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"HONOURS EVEN!"

This week's book-length story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood

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A NIGHT ALARM FOR THE ST. JIM'S CAMPERS!

RIVALS UNDER CANVAS! Ragging is the order of the day at Windyridge, where Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood are in camp, and the fun is fast and furious. But when the time comes to say good-bye to camp life, Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver shake hands and call it—



HONOURS EVEN!

A Magnificent New Long Complete
Story of St. Jim's and Rookwood—
the Schools under canvas.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. A Night Alarm!

"YAW-aw-aw-aw!"

It was a sleepy yawn, and it came from the aristocratic mouth of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

Again Arthur Augustus yawned, and then he opened his eyes drowsily, and blinked about him in the gloom.

For the moment he imagined himself in the Fourth Form dormitory at St. Jim's—until the whisper of the night breeze in the gorse, and the murmur of the waves on the beach below the camp reached his ears. He remembered then that St. Jim's was far away, and that he was in camp at Windyridge.

With the remembrance came a vague sort of feeling that something unusual had awakened him, and he sat up suddenly in his sleeping-bag.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, groping for his eyeglass, and jamming it into his eye. "Somethin' wakened me—somethin' outside the tent. I must wake Jack Blake. Yaas, wathuh!"

And the swell of the Fourth reached over to wake Jack Blake, who was sleeping beside him in the tent.

The next moment a muffled sort of yelp sounded, and it came from Jack Blake.

Arthur Augustus had intended to nudge his chum into wakefulness, and he had succeeded. Unfortunately, his nudge had been rather violent, and it had also taken Jack Blake full on the nose.

Hence Blake's yelp.

"Bai Jove! For goodness' sake don't make such a wow, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, in a stealthy, warning whisper. "Quiet! I—"

"Quiet! I'll give you quiet!" snorted Blake, sitting up suddenly. "Was it you biffed me on the nose just then, Gussy, you ass?"

"Wathah not, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "I merely nudged you—"

"Then it was you!" hooted Blake. "You've thumping well scratched half the skin off my nose, you dangerous maniac!"

"I meahly poked you with my fingahs—"

"Well, now I'm going to poke you with my fist!" breathed Jack Blake in deadly earnest.

And he hit out at where he judged D'Arcy's face to be.

Smack!

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"Yawoooooh!"

To judge from the wild howl of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy Blake's judgment was excellent. At all events, Arthur Augustus howled, and fell back on to his bed.

But he did not remain there. Blake had hit hard, and Arthur Augustus was hurt.

He was also wrathy.

"You feahful wottah, Blake!" he gasped. "Put up your fists, you wuffian! Ow! Ow! By dose! I will give you a feahful thwashin' for that, bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus started to do his best to keep his word. He stumbled out of the bedclothes, and struck out at Blake's vague form. The next moment the two juniors were at it hammer and tongs.

For some seconds they thumped away at each other, and then, somehow, they both found their feet, and went staggering and stumbling blindly about the tent in a deadly embrace.

Even a full-sized bell-tent was scarcely a suitable place for such conduct—especially in the darkness, and with several other fellows sleeping in it.

At all events, there arose sundry alarmed yells as Arthur Augustus and his opponent stumbled about, rudely awakening the sleepers from slumber.

Then the two struggling forms went down again—full on top of the recumbent form of George Herries, and George Herries did more than yell.

He struck out with both fists, yelling excitedly as he did so.

"Go for 'em, chaps! Wake up and smash 'em!" he roared. "It's those Rookwood rotters raiding us! Wake—Yaroooooh!"

Herries' alarmed yells ended abruptly in a strangled howl as something—it was Blake's elbow—was jammed into his mouth.

But by this time the rest of the juniors were fully aroused, and Herries' excited yells made them jump to the same conclusion that Herries had—that it was a midnight raid of their Rookwood rivals!

This was natural enough, for the rival juniors from Rookwood were camped close to the St. Jim's campers, and already there had been plenty of rags and raids between them.

At all events, the St. Jim's juniors jumped to that conclusion, and they sprang up and rushed to Herries' aid—naturally mistaking Blake and D'Arcy for the enemy in the darkness.

The next moment the tent resounded with yells and thumps as the fight became a whirling scramble of arms and legs.

But it did not last very long, fortunately. Jack Blake grasped the position at once, and he raised his voice in a wild yell.

"Stop, you asses! Can't you see it's us?" he bellowed. "Chuck it—for goodness' sake chuck it! It isn't a raid at all!"

The rest of the juniors were far too busy to see anything just then, but they heard Blake's words, and they stopped suddenly. They were just beginning to realise, from the voices of their unseen opponents, that there was a little mistake somewhere.

As he felt himself released, Jack Blake fumbled for a match, and after a struggle he managed to light the hurricane lamp hung on the tent-pole.

In the flickering light from the lantern the St. Jim's campers blinked at each other rather blankly—at least, all did with the exception of Blake and D'Arcy. Those juniors were looking battered and wrathful.

"Oh, you—you awful idiots!" panted Blake. "You—you burbling jabberwocks!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You—you silly idiots to wush—"

"Then—then it wasn't a Rookwood raid at all?" ejaculated Digby, staring blankly at the irate faces of Blake and D'Arcy. "Someone shouted—"

"It was that ass Herries!" snorted Blake, glaring at George Herries. "He lost his silly head—"

"Well, what would you do if you woke up suddenly and found two silly maniacs fighting over you?" said Herries warmly. "I naturally thought it was a raid—"

"Raid fiddlesticks!" snorted Blake, feeling a rapidly swelling eye tenderly. "Anyway, it was all that dummy Gussy's fault, of course—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We might have known it was old Gussy," grinned Digby. "How did he start it?"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Jabbed me on the boko and woke me up!" snorted Blake. "Blessed if I can think why we don't chain the dangerous animal up at night like young Wally does Pongo."

"Bai Jove, Blake! If you dare to chawactewise me as an animal," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I shall be veluctantly obliged to pitch into you again! I have already told you that I merely poked you—"

"You scratched my dashed nose—"

"If I scatched your nose I am sowwy, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "My object was just to dig you in the wibs and wake you up."

"But why should you wake me up at all, you burbling dummy?"

"If you had allowed me to explain I could have told you that and pvenented this wumpus," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I woke you up because I awakened to hear someone pwowlin' about outside the tent. Natuwallly, I imagined it was a Wookwood waid, and I—"

"Rubbish! You must have been dreaming!" said Blake scornfully. "Anyway, for goodness' sake, let's get to sleep now. You've been hearing things, Gussy, in your dreams, and—"

Blake broke off abruptly and turned his head.

At that moment he himself heard something—a slight rustle at the tent flap behind him. The rest of the St. Jim's Fourth-Formers also heard it and glanced towards the flap.

Then their jaws dropped, their eyes bulged, and their hair rose on their heads.

For the flap had suddenly bulged and burst open, and through the aperture a head was poked.

It was not a boy's head—not even a human head—it was the huge, ugly head of a most ferocious-looking bull!

CHAPTER 2. Startling!

THERE was no doubt about it. In petrified horror the campers stared at it, speechless and utterly unnerved.

It was an enormous head certainly, but in the flickering light of the lantern it looked gigantic and grotesque. The wicked-looking eyes seemed to glint evilly at the horror-stricken campers.

Then Blake suddenly found his voice, and he gave a terrified yell.

"A bull! Great Scott! Look out, chaps!"

The next instant the wildest confusion reigned in the bell-tent. The juniors lost their heads completely. Amidst howls of alarm they made a combined rush to escape from the tent—and especially from the bull.

Unfortunately, they all seemed to make for the same spot, and in a moment they were mixed up in a struggling, yelling heap as they strove to crawl under the canvas at the back of the tent.

But worse was to come.

For several whirling seconds they fought to get out, and then quite abruptly the tent itself sagged and collapsed upon them.

Luckily, the lantern was a candle-lantern, and it merely went out at once. But now the hapless campers were in deep darkness; and, under the billowy mass of canvas and

lurching, bumping tentpole, they fought and struggled amid a perfect medley of yells and howls.

By this time the nearer tents were alarmed, and presently pyjama-clad forms were running towards the scene of the disturbance.

Tom Merry was the first fellow on the scene, and he stared in some amazement at the billowy mass of canvas.

"What the thump—" he began.

"What's the matter?" interrupted Monty Lowther, rushing up just then, with Manners and Bernard Glyn at his heels.

"Great Scott! Are you Fourth chaps underneath?"

"Sounds like it," chuckled Tom Merry. "The blessed tent must have collapsed on them somehow. Lend a hand, for goodness' sake, before the clumsy asses are smothered!"

"Ha, ha! Right-ho!"

Other fellows were running up from everywhere now, and soon willing hands were at work; and then, when the canvas was torn aside, it revealed the forms of the hapless Fourth-Formers.

They sat amid the ruins of their site and gasped and panted and groaned, while they blinked in the light from the lanterns several fellows carried.

"What the thump's happened, Blake?" demanded Tom Merry. "Did the tent collapse while you were sleeping?"

"Ow!" gasped Jack Blake, nursing his head, which had come into contact with the tent-pole. "Ow-ow! My—my head's broken, I think! Oh crumbs! Oh, my hat! Why, where's the—the bull?"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, where is the w'etched bull?" groaned Arthur Augustus, blinking about him dazedly. "Has it gone?"

"Has the beastly thing gone?" echoed George Herries, with a groan. "Ow-ow! It was awful!"

"Great pip!"

The crowd stared at the hapless Fourth-Formers.

"A bull, did you say?" gasped Tom Merry. "Don't talk rot, you fatheads! There's no bull here!"

"Thank goodness!" gasped Blake, staggering to his feet. "It—it was an awful brute! D-did-did you chaps see it go? It must have rushed in after us and pulled the dashed tent down!"

"Luckily, we spotted the brute!" said Herries, in deep relief. "Though it beats me why the beggar didn't charge when we were struggling beneath the tent."

"A bull!"

"Great pip!"

The crowd of startled fellows stared blankly at the Fourth-Formers.

"You must have dreamed it!" said Tom Merry, after a pause. "I saw no animal, and there's no sign of a bull. Half a minute!"

Taking a lantern from the hand of the collapsed tent. He hunted carefully for some moments, and then he looked at Blake & Co. and chuckled.

"You dreamed it!" he repeated. "There isn't a hoof-mark anywhere; the ground's soft, and would have shown tracks if a bull had been here, you asses!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It was a bull, I tell you!" hooted Blake wrathfully. "We all saw it and rushed to get out of the tent. Then the dashed tent fell on us!"

"It poked its head inside the tent," said Digby. "You fellows can grin. It's quite true!"

"Yaas, wathah! I twust you do not doubt our word, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

Tom Merry grinned. All the fellows were grinning now. Whether the Fourth-Formers imagined they had seen a bull or not, it was clear—to them—that there had been no bull. The absence of tracks on the soft ground was clear proof of that.

"We don't doubt your word that you've seen a bull," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "We can't help you seeing things, you know. But there's been no bull here, old tops. You'd better turn in again and finish your dream out—or nightmare."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. went crimson at the roar of laughter. It was only too clear to them that nobody believed their story.

Jack Blake breathed hard.

"You—you burbling dummies!" he stuttered. "Can't you believe us, blow you? I tell you—"

"Spare us!" begged Monty Lowther. "Don't sing it over again! We want to get back to bed, dear men. You can tell us about the nightmare in the morning. By that time it will have become a field-mouse, I expect, or a bull-frog!"

"You—you—"

"Shush, shush! Never mind!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "We'll help you to get your tent up again, old fellow. Come on, chaps! All hands to the pumps!"

Amidst grins and chuckles the other campers helped the fuming Blake & Co. to re-erect their tent. It was done at last, and, leaving them to get their beds into order themselves, Tom Merry and the rest returned to their own tents.

"What a scream!" grinned Monty Lowther. "We'll pull their legs no end about this in the morning."

"It's rather queer, though," said Manners. "The fat-heads must have seen something."

"Well, it is rather queer," admitted Tom Merry. "They couldn't all have dreamed the same dream. I—I suppose it couldn't have been anyone playing a joke?" he added, becoming suddenly thoughtful.

"That's what I was wondering," said Manners. "We mustn't forget those Rookwood chaps are on the warpath, though it's more likely to be those little imps in the Third—Wally and his pals."

"That's so," agreed Tom Merry, yawning. "Anyway, I'm going to sleep. Night-night, chaps!"

And with that Tom Merry blew out the light, and, tucking the blankets round him, composed himself to slumber again. His chums in the Shell tent were not long in doing likewise. They had had a tiring day, and they were tired, and within five minutes all were sleeping soundly.

Their sleep lasted just that time and no longer.

Tom Merry awoke abruptly, with the sound of a most alarming yell ringing in his ears.

He was wide awake in a flash, and as he blinked about he was astonished to see Manners standing up, a lighted lantern in his hand, and on his face a look of petrified horror.

He was staring with goggling eyes at the tent doorway, and the next instant Tom Merry jumped as he saw why.

The flap of the tent was drawn back, and in the aperture was framed the huge, shaggy head of a bull.

Even as Tom Merry looked Manners gave another yell, and, dropping the lantern, he made a dive for the back of the tent.

"Look out, chaps!" yelled Tom Merry. "A bull! Great Scott! It is a bull!"

He was after Manners in a flash, and after him, scarcely a second later, went every other fellow in the tent.

Manners' first yell had brought them to wakefulness, just in time to see what Tom himself had seen. And Tom's yell was enough.

In one headlong dive they went after Tom Merry, and, as in the case of Blake & Co., they all seemed to make for the same spot—the spot where Manners was already trying madly to scramble out.

The result was exactly the same as in the case of Blake & Co.

For several whirling seconds they struggled desperately, and then the tent sagged and flopped down upon them, burying them in its billowing folds.

If anything, the Shell fellows made more noise about it than Blake & Co. had done.

They fairly bellowed as they struggled and fought to escape from the bulging canvas and ropes, expecting every second that the bull would charge them.

At last Tom Merry succeeded in scrambling out, and as he glared anxiously about in the darkness he fairly gulped with relief. No ominous bulk loomed up before him, but lights were flickering all about him from the vaguely-seen tents, and excited voices were calling.

"What's the matter?"

"What the thump's happening now?"

"What—Great Scott! It's another tent down!"

There was a yell as the crowd of pyjama-clad figures rushed up and surrounded Tom Merry, and he was bombarded with questions.

But doleful howls were still proceeding from the heaving mass of canvas, and instead of answering Tom started to release his comrades. And the others lent a hand then.

Soon Tom's sleeping companions were all rescued, and then Tom Merry was ready to answer questions.

"What happened, Merry?" demanded Kildare, who had been one of the first on the scene. "What's all the rumpus about, kid?"

"It—it was a bull!" said Tom.

"A what?"

There was a yell.

"Yes; it was a bull right enough," replied Tom Merry, blushing as he met Jack Blake's triumphant look. "Blake and his lot must have been right after all. We saw it, didn't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"A whacking great brute!" added Manners, with a shudder. "I heard something moving outside—it woke me up, I suppose. Then I lit up, and—and I saw it at the tent flap, and I yelled."

