, they could scarcely see one another and were obliged to join hands, lest one of the trio should become detached from the rest.

Even Wally D'Arcy realised the futility of going on. In the opaque darkness, and without a light to guide them, it would be impossible to reach King Arthur's Height.

"This is a pretty go!" said Wally grimly. "No use climbing any farther. We must get back to the camp."

"How on earth shall we find our way in this awful mist?" said Jameson.

"It might lift presently."

"Well, it certainly can't get worse!" grumbled Curly Gibson.

The three fags turned and started to retrace their steps.

Progress was painfully slow. They were walking in Stygian darkness, and there were many pitfalls such as rabbit-holes and clumps of gorse and large loose stones. Several times they stumbled, and when Wally D'Arcy tripped up and fell he brought his companions to earth with him.

The fags were tired and leg-weary by this time. Even Wally was fagged, though he would not admit it.

They could not tell where they were going—whether they were heading in the right direction or getting hopelessly off the track. The drenching mist soaked through their garments, and they were as melancholy a trio as could well be imagined.

The unwisdom of setting forth on such a foolhardy expedition was clear to them now. They envied the sensible Joe Frayne snug in his bed in the St. Jim's camp.

The mist showed no sign of lifting, and the three fags were hopelessly lost. They struggled on, hoping to find some familiar landmark which would serve as a clue to their whereabouts; but the farther they progressed, the more hopeless became their plight.

They had walked, it seemed, an interminable distance, yet they could not get clear of the downs.

In despairing silence they stumbled on. At length there was a sobbing gasp from Curly Gibson.

"I—I'm whacked, you fellows! I can't go on!"

Wally D'Arcy was about to reply and to try to hearten his chum when he caught his foot in a hole and fell awkwardly, wrenching his ankle.

"That's done it!" groaned Wally. "I've twisted my beastly ankle!"

The trio halted. They were at the end of their tether; they could go no farther.

There was nothing for it but to remain where they were and rest until the mist cleared, or until help came.

The latter possibility was indeed remote. Who was likely to be abroad on the downs at that time of night under such awful conditions?

It seemed madness to rest on the wet grass, but the exhausted fags had no alternative. A shepherd's hut or any sort of shelter would have been a tremendous boon. But it was impossible to locate any such building.

Wally D'Arcy & Co. flung themselves on to the grass in the abandonment of despair. They were wet and they were utterly weary, and they were in as dismal and cheerless a plight as they had ever encountered. Bitterly they regretted having embarked on the expedition; but it was now too late for regrets.

They nursed a faint hope that the mist would lift, so that they could see their surroundings. But the black pall which overhung the downs seemed to grow blacker than ever.

Curly Gibson still had the sticks in his possession which were to have served as flares. But they were quite useless now, for the solitary box of matches which the fags possessed had been soaked right through.

Wally D'Arcy sprawled on the grass, staring hopelessly into the darkness. Beside him Curly Gibson and Jameson were sobbing quietly.

The hopes of the trio were at zero now, and they scarcely dared to speculate what the end of their grim adventure might be.

CHAPTER 12.

A Rescue—and a Reunion!

"B AI Jove! What a night!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, on sentry-duty at the St. Jim's camp, sought refuge from the storm beneath the awning of the dining-marquee.

Peal upon peal of thunder broke forth, and vivid flashes of lightning played around the slumbering encampment.

Arthur Augustus stood at the entrance of the marquee, watching the storm. It was a magnificent and awesome spectacle.

"It's a good job nobody is out of camp," murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "It would be no joke, bein' caught in this awful storm!"

For upwards of an hour Arthur Augustus had patrolled the camp; and he was satisfied that nobody had left it. It did not occur to him that to dodge the sentry and slip out of camp on such a dark night was a very easy matter.

The storm increased in violence; and when it was at its height, Arthur Augustus fancied he heard somebody calling.

"Sentry! I say, sentry! Where are you?"

Arthur Augustus stepped out from the marquee.

"Who is callin'?" he demanded.

"It's me—Frayne!" came the reply, through the darkness.

"Where are you, Master D'Arcy?"

Joe Frayne had never been able to get out of the habit of addressing Arthur Augustus as "Master." The little fag had a great liking and respect for the swell of St. Jim's.

"I am heah, deah boy!" called Arthur Augustus. And, guided by the sound of the voice, Joe Frayne was at his side in a moment.

"What are you doin' out of your tent, kid? I twust nothin' is w'ong?"

"Somethin' is very much w'ong, Master D'Arcy. Your minor an' Gibson an' Jameson are out in this awful storm!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus was considerably startled, as well he might be.

"They slipped out of camp some time ago, an' they're up on the Downs," said Joe Frayne breathlessly. "They're tryin' to get to King Arthur's Height. I begged them not to go, but Wally wouldn't be put off. I've not had a wink of sleep; I've been fearfully worried about them. I thought they'd hurry back to camp when this storm started; but they haven't turned up yet. Knowin' you were on sentry duty, I thought I'd better tell you."

"You should have told me before!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I am amazed that the young wascals should have broken camp; I thought last night's expewiences would be a lesson to them. If they are out on the Downs in this awful storm, somethin' d'eadful may happen to them! I must wake Tom Mewwy an' the othahs, an' we must go afiah them at once!"

"May I come along, Master D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"You had better go back to bed, Fwayne," he said.

The fag retired, rather reluctantly, and Arthur Augustus hurried to Tom Merry's tent, and awakened the Terrible Three, telling them what was amiss. He also aroused Jack Blake and Herries and Digby.

The juniors looked very grave when they heard of Wally D'Arcy & Co.'s latest exploit. They rose and dressed with alacrity, and joined Arthur Augustus.