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"Phew!"

"Well, my hat!" remarked George Alfred Grundy, in disgust. "I can understand Fourth Form kids seeing things and getting frightened, but when Shell fellows start seeing bogies—"

"Oh, you dry up!" said Tom Merry crossly. "I tell you we saw it!"

"Then where is it?"

"I'm hanged if I know! It must have bolted!" said Tom Merry, looking about him with knitted brows. "But we saw it!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite believe you, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "Now perhaps you othah fellows will agree that there was a bull."

"Bosh!" said Grundy. "Bunkum! I'll believe it—"

"Hold on," said Kildare, smiling. "We'll see if Merry's bull has left any tracks."

And he started to search the ground round about the tent with the aid of his lantern. Tom Merry and several other fellows joined in, and the vicinity of the tent was hunted for a radius of several yards.

But there were no tracks of an animal—only trampled human footmarks in the soft ground.

Tom Merry was looking more than puzzled when he gave it up at last.

"Well, this beats the band!" he gasped. "We couldn't possibly have been mistaken, you chaps. We saw it clearly."

"Well, there's been no bull here," said Kildare grimly. "It's queer. Twelve fellows could hardly have dreamed it."

"Phew!"

It certainly was queer. All the fellows were beginning to see that now, and their grins faded. The fellows in both tents could scarcely have all been mistaken, nor could they have dreamed the same dream—if it could have been a dream.

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy Trimble, glancing about him into the darkness fearfully. "It—it must have been a ghost, you fellows—a phantom bull!"

There was a chuckle. It came from young Wally D'Arcy of the Third, but scarcely any of the other fellows chuckled or grinned. They were more than puzzled. Neither Blake nor Tom Merry were the sort of fellows to be frightened about nothing. Kildare, however, laughed.

"It's someone playing a trick, of course," he said. "It looks like it, at all events. If it was, whoever did it won't dare to try it on again, I fancy. Back to bed, kids! Some of you can help these chaps to get their tent up first, though."

"Right-ho!"

Luckily the juniors' tents were situated well away from the masters' quarters, and only one or two prefects had been aroused by the uproar.

Several Shell fellows helped Tom Merry & Co. to get their tent and tackle ship-shape, and the rest returned to their own quarters excitedly discussing the strange happenings. Baggy Trimble's suggestion of a phantom bull, funny as it sounded, had made more than one fellow feel uneasy.

It was certainly queer. There was the possibility of somebody larking, of course; yet a bull was not an animal anyone would "lark" with. And Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. certainly must have seen a bull. They could not all have been mistaken.

The fellows turned in quickly, but secretly quite a number privately resolved to sleep with one eye open—in case the phantom bull paid them a visit!

The only fellow who did not seem at all disturbed by the strange affair was Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form.

That cheery youngster was chuckling as he walked back to quarters with his chums, Curly Gibson, Jameson, Levi-minor, and Manners minor.

"What a scream!" he chortled gleefully. "I say, you chaps, we're looking into this."

"Wha-at?"

"Don't look so funky!" grinned Wally. "We're going to bowl out the giddy phantom bull, my pippins, and we'll see those old fogies in the Fourth and Shell never hear the last of this."

"But—the bull? It must have been a—a bull."

"Rot! It was those merry old Rookwood chaps playing a trick, of course," said Wally confidently. "And we're going to bowl 'em out. Now, let's go and let old Pongo loose—the old chap will strain his throat if he goes on barking like this much longer. Come on!"

And Wally hurried away through the darkness towards their tent from which came the excited barking of Pongo who had been disturbed by the uproar. And his chums followed. They were feeling far from comfortable at thought of Wally's programme, but they had the greatest faith in their leader.

Reaching the tent, Wally released Pongo, and very soon quietened him down. Pongo was a very mischievous little dog indeed, and he was far from being well trained in most



"What price the phantom bull, Tom Merry?" grinned Wally D'Arcy. "Look behind you!" The junior captain swung round and cast the light from his lantern behind him. Then he almost jumped a foot in the air as he saw, lying on the ground, an enormous head—the head of a bull, with huge horns and glinting eyes, and ringed nose complete. (See Chapter 3.)

things. But he was well trained in one respect—and that was to keep still and quiet when his master desired it.

He was quiet now, save for a subdued whining as he trembled excitedly in his master's grip.

"Now," said Wally, after he had explained the plan to Joe Frayne and Hobbs, who were already in the tent, "all we've got to do is to watch and keep quiet until those Rookwood chaps turn up—if they do turn up again. I fancy they will, though."

"But the bull?"

"Blow the bull!" chuckled Wally. "You'll know all about the bull presently."

"But—but—"

"Quiet!"

And with that Wally, still holding the excited Pongo, took up his position at the open flap of the tent, from where he had a good view of most of the tents, white and ghostly in the dim starlight. And his chums, with slippers on and coats over their pyjamas, joined him there, and in silence they waited.

CHAPTER 3. The Phantom Bull!

"HARK!"

"Quiet!"

"But I—"

"Shush! Not a word!"

"But I can hear—"

"Will you shurrup?" hissed Wally D'Arcy.

"But I can hear someone coming," grunted Curly Gibson.

"Of course you can—so can we all!" breathed Wally in sulphurous accents. "D'you want them to hear us, you burbling dummy? Quiet! And for goodness' sake don't move until I give the word, blow you!"

"I wasn't going—"

"Dry up!"

There was such ferocity in Wally's low-breathed tones that Curly Gibson dried up, breathing hard.

The fags of the Third of St. Jim's had been waiting and

watching for ten minutes or more now, and they were getting rather cramped with their uncomfortable kneeling position in the shelter of the tent. Moreover, their tempers were getting just a bit on edge—Wally's because his followers would not keep silent, and his followers because they had little faith in his plan.

And as the long minutes passed that faith grew less and less. In the view of the fags, if the whole affair was a Rookwood rag, it was not likely to be tried on a third time.

But Wally thought differently, and was determined to keep watch until dawn, if need be. And, as usual, he had his own way in the matter.

Then suddenly Pongo stiffened in his master's grasp, and his impatient whining and trembling increased in intensity. And the next moment Curly Gibson whispered:

"Hark!"

Footsteps and muttered voices had sounded from the darkness—faint but unmistakable.

But all the fags had heard the sounds, and after effectually "squashing" Curly, Wally turned a pair of keen eyes towards a dark copse fifty yards beyond the last tent.

Beyond the copse, some distance away, stood the Rookwood camp, and Wally knew the enemy would come from the darkness of the copse.

The next moment he saw that he was right. Out of this darkness loomed two dense figures, and they seemed to be carrying a bulky object between them.

"Quiet!" breathed Wally again warningly. "You know what to do, Reggie Manners—when we rush 'em you dash off and rouse those Shell and Fourth slackers."

"Right-ho! I'll—"

"Quiet!" hissed Wally.

Evidently Wally was taking no chances of his followers' voices being heard—whatever he was about his own!

In the dim starlight the two figures loomed close up, appearing big and burly; and even Wally wondered for the moment if they were men and not boys.

And then the fags heard a whispered voice:

"Here we are again, chaps! Quiet now! We'll tackle
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some of these cheeky fags this time, and give 'em the fright of their lives!"

"Ha, ha! Yaas! I'll hang on to the old thing while you loosen the tent-pegs, Jimmy."

A couple of chuckles followed.

There was no doubt about it now. The first voice was the cheery voice of Jimmy Silver, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, and the second was the drawing voice of Val Mornington, likewise of the Classical Fourth.

The next moment Wally gave the word.

"Now, chaps!"

At the same moment Pongo gave an unexpected wrench at his leash and sprang away, and it was Pongo who reached the Rookwood raiders first.

The next moment the silence of that peaceful summer's night was split by two startled yells.

Pongo was not, by any means, a ferocious dog—far from it. Certainly he could be dangerous on occasions. But in the main he was quite harmless. For all that, he had rather an unfortunate habit of nipping fellows' calves playfully.

He exercised his playful habit now on Jimmy Silver and Mornington.

With a semi-savage growl, he sprang at Jimmy Silver, nipped his calf neatly, and then, diving between Jimmy's legs and upsetting him, he snapped playfully at the aristocratic calf of Mornington.

"Ow, ow! Oh crumbs! Look out!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"Good gad!" gasped Mornington.

Jimmy Silver sprawled over Pongo, and over him sprawled Mornington, and the next moment both Rookwooders and Pongo and their burden were mixed up in a struggling heap on the ground, amidst startled yells and excited barks.

Then Wally & Co. joined in.

They fairly swamped the startled raiders.

"Pile in, chaps!" sang out Wally cheerfully.

"What-ho!"

The fags piled in with a will.

The Rookwood raiders were utterly unnerved by the unexpected attack by Pongo, and they scarcely attempted to defend themselves for the moment.

But as Wally sang out Jimmy Silver grasped the situation, and realised it was an ambush.

"Back up, Morny!" he gasped. "It's only a gang of silly fags. Ow! Oh crumbs! I'm bitten again! Yow! Call that beastly dog off!"

Apparently Pongo was still doing his "bit."

In fact, to judge from sundry yelps from friend and foe alike, Pongo was doing more than his bit. In the darkness and confusion Pongo was finding it rather difficult to distinguish a friendly calf from an unfriendly one, so he nipped at all that came his way indiscriminately. Pongo was enjoying himself.

But Jimmy Silver and Mornington, at least, were not.

They were fairly buried beneath the swarm of fags, and their desperate struggles were of no avail.

Half a dozen fags—not to mention Pongo—were rather a tall order even for the two Rookwood Fourth-Formers, and they gave in at last, and lay still, panting and breathless, with fags sitting on them to keep them down.

"Ow!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Ow-wow! Oh, you little imps! Oh crumbs! I'm whacked!"

"Good! I'm glad you own up to it at last!" gasped Wally with a chuckle. "Better late than never. If you'd left it until never you'd have been mincemeat! You give in?"

"Ow! Yes, yes! Lemme gerrup."

"Oh, gad! Oh, yaas!" panted Mornington. "Get off my chest, you little rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! Here come the old fogies!" chuckled Wally. "Here's where we shine, chaps."

"What-ho!"

Lights were flashing again now, and for the third time that night the camp was alarmed, and the next instant Tom Merry, with a crowd of Fourth and Shell fellows at his heels, came rushing up on the heels of Reggie Manners, who had very soon roused them.

"Got them?" he snapped, flashing the light of a lantern on the scene. "Oh, good! Jimmy Silver and Mornington—eh? Well, we've got you, my pippins!"

"You mean, we've got them for you, old nut!" chuckled Wally D'Arcy. "What price the Third now, Merry?"

"Well, you've scored this time, and no mistake," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Anyway, we've collared these chaps. What the thump were they up to, Wally? Were there only the two of them?"

"Yes."

"Right! But—"

"Look behind you and you'll see what their giddy game

was," grinned Wally. "What price the phantom bull? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver and Mornington.

Puzzled, Tom Merry swung round and cast the light from his lantern behind him. Then he almost jumped a foot in the air at what he saw.

On the ground lay an enormous head, the head of a bull, with huge horns and glinting eyes and ringed nose complete. Behind the head was a wooden shield, and attached to the shield was a long pole. That was all.

It was just a stuffed bull's head!

As he saw it Tom Merry understood, and he grinned sheepishly.

But the rest of the fellows roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "So that was it? You rotters brought that thing and shoved it through the tent-flap, and we thought it was a rotten bull."

"Oh, bai Jove! The feahful wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver and Val Mornington grinned.

"We'd have frightened the whole camp if these young imps hadn't tumbled," Jimmy Silver grinned ruefully. "How the little rotters spotted it, goodness knows!"

"Simple enough," said Wally D'Arcy cheerfully. "You see, I saw this bull's head hanging up in Farmer Bland's kitchen. It's the head of one of his prize bulls, or something. Anyway, when I heard you old dummies had seen a bull, and when there proved to be no tracks, I tumbled to it. I guessed these Rookwood merchants had pinched or borrowed the thing from the farmer."

"Great pip!" gasped Curly Gibson. "I saw it, too, when we went to the farm for eggs yesterday. But I never tumbled."

"It needs brains to put two and two together," remarked Wally complacently. "Well, what about these merchants? They're bowled out, and—"

"Leave them to us," said Tom Merry grimly. "Up with 'em, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You fellows look tired," said Jimmy Silver, with a rueful grin. "Why not get back to bed and let us trot home?"

But the soft answer failed to turn away wrath.

"Likely, isn't it?" said Blake, with a snort. "You've had your little joke, my pippins, and now you've got to go through it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Rookwood juniors were hauled to their feet, and their hands were tied together. They were prisoners-of-war, and the St. Jim's juniors weren't likely to let them "trot home" yet awhile.

Tom Merry's eyes were gleaming now.

"I suppose this is just a little joke of your own, Silver?" he inquired blandly. "Just you and Morny—what?"

"Well, in a way, it was," grinned Jimmy Silver. "The rest of the fellows in our tent know we've come out on the warpath, of course."

"All the other fellows asleep, I suppose?"

"Yes; only my own pals awake, waiting—"

Jimmy Silver paused, suddenly suspecting that Tom had a reason for asking the questions.

His suspicions were right, as it happened.

"So all the other fellows are asleep, are they?" grinned Tom Merry. "Good! That's all I wanted to know, old tops. I suppose there are fellows left on guard, though?"

"Find out!" snapped Jimmy Silver, wishing he had been more careful. "Why, what—"

"You'll see," grinned Tom. "Now, you chaps," he went on, turning to the grinning crowd. "We're going to teach these Rookwood youngsters to let sleeping dogs lie. Now we're wide awake we'll get busy and make the most of our chance. Silver has very kindly told us that the rest of his camp are asleep, so I vote we raid 'em, and pay them back some of what we owe them."

"Bai Jove! Good ideah, Tom Mewwy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here—" began Jimmy Silver, in alarm.

"It's not quite midnight yet, so we've plenty of time," grinned Tom Merry cheerfully. "Now my idea's this. They're bound to have left at least two fellows guarding their camp. But those two will be expecting Silver and Morny back—carrying this giddy bull's head, I expect. Well, if two of us march into their camp, carrying the giddy bull's head, they'll let us come up without suspecting danger. Then we can fall on them and stop them giving the alarm. The camp will be at our mercy then. How's that?"

"Good wheeze!"

"Then let's get busy," chuckled Tom. "We'll sling these prisoners into an empty tent, and then we'll arm ourselves with giddy pillows and things. We'll sock into the merry sleepers, and then we'll let the tents down round their ears—just as these two merchants did to us."

"Good egg!"

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"Yaas, waiyah!"
"Then, sharp's the word. We'll need every Fourth and Shell fellow, and you Third Form fags can join in, too. This has got to be a record rag."
"What-ho!" grinned Wally D'Arcy.
And with that the St. Jim's campers set to with a will to make ready for the great attack. None of them felt tired or sleepy now, and all of them were eager and more than ready to take part in the night attack on the enemy camp.