The thunderstorm had abated by this time, but it could be seen that the Downs were enveloped in a heavy mist.

"Those silly young asses will be getting lost!" said Tom Merry. "It will be impossible to see a hand's turn, up on the Downs."

"Better fetch some lanterns from the store-tent," suggested Jack Blake.

A few moments later the party of seven hurriedly left the camp. Three of them carried lighted lanterns.

Searching for three fags on the misty Downs would be rather like hunting for a needle in a haystack. Even with the lanterns it was not possible to see very far or very clearly. But the search-party hoped for the best.

Tom Merry led the way, and Arthur Augustus walked immediately behind him.

The swell of St. Jim's was greatly agitated in his mind. As on the previous night, he conjured up all manner of direful possibilities.

When the juniors reached the foot of the Downs, and started to climb, they were astonished at the density of the mist. They scrambled up the slope, keeping close together, and guided by the lanterns.

From time to time, as they ascended, they sent up a loud "Ahoy!" But no response came to them through the mist.

"They must have come a fearful way," said Tom Merry, "or they would have heard us by now."

"And there's no sort of shelter on these Downs," said Manners. "Let's hope that nothing serious has happened to the crazy young idiots."

Arthur Augustus said nothing, but his heart was heavy as he toiled up the slope with his companions.

The swell of St. Jim's was mentally reproaching himself for his recent treatment of Wally. He began to wonder whether he had not been too severe with his minor, and taken the affair of the jape too seriously.

Certainly such a jape as decoying Arthur Augustus and his chums to the wrong camp had been a little too thick. But, after all, the japers had been adequately punished, and the matter ought to have ended there.

The more he thought about it the more forcibly it struck Arthur Augustus that he had made far too much fuss about the whole thing. He had demanded an apology from Wally, and Wally had declined to apologise; and Arthur Augustus had worked himself up into quite a temper about it. He had washed his hands of Wally, and had ignored his minor's existence for days together.

Arthur Augustus could see clearly enough now that in riding the high horse and taking up such a lofty attitude he had merely exasperated Wally, and fostered the youngster's sense of recklessness. It was, in fact, largely due to his major's attitude that Wally had set out on this foolhardy expedition. If Gussy had forgiven and forgotten the incident of the jape, this would never have happened. And the swell of St. Jim's felt himself to blame, in no small measure, for Wally's recent exploits.

"I twust, deah boys," panted Arthur Augustus, as they struggled up the slope, "that you will not be too watty with my minah an' his pals when we find them."

"They deserve to be scragged for this!" growled Jack Blake.

"Ahem! I—I feel that I am in some degwee to blame," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, I have been wathah down on my minah duwin' the last few days, an' he is showin' his wesentment by indulgin' in these weckless pwanks."

"Something in that," said Tom Merry. "I've been thinking all along, Gussy, that it's not like you to let that affair of the jape rankle. The kids were punished, and if you had let it go at that I don't suppose these midnight excursions would ever have been planned. But you annoyed young Wally by doing the heavy-father stunt; and it's had the effect of making him kick over the traces."

"I think we ought to let them off this time, anyway," said Monty Lowther. "If they've been out in this awful mist all this time—as they must have been—they've suffered enough. We'll be decent to the little beggars when we find them."

"When!" said Manners. "Strikes me we shall have to tramp these Downs till dawn before we do find them!"

"Let's give another hail," said Tom Merry.

Seven voices combined in a mighty shout:

"Ahoy!"

"D'Arcy! Wally D'Arcy! St. Jim's here!"

The juniors paused, and listened. Faintly through the mist came an answering hail:

"Ahoy!"

Arthur Augustus pressed forward eagerly, swinging his lantern.

"That's my minah!" he exclaimed excitedly. "This way, you fellows!"

The three adventurous fags were discovered at last! The lantern-light showed them to be huddled together on the grass in the weeping mist—a pitiful and woebegone trio.

Wally D'Arcy and his companions fairly sobbed with joy and relief on catching sight of the St. Jim's search-party. The juniors rescued them from their terrible plight not a moment too soon. Had they remained indefinitely on the wet grass, exposed to the damp air, they would indubitably have caught pneumonia. As it was, they would probably feel the effects of their exposure for several days to come.

(Continued on page 28.)

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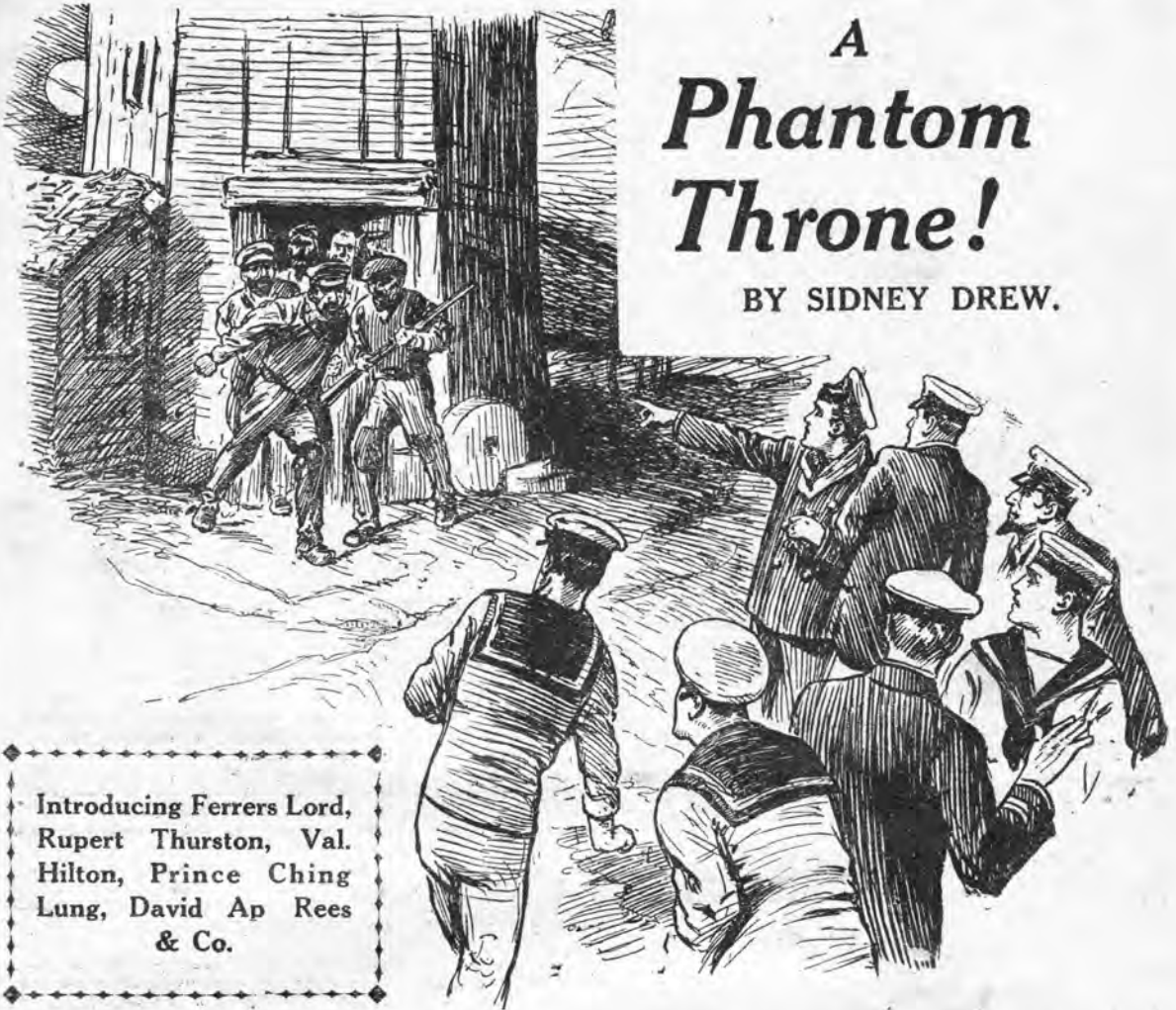
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Introducing Ferrers Lord,
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& Co.

Val Lands The Cargo!

ALTHOUGH, like the others, Val Hilton had taken Prince Ching Lung's advice and made a run for it, he had suddenly remembered that he was in command, not Ching Lung, and that as such it was his duty to lead an attack and cover a retreat. Val had slowed down a little and did not reach the launch before the fog had rendered it invisible.

He had tried to swerve out of the kneeling marksman's line of fire, and he seemed to have succeeded for he had not been hit. Some of his friends, however, must have been badly peppered, he reflected. But they were bearing the pain gallantly, for he did not hear a single cry. Behind him, and very close to him, he could hear the shuffling of feet in the coarse sea grass and the heavy breathing of the men who had been running hard, and also a lapping and sucking of water which told him that the lazy tide was just beginning to flow.

"If that cartridge wasn't a blank," he said, "that chap must have jerked up his gun just as he touched it off and let it go at the sky, or else I would have stopped a few pellets."

From the invisible launch came no sound, for the occupants had more sense than to invite another charge of buckshot. At any second the mist might break away and betray them. Val lay flat and began to scoop up the sand with his hands to form a rampart.

His instructions were clear and definite. In spite of the fog they had found Klarspargen, and the goods they had brought had to be landed on it before dawn. It had been difficult enough to locate the wretched island, but to find it occupied by a gang of desperadoes prepared to guard it with gun, bludgeon, and knife was a bitter blow. Even Ferrers Lord could not have anticipated such a state of affairs.

"The beggars have gone," muttered Val at last.

If they had not gone, then they were keeping very quiet. The breeze was still blowing, and unless it had veered he knew it was blowing straight across the island from east to west. He got up, faced the breeze, and walked forward. His ears told him that the tide was running strongly, and unless they had anchored he knew also that the launch must have drifted a considerable distance and that they must have discovered by now that he was not on board.

Val had a new idea. His uncle, Ferrers Lord, planned so carefully that his plans very rarely failed unless something utterly unexpected cropped up. The fog was unexpected, but that difficulty had been overcome.

"It's just a fluke," thought Val. "We're up against nothing but a fluke, and if I hadn't mud inside my head instead of brains I'd have seen it at once. If those beggars knew all about it and had been waiting for us to come, they'd have had better weapons than sticks and knives and a rusty old gun. It strikes me that we've all got the wind up, both sides."

There was a big risk of being captured, but he kept on against the breeze and then stopped to listen. The sound of guttural voices reached him, and he dropped flat and pulled a bunch of grass in front of his face as the mist thinned. He was dangerously near the mill—within twenty yards of it, and he could see light streaming from the open door.

Something that looked like a horrible misshapen monster emerged, and Val grinned. It was a man, and it was the load on his back that made him resemble a gorilla. Bending under his load he vanished into the fog, followed by a procession of similar monsters. Only one of them came back, having got rid of his burden. He went into the mill, but only remained a few seconds. A few minutes

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after he had gone, Val heard the noise of an engine and the breeze brought a smell of hot oil with it.

"Just a bunch of smugglers who thought we were on their track," thought Val. "They've got their goods away and I wish them luck, but why didn't that last guy put out the light?"