CHAPTER 4. The Great Raid!

"STEADY now!"
"Steady, the Buffs!" murmured Monty Lowther. And there was a chuckle in the darkness.
Everything had gone off like clockwork so far. Tom Merry had given his orders, and everyone knew exactly what to do. Two by two, with the Shell fellows leading, the Fourth next, and the grinning, eager fags bringing up the rear, the attacking force had started out on the midnight raid, and now Tom Merry whispered the warning as the enemy camp came into sight through the trees.

In the starlight of the summer night the white tents of the Rookwood camp looked like ghostly sentinels. Only from one tent came the faint glow of a light through the canvas.

"That's the tent Silver and Mornington sleep in, I expect, and it's quite possible some of the merchants are waiting up for them," grinned Tom. "Blake, D'Arcy, Lowther, Levison, Manners, and I will tackle them. The rest of you know what to do. Hallo, there are the giddy sentinels. Halt!"

The attacking force halted amidst subdued chuckles.

"Blake and I will deal with these merchants," said Tom briefly. "Hand over that giddy bull's head."

"Here you are," said Lowther.

Lowther was carrying the heavy head by the pole, over his shoulder, and he swung it round, and—whether by accident or design—he rammed the ugly nose of the defunct animal under Tom Merry's chin.

Tom Merry only just managed to stifle a gasping yell as he sat down violently under the impact.

"Ow-ow! Grobogh! Oh, you—you—"

"Sorry!" murmured the irrepressible Monty. "It was rather heavier than I had expected, you know."

"Oh, you awful ass!" gasped Tom. "Ugh! The horrid thing caught me right under the chin. You careless dummy!"

"Sorry! It was just a careless bull-under," said Lowther. "Sorry!"

"Ass!"

Tom was strongly tempted to smite the humorous Lowther hip and thigh, but there was no time, nor was it the place, for that. He scrambled up growling wrathfully, and picked up the bull's head again. Then Blake and he crept away towards the enemy sentries.

On emerging from the fringe of trees they threw aside caution and walked boldly up to the camp entrance. The two sentries were standing chatting together drowsily, but they were alert in a moment.

They soon saw the bull's head, however, and Blake and Merry were greeted with chuckles.

"Hallo, here they come! Well, how did things go, Jimmy?"

It was Raby's voice, and as he spoke the other fellow chimed cheerily:

"We heard the rumpus from here; was it a success?"

"Yes," answered Tom Merry cheerfully. "It was a success—for us."

With that Tom flung himself on the speaker, who happened to be Conroy, and at the very same instant Jack Blake flung himself at Raby, while the bull's head hurtled away into the darkness, its duty done.

There were two muffled yelps of startled surprise, and after that the two Rookwood sentries were silent—with strong hands clapped over their mouths they could scarcely help being silent.

And then, before they could even grasp the meaning of it, there came a rush of feet and a swarm of St. Jim's fellows came to the help of Tom Merry and Blake.

It was all over in a flash.

The sentries were gagged and bound, and dumped in a thicket, and then Tom led his men on. The camp was at their mercy.

Leaving the rest to do their allotted tasks with the other tents Tom Merry led his chosen men towards the lighted tent.

Here he expected to find its occupants wide awake, and he anticipated a tough resistance from them.

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As he peeped into the tent, however, he found he was mistaken.

Its four occupants were fast asleep, and they had evidently left the light burning for their absent comrades' return.

"Good egg!" murmured Tom Merry. "Get to work, chaps!"

Swiftly and in silence the St. Jim's raiders loosened the tent-pegs and guy-ropes so that a swift haul at the ropes would cause the tent to collapse when the time came. Then they followed Tom into the tent, armed with their pillows and bolsters.

But as they were about to waken the sleepers, Tom whispered a word and pointed to the small camp table on which the lantern stood.

On the table, in addition to other oddments, were a large bottle of blue-black ink, pen, and paper.

Ignoring the pen and paper, Tom Merry took up the bottle of ink and crossed to the nearest bed, which happened to contain the sleeping form of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Tom poured some of the ink over Lovell's curly hair and gently rubbed it in. Then, with his forefinger, he traced circles of ink round Lovell's eyes, and nose, and mouth.

When he had finished Arthur Edward looked an extraordinary sight. Almost choking with suppressed mirth, the St. Jim's raiders watched Tom as he started to work on the face and hair of Newcome, who was sleeping next to Lovell.

Like Lovell, Newcome stirred uneasily in his sleep, but he did not awake, and Tom crossed to the next bed.

But before he could do any more decorating something happened.

The five minutes time limit Tom had arranged with his followers to loosen the tent-pegs of the various tents ended. From the tents all round them came sounds of sudden uproar as the St. Jim's fellows got to work with their pillows and other weapons.

"Time's up," chuckled Tom Merry. "Now, chaps, better get to work."

As he spoke Tom shoved the ink on the table and grabbed his pillow. But before he could make good use of it there sounded an excited barking outside, and the next instant something dashed into the tent like a whirlwind.

It was Pongo, Wally D'Arcy's pet, and evidently the light had attracted Pongo. At all events, he came dashing in, and it was plain he was enjoying the raid as much as the St. Jim's juniors.

"That blessed dog again!" gasped Blake. "Here, outside, you giddy—Oh crumbs! Yarooop!"

Crash!

After one mad rush round the tent Pongo had dived between Blake's legs, sending Blake crashing against the camp table. In its turn the table was sent crashing against the tent-pole, and as he saw it sway ominously Tom Merry yelled:

"The tent! Outside—quick!"

He leaped for the tent flap, and after him jumped his fellow-raiders. Lowther was the last, and as he came flying through the flap the whole tent collapsed amidst a chorus of startled yells, above which sounded the wild bellowing of Lovell.

Only just in time Tom Merry dragged Lowther clear, and then Tom gave a chuckle and snatched a whistle from his pocket.

"Time to clear!" he said.

With that he blew a shrill blast on his whistle.

The effect was electrical.

As the whistle shrilled out there sounded a sudden lull in the hubbub of strife from the various tents, and from them surged the St. Jim's attackers.

As they leaped out they jumped to the tent-ropes, and set to work on the loosened pegs with a will. The next minute tents were collapsing on every side, like ninepins going down.

"Time to make for home now, chaps!" called Tom Merry.

And he blew another blast on his whistle.

It certainly was time, as Tom had said. From every billowing mass of canvas that had been a tent a moment ago came muffled howls of fury.

It was time to depart, and the St. Jim's raiders departed, making for the dark copse of trees helter-skelter. They arrived back at their own camp in a laughing, gleeful swarm, and then Tom Merry proceeded to call the roll.

There was just a chance that in the strife and confusion some of the St. Jim's fellows might have been captured, and Tom Merry, though triumphant, was just a bit worried in case that had happened.

His fears were justified as he called the roll.

One fellow was absent, and that fellow was Baggy Trimble!

"Trimble!" echoed Tom Merry, frowning. "Great pip! I said that fat ass wasn't to come on any account! I knew he'd get collared if he did!"

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"I told him to get back to bed when we started out," said Levison, with a grin. "But I noticed the fat ass was with us when we reached the camp."

"Blow it!" snorted Tom Merry. "I'm blessed if I can understand this! It isn't like that fat idiot to want to join in a scrap. Anyway, it doesn't matter much; he's not much loss—"

"A jolly good loss!" sniffed Grundy. "Let him go, and good riddance to him!"

"There'll always be enough grub to go round now!" grinned Lowther.

"That's not it, though!" growled Tom. "We don't want those Rookwood beggars to have a prisoner to crow over! Anyway, we've got Silver and Mornington, and we'll keep the beggars as hostages until they send Trimble back."

"Good egg!"

"And now to bed," grinned Tom Merry. "We've scored fairly this time, chaps, and I bet those Rookwood fellows won't forget this in a hurry."

"Wathah not, bai Jovel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The triumphant St. Jim's campers went back to bed to sleep the sleep of the victors. Baggy Trimble, apparently, had been lost, and many pillows and bolsters had been lost, but Baggy was not likely to be missed—excepting at meal-times—and there were plenty more pillows and bolsters in the camp stores. And with a strong guard of sentries, in case of reprisals from the Rookwooders, the St. Jim's camp was soon silent again under the stars.

CHAPTER 5.

In the Hands of the Enemy!

"O H crumbs!"

Baggy Trimble gave vent to that ejaculation in tones of deep dismay.

The fat junior had just awakened from a dreamless slumber, and there was good reason for him to feel utterly dismayed.

In the first place Baggy awoke feeling stiff, and a trifle cold, and exceedingly cramped; in fact, Baggy Trimble ached in every limb.

Yet it was not this circumstance that made Baggy feel dismayed, but the discovery that it was broad daylight, and that the early morning sun was streaming in upon him through the slightly-opened flap of a large tent—a tent he did not recognise at first.

But the sight of a large stack of packing-cases, and biscuit-tins, and loaves of bread, and cases of tinned stuffs, and other foodstuffs brought recollection to him, and he remembered just where he was.

He was in the enemy's camp—in the Rookwood School campers' store-tent.

It was really a dreadful discovery for Baggy, and it was no wonder he felt dismayed.

"Oh crumbs!" repeated Baggy, with a groan. "I—I must have fallen asleep!"

There was very little doubt about that.

Actually, what had happened was simple enough. Baggy Trimble had not accompanied the St. Jim's raiders the night before in order to take part in the struggle; far from it. He had accompanied them merely in order to make a private raid of his own on the enemy's food supply.

The crafty fat youth had guessed that it would be a very easy matter to get into the tent whilst the Rookwood fellows were otherwise engaged repelling the invaders, and his guess had been only too correct.

The Rookwooders had been too busy, and Baggy Trimble managed to sneak into the store-tent easily enough.

Then Baggy had got busy, just as his fellow-campers were busy in another way.

Most of the foodstuffs were in cases, but Baggy had soon found a crowbar, and with this, and his scout's knife to open tins, he had made a general attack on the "grub." There was not a very large variety of things, certainly, but there were sardines, and potted meats, and tinned fruit—and there were the biscuits.

Baggy started on the tinned stuffs, and finished up with biscuits—and he finished quite a lot up. In fact, when Baggy did finish at last he did not even feel equal to peeping out of the tent to see how the battle was going.

As a matter of fact, the battle had ended long ago, and the St. Jim's juniors had departed long ago. But Baggy did not know that. He had not expected them to do the job so swiftly, and he had quite failed to hear Tom Merry's whistle.

So Baggy, feeling in need of a rest after his exertions, sat with his back against a packing-case, and waited for the whistle to go, blissfully ignorant that it had already been sounded.

After that he didn't remember anything. But as he

blinked about him now, in the daylight, with the sun streaming through the crack in the tent door, he realised with deep dismay that he must have fallen asleep.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Baggy again. "What shall I do? How the thump am I to get out of this hole? If I'm found here—"

Baggy shuddered.

At his feet was the pocket-torch he had used the night before—it was D'Arcy's property—and pocketing this, Baggy rolled over to the tent door and peeped out.

It was a glorious morning, fresh and breezy, with the bright sun shining and glimmering on the white tents of the encampment. But Baggy had no eyes for scenery, and was not interested in atmospheric conditions. He only wanted to see if anyone was astir yet.

He peered out cautiously, and then he groaned.

The camp was astir. On every side fellows were leaving their tents, with raincoats and dressing-gowns over their shoulders. The morning air resounded with cheery voices and laughter.

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy.

over the top of the packing-case at the Rookwood fat youth. Baggy Trimble and Tubby Muffin had much in common—a great deal in common—and Baggy guessed at once that Tubby Muffin was about to make a surreptitious raid on the food-store whilst his fellow Rookwooders were bathing in the briny.

But Tubby was a Rookwooder and an enemy, and Baggy did not forget his danger.

Scarcely daring to breathe, he watched as Tubby crossed to a case of condensed milk, and, prising up the lid, he drew out a tin. Then from his pocket he drew a tin-opener, and, opening the tin, began to devour the contents, using a fat and not over-clean finger for the purpose.

Then, licking his fat lips with satisfaction, the food-raider started on a second tin, and after that a third. Then, his appetite for condensed milk apparently satisfied, Tubby started on a tin of biscuits.

The sight was almost too much for Baggy Trimble. Though he had gorged to his heart's content only a few hours earlier, he had awakened ravenous, and he was just wondering whether he dare reveal himself, and trust to Muffin's

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

No. 2.—Meeting a New Boy.



When summer sunshine starts to glow
On the pleasant, peaceful scene;
And flannelled figures, to and fro,
Go flitting o'er the green;
When schoolboy cricketers rejoice,
And all are blithe and gay,
We quake to hear the master's voice:
"A new boy comes to-day!"

"His train arrives at four o'clock;
I wish him to be met."
This statement gives us quite a shock
And causes keen regret.
Our cricket match must be deferred,
And we must haste away.
Because the master's voice is heard:
"A new boy comes to-day!"

Tom Merry groans a dismal groan,
Manners is making faces;
Blake moans a melancholy moan,
While Gussy gives grimaces.
"Bai Jose, it really is too bad
To interrupt our play!
Why can't the new chap—thought-
less lad—
Awake some othah day?"

But masters' wishes must be met
As well as the newcomer!
We cannot blame the fellow; yet
Why should he come in summer?
It would be more appropriate
To come on Christmas Day,
Arriving here in lonely state
When all the school's away!

We don our blazers and depart
Upon our thankless mission:
The train rolls in; a youngster
smart
Then dawns upon our vision.
"My name," says he, "is Guy le
Grand;
It's good of you to meet me.
Is there a bunshop close at hand?
If so, I'll let you treat me!"

With feelings far too deep for
speech,
We lead him to the shop,
Where Master Guy eats many a
peach
And quaffs much ginger-pop.
At length we march him to the
school,
And recommence our play;
And those words haunt us, as a
rule:
"A new boy comes to-day!"



NEXT WEEK

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He watched in deep dismay, and then, as the stream of fellows began to slacken his hopes rose. Presently a lull came, and Baggy caught his breath. There wasn't a soul to be seen in the camp now—and the store-tent was scarcely twenty yards from the camp entrance.

Dare he risk it?

Even as he debated the question Baggy gave a gasp and drew back suddenly.

Round the corner of the tent in which he was hiding a figure had appeared—the figure of a fat and podgy junior. Baggy recognised him in a flash, but he did not wait for the other to recognise him in turn.

He dodged back into the tent like lightning, and dropped behind a large, empty packing-case that stood on its side close by. The next moment the fat Rookwood junior slipped into the store-tent.

It was Tubby Muffin, the Falstaff of the Rookwood Fourth Form, and, from the stealthy manner in which Tubby Muffin sneaked into the tent it was very obvious that he was up to no good there.

Despite his danger, Baggy almost grinned as he peered

own fear of discovery to save him, when the question was settled for him in a startling manner.