The last man to leave the mill had closed the door, but it was a badly-fitting door and light showed through the chinks. Val crept forward and peeped in. The light came from a hurricane lamp hanging from a cove above a wooden table. Close to the edge of the table, its point dug deeply into the wood, was a big clasp-knife, its edge outwards.

With his eye to the crevice in the door, Val saw a curious sight. A man who was squatting in the corner of the room was trying to rise to his feet. He did it slowly and jerkily, his back against the wall. He had grey hair and a grey beard. Having gained his feet he began to hop towards the table, and then Val saw that his wrists were corded. As he took the haft of the knife between his teeth and tried to bring the cord against its edge, Val opened the door.

"Good evening, friend," he said. "Let me do that for you!"

The man seemed neither surprised nor startled. "Thank you, Mr. Midshipman," he answered, holding out his wrists. "It will enable me to salute you!"

Val cut the cords, and after giving a salute, the man of the mill freed his ankles and rubbed them briskly.

"It was unfortunate," he said. "Those smuggling dogs came yesterday before dawn and pounced on me when I was asleep. They landed their cargo, and from what I heard they intended to fetch another one, and hide it here to-night, but the fog put an end to the scheme. I expected you, and would have put off to warn you, but of course I was a prisoner."

"So they were only smugglers?" asked Val.

"Nothing else."

"And your name?" asked Val, examining the open clasp-knife.

"If your honour will open a certain letter he will find my name there," said the man of the mill.

It sounded straightforward enough, but Val scented a trap. His instructions were not to open the second sealed envelope until he had landed the goods. He slashed upwards with the knife, severed the cord and caught the hurricane lamp in his left hand as it fell.

"Turn round," he said, "put your hands behind you and take this lamp in both of them. Got it? Now, back round the table and face the door. Outside now, friend, and turn to the left. Take it very gently and make for that mooring-post, which of course you know. Any tricks and I may have to sling this knife at you, and I've got a trick of throwing a knife so that it always arrives point first. Take it easy, friend."

"I am your honour's servant," said the grey-haired man, "and though you distrust me, I do not complain."

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR!

FERRERS LORD, millionaire and world traveller, enters the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary aboard his yacht, the Lord of the Deep. In the privacy of Ferrers Lord's cabin these Ministers of H.M. Government discuss informally with the millionaire and Rupert Thurston the activities of the Royalist party in Germany. Lord declares that the plot to restore the Kaiser to the throne is likely to be put into operation at any moment, and adds that should Germany be plunged into civil war, the whole of Europe would be involved, in consequences too horrible to contemplate. So strong is the proof the millionaire submits to support his statement that the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary are convinced that swift action must be taken to avert this calamity. Ferrers Lord then suggests a way out of the trouble, and, although it is fraught with much risk to those who throw in their lot with him, the millionaire answers for the loyalty and patriotism of all aboard the Lord of the Deep, and offers to take that risk.

After the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have departed from the yacht, Midshipman Val Hilton, Ferrers Lord's nephew, is ordered to proceed to an island named Klarspargen and land certain goods in the vicinity of an old mill. Under the command of Val are his friends, Prince Ching Lung, David Ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock, the bo'sun, Barry O'Rooney, and a number of ordinary seamen. They make the island in a thick fog, and have barely sighted the mill when they are surprised by the sudden appearance of a dozen or more men, who come charging down upon them. A retreat is made to the launch, rendered the more effective by reason of a thick blanket of fog that separates the two parties.

(Now read on.)

There was still plenty of mist, and Val kept close behind the hurricane lamp as it bobbed along in front of him. Suddenly came sounds of anger and strife.

He could hear the voices of Barry O'Rooney and the bo'sun, and the less gruff, but equally angry voice of Master David Ap Rees, and an uproar of guttural shouts. It was easy enough to guess that the smuggling craft and the launch had fouled each other in the fog, and that both crews were exchanging rude remarks if not blows.

"Your honour, I am scorching my fingers," said the man. "Then put the lamp on top of your head and keep it there with both hands," said Val.

"Bedad, an' if Oi could get hould of you, you Dutch spalpeens, Oi'd bash your ugly faces as flat as if a shame-roller had run over 'em," roared Barry O'Rooney. "Come back and Oi'll skin the whole throb of you!"

"No, no, don't be greedy!" bellowed Maddock. "You can skin half of 'em, but leave the other half to me, my lad!"

"Bat-eyed idiots!" added the voice of Dave. "Bunch of clumsy Huns!"

Evidently the two boats had drifted apart, greatly to the grief of O'Rooney and the bo'sun. While the grey-haired man stood like a human lighthouse beside the stump where the Irishman had fallen, Val Hilton pulled out a silver whistle and blew three short blasts.

"Chi-ike!" cried Dave, who was the first to sight the dim beacon. "That's Val's pipe, boys, and I see a glim!"

The launch could have suffered little damage in the collision, for her engine started at once, and Dave jumped ashore with the hawser.

"Oh, here you are then," he said. "I like your idea of a street lamp! Have you captured the island, then, old thing?"

"The enemy has evacuated, and I'm in possession. They were only a gang of smugglers."

"That was what the prince said when the johnny with the gun let fly streets above our heads," said Dave. "If he'd meant to hit, he could have punched us all full of holes. Who's your pal?"

Before Val could explain, Maddock and Prince Ching Lung were ashore, and the bo'sun took the lamp which the prisoner still held patiently on his head and held it to the man's face.

"Souse me if it ain't Jimmy Wigland!" he growled. "Say, Barry, whom do you think we've struck on this chunk of sand? Here's old Jimmy Wigland, the lingo merchant. It's Jimmy, safe as houses, though he's sprouted whiskers!"

To both the boys and also to Ching Lung Wigland was a complete stranger, but O'Rooney and Maddock knew him well and shook hands with him.