Quite suddenly the case against which he was leaning slid away, and Baggy sprawled almost at the feet of Tubby Muffin.

That fat youth gave a startled yelp and almost jumped out of his skin. He stared, transfixed, and then he opened his mouth to yell.

But Baggy Trimble was too quick for him.

The St. Jim's Falstaff was not a fighting man by any means, and he would not have tackled even a fat funk like Muffin in the ordinary way. But he was desperate now.

He was up again in a flash, and he jumped at Muffin, clapping a fat hand over that youth's capacious mouth, and strangling his startled yell.

"Stop it!" gasped Baggy desperately. "Don't you make a row, Muffin, you rotter! If you do, I'll tell 'em what you were up to, you rotten sneak!"

"Yooooop! M-mum-mum!" gurgled Tubby Muffin. "G-gug-gug! Grooooh! M-mum-mum! Help!"

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Suddenly Tubby Muffin succeeded in wrenching his mouth clear of Baggy's fat hand, and his gurgling and mumbling ended in a piercing yell for help.

It was enough for Baggy Trimble. He punched Tubby full on his podgy little nose, and then he jumped for the tent door in a frantic attempt to escape.

But the biscuit-tin was in the way, and Baggy tripped headlong over it, and this time he gave a yell as he thudded down.

"Oh! Wow!" wailed Tubby Muffin, clutching his nose. "Ow! Oh, you awful rotter! Why, I'll—I'll—"

Leaving his nose to take care of itself, Tubby Muffin scrambled up with battle in his eyes. That punch on the nose had hurt, and it had roused the fighting spirit in the Rookwood fat youth.

He rushed at Baggy Trimble just as that junior reached his feet, and in a trice the two were at grips, lurching about the tent in a deadly embrace.

The biscuit-tin went over, and the two fat youths trampled on the contents as they stumbled about, until suddenly Trimble tripped backwards over the tin itself, and he pulled Muffin over with him.

Unfortunately, there was a huge stack of sacks and boxes just behind them, and as the struggling forms cannoned against this the whole pile collapsed.

Crash! Thud! Clatter! Crash!

"Yaroooooh!"

"Yooooop!"

A case of tinned pears burst open, scattering its contents far and wide, and another case of apricots fell against Trimble's shin and toes. Naturally Trimble howled fiendishly.

But that was not all. On the top of the stack a sack of flour had been carelessly piled, and as this came down it caught Tubby Muffin a fearful thump on the head before it burst against the sharp corner of a box.

The white flour swept out in an avalanche, and as Trimble and Muffin were still clutched together just below, they got most of it, whilst the rest rose in clouds of flour-dust, enveloping them.

"Yaroooooh! Gug-gug-gug!"

"Oh crumbs! Groooooh!"

The rival fat youths would have been wiser to cease the battle after that, but they did not. Both were sorely hurt now, and both were too savagely desirous for vengeance to heed anything else just then.

They continued the battle with renewed ferocity, and they fairly wallowed in the flour and crushed biscuits as they rolled about the floor, punching away at each other with a right good will.

They were still punching away when the tent-flap was wrenched aside and several startled faces appeared there.

"Great Scott! What—what—"

"What the giddy thump! Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Newcome rushed into the tent, with Raby and Conroy and several other Rookwood Fourth-Formers close at their heels. They stared transfixed at the sight before them.

"Great pip!" gasped Raby, as he stared at the two flour-covered fat youths. "It—it's Muffin!"

"And that fat worm from St. Jim's—Trimble!" gurgled Conroy. "Oh, my only summer bonnet! Just look at them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood fellows roared with laughter. Muffin and Trimble certainly did look a sight. They ceased fighting now, and they scrambled to their feet, gasping and panting and covered from head to foot in flour and crumbs of biscuit.

"Ow!" gasped Trimble. "Ow-ow-ow! Oh dear!"

"Ow-wow-wow!" groaned Tubby Muffin. "Ow! Oh, the awful rotter! I say, you fellows, collar the cad—quick!"

But the "fellows" were not at all eager to do that. Smears of crimson showed against the floury features of the fat youths, and altogether they looked fearful sights. It was no wonder the Rookwood fellows kept their distance, though they did only wear coats over their bathing-costumes.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Newcome. "This takes the giddy bun! Come on—out of that, you fat rotters! Outside!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy Trimble.

He knew he was "for it" now. He followed Tubby Muffin as that fat youth rolled, groaning, out of the tent. But he got no chance to make a run for it—though he knew he could never hope to outdistance any of the Rookwooders.

As the two rolled out dismally, the rest of the juniors closed round them in a laughing crowd.

"Now, you fat chumps!" said Arthur Newcome, with a grim chuckle. "What does this mean?"

"I fancy I can guess that," chuckled Raby. "The fat thieves have been after the grub, of course!"

"But what is this fat worm Trimble doing here?" said Lovell blankly.

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"I say, I'll jolly soon tell you that!" wailed Tubby Muffin tearfully. "Oh, the awful beast! I found him in there, you fellows. I—I just happened to be passing—"

"You mean you just happened to go in after grub?" sniffed Lovell. "We know you, you fat thief!"

"Oh, I say, you know, Lovell—that's not true!" mumbled Muffin. "I just happened to be passing the tent, and I heard someone moving about inside. It sounded awfully suspicious to me, and—and I went inside to investigate. Then Trimble flew at me—"

"Oh, what an awful fibber!" snorted Trimble. He knew he was for it, and he meant to see that Muffin did not escape scot-free. "You came in after the grub, you rotter! I watched you scoffing tinned milk and biscuits!"

"That's more like it!" grinned Raby. "But how did you get in there, Trimble? That's what we want to know, my pippin!"

"Oh dear! I—I say, you chaps, it—it was like this," said Trimble. "I must have been kidnapped and drugged, I think! When I woke up I found myself in that tent. I must have been kidnapped and brought here in the night. That—that's it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that about beats Muffin's whopper!" grinned Conroy. "You fat—"

"It's true!" groaned Trimble desperately. "I tell you I haven't the faintest idea how I came to be in there. If you think I slipped in last night after the grub, and fell asleep, you're quite mistaken—quite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's pretty clear now, anyway!" chuckled Raby. "The fat worm must have come with Tom Merry & Co. last night, and slipped in after the grub. Then he must have fallen asleep, and— Hallo! Oh, good! Here's old Jimmy!"

"Good egg!"

There was an excited yell among the Rookwooders as two juniors came trotting up from the direction of the camp entrance at that moment. They were Jimmy Silver and Mornington, and they were panting and breathless.

"Oh, good!" repeated Raby. "Great Scott! We were just beginning to worry about you, Jimmy. What happened? They've let you go, then?"

"Yes—blow them!" grinned Jimmy Silver ruefully. "We've been tied up in one of their rotten tents all night, and they've let us go on condition we sent a chap named Trimble back. Have you fellows collared— Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver suddenly sighted Trimble and Muffin then, and he nearly fell down. But he roared with laughter as his chums explained the position.

"Well, the fat rotters!" he grinned, looking from Trimble's dismal face to the equally dismal face of Muffin, and then glancing into the store-tent. "Great pip! What a mess they've made!"

"What shall we do with the fat rascal?" asked Lovell grimly.

"We can't do anything," grinned Silver. "I promised to send him home straight away."

"Yes, but—"

"But I didn't say how I would return him," grinned Jimmy, his eyes glimmering with mischief. "Look here, I've got an idea. I notice there's a big, empty packing-case in there. Well, why not shove Trimble inside, and return him to his camp in that farm-cart? We'll address it to Tom Merry, and it'll be quite a surprise for him."

"Ha, ha! Good egg!"

"We'll do it, Jimmy!"

"Right!"

Jimmy Silver rushed away, while his chums set to work with a will. Some of them guarded the apprehensive Baggy Trimble, whilst the rest brought out the large packing-case and got the lid ready. They were just bundling the howling Trimble into the case when Jimmy came back from the camp fence, on the other side of which a farm-cart was standing.

"All serene!" he chuckled. "I've tipped the farm-hand a bob, and he's going to deliver the case at the St. Jim's camp at once. Buck up—before the breakfast bugle goes!"

"What-ho!"

Despite Trimble's howls of alarm, he was held down in the case whilst the lid was nailed on and a rope passed round it and made secure. Then Jimmy Silver addressed it to Tom Merry, and the case was carried round to the camp entrance, with Baggy's yells sounding in muffled accents from within it.

A yokel was waiting there with a horse and cart, and the packing-case was lifted on. By this time a big crowd had assembled, and as the cart rumbled away the hapless Baggy's muffled yells were answered with roars of laughter from the Rookwooders.

"Well, that's one little jape to be going on with!" said

Jimmy Silver, becoming grim. "I expect Tom Merry will be surprised when he gets that. And now—Hullo! 'There's the giddy breakfast bugle! Blow! Anyway, we'll tell you fellows after brekker how we were collared last night. And, by jingo, we'll make those St. Jim's chaps squirm for last night's affair! They scored for once; but we'll score next time!"

"Yes, rather!" Jimmy Silver & Co. were looking very grim and determined as they went in to breakfast. St. Jim's had scored undoubtedly; but the Rookwood juniors were grimly determined to get even.

CHAPTER 6.

Poor old Baggy!

"THAT fat ass Trimble returned yet?" Tom Merry asked the question as he met Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy outside the big marquee where the school congregated for meals. The juniors had not long returned from their bathe, and all of them looked in the pink of condition, in addition to looking cheery and gleeful. They were still feeling triumphant over the victory of the night before.

Blake shook his head and grinned. "Haven't seen the fat ass yet," he remarked carelessly. "He'll be here in time for brekker, never-fear." "It's rum, though," said Tom Merry, frowning. "If Silver and Mornington had kept their word, he should have been here by this. I—I suppose it's pretty certain he was collared last night by those Rookwood chaps?" "Must have been," said Blake. "Blow the fat rotter, anyway. They can keep him for ever, for all I care!" "Hear, hear!" "Yaas, wathah! They are vewy welcome to Twimble," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Still, it is wathah stwange he hasn't turned up yet." "Perhaps they've asked him to stay to breakfast," remarked Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The big marquee was nearly full as the chums of the School House at St. Jim's strode in, and very soon afterwards breakfast was in full swing.

Dr. Holmes was breakfasting in his own private tent, but Mr. Railton and the rest of the masters were present, and, excepting for the big tent and the rough trestle-tables, the meal seemed little different from a usual breakfast at St. Jim's.

The fellows, however, were allowed a little more latitude, and they laughed and chatted cheerfully as they discussed the victory of the night before.

There was a sudden hush, however, as a figure suddenly appeared, darkening the sunlit entrance of the tent.

It was that of a farm-hand, and on his back was a huge packing-case.

"Hullo!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Who's this merchant?"

The farm-hand seemed rather taken aback as he hesitated, surveying the rows of schoolboys in wonderment. He had evidently brought the case there, seeing it was the largest tent in the camp, and possibly thinking it was a store-tent.

He had obviously not expected to be greeted by curious stares from hundreds of youthful eyes.

"My heye!" he gasped.



Baggy Trimble and Tubby Muffin, wallowing in flour and crushed biscuits, were punching away at each other with right good will when the tent flap was suddenly wrenched aside and Arthur Newcome and several other Rookwood Fourth-Formers looked in. They stared transfixed at the sight before them. "Great pip!" gasped Raby. "It's Muffin and that fat worm from St. Jim's—Trimble!" (See Chapter 5.)

With the heavy packing-case still on his back, the farm carter blinked about him hesitatingly.

At a sign from Mr. Railton, Kildare rose from his place and crossed to him.

"Well, what is it?" he asked. "Is that case to be delivered here?"

"Which it's addressed to a bloke named Merry, and which it's bloomin' 'eavy!" grunted the man. "'Ere, help me down with the thing, mate!"

Before Kildare could reply the man twisted himself round and began to lower the case—expecting Kildare to take it, apparently.

There was nothing else for Kildare to do but help, and as the man crouched he grasped the bottom end of the box. He had not judged it to be so heavy, however, and as the man let go the case crashed to the ground.

"Yaroooooh!"

There came a sudden, muffled howl from the packing-case, and Kildare leaped back, startled.

"Which there's summat alive in that there box!" grunted the carter, mopping his heated brow. "It's bin yelpin' and gruntin' summat awful! Jest you listen, mister!"

To prove his words the man grasped the case and turned it over with a crash.

This time a most terrific howl came from the box.

"Yaroooooh! Ow-ow-yow! Lemme out, you awful beasts! Yoooooop!"

"Oh, my only hat!" murmured Lowther. "That sounds like Trimble!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Tom Merry.

He had heard the carter say the box was for him, and he guessed what it meant.

Mr. Railton came rustling up.

"What is it, Kildare?" he said, in astonishment.

"There seems to be someone in the case," said Kildare, who was grinning now. "Shall I open it, sir?"

"Bless my soul! Yes, yes, open it at once, Kildare! This is most remarkable!"

Darrell and Monteith came to Kildare's aid, and together they started to open the great packing-case. The rope was

soon wrenched off, and then Kildare tore off the lid with a crowbar Monteith had fetched.

By this time almost every fellow in the big marquee was on his feet. The next instant the silence was shattered by a perfect howl of laughter, as the fat, flour-covered form of Baggy Trimble popped up from the case like a great, fat jack-in-the-box.

"Trimble!"

"My hat! It is Trimble!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble's fat and flour-streaked face was a picture as he blinked about him and saw where the carter had brought him.

"Oh crumbs!" he groaned.

His wrath vanished suddenly, and he blinked apprehensively at Mr. Railton.

"Bless my soul!" gasped that startled master. "Trimble, so—so it is you, Trimble! Good gracious!"

Mr. Latham left his place and came hurrying up. He stared as if thunderstruck at his fat pupil.

"Trimble!" he gasped. "This—this is amazing! I had already marked you as absent from breakfast, wretched boy!"

"Merry," said Mr. Railton, turning suddenly towards the Shell table, "this case was addressed to you. Do you know anything of this—this amazing matter?"

Tom Merry got to his feet and tried to assume an innocent expression.

"No, sir, nothing at all!" he said meekly. "I don't know why it should be addressed to me!"

This was quite true, as Tom Merry only had his suspicions on that point.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, his mouth twitching slightly as he surveyed Trimble's doleful features. "Possibly Trimble himself can enlighten us as to what this astonishing affair means. Trimble, how came you to be sent here in that packing-case? And how came you in that state, boy?"

Trimble stood up in the case and groaned. He wanted badly to tell who had put him in the case, but he dared not; he knew what to expect from his schoolfellows if he gave the Rookwood jokers away. Moreover, he had his own fat skin to consider. If the Housemaster knew he had been raiding the Rookwood food supplies—

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble. "I—I don't really know, sir! I—I just went out for an early morning walk, and—and some fellows kidnapped me!"

"Kidnapped you?" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir!" said Trimble, gaining courage. "It—it was like this, sir. I was just walking along the—the cliffs, and some fellows—some fearful ruffians—rushed at me and kidnapped me and shoved me in that box!"

"But—but the flour, boy—"

"They—they shoved me in a flour-sack first, sir," gasped Baggy. "And then they shoved me in that box, and—and threw the bag away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter at that—a roar that Mr. Railton hushed instantly by raising his hand. It was only too obvious to the fellows that Baggy was romancing. It was very obvious to Mr. Railton also that Trimble was not telling the truth. The Housemaster knew full well of the rivalry between Rookwood and St. Jim's, and he had his own views as to what had happened to Trimble, and who had put him in the packing-case.

Moreover, there was the label addressed to Tom Merry.

But breakfast was getting cold, and Mr. Railton disliked a cold breakfast.

"Trimble," he gasped, "it is perfectly obvious to me that you are not speaking the truth. I am well aware of the feud between the boys of Rookwood camp and the boys of this camp, and I have no doubt that this is what you term a rag—a practical joke played by the Rookwood juniors."

"You—you see, sir—"

"I do see, Trimble!" snapped Mr. Railton, though his eyes were twinkling. "You are clearly the victim of a practical joke. So long as these jokes remain comparatively harmless, however, I shall take no steps in the matter. You will go to your tent and change your clothes without delay."

"Oh, ye-e-es, sir!"

Amidst numerous subdued chuckles Baggy Trimble climbed out of the packing-case and rolled away. He was aching in every limb, and he felt he had been through a mangle. But he was only too thankful to get off so lightly, for all that.

Tom Merry & Co. breathed in great relief again, as did all the fellows who had taken part in the rag of the night before. The affair might easily have leaked out had the egregious Baggy Trimble been cross-examined.

As Baggy rolled away, Mr. Railton ordered Kildare to take the case outside, and then returned to his place, and the meal went on. The carter had already departed. He

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had seen there was no chance of a tip, and he had discreetly retired.

It was not until breakfast was over that Trimble turned up again, and his feelings were too deep for words when he found there was no breakfast for him. But Tom Merry & Co., who soon got the story of his adventures from him, and who roared over it, took pity on the hapless fat youth, and found him some biscuits and chocolate. And though Baggy was neither grateful nor satisfied, he devoured them, and had to make the best of things.

CHAPTER 7.

Unpleasant News!

"YAWOOOOOH!"

"Grrrr!"

"Yawoooooh! Yoooop! Oh, bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"What the thump—"

"Oh, bai Jove! Go away, you wotten bwute! Wally, you young wascal—"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the shining light and ornament of the School House at St. Jim's, and just now of the St. Jim's School camp at Windyridge.

There was no doubt about that. The dulcet tones of Arthur Augustus were unmistakable, and could have been heard a mile away.

Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners, who were strolling round the camp after dinner, heard them, and stopped.

"What the thump is the matter with old Gussy?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Hark at him!"

"And hark at Pongo!" chuckled Lowther. "I fancy I can guess what's going on. Pongo is wiping his paws on Gussy's bags. That dog will be the death of poor old Gussy."

The Terrible Three chuckled, and ran round the tent behind which the shrill barking of Pongo, and the dulcet tones of Arthur Augustus were proceeding.

As they expected, they found the swell of the Fourth jumping about, trying vainly to avoid the attentions of Pongo, Wally D'Arcy's pet mongrel, though Wally never would admit that he was a mongrel.

At all events, Pongo was there. He was leaping up madly at Arthur Augustus, who was dancing about like a cat on hot bricks in his efforts to keep the mischievous Pongo off his natty, well-creased trousers.

A few yards away, Wally D'Arcy, with a couple of his chums of the Third, were standing doubled up with laughter.

"Gweat Scott! Wally, you uttah young wascal, call your wretched dog off, will you? Oh, bai Jove! The bwute will uttally wuin my twousahs! Go away! Shoo, you bwute! Tom Mewwy, pway dwag this feahful animal away!" wailed Arthur Augustus, suddenly catching sight of the Terrible Three.

"Here," bawled Wally, "leave old Pongo alone, you Shell chaps! Let the old chap have a bit of fun, if he wants it. It's Gussy's tie—"

"You young wuffian—"

"If Gussy will wear jazz ties, it's his own look-out if a decent, respectable dog like Pongo objects to them," snorted Wally. "He only wants to chew it up. Chuck him the tie, Gus, and he'll leave you alone!"

"You impudent young wascal—"

"Rats! Impudent yourself to wear an awful tie like that," jeered Wally. "Your dashed waistcoat is gaudy enough, without wearing jazz ties."

"It isn't a jazz tie!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Are you goin' to call the wretched bwute off, Wally?"

"Not much! Chuck him the tie, you old ass, and he'll leave you alone then."

"You—you—"

"Or chuck him the tie-pin," suggested Wally, grinning. "He likes bright things, does Pongo. In fact, it may be the tie-pin he's after."

"Call him off!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, still dancing about, and almost in hysterics now. "Oh, bai Jove! Yoooop! Wally, you little villain— Oh, cwumbs!"

Crash!

"Yarooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus was down. He tripped backwards over a tent-peg, and measured his length on the trampled grass. Pongo gave a shrill yelp of triumph, and immediately walked over him with his muddy paws. Then he made a snap, either at Gussy's tie or his tie-pin—it was not clear which.

At the critical moment, however, Tom Merry ran to the rescue of Arthur Augustus, and dragged the excited Pongo away. Fearing harm to his pet, Wally D'Arcy then dashed up and took charge of Pongo.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally & Co.

Arthur Augustus scrambled up, breathless, and panting, and wrathly. He made a rush at his young brother, and that young rascal took to his heels, with Pongo yelping excitedly in his arms, and with his laughing chums at his heels.

"Hold on, Gussy!" laughed Tom Merry. "Let the little scamp go. He'll only lead you a darce."

"Yes, think of your dignity, old chap," urged Lowther. Arthur Augustus thought of his dignity, and paused instead of rushing in chase of the fags.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped. "That young wascal wequires a jolly good hidin'. He has no wespect whatever for his eldahs. And as for that w'etched dog—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus on the subject of Pongo for the moment.

"Never mind, Gussy," said Tom Merry soothingly. "He's done no harm, after all, and he doesn't bite—"

"Harm!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Look at the state of my clobber. My trowsahs wumped and mudday; my waistcoat uttably wuined, and my tie torn. It is a vewy, vewy good thing I was wearin' my panama and not my toppah, or that would have been wuined, too. As it is—"

"Hallo, what's up now, Gussy?" asked Blake, coming along just then with Herries and Digby. "Is our tame lunatic worryin' you chaps?" added Blake affably, turning to the Terrible Three.

"Weally, Blake—"

"No, not at all," laughed Tom Merry. "It's old Pongo that's been worryin' Gussy."

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. But he decided not to notice Blake's reference to a "tame lunatic."

"That feahful animal is the wovwy of my life!" he said wrathfully. "It has no wegard whatever for a fellow's trowsahs, and I am absolutely fed-up with it, bai Jove! It was bad enough at St. Jim's, but it is allowed far more latitude heah. Towsah, Hewwies' wotten animal, was bad enough, but—"

"You leave old Towser alone!" snorted Herries. "If you dare to call Towser a rotten animal, Gussy—"

"I withdwaw that wemark, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus, "though he weally is a wotten bwute, but not such a nuisance as Pongo. Pongo is as uttably gwaceless and twoublesome as his mastah, bai Jove! I do not wish to be hard on Pongo, but if Wally doesn't keep him undah bettah contwol, I shall be obliged to— Bai Jove! That w'etched animal again!"

It was Pongo again. A sudden commotion had sounded near the camp entrance, and then the juniors caught sight of Pongo, who was barking and snapping round the heels of two juniors who had just entered the camp.

"Great pip! It—it's Jimmy Silver and his pals!" gasped Blake. "Come on!"

The juniors followed Blake with a rush as he sped towards the camp entrance. That Jimmy Silver & Co. had dared to walk into their camp was amazing, especially after what had happened.

Then the juniors understood as Jimmy Silver started to wave a white handkerchief on seeing the St. Jim's juniors racing up.

"White flag!" grinned Tom Merry. "What's this visit mean?"

Wally D'Arcy was just dragging his pet away from the rather apprehensive Rookwooders as the chums of the School House rushed up. There were five of the Rookwood fellows—Jimmy Silver, Raby, Newcome, Arthur Edward Lovell, and Mornington.

Tom Merry was struck at once by the serious looks on their faces.

"Hallo! What do you fellows want here?" asked Tom as they surrounded the five. "Anything the matter?"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Yes, something is the matter," he said grimly. "Can you fellows take us somewhere where we can talk? It's pax, of course, for the time being."

"Oh, yes. Come along to our tent," said Tom.

The Rookwood fellows followed Tom as he walked away towards his tent, and the rest followed, wondering and just a trifle uneasy, as Tom himself was. Was it possible that there had been serious trouble at the Rookwood camp over the rag of the night before? They knew that Dr. Chisholm, the Rookwood Head, was rather a tartar at times.

But it was not that, as the St. Jim's fellows soon discovered.

"It's rather a rotten business," said Jimmy Silver slowly, as the crowd entered the tent, "and we don't like having to come to you about it. But—well, something's got to be done. The fact is that during the time Morny and I were prisoners in your camp a quid belonging to Morny has mysteriously vanished."

"My hat!"

The St. Jim's fellows looked grave. They also looked just a trifle angry. That they had ragged the tent the night

before, and that now Jimmy Silver & Co. had come to them regarding the money looked as if—

Jimmy Silver read the looks on the St. Jim's juniors' faces, and he hurried to explain.

"We don't think any fellow belonging to St. Jim's has taken it, of course," he said hastily. "You can take our word for that. But the money must have gone some time during the rumpus or immediately before, and we thought it may have been brought away by accident. It was in a wallet with letters and things."

"Phew!"

"Rotten!"

Tom Merry set his lips.

"Then I think I can answer you right now, Silver," he said coldly. "We've no thieves at St. Jim's, and if any fellow had brought the wallet away by accident he would have discovered it by this time and returned it."

"I know that, ass!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "But— Well, can't you see that we have to take such a matter up and make inquiries. It was suggested that all our fellows' tents should be searched, and they all agreed to it at once. They were searched before dinner, but nothing was found. The wallet has absolutely vanished."

"Who saw it last?" asked Tom Merry abruptly.

"Morny did himself. He placed it on the table in the tent, and he swears it was there when he left with me to play that bull's head trick on you."

"That's right," said Mornington, who was looking more bored than worried. "I left it on the table—I know that quite well. Careless of me, of course, but—"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyway, it's gone now, blow it!" grunted Arthur Edward Lovell. "Morny deserves to lose it, but the matter can't be allowed to rest there, of course."

"Certainly it can't," said Tom Merry frankly. "I suppose you've done quite right in coming here about it. We were in the tent, and I myself touched the ink on the table. My hat! I believe I remember seeing a wallet on the table when I came to think."

"You—you do?"

"Yes; just before the table went over," said Tom, frowning. "You're sure you searched the tent thoroughly?"

"Yes. We've even taken the floorboards up and searched every inch and every likely place. It's not there. But look here," said Jimmy Silver, his usually cheery face clouded. "I want you fellows to understand clearly that we none of us think it was stolen by any St. Jim's fellow. We know it couldn't have been. But we had to come and inquire. We really came to see just the fellows who entered our tent, to ask them if they saw it, and that's all."

"I'm certain I saw one on the table," said Tom grimly. "But I've seen nothing of it since. I can tell you no more than that."

"There—there's that fat chap—Trimble," growled Lovell. "We found him in our camp this morning—in the grub-tent. He'd been there all night, we believe. He ought to be asked."

"Trimble was in your store-tent all night," said Tom, smiling grimly. "He came with us and sneaked in there for a free feed. Then he fell asleep and slept all night in there. He could scarcely have taken it, could he? In any case, the fat ass isn't as bad as that by a long way."

"It's rotten," said Jimmy Silver gloomily. "And it's rotten for us to have to come to you chaps."

"It's only right," said Tom Merry. "And we'll do our best to help—you can rely on that. I'll tackle every single fellow about it as well as Trimble."

"That's good enough, then," returned Jimmy Silver, half smiling. "Let's hope it turns up soon, anyway. But I'm certain it can't have been pinched by any St. Jim's chap or Rookwood chap, and this is going to make no difference between us."

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"No reason why it should."

"None at all," said Jimmy Silver, smiling again. "I mentioned it just as a warning. You fellows scored last night, but our turn will come. So mind your eye! We'll put the kybosh on you fairly next time. Come on, you fellows! We'll get back now, or we'll be late for afternoon class."

And with that Jimmy Silver & Co. took their departure, being escorted safely from the camp by Tom Merry & Co. But when the St. Jim's juniors returned their faces were sombre and troubled. They were quite sure that Jimmy Silver and his own chums were quite sincere in their belief that no St. Jim's fellow had actually stolen the wallet, but at the same time they knew how strange it looked. They themselves had been in the tent—had ragged it—and Tom Merry himself had admitted having seen the wallet. It certainly was worrying.

CHAPTER 8.

A "Plot" Overheard!

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus made that ejaculation in tones of deep dismay.

The swell of the Fourth of St. Jim's was leaning gracefully and negligently against the little shop counter in the small general grocery shop in Windyridge Village. Besides selling many things in the grocery line, and the ironmongery line, and nearly every other line, the small store also boasted a small table where one could sit and eat stale buns and drink lemonade.

Arthur Augustus had called in on this bright summer's afternoon for a bun and a lemonade. It was not the first visit the swell of the Fourth had made to the little village shop during the last few days by any means. As a matter of fact, there was rather a pretty girl in charge of the shop, and Arthur Augustus was a trifle "smitten" as Monty Lowther had put it. Arthur Augustus was very susceptible to the charms of the ladies.

It was while he was leaning against the counter, chatting to this young lady, that Arthur Augustus suddenly broke off the conversation with that alarmed ejaculation. Happening to glance through the window, he had seen four school-boys approaching the shop.

The four were Jimmy Silver, Raby, Newcome, and Arthur Edward Lovell—known at Rookwood School as the Fistical Four.

Naturally, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rather dismayed at the sight. The Fistical Four were very decent fellows, but they were rather too apt to rag Arthur Augustus—especially when they met him alone. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's innocent and unsuspecting nature was always fair game for the cheery Rookwood jokers.

Arthur Augustus had already found that out, and he was suspicious of them now. He did not want stale jam-tarts to be stuffed down his collar, nor lemonade to be poured over his aristocratic hair.

Hence his apprehension.

"Oh, bai Jove!" repeated Gussy. "I am fairly twapped! Those Rookwood wottahs have no wespect for a fellow's clobber or his feelin's."

"What is the matter?" asked the young lady behind the counter, in alarm. "You—"

"It is nothin' vewy sewious, miss," said Arthur Augustus, though he certainly looked as if it was. "There are some fellows comin' here who are wathah wude and wough; I would wathah not meet them, bai Jove! I wondah—Bai Jove!" broke off the swell, suddenly sighting a stack of tinned stuff on the far counter behind him. "I wondah if you would be kind enough to allow me to hide behind that stack of pwovisions, miss?"