"He's come with us once or twice when we've needed an interpreter, sir," explained Maddock. "He can patter nearly every language under the sun, souse me, so we call him the lingo merchant! He's O.K. is Jimmy!"

"Then I'd better apologise," said Val. "I'm sorry I wasn't as polite to you as I might have been, Wigland!"

"No offence, sir," said the interpreter. "You did the proper thing!"

"Then you'd better show us where to put the goods. There's some more to come off if we can get it off; but this is the most important lot that must be got ashore. Will you see to it, prince?"

"Yours to command, sir!" said Ching Lung.

Bales and boxes were passed ashore, and then for the first time, like a grey spectre of a ship, the Lord of the Deep loomed through the fog. Val and Dave could see her; but it was doubtful if she could see them, so Val scrambled back into the launch and lighted a flare. And presently a rowing-boat put off from the launch, with Joe, the yacht's carpenter, in command.

"Mr. Prout's respects, sir," said Joe. "He doesn't think it will be safe to stay more than another half-hour."

"Out with the dunnage, then, Mr. Maddock will show you where to stow it. It's heavy stuff, isn't it?"

"Pretty heavy, sir, but packed easy to handle, sir," answered the tall, bony carpenter. "Look lively there!"

Joe had brought half a dozen burly sailors with him. When the last package had been transferred from the boat to the sand Val heaved a sigh of relief.

"That's done, Kid," he said to Dave. "I didn't think we were going to pull it off. Got a flash-lamp handy?"

Val took the sealed letter out of his pocket-book and tore open the envelope. There was a sealed envelope inside marked "Mr. Prout."

The millionaire's instructions to his nephew, Midshipman Hilton, were brief and to the point.

"You will remain on Klarspargen with Mr. Ap Rees, O'Rooney and Maddock, and assemble the plane. The prince will stay with you at his discretion. Hand the enclosed note to Mr. Prout. F. L."

"Anything exciting, old son, or is it some grim and grisly secret?" asked Dave. "Have a look for yourself," said Val. "We're going to be marooned on a desert island by the look of things! Fancy being shut up here with you, O'Rooney and Maddock! It's almost too awful to contemplate! If the prince sells me a pup after about twenty-four hours of it, I shall go raving mad and commit suicide!"

"Who's talking about me behind my back?" asked Ching Lung's pleasant voice.

"I've just opened the chief's note," said Val. "I'm compelled to stay here with this awful kid and Maddock and O'Rooney and, I suppose, the interpreter chap. The chief as good as says that if I asked you nicely you might stay as well."

"And do stay, for the love of Mike, or I shall be bored stiff!" added Dave.

The prince lighted a cigarette.

"What you want is a nursemaid," he said. "A nursemaid, a bucket and spade each, and with all this nice wet water to paddle in and lots of nice sand to build castles with, you'd be quite happy for a long time! No, it's not exciting enough for me at my time of life! May I look at that letter, for it can't be strictly private, as you've passed it on to Dave?"

While Dave held the flash-lamp, Ching Lung glanced quickly at the millionaire's note. Everything had been carried up to the mill, and the men had come back.

"Give this letter to Mr. Prout," said Val to the carpenter, as a couple of grunts from the yacht's siren warned them that her steersman was growing either uneasy or impatient. "To remain, Mr. An Rees, Mr. Maddock and Mr. O'Rooney. The rest away!"

The launch with the rowing-boat in tow made for the yacht. Ching Lung, who had remained, was sitting on the stump.

"Bedad, phwat's the name of it?" asked Barry O'Rooney dismally. "This ould dust-heap, Oi mane?"

"Klarspfargen, souse me!" replied the bo'sun.

"Claspfarden, said Barry. "Troth, I wouldn't give a farden for it, lock, stock, and barrel! Is ut for this Oi left Ballybunion, swate home of me happy childhood, to be a sand-hopper or a sand-piper? That's the saddest sound that ever struck my ear to hear ould Tommy Prout dragging up his mud-hook. There she goes slithering away into the fog loike a beautiful drame, all that's liveliest and best. Loike a swate drame she faded from the land, and all that's left to us is tears and sand!"

"Oh, muzzle the frabjous idiot!" said Dave. "When he gets on the poetry stunt it gives me pins and needles!"

"It gives me belaying pins and knitting-needles!" grunted the bo'sun wearily.

For the next quarter of an hour not a single word was spoken, for all knew that the yacht was in perilous waters, and the lingering fog made Prout's task more difficult and dangerous. Then faintly, but distinctly, came the sound of a pistol-shot.

"Good!" said Ching Lung. "That means she's in deep water. Prout nosed out of that finely!"

A Relic of the Great War.

THEY made themselves as comfortable as they could amongst the packages and bundles, and Val awoke rather stiff and cramped to find a glorious sunny morning with a breeze blowing from the East. The only other person stirring was James Wigland, and as the yawning middy rose Wigland gave him the salute.

"You'll find a basin, soap, and towel outside, sir," said Wigland. "If it hadn't been for the smugglers you wouldn't have had to put up with so much inconvenience; but we'll soon alter that, sir."

"I don't see how, for we can't chuck all this dunnage into the open," said Val. "Have we to wash in salt-water?"

"Just at the moment, sir, for we have only a couple of kegs of fresh; but it will be altered."

Val could not quite see how it was to be altered. The tide was down, and there seemed to be scores and scores of little sandy islands similar to Klarspfargen intersected by narrow winding channels. How the yacht with her deep



Straightening himself, Dave gripped the edge of the hole and then put his head through. The next instant he had a glimpse of a masked face above him, as a strong hand reached out and gripped him by the collar and the muzzle of a revolver was thrust into his face. (See page 27.)

draught, had got in without running hard and fast aground appeared in daylight to be something like a miracle. She had not only wriggled in, but she had wriggled out safely.