The young lady had already seen the four outside. They had stopped just outside the doorway, presumably to look in the window. She grasped the situation at once, and lifted the flap of the counter swiftly. Arthur Augustus' Chesterfieldian politeness, and his never-failing good nature, had made an impression on the young lady, and she rather liked him—as everyone else did who met him.

"Quick!" she murmured, smiling. "Here they are now."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was round the shop counter in a flash, and he managed to hide himself behind the stack of provisions just as the door-bell clanged, and the Rookwood juniors entered.

All of them were smiling as they glanced round the little shop—a fact Arthur Augustus might have wondered at had he seen it.

"Good-afternoon, miss!" began Jimmy Silver, raising his straw hat politely. "Four lemonades, please!"

"Yes, sir!"

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The young lady poured out four glasses of lemonade, and while she did so the Rookwood fellows talked—as if continuing their conversation.

"It's jolly risky, of course," remarked Jimmy Silver. "If the Head got to know that twenty of us were breaking bounds to-night to go to the pictures at Seamount—"

"Jolly risky!" agreed Lovell. "I don't think it wise, Jimmy. Why not go two or three at a time night by night—"

"More risky still that way," said Silver emphatically. "The beaks are bound to tumble if fellows are breaking bounds night after night. No; my way's the best way; let us go twenty at a time—say once a week."

"It means walking home, and it means getting in about midnight," warned Raby.

"Well, what does that matter?" grinned Jimmy Silver. "It'll be a jolly walk along the cliffs at midnight, and it's moonlight these nights. It'll be ripping fun. Anyway, we're going to-night, and twenty of the Modern Fourth next time. It'll be a jolly tramp there and back without the fun of seeing the pictures."

"Yes, rather!"



Silence reigned as Kildare tore off the lid of the packing-case. The perfect howl of laughter as the fat, flour-covered form of Baggy Trimple is Trimble! "Ha, ha, ha!" "Bless my eyes!"

"There's one thing we mustn't forget, though," said Raby. "We mustn't let a word of it reach the ears of those St. Jim's chaps."

"My hat! Rather not!"

"If they got to know twenty of us were leaving the camp to-night, they'd raid us again for a cert," went on Raby. "And with our force weakened by twenty of our best men, they'd simply do as they liked."

"Oh, quite!" said Jimmy Silver. "But they won't know; how could they ever get to know?"

"They couldn't, of course," agreed Newcome. "It's safe enough. Well, shall we be getting on?"

"Right-ho!"

The Rookwood juniors drained their glasses and left the shop. Outside in the village street all four chuckled deeply as they strolled away.

"Think old Gussy swallowed it?" asked Raby.

"Of course!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "It was jolly lucky you spotted him going in that shop, Lovell. I couldn't for the life of me think of a safe way of letting the enemy get hold of the yarn that twenty of us were leaving the camp to-night. That's done it, though. I knew he'd see

us if we showed ourselves at the window, and I knew he'd hide."

"Worked like a charm," laughed Newcome. "He'll go back and tell his pals, and they're bound to come and raid us to-night."

"I say, let's hide and see if D'Arcy comes along soon," suggested Raby. "If he does we'll know he's swallowed it."

"Good wheeze!"

The Rookwood juniors had reached the sandy lane leading back from the village to the sea, and they followed Raby's suggestion and hid behind the hedge. They had scarcely done so when the form of Arthur Augustus came into sight, and he was running hard.

"It's all serene," chortled Jimmy Silver. "Here he comes in a fine staw, and—Great pip! Here comes Merry and his lot!"

"Good egg!"

The Rookwooders chuckled as they suddenly sighted Tom Merry & Co., with Blake, Herries, and Digby, strolling towards the village. As they expected, the St. Jim's juniors met the running D'Arcy almost opposite to the spot where



The next moment, however, the silence was shattered by a giddy Trimble was disclosed to view. "Trimble!" "My hat! It my soul!" gasped Mr. Railton. (See Chapter 6.)

Jimmy Silver & Co. were hiding. The voices of the St. Jim's fellows reached them clearly.

"Hallo! Here's old Gussy now," said Blake wrathfully. "You've been a thumping long time, ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Have you got the chocolates and the biscuits, Gussy?"

"No. You see—"

"Well, you burbling chump!" snorted Blake. "What the thump have you been doing, and why are you coming back—"

"He's been spoonin' with the girl in the grocery shop," grinned Lowther. "Dear old Gussy, always—"

"Weally, Lowthab, I vepudiate the suggestion!" said Gussy wrathfully. "Howevah, pway don't wot, deah boys! I have some intewestin' news for you!"

"Cough it up, then, dummy!"

Arthur Augustus did so, and as they listened the St. Jim's campers looked first surprised, and then gleeful.

"I wathah fancied it would intewest you," smiled Arthur Augustus. "It was quite by chance that I happened to see them approachin' the shop, bai Jove! I came away the moment I felt it safe, and I was just wushin' to find you."

"Good man, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, his brow reflective,

"This is a chance, and no mistake! As Raby says, with twenty of the little fellows out of the way we'll have them at our mercy. And we'll leave some nice surprises for those twenty chaps when they return. I vote we rag their quarters—put nettles and stuff in their beds, and all that. Well, what about it, chaps?"

"Yes, rather! We'll do it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good! Then we'll go straight back now and start getting ready for the raid, my pippins. We've already scored, but we'll show those Rookwood cripples that it wasn't only a flash in the pan."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And with that Tom Merry led his men back towards the St. Jim's camp at a trot, all of them chortling gleefully. Nothing more had been discovered regarding the missing note-case and money, but Jimmy Silver had very soon proved that they meant it when they said that the unpleasant affair would make no difference to the ragging and rivalry.

Only the previous night Tom Merry & Co. had discovered—very painfully—that some miscreants had filled their beds with nettles and smothered their pillows with pepper, and they knew Jimmy Silver & Co. had already started on the warpath again.

And now Tom Merry thought he saw a chance to score.

He would have known it was a very slender chance had he only seen what happened after they had gone. From the hedge emerged the Rookwood fellows, and they doubled up and roared with laughter.

"What a scream!" chuckled Jimmy Silver at last. "I never imagined they would swallow the yarn quite so easily as that! But they've swallowed it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now we've got to get back and make preparations for their reception to-night—both at our camp and at their own camp when they leave ours. Come on, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

And, laughing uproariously, Jimmy Silver and his merry men started back at a run for their own camp. There promised to be queer happenings at the rival camps that night.

CHAPTER 9.

Rather a Surprise!

"READY, you fellows?"

"Ready—eh, ready!" quoth Figgins.

"Charge, Chester—charge!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"No rotting now!" said Tom Merry warningly. "This is serious business, and we mustn't make a muck of things. All the chaps here—Shell and Fourth?"

"And Third?" added Wally D'Arcy cheekily. "Don't you forget we're the giddy Guards in this rabble of an army! If it wasn't for us—"

"Life would be worth living!" added Lowther. "Yes, we all seem to be here, O captain!"

"Excepting Trimble and Skimpole," added Blake, with a chuckle. "We've tied Baggy to a tent-pole, so that he won't get at the grub while we're away. Skimmy's going to sit up and read Professor Balmyscrumpet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush. Not so much giddy row!" warned Tom Merry. "Now you fellows know what to do? So many to each tent, and don't rush in until I give the word! Got the nettles?"

"Yes; we've got a giddy sackful here!"

"And the pepper and flour?"

"Yes; all nicely tied up in little paper bags."

"Good! Those fellows armed with squirts of ink must mind they make good use of them, of course. The nettles we'll reserve for the beds of the fellows who're away. We sha'n't need pillows or anything else on this job, I fancy. Now," added Tom Merry, "if you fellows are ready we'll start. March!"

And the St. Jim's raiders marched in a chuckling, merry crowd. It was a bright moonlight night, and much more caution was necessary this time. But, to their surprise, they found no sentries on guard in the enemy camp when they arrived there.

"Getting slack!" chuckled Glyn.

"Don't expect another raid so soon after the other, I suppose," grinned Tom Merry. "Well, they're going to get what they don't expect!"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

The raiders advanced cautiously into the enemy camp. Not a light glimmered anywhere. Carefully avoiding the tents of seniors and masters—luckily those were some distance from the juniors' quarters—the raiders scouted ahead and took up their positions outside the tents of their Rookwood rivals.

Tom Merry allowed them five minutes, and then gave the signal—a low whistle.

As it rang out the St. Jim's raiders plunged into the enemy tents.

What happened next was not at all clear to anyone concerned. It all seemed like a horrible nightmare to the St. Jim's juniors.

For Jimmy Silver & Co. had spent quite a little time preparing for the raiders, and had a little surprise for them. It was the St. Jim's raiders who got what they did not expect.

Inside each tent door they had placed large zinc bathtubs, and each tub was filled to the brim with a conglomeration of water and flour and ink.

Splash, splash, splash!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip! Look out, chaps!"

"Yooooop!"

"Yarroooooogh!"

The next moment the air resounded with splashes, followed instantly by yells of alarm and sounds of stumbling and tumbling and crashing.

The foremost raider to charge into each tent went full tilt into the flat baths, and as he sprawled his comrades, unable to pull up, sprawled over him.

The horrible concoction in the baths splashed up and over them as they struggled and sprawled over the baths in the tent doorways.

But that was not all, unhappily. As they struggled the front part of each tent was drawn back, and from the dark interiors of the tents Rookwood fellows swarmed. They were armed with pillows and bolsters, and they started to belabour the unlucky St. Jim's fellows with a right good will.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Yarrooooooh! Oh crikey!"

"Oh, my hat! Yooooop!"

All along the double line of tents sounded howls of woe and the thudding of the pillows as the Rookwood juniors got to work in real earnest.

The hapless St. Jim's raiders were completely demoralised.

Dazed and bewildered, they sprawled and struggled over each other in the moonlight. The shock of surprise, and the unexpectedness of it all made them lose their heads completely.

"Sock into them!" came Jimmy Silver's cheery voice.

And the Rookwood juniors obeyed with a will.

But at last Tom Merry managed to rally his men together a little. Tom himself had been the first to come to grief, and he had spotted at once that they had been "had" and "had" badly.

The nocturnal cinema party was obviously all spoof—it had been invented to lead them astray, and Arthur Augustus had been their unconscious helper.

The Rookwood fellows were very obviously in full force without a single absentee—much less twenty absentees!

But it was no good repining, and after the first shock of surprise Tom Merry did his best to rally his men together again.

"Back up, chaps—this way!" he bawled. "Keep your peckers up! Yarrooooh!"

Tom Merry went down under the weight of a pillow just then, but he was up again in a flash, and he snatched the pillow from Lovell, who had bowled him over.

But few of his followers were so lucky as to capture a weapon, and Tom bitterly regretted not having brought weapons with them.

Back to back now, the St. Jim's fellows fought gallantly, gradually forcing their way towards the camp entrance. Even so, the luckless Saints would have found it no easy matter to escape had not the Rookwood prefects taken a hand—and a cane—in the game just then.

For several moments past lights had been flashing among the prefects' quarters, for the uproar was enough to waken the celebrated Seven Sleepers. And now the voice of Bulkeley, the Rookwood skipper, was heard, and the next moment he came up at a run, followed by several other Rookwood prefects.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Yells and howls of laughter followed the laying on of the prefects' canes, and as the rival juniors scattered to avoid the swishing canes, Tom Merry gave a yell:

"Now, chaps! Run for it! This way!" he bellowed.

To make sure he was heard, Tom Merry gave a shrill blast on his whistle, and then he led the way with a rush.

After him went his followers quickly enough. Most of them were in a parlous state—wet and floury and sore in more ways than one, and they were only too glad to retreat for once.

In a mad stampede they went for the entrance, sending

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the Rookwood fellows who tried to stop them reeling to right and left.

But the intervention of the Rookwood prefects had disorganised the Rookwooders, and Tom Merry and his men charged through them like a knife through cheese.

At the camp entrance Tom Merry hung back until he saw the last of his men through, and then he followed up. Luckily, the Rookwood juniors did not dare to disobey their skipper, who was bellowing to them to return, and the St. Jim's fellows pounded on through the wood, and five minutes later they were safe in their own camp.

But there a great surprise met the unfortunate raiders—a great and exceedingly unpleasant surprise.

Not a single one of the junior tents remained standing. In their place was merely a bulky bundle of canvas on the ground.

It was the last straw.

In hopeless dismay the hapless St. Jim's juniors stood at the entrance to their encampment and blinked aghast at the desolate scene.

It was an unhappy homecoming, and an unhappy greeting to their tired eyes.

"Well!" remarked Tom Merry faintly. "Well, upon my word!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "What—what—Bai Jove!"

On all sides were heard expressions of amazement and deep dismay.

"Oh—oh crumbs!" groaned Blake. "This—this caps it all! Oh, the crafty rotters! Some of them must have dodged us, and come along here, and dropped the dashed tents. Hallo, what—"

At that moment a muffled sound of yelling came from the store-tent close by, and the crowd rushed across to it, recognising Baggy Trimble's doleful tones. Tom Merry flashed his electric torch into the dark interior of the store-tent.

He found Baggy Trimble and Skimpole tied back to back against the tent-pole. They fairly groaned with relief as Blake cut them free.

"It was those awful Rookwood beasts!" groaned Trimble. "Some of them came along just after you'd gone, and they yanked us out of our tents and tied us up here. They've done something to our tents, I believe."

"And they have treated us with gross disregard and rudeness!" wailed Skimpole. "Instead of spending a peaceful few hours with my favourite author, Professor Balm-crumpet, I have been subjected to painful indignities, and have been obliged to remain—"

"Cut it short, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry. "We've all been through it to-night, blow it! We've been dish and done brown fairly! That awful, burbling ass, D'Arcy, ought to be boiled in oil!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Bump him!" snorted Herries. "Bump him for letting us in for this!"

"Yes, rather!"

All the fellows were only too willing to bump Gussy—and he was bumped—soundly. It was hard lines on Gussy, in the circumstances, but it certainly relieved their feelings a bit.

Then, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting on the tent floor and passing complimentary remarks on all and sundry, the juniors streamed out to examine their tents. To their surprise, they found all the pegs and guy-ropes intact. The only things that were missing—or seemed to be missing—were the tent-poles.

But as those were very important parts of the tents it was a very unpleasant discovery for all that.

For over half an hour the tired and dispirited juniors searched for the tent-poles, but it was useless. Tom Merry gave the word to give up the search at last.

"It's no good!" he groaned. "They've hid them in the wood, of course, and it's useless hunting in the dark. We'll have to sleep as best we can until daylight."

And it was so. Most of the fellows loosened some of the tent-pegs, and with the loose floor-boards as supports, they rigged up temporary tents.

When they had finished the junior part of the St. Jim's camp looked for all the world like an Arab encampment in the desert.

Even then, however, Tom Merry & Co. had not finished making unpleasant discoveries.

For every single bed had been filled with stinging-nettles, and every pillow smothered with pepper.

This was, indeed, the last straw, and the wild night air fairly hummed with ferocious and uncomplimentary remarks regarding the humorous Rookwooders.

But order was restored at last, and though grunts and sneezes were heard for some time, as what remained of the pepper and nettles still troubled the weary campers, sleep came to them at last, and soon all was silent in the St. Jim's camp.

CHAPTER 10. A Mystery!

TOM MERRY & CO. were up very early the following morning—very, very early, and well before the lark. And it was very necessary for them to be early. Tom knew, and every fellow knew, that there would be exceedingly awkward questions asked about the missing tent-poles. It was all very well to be able to explain that somebody had taken them, but the question the authorities would ask would be what they—the juniors themselves—were doing when the poles were taken!

It was scarcely a question they could answer.

So, before turning in, Tom had impressed upon all and sundry the absolute necessity of finding the poles and getting the tents to rights before the rest of the camp was astir.

Really, Tom Merry felt very dubious indeed about their possibility of doing so.

But he was determined to try.

So Tom himself was up and doing almost at the first rosy streak of dawn in the sky, and the first thing he saw was a note pinned to the flap of his own tent.

It was a brief note from Jimmy Silver, asking if they "had ever been had," and telling him the missing tent-poles would be found shoved under the floor-boards of the store-tent.

It was a stroke of luck, and Tom Merry made the most of the chance. He roused his followers, and though they were tired out, the juniors tumbled up, and the store-tent was visited.

Sure enough the poles were there. The store-tent was on a raised wooden floor—to keep the stores dry, presumably—and very soon the poles were dragged out one by one.

Then the St. Jim's juniors got busy, and well within the hour all the tents were up and presented their usual appearance.

"Oh, good egg!" panted Tom Merry, wiping his perspiring brow. "That's saved us a thumping big rumpus, anyway. I suppose Jimmy Silver thought we should find the note last night. Anyway, it's all serene now. I vote we all get back to bed, chaps."

"Hear, hear!"

It was a hearty agreement, and the juniors went back to bed to finish their sleep out. Rookwood had scored heavily—there was no doubt about that—but they felt exceedingly thankful that it had not led to trouble with the "beaks," as it might easily have done.

All the juniors were very soon asleep, and they were not in a hurry to turn out again when the rising-bugle rang out clear on the morning air.

But, tired and aching as they were, the day's work had to be faced, and they did tumble up.

As the Terrible Three were strolling about the camp just after breakfast, they met Blake & Co., and Tom Merry stopped as he noted that their faces were unusually grave.

"Hallo, what the thump's the matter with you merchants?" he asked. "Not taking last night's affair to heart, I hope? My dear man, it's all in the day's work. We scored the other night, and we'll jolly well score again before long."

"Bai Jove! You are makin' wathah a mistake, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head gravely. "We are not wowwyin' about last night's fiasco at all. The fact is, we were just lookin' for you fellows. Somethin' wathah wotten has happened again, deah boys!"

"Cough it up!" said Manners.

"My gold tickah and guard have mysteriously vanished," said Arthur Augustus impressively—"vanished in the night, deah boys. Natuwallly, we are wathah twoubled about it."

"Great pip! I should jolly well think so!" said Tom Merry, in great alarm. "Are you sure, Gussy?"

"It's right enough, Tommy," grunted Jack Blake. "The silly dummy deserves to lose it, though. He left it on the camp-table in our tent last night before we started out."

"Weally, Blake, what else could a fellow do?" asked Arthur Augustus mildly. "It would have been wank folly to take my gold tickah on such a waid. It might easily have got sewiously damaged."

"You could have packed the dashed thing somewhere," said Blake. "Now it's gone. It means more rotten worry and suspicion all round."

"Phew!" said Lowther. "You've searched, of course?"

"Every blessed inch of the tent, and every blessed inch round the tent within twenty yards almost!" growled Blake. "The blessed tailor's dummy will be losing his napper next!"

"But it's serious!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in alarm. "This is the second thing that's mysteriously vanished. What about Mornington's wallet?"

"And my giddy cigarette-case," added a cool voice.

It was Ralph Reckness Cardew, and he was smiling blandly as he joined the group.

"Wha-what did you say, Cardew?" gasped Tom Merry.

"I was merely addin' my troubles to Gussy's troubles," said Cardew airily. "I hear Gussy's lost his ticker."

"Yes. That's so," said Blake.

"Then we're comrades in misfortune," remarked Cardew. "I—alas—have lost a gold cigarette-case. This, of course,"

(Continued overleaf.)



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.

FROM DOWN UNDER!

WITH the Australian cricketers in our midst, it is not an injudicious moment to refer to a charming letter I have received from an Australian girl reader. You see, even the girls and boys "down under" read the GEM, although they have to wait longer than you do to get it. But every Aussie chum tells me that it is worth waiting for. In this case, my correspondent says that she "prefers the jolly old GEM to any girls' paper going, although she is a girl." It really is surprising how many of the fair sex do read our little paper, which, if we remember that girls, as a whole, are very critical, just goes to show how good it is. Splendid! Many thanks, my Australian chum, for your jolly interesting letter.

FREE GIFTS!

Whilst on the topic of Australia, I must make mention of the magnificent stand-up, cut-out photo, printed in two colours, of J. S. Ryder, which is given away FREE with every copy of this week's "Popular." And our grand companion paper, the "Magnet," keeps the "Pop" company in this stupendous Free Gift scheme, for in its pages this week readers will find a top-hole, cut-out photo of G. G. Macaulay, the famous Yorkshire cricketer. These stand-up photos will look just "it" on the mantelpiece in your den. Readers will be given the unique opportunity of collecting a set of Australia's and England's leading cricketers as the weeks roll by, for these FREE GIFTS will be included in each copy of the "Magnet" and "Popular"

for some time to come. This really is the opportunity of a lifetime, and Gemites—most of whom read the "Magnet" and "Popular"—should step in right now and make the most of it.

LOOK OUT FOR THE "SHERBET MAN"!

Would you like a Free Gift of a box of delicious sherbet? Of course, you would! In the hot weather there's nothing like a good thirst-quencher. And sherbet is just the thing! Look out, then, chums, for the Special Representative of the GEM at the seaside this summer. At all the principal seaside resorts our Representative will be Specially Looking Out for boys and girls who are carrying a copy of the GEM. To everyone seen displaying this paper he will present FREE a BOX OF DELICIOUS SHERBET. So mind you take your GEM with you when you go on the beach, and show it as prominently as you can. Our Sherbet Man will be on the look-out for you!

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"GRUNDY'S FEUD!"

By Martin Clifford.

A Topping, Extra-long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., dealing with the one and only George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. You'll laugh till your sides ache over this fine yarn, boys, so be sure you read it!

"A PHANTOM THRONE!"

By Sidney Drew.

There will be another long instalment of this fine serial included in next week's programme—that goes without saying. It's a thriller, too, chums! Don't miss it!

"CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!"

Look out, too, for the third jolly poem in this series by the St. Jim's Rhymester. It deals with Picnic-Parties—always of interest to the average boy—and is well handled. Order your GEM in good time—I can't rub this in too much! Cheerio, chums!

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he added, "is strictly between ourselves. As cigarette-cases are frowned upon by the authorities, I do not propose to make my loss public. Catch on?"

"Phew!"

It was certainly adding trouble to trouble. That two juniors should lose valuable articles in one night was scarcely likely. The thought dawned upon them all now.

Mornington's wallet must have been stolen. And now Gussy's gold hunter, and Cardew's gold cigarette-case had gone—obviously in the same manner.

It was an unpleasant reflection.

"Better ask those Rookwood chaps about it—just as they asked us," murmured Cardew, with a chuckle. "They were in our tents last night, you know."

"You silly ass!" said Tom Merry. "I'm jolly sure it wasn't a Rookwood chap, any more than it was a St. Jim's chap. It's some rotten outsider who's scrounging round the camps. We'd better mention the matter to the Rookwood fellows, for all that. It will show them that it's more likely to be somebody outside both schools."

"That won't bring the things back, though, Tommy," said Cardew.

"I know. You don't seem to be troubling much about it yourself, anyway, Cardew."

"I'm not, old bean. I merely mentioned the matter en passant—just to make Gussy feel a bit happier when he knew he wasn't the only fellow."

And Cardew yawned and strolled away. It was very clear that the loss of the cigarette-case wasn't troubling him much.

But it troubled Tom Merry & Co. a great deal. They were not at all troubled about Cardew's cigarette-case; Cardew had no right to possess such a thing, in any case. But the fact went to prove their worst fears—that a thief was at work.

When Tom Merry & Co. went in to morning lessons all the Lower School were in possession of the startling news. And it was very soon clear that the masters had heard the news also, for at the end of lessons Mr. Railton sent for Cardew and D'Arcy.

But, fortunately—for Cardew—the cigarette case had become a card-case by the time the story reached Mr. Railton's ears—Cardew himself had seen to that—and after hearing the bald facts that both articles had been left on the camp-tables, and had vanished in the night, Mr. Railton dismissed them, promising to look into the matter.

But the juniors themselves were determined to do that, and, after dinner, Tom Merry & Co. walked over to the Rookwood camp and had a conference on the subject with Jimmy Silver & Co. It seemed only too clear now that a thief was robbing both camps under cover of the rags, and when the St. Jim's juniors left their rivals it was agreed that both sides should keep an eye open for the unknown prowler.

CHAPTER 11.

Rival 'Tees.

"LEAVE it to me, you fellows!"

"Eh?"

"Leave it to me, bai Jove!"

"Leave what to you?" inquired Blake, staring at

Arthur Augustus.

"This wretched business of the missin' articles, of course," explained Arthur Augustus calmly.

"But why should we leave it to you, dummy?" asked Blake. "We want to catch the giddy thief, not leave him more valuables to pinch, fathead!"

"I wufuse to be alluded to as a dummy or a fathead, Jack Blake!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "If you chawactewise me as—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wufuse to wing off, Blake. As I have already wemarked—"

"Don't repeat yourself, old chap—life's too short!" groaned Blake. "Besides, it's nearly bed-time."

"I am fully aware that it is neahly bed-time, Blake," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "That is why I wemarked just now that you fellows could leave it to me."

"But why—"

"I will explain," went on Gussy patiently. "The Rookwood fellows have agreed to keep a watch on their camp each night, and we have agreed to do likewise here."

"That's so."

"Vewy well," resumed Arthur Augustus. "To me such a course seems uttably unnecessawy and futile. It is quite unnecessawy for severall fellows to lose a night's sleep, and it is quite futile for any of you youngstabs to hope to catch such a slippewy individual as this wretched thief obviously is."

"Thanks, old chap. Any more compliments?"

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"Therefore," went on Arthur Augustus calmly. "I wopose that you fellows wetiah for the night in the usual way, and leave it to me."

"To you?"

"Yaas."

"Not to Skimpole, or Trimble, or Grundy, or any other hopeless dud except you?"

"Yaas!" repeated Arthur Augustus, fortunately quite failing to grasp Blake's meaning.

"Not even to that tent-pole, or that tree, or that donkey in the field yonder—just to you?"

"Yaas. I wathah fancy you fellows will admit that as an amateur detective I have no equal at St. Jim's, deah boys!"

"Oh, my hat! Certainly not, old chap—not even in the whole wide world—though Grundy comes close up," agreed Blake affably. "So you want us to give up the idea, and just leave it to you?"

"Yaas! No weason why you fellows should lose your sleep," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "Just go to sleep and leave it to me. I shall watch the camp, and if I should see anythin' suspicious to wequiah any help I will wouse you."

"Good man! Hallo, here's Grundy!"

The Fourth-Formers were standing just outside their tent at the moment, and just then Grundy's burly form loomed up in the gathering gloom.

"Hallo! Oh, good!" said Grundy briskly. "I was just coming to see you fellows, and I rather feared you'd be out, wasting your time trying to catch that rotten thief."

"You cheeky ass!" said Tom Merry.

"I want no fag cheek," said Grundy grimly. "I mean just what I say when I refer to you kids wasting your time on such a job. That's what I've come about. I've come along now to tell you fellows to leave it to me."

"Oh crumbs! Here's another of 'em!"

"Eh? I'm speaking plainly, aren't I?" said Grundy patiently. "No good you kids wasting your time watching for that thief. You can leave it to me. I'll stay up and watch, and you can go to bed as usual."

"Bai Jove! Gwundy you awful duffah!"

"Dry up, Gussy! I don't want to have to punch your head for cheek," said Grundy, with kindly grimness. "Well, you fellows understand? Get off to bed now, sharp, and leave it to me. If I can't run the thief down to earth nobody else can. I don't want to brag, but—"

"You can't help yourself, what?"

"Don't try to be funny, Lowther. Well, night-night, chaps! If you do happen to hear a rumpus in the night don't get up—you'd only muck things up and spoil my game if you came along."

"Oh dear!"

The great George Alfred Grundy marched away into the gloom—apparently to begin his self-imposed vigil. The chums of the St. Jim's School House chuckled as they stared after him. They were too used to Grundy's swank and lofty belief in his own greatness to trouble to go after him and bump him for his cheek.

"The silly ass!" said Tom Merry, looking serious. "I hope the duffer doesn't muck up things and scare the thief away, anyhow. Well, we'd better turn in, I think, until Kildare's been round to see lights out. Then, when all is clear, we'll get up and start on the job."

"Bai Jove! Do you fellows mean to wufuse my offah to take ovah the job?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, old top! You see, that thief's got to be caught," explained Blake blandly. "Now, just you get off to bed like a good little chap, and leave serious jobs to serious people."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look out! Here's Kildare," grinned Tom Merry; and, with Lowther and Manners, he slipped away and made for his own tent.

Some distance away Kildare and Darrell, armed with a lantern, were going from tent to tent, making their usual nightly round, and Blake, Herries, and Digby chuckled and slipped through the doorway of their own tent.

They naturally expected Arthur Augustus to follow, but he did nothing of the sort. He slipped round the back of the tent, and vanished into the gloom. He had already placed his bolster to represent his form in the bed, and he knew the prefects were not likely to look closely.

Blake and the others in the tent had no time to do anything in the matter, for just as Gussy vanished the prefects came along and looked into the tent. And when they had gone, Arthur Augustus had vanished.

But Blake & Co. did not trouble themselves. They felt glad rather than otherwise that Arthur Augustus was not to be with them. Arthur Augustus was rather apt to be trying on such excursions.

And, meanwhile, Arthur Augustus was lying low in the hedge at the rear of the tent. He did not mean to move until the prefects had finished their rounds.

But the light vanished at last, and then Arthur Augustus

started to scout round the camp, keeping well in the shade of the hedge.

Almost at once the creeping Arthur Augustus saw something suspicious—something very suspicious indeed!

It was the sight of a dark figure creeping stealthily along the inside of the hedge bordering the camp and just a few yards ahead of him.