"Gosh!" muttered Val, as he pulled off his shirt. "If I could have seen this last night my hair would have been on end all the time! We might easily have stuck about a million pounds' worth of yacht on top of one of those sand-heaps and never got her off again. It says something for Prout's nerve, for he knew exactly what we were up against. And though I guessed it was pretty tricky, I didn't guess the real thing within miles!"

Wigland, very respectful and polite, came out to give Val a rub down with a towel.

"I was a spy during the War, sir," he said, "and I know these sand-banks pretty well. At one time I think I was helpful, for the Germans had designed and were building hundreds of small submarines that could not be followed into the shallows. Fortunately, I discovered the plan and what was going on here. The scheme failed and Mr. Ferrers Lord was chiefly responsible for its failure. Much work had been done by the Germans, but when Mr. Ferrers Lord made his unexpected raid, the works were destroyed. Perhaps not quite all, sir," he added, "but I'm sure there's not a German alive to-day who is not sure that everything was blown sky-high that night."

"That sounds interesting," said Val, "but I can't see how this could be a useful submarine base. In daylight at low tide they'd be as easy to see as goldfish in a bowl, and a squadron of bombing aeroplanes could have wiped them out!"

"Exactly, sir," said Wigland, "but their bitterest foe must admit that the Germans are a clever race. What you

way is perfectly true, but the war might have taken a different turn if the plan had not been discovered. For that I take no credit, as the chief suspected it and sent me here to make sure. And I know for a fact that after his raid, the Germans scrapped hundreds of these small submarines."

The others were stirring, and Mr. Barry O'Rooney was grumbling about having contracted a stiff neck.

"It's a pity you haven't broken it, you old grouser," said Dave. "I thought Irish people were supposed to be a jolly sort, but you're always on the mump. Last night it was your ribs and now it's your neck! Can't you raise a smile then?"

"Not since Oi came to say, sir," said Barry O'Rooney. "Wance Oi was a laughing bhoys, bubbling o'er wid mirth and joy, but since Oi saw the face of Ben, Oi'll niver, niver smile agen! Ochoone! Phwat a loife!"

"You get a wash, souse me, and then cook something for breakfast," growled the bo'sun.

"That's right, bo'sun," said Val. "Breakfast is the stunt! Prince, your bath is hot and ready, scented soap and bath-salts complete! You go next, Dave, indeed, whatever, look you, and don't leave any wet footmarks on the Axminster carpet!"

Val went out with the prince.

"What has that chap Wigland got up his sleeve, prince?" he asked. "He tried to trap me last night into opening the chief's letter before the goods were ashore and that's why I turned him into a lamp-post. He's been telling me that the Germans tried to make a submarine base here during the War, and the chief raided it and messed up the whole gadget. He seems to be hinting at a big surprise!"

"That's just the way to take all the surprise out of it, son," said the prince, getting busy. "I don't think very much of your bath, for you'd get nearly as good a lather in sea-water with half a brick as with soap. As I was about to remark, as this guy Wigland seems to be a well-meaning sort, pretend to be surprised even if you're not if it pleases him. Has Dave been asking questions?"

"No, he's got over that! I can guess that Wigland's surprise is some sort of a hole, for with a chance of more visits from smugglers, the mill, isn't a safe hiding-place for our clutter, and even in this abandoned spot we couldn't knock the plane together in the open without the risk of being seen. But I wish these traps weren't laid for me!"

"About opening that letter before the proper time, eh? My dear chap, little things like that are only done to make you careful. A trap is the most harmless thing in the world if you don't fall into it. Next man, please!"

Dave took his turn at the basin, and when breakfast was over, Wigland produced a couple of rusty shovels, and at the sight of them Barry O'Rooney shuddered.

"Don't bring war of those things near me," he said.

"O'm on the sick list wid a stiff neck and nointeen broken ribs. If there's any digging to be done, Ben's the bhoys for ut. For digging, Ben has a natural gift which runs in the family, so to spake, all the Maddocks having been navvies for generations."

"Which is a thundering untruth, souse me," said the bo'sun, "but even if they had been, navvying is an honest job though inclined to raise blisters, and a sight better than the oakum-pickers like the O'Rooney crowd! I only heard of one O'Rooney who earned an honest living, and he went about with a wild beast show as a human gorilla!"

"I think that's one to you, Maddock," grinned Dave. "But what are we going to dig for, sand-eels or buried treasure?"

They followed Wigland, and standing on a dune almost in the centre of the island, the ex-war spy searched the nearer islands and channels through a pair of field-glasses. To the north, the brown sails of a few fishing-boats could be seen, and to the west, the smoke of a steamer.

Wigland threw off his coat and began to dig, and seizing the second shovel, Barry O'Rooney quickly proved that even with nineteen broken ribs and a stiff neck a willing man can do plenty of hard work. In less than five minutes, the diggers had uncovered a steel door.

"What's this, Aladdin's cave?" said David. "I'll have all the jewels and money, and you other guys can wangle who'll have the magic lamp!"

The circular door was hinged, and Wigland raised it without much effort and went backwards down an iron ladder. He pressed a switch, and Val, who followed him, was momentarily dazzled by the glare of electric light.

"This is the one place the chief did not destroy, sir," said Wigland. "It was the only one actually completed and ready for use. There was a submarine here, but in the alarm she tried to get away. She did not get very far," he added grimly.

The rectangular underground chamber had walls and roof of massive concrete slabs strengthened by steel girders. A broad channel with seven or eight feet of water in it ran its entire length, and the channel was less than half full. On either side were arches leading into two other chambers, one intended for the officers of the submarine and the other for the crew.

"This is a fraud," said Dave. "Where's the money and where are the jewels?"

"How does the opening gadget work, Wigland?" asked Val. "Hasn't the machinery rusted out?"

"No, sir, Mr. Harold Honour has been here more than once and attended to that."

As Wigland pressed an electric button, the end wall, that seemed to be as immovable as solid rock, began to sink, showing a patch of blue sky, and the sun shone in paling the artificial light. It sank lower and lower till its broad edge sank beneath the channel, and then, like a picture in a square frame, they saw the tide ebbing past another sandy island beyond, and beyond that, blue water that hazed away to the distant coast.

"A regular bag of tricks," said Dave. "Very pretty! But what's it all about?"

"A German submarine garage," said Val. "But how about getting the stores down? It will mean unpacking most of them, for a lot of them are too bulky to go through that hole. We ought to have kept a boat!"

"There is a boat, sir, but it would be better to leave that till night," said Wigland.

Dave had gone exploring. The room on the left contained a table, several wooden chairs and a plate-rack full of crockery. There was also a big electric radiator and three hammocks and a locker filled with blankets. Both hammocks and blankets had a musty flavour like the whole atmosphere of the place, but the fresh breeze blowing through and rushing up the manhole was rapidly clearing away the stale odours.

"Say, Val," he shouted, "if we're going to hang out in this cellar, what about drying it a bit? Ask Wigland if we can spare the juice to work this radiator. It's as damp as a wet sponge and we don't want to catch chin-cough!"

"Damp, is it?" said Barry O'Rooney, who had been examining the other chamber. "Who, wet weather is dry to ut! You want to wear a diving-suit all the time to kape dry in a place loike this! Bedad, it would dhrour a fish!"

Some hard work followed. Dave was put on guard, for if a boat had happened to come down the channel and her occupants had seen the square hole in the sandbank, it might have caused complications. The bales and packages that would pass through the man-hole were carried down from the mill. The dry east wind blew strongly, and this, with the heat of the radiator, rid the place of a great deal of the damp.

"Well, how goes it, Val?" asked Ching Lung. "Why this air of gloom in one so young? You might have all the troubles of the world weighing down your youthful head, and then some. Smile—for the love of Mike, smile!"

"It's that beastly plane!" said Val. "I've been measuring up. If we could plank over the channel we could put her together down below; but I'm thinking of getting her out. There's only about nine inches to spare on each side, and one slip would put paid to it!"

"Have you consulted that famous engineer, Mr. Barry O'Rooney?"

"Oh, Barry O'Rooney is good enough, and I'll consult

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THE FIVE PRIZES OF £1 EACH have been divided among the following seven competitors, whose solutions came next in order of merit:

A. W. Diver, 55, Rutland Road, S. Hackney, London, E. 9.
Miss M. Higgs, The House, Globe Works, Chatsworth Road, Clapton Park, London, E. 5.

S. C. Riordan, Flat 7, 9, Powis Square, Bayswater, W. 11.

S. A. E. Stent, 96, Brockley Rise, London, S. E. 23.

E. Thompson, 205, Smithdown Lane, Edge Hill, Liverpool.

G. Wallis, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol.

K. Welch, 19, Glenfield Road, Wavertree, Liverpool.

The correct solution was as follows:

The crooks' headquarters is a gloomy-looking building, and is near a lonely lane called Winding Way. The windows are all barred by wooden shutters, which give the place an air of mystery, and the gang enter through a secret gate screened by shrubs. It cannot be opened without causing a statuette in the Monk's apartment to blow out a puff of smoke.

A PHANTOM THRONE!

(Continued from previous page.)

him when necessary," said Val; "but I wish I could do it on top!"

"Then why not do it on top?"

"Because the planks are down there ready for the job," said Val. "I'm not idiot enough to think that the Huns put them there to be chopped up for firewood. It would be jolly for me if I got the plane ready, and orders came to take her out and I fozzled it, wouldn't it?"

"You'd probably get smacked hard and sent to bed, son," said the prince. "Have you measured up the stuff that's left?"

"Maddock has. Wigland's boat won't carry heavy stuff, so it's my idea to knock those planks into a stout raft nearly the width of the tunnel, and tow the stuff in just about full tide. We ought to clear the lot in about two journeys that way, while it would mean a dozen with the dinghy."

"Good!" said Ching Lung. "You are a brainy youth! I'll descend into the darksome dungeon and lend a hand!"

Presently, David Ap Rees, who had made himself a comfortable seat on a sandy hillock, heard a faint noise of hammering. Dave yawned and looked round him, and then up at the blue sky. The channels were beginning to fill, but nothing stirred on the sea. He slipped the field-glasses back into their leather case and gave another yawn.

"There's plenty of fresh air connected with this job," he thought, as the breeze swept the coarse sea-grass into green waves, "but there's nothing exciting about it. The work is so fierce that if I don't have a biscuit and a drink to keep body and soul together I shall die of exhaustion!"

The Masked Spy!

DAVE went into the mill, and found it a hungry place, for the tin of biscuits, like the other provisions they had brought with them, had been removed. The keg of water had been left, and Dave refreshed himself out of a cracked teacup. An ancient ladder, with several rungs missing, led up to a loft. There was a sliding door there, and Dave remembered that there was a window, and he would like to have a view from it.

The door stuck a little, but he managed to push it back. There were two windows—mere slits in the wall—and the floor was of stone slabs and very strong. Rusty cog-wheels and scraps of machinery lay about, and the old shaft to which the sails had been connected was still in position. Over the shaft, through a ragged hole, he could see the sky.

Dave gave a jump, caught the shaft, swung himself, caught his left leg over it, and pulled himself up. Edging himself along the shaft to the wall, he stood up, and then walked gingerly along it. There was not much head-room, and he had to stoop till he was under the hole in the broken roof. Straightening himself, he gripped the edges of the hole, and then put his head and shoulders through.

The next instant a strong hand gripped his collar and the muzzle of a revolver was thrust into his face. He felt his feet slip from the bar, and for a second he dangled there, too choked and startled to shout, with the vision of a masked face above him. As he struck at the face with his fist, the revolver fell with a ringing clatter, and a second arm came through.

Dave obtained a grip, and got his arm round his assailant's neck and locked it there with all his strength, straining back to keep clear of the man's other hand, that was clawing madly to reach his face. And so they hung, the gap slowly darkening as Dave's weight dragged the gasping, grunting man down.

Then they fell across the shaft, the man uppermost; then spun over and crashed to the floor. Dave was uppermost now, but not for long, for the man hugged him like a grizzly bear, and swung Dave over on his back. With a wrench the masked man freed himself, and, kneeling heavily on the youngster's chest, he reached for the revolver and stood up, a brawny, towering figure. He had fair hair, and Dave could see beads of perspiration trickling from under the mask and running into the golden stubble on his unshaven chin.

"Stay quiet!" he said, breathing hoarsely. "If you make one sound I will the brain hammer out of you mit this!"

He shook a rusty iron bar at Dave, and then shut the sliding door, after standing over it a second or two to listen.

His warning to be quiet was quite unnecessary just then, for Dave was too limp and winded to speak much above a whisper. The man was dressed in a rough blue jersey and slacks, like an ordinary fisherman or sailor; but fishermen and sailors do not go armed and masked, and Dave knew him for what he was—a spy.

"What is it you haf hidden below in the cases and packadgess?" he asked. "I ain choost to go down and see when you come and make the mischief, inderfering young vool, you are! Dell me what is in the packadgess you haf, or I vill shood you!"

"I don't know," said Dave. "I didn't see the stuff packed!"

"An aeroplane—yes?"

"You're saying it," said Dave.

The big man muttered something in German which Dave did not understand, and put the staple over the ring of the sliding door. He pushed the iron bar through the ring, and then, with amazing strength, he forced the two ends of the bar inwards until they almost met in an oblong. The next moment he slipped the revolver into the side pocket of his slacks and peeled off his jersey. He did it so quickly that he was clear of his jersey before Dave could get to his feet. Round his waist a cord was wrapped, fold upon fold. The spy unwrapped it, making neat, sailor-like coils on the floor, and threw the loose end over the steel shaft.

"Now I vill tie you oop," he said. "Perhaps it is not so bad I haf you taken; for if I gannot get away I can make goot derms. I go free or I shoot you, so put oud your hands, my friendt. Put oud your hands or I knock you senseless!"

(Young Dave is in a tight corner, but he keeps his wits about him, for all that. Mind you read next week's thrilling instalment of this grand yarn, boys!)



(Continued
from
page 22.)

Not one of the fags was capable of walking. Wally D'Arcy was crooked, and Curly Gibson and Jameson were stiff and cramped and exhausted.

Arthur Augustus took his minor on his back, and handed his lantern to Herries. Tom Merry shouldered Curly Gibson, and Jack Blake saw to Jameson. And then the party started on their homeward journey through the thick and heavy mist.

Scarcely a word was spoken on the way. The three lantern-bearers went ahead, and they struck the correct route to the camp.

Half-way home, Tom Merry and Gussy and Blake were relieved by Manners and Lowther and Digby, who took the three fags on their backs and carried them for the remainder of the journey.

Tom Merry feared that the absence of so large a party from the camp would have been discovered by the authorities. Fortunately, his fears proved to be groundless.

The night was well advanced when rescuers and rescued reached camp, and the three fags were promptly put to bed and tucked beneath the warm blankets.

Arthur Augustus remained with them for a time. He brewed some cocoa on a spirit-stove, and under the

stimulating influence of the hot beverage the fags revived, and recovered in some measure their normal good spirits.

"You're a good chap, Gus!" said Wally D'Arcy gratefully. "Goodness knows what would have happened to us if you hadn't brought a search-party along to find us."

"That's all right, Wally. I only hope that you will suffer to ill-effects from your dreadful experience."

"We won't break camp again, anyway," said Wally. "No fear!" chimed in Curly Gibson and Jameson.

Arthur Augustus smiled. "I am glad you realise the utter folly of these midnight excursions," he said. "Soonah or lahab, you would have been certain to get into serious trouble."

Wally D'Arcy finished his cocoa, and handed the empty cup to his major.

"I've been a pigheaded ass, Gus!" he said. "I ought to have apologised to you the other day when you asked me to. Still, better late than never. I give you my apology now—if you'll take it."

"Why, of course I will!" said Arthur Augustus, his face beaming. "As for being pigheaded—I am afraid the pig-headedness has not been entirely on your side. But we will not refer to the matter any more. Give me your fist, Wally!"

Major and minor gripped heartily; and thus the breach was healed.

Light of heart now, Arthur Augustus returned to his own tent.

Next morning there was a good deal of sneezing and wheezing in the tent occupied by Wally D'Arcy and Curly Gibson and Jameson. All were suffering from colds; but, thanks to their timely rescue, the colds did not develop. Miss Marie Rivers, the school-nurse, doled out copious draughts of quinine to the three fags, and in a day or two they were all right again. And life flowed along smoothly and merrily for the Chums under Canvas!

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's rousing story of Tom Merry and Co. under canvas, which again introduces Jimmy Silver and Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood. This extra long yarn is entitled: "HONOURS EVEN!"—and it shows Martin Clifford in good form.)



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