"Oh, bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

The swell of the Fourth fairly trembled with excitement now.

All his detective instincts were aroused, and he trod after the unknown prowler, his heart thumping fast.

Now treading amid bracken in the ditch-bottom, now splashing into ankle-deep water, Arthur Augustus followed on, sticking like glue to the trail until they had circumvented the camp twice.

And then quite suddenly Arthur Augustus made rather a surprising discovery.

The prowler in front was in his turn tracking another dark figure now. Arthur Augustus, indeed, had seen his figure tense on sighting the other form.

There was no doubt about it.

It struck Arthur Augustus as very strange indeed. Was it possible that there were two thieves on the prowl, and that one had sighted the other and was trailing him for some unknown reason?

To Arthur Augustus it seemed very likely indeed.

He stooped suddenly, athrill from head to foot.

The foremost dark form had stopped abruptly and glanced about him stealthily. Then he stooped, as if to crawl under the canvas wall of the nearest tent.

And at that moment the second form suddenly rose upright and flung itself on the first form.

There arose a muffled, terrified yelp, but Arthur Augustus scarcely heard it, for he was running and splashing towards the spot now.

He reached it, and flung himself valiantly at both forms.

It was a really gallant effort on the part of Arthur Augustus, but the next instant he got the shock of his life as a terrified yelp came from beneath him.

"Yarrooooh! Yooop! Help! Murder! Oh dear! Gerroff! Oh crumbs! Yarrooooooh!"

It was the voice of Baggy Trimble. And even as he heard it there came a bellow from the other dark form, and Gussy jumped as he recognised that also.

"Got you, my pippin! Hallo! Another rotter, eh? All right—I'll handle both of you, you brutes! Take that! And you take that!"

Biff! Biff!

It was George Alfred Grundy, and both Trimble and Arthur Augustus took what he gave them. Trimble took his on his fat little nose, and Arthur Augustus took his under the chin.

Two fiendish yells arose on the still night air.

"Yarrooooooh!"

"Yoooop! Oh crumbs!"

Grundy could punch, and he had evidently punched now—hard!

Trimble rolled one way and Arthur Augustus rolled another. And just at that moment a light flashed and running feet sounded. Then six dim forms rushed up, and a light flashed on the scene from a pocket electric torch.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy moved forward cautiously towards the fringe of a little clearing, lit by the pale rays of the moon. Then he drew up suddenly as his eyes alighted on an unknown prowler who was digging up the soft, leafy soil with a chunk of wood. On the ground close to the man was a sack. (See Chapter 12.)

It was Tom Merry & Co., and they blinked in stupefied amazement at the sight. Then Tom Merry jumped forward just in time to prevent Arthur Augustus from flinging himself on Grundy in his towering wrath.

"What the dickens—"

"What the merry thump—"

"What does this mean?" gasped Tom Merry. "Grundy—Trimble—Gussy—"

Grundy interrupted him. He sat on the ground and glared in dumbfounded amazement as he recognised Trimble and D'Arcy.

"Well!" he remarked. "Well—well, I'm hanged! You—you fat idiot, Trimble! You—you barbling tailor's dummy, D'Arcy! You've mucked up—"

"What—"

"I'll jolly soon tell you what's the matter!" snorted Grundy, his tone showing his deep disgust and disappointment. "I saw this fat worm—this crawling lard-barrel—sneaking along inside the hedge, and I thought it was the rotten thief!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "And I saw you sneaking along, Gwunday, and I imagined you were the thief. I didn't recognise you, of course."

"Oh crumbs! And Trimble—"

"I think it's pretty clear what Trimble was after," chuckled Monty Lowther. "This tent is the store-tent, and Baggy was just making a raid on the grub."

"Phew! That's it!"

That was undoubtedly the case.

For an instant Tom Merry & Co. stared at the three chief actors in the little comedy, and then they doubled up and almost exploded with suppressed laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, my only topper!" gurgled Tom Merry at last. "This beats the band! Trimble, you fat grub-raider—"

"Bump the fat rotter, and pack him off to bed!" suggested Blake.

"That's the ticket!"

"I say, you fellows," gasped Baggy Trimble tearfully, still clutching a rapidly swelling nose. "Haven't I suffered enough? Look at my nose! Ow-ow! Besides, it's all a mistake. I must have been walking in my sleep, and—"

But Trimble's protests were of no avail, and after soundly bumping him, Tom Merry & Co. sent him "packing," and Trimble went back to bed, only too thankful to do so now. Then the juniors looked at Grundy and Arthur Augustus. "This comes of letting born idiots take a hand in serious matters," said Tom Merry grimly. "Grundy, I'd advise you to trot back to bed before you make any more silly blunders!"

"Oh, let the silly asses rip!" grinned Blake. "I expect Grundy will be tracking his own shadow next!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—" Grundy spluttered a moment, and took a threatening step towards the laughing juniors, but thinking better of it, he lowered his great fist and walked away into the darkness, snorting like a war-horse.

"Dear old blundering Grundy!" grinned Lowther. "Fancy having two fellows so much alike as Grundy and Gussy in one school!"

"Lowthah, you wottah—"

"Peace! This is not the time or place for squabbling," said Tom Merry warningly. "We've serious business on to-night, you asses! Are you coming with us or not, Gussy?"

"I uttably wefuse to accompany such wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, almost breathless with indignation. "You are a set of gwinin' asses, and I uttably wefuse to tweek you as fwends any longah, bai Jove!"

And with that Arthur Augustus marched away, and, like the mighty George Alfred, he was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

CHAPTER 12.

Very Mysterious!

"WOTTAHS!"

That was the opinion of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy regarding his chums.

Arthur Augustus was feeling very sore indeed as he marched away from them after Grundy had departed. He was disappointed that the figure he had so painfully and so skilfully tracked had turned out to be only Grundy tracking Trimble. It really was disappointing and annoying—and a trifle humiliating.

But while he felt very annoyed with Grundy and Trimble, Arthur Augustus felt still more annoyed with his chums. They had ruffled his dignity, as it were—and the dignity of Arthur Augustus was not to be ruffled with impunity.

"The wottahs!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "The cacklin' wottahs! Weally I often wondah how I stand the wude and disrespectful boundahs. I shall certainly wefuse uttably to acknowledge them as fwends aftah this—at least, not until they have tendahed me a humble apology. Wathah not, bai Jove!"

Coming to a gap in the hedge, Arthur Augustus dived through into the field beyond. He was not at all clear what his programme was now, but he was determined to give his late chums a wide berth, at all events.

Grundy had vanished; and, after reflecting a moment, Arthur Augustus started to move along the far side of the hedge, keeping out of the ditch this time. Only desperate necessity would make the swell of the Fourth walk in a wet ditch. A fellow had to consider his shoes and his "clobber!"

But quite abruptly Arthur Augustus dropped back into the ditch again swiftly.

The desperate necessity had come now.

Ahead of him, moving slowly towards him with a stealthy, slinking gait was a dark form. It was not a boy's form—Arthur Augustus saw that at a glance. And yet it was scarcely a man's form.

But it was very suspicious, to say the least of it. The slinking gait of the unknown alone was very suspicious.

Then Arthur Augustus saw that the unknown prowler was carrying a sack on his back—at least, it looked like a sack.

"Bai Jove!" breathed the swell of the Fourth.

Fairly quivering with excitement, Arthur Augustus crouched down in the ditch, scarcely daring to breathe. The water in the ditch came up over the tops of his natty shoes; but, as these were already drenched through, Arthur Augustus did not mind so much—in fact, he was far too excited to notice it, much less heed it.

He felt certain he was on the right trail this time.

And Arthur Augustus did not blunder. He was a trained Scout, and he crouched down now, head lowered, face and hands hidden, his jacket swiftly dragged up to hide his white cricket-shirt and bare neck.

The next moment the prowler came slinking past.

Even in the dim moonlight D'Arcy saw at a glance that he was a rather ragged individual, with an ancient felt hat pressed down over his face, which was youthful, but exceedingly dirty. Gussy even caught a glimpse of a pair of shifty eyes—at least, they certainly looked shifty.

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And the man was, indeed, carrying a sack. Certainly it did not look well filled. But there was something in it, and the fellow seemed to be carrying it with stealthy care.

He passed Arthur Augustus at a shuffle, glancing about him guiltily as he did so.

Arthur Augustus had no doubt whatever in his mind now—no possible shadow of a doubt.

This was the unknown prowler—the rascal who had robbed both camps in the darkness of the night!

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "I wathah wish Blake and the othahs were with me, but—but it cannot be helped. I must tackle the wascal alone if need be. I will follow the bwute and see what he is up to, first of all, howevah."

With that Arthur Augustus started to tread cautiously after the mysterious prowler, and he was scarcely ten yards behind him when the fellow vanished into the deep recesses of the wood.

It needed some nerve to follow; but Arthur Augustus did follow, though his heart was thumping madly now. He dived amid the shadowy trees, and, after stumbling a few paces forward, he halted, at a loss.

The trampling footsteps ahead had ceased, and silence reigned in the dark wood.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with a shiver. "I weally do wish Blake and the othahs were here. Yaas, wathah!"

But even as he hesitated Arthur Augustus heard a sudden sound that made his eyes gleam with determination.

It was a sound of digging—an unmistakable sound.

It echoed hollowly in the silent, eerie wood, and once again Arthur Augustus shivered. And it was, perhaps, no wonder. It was a late hour—Gussy reflected that it must be close on midnight—and the silent woods alone were unnerving, without the presence of the unknown prowler, and that eerie, echoing sound of digging!

And here, under the trees, it was very dark.

But Arthur Augustus had plenty of pluck, and after that first hesitation he set his teeth and moved forward cautiously towards the sound.

Then quite suddenly he halted.

He had reached the fringe of a little clearing, lit by the pale rays of the scarcely visible moon. In the clearing was the unknown prowler, and he was digging up the soft, leafy soil with a chunk of wood.

On the ground close by lay the sack.

Arthur Augustus noticed now more clearly that there seemed to be very little in the sack—just a bulge at the bottom, the rest of the sack having been twisted for carrying. It seemed very significant indeed to Arthur Augustus.

Was the fellow about to bury his plunder? Certainly a wallet and a gold watch and chain and a cigarette-case would not cause such a bulge in the sack. But, then, how did he know what other stolen property the sack contained? Indeed, it was more than likely that heaps of stuff had been stolen from the two camps—things not so valuable, and that had not even been missed yet.

It was more than possible. It suddenly occurred to the watching junior that the sack might even contain further plunder that had been stolen during the past hour or so from the two camps.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

As he stared at the digger Arthur Augustus noted that he was several inches taller, and at least four or five years older. And he was much bigger-made and stronger-looking, to boot.

Arthur Augustus realised that he could not hope to come off best in a fight with the fellow. He wisely decided to waste no further time watching. He would bring help without further delay.

Arthur Augustus reached this resolve within a minute of reaching the spot, and the next moment he was treading softly back the way he had come. Then, emerging from the woods, he threw caution to the winds and set off at a run for the St. Jim's camp.

But he did not reach it then. To his ears came the sudden sound of laughter, and a minute later he had run almost into the arms of Tom Merry & Co.

"Great Scott! It—it's old Gussy again!" gasped Blake. "What the thump—"

"Quick!" panted Gussy. "Bai Jove! Pway be quick, deah boys! The thief—"

"The—the what?"

"The thief!" gasped D'Arcy, breathless with excitement. "I've twacked the wascal down! He's just buwvin' his plundah in a cleahin' in the woods!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Blake.

"Gussy, you awful ass—"

"Quick!" almost shrieked Arthur Augustus, "or the wascal will escape us! I spotted him sneakin' wound our camp, and I watched him—a wascally poachah, I believe he is. He looks a most feahful wuffian! He is at this vewy

moment buwvin' his plundah in the woods. Follow me, you stawin' duffahs!"

And, without waiting for a reply, Arthur Augustus pelted away.

"Come on!" snapped Tom Merry swiftly.

He was about to rush after D'Arcy when five figures appeared, running from the direction of the Rookwood camp. They proved to be Jimmy Silver, Raby, Newcome, Lovell, and Mornington.

"Oh, it's you fellows!" gasped Jimmy Silver, as he panted up. "We were just scouting round when we heard voices, and thought we'd better investigate. What's happened? Seen anything suspicious?"

"Gussy has, I believe," said Tom.

And he swiftly related what Arthur Augustus had just told them.

"Phew!" remarked Jimmy Silver grimly. "It looks jolly suspicious, anyway. If D'Arcy did see him—"

"No doubt about that—Gussy's in deadly earnest," said Tom. "Come on, let's go after him!"

He led the way with a rush, and the rest followed hard on his heels. The moon was stronger now, and running was safe and easy. They pounded up, and found Arthur Augustus impatiently awaiting them at the edge of the woods.

As they pounded up he held up a warning hand for caution, and then he plunged into the dark trees. The rest followed. Cautiously they pressed after the swell of the Fourth, and the next minute they were staring into the clearing.

Thud, thud, thud!

"Ow!" gasped Lovell, his face white. "There—there's something rotten inside!"

"What?"

"A—a body, or something!" gasped Lovell faintly.

"A whatter?"

It was a gasp. Tom Merry gave a muttered exclamation, and with a sudden, swift movement he tipped up the sack and shook it.

Something fell out and rolled over on the ground.

The crowd of juniors stared at it as if suddenly petrified.

It was the dead body of a huge tom-cat!

That was all.

Tom Merry was the first to find his voice.

"M-mum-my hat!" he mumbled feebly. "It—it's a blessed tom-cat!"

"Bai Jove!"

The face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a picture. From chalk white it grew to a pale pink, and from a pale pink it grew to a vivid scarlet.

The rest of the fellows looked at him with feelings too deep for words.

"Keep it dark, you gents!" groaned the scared-looking yokel. "I never meant to do it—I swear I didn't! Put it back in that there hole for 'Eaven's sake! If the missus knows I did it, she'd play 'Amlet, as well as sack me on the spot. That there durned tom-cat was the happle of 'er here!"

"Oh crumbs!" choked Jimmy Silver. "Oh dear!"

"I never meant to do it, but the missus knows as I 'ad the old gun outer the kitchen this arternoon, and she'll guess as I done it, if she sees the body, and sees as 'e's bin

Result of "Scarlet Streak" Competition No. 8.

£10 WON BY "GEM" READERS!

IS YOUR NAME HERE?

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution.

THE FIRST PRIZE of £5 has therefore been divided among the following nine competitors, whose efforts each contained one error:

E. F. Day, 43, Ladywell Road, Lewisham, London, S.E.13.

L. Harrison, 55, Fernhurst Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham.

H. Ashley Johnson, 94, Brocksford Street, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent.

THE FIVE PRIZES of £1 each have been divided among the following nine competitors whose solutions each contained two errors:

A. F. Ager, 54, Bickerton Road, Upper Holloway, London, N.

R. F. Aldrich, 14, Watkin Road, Folkestone.

T. P. Ballard, 74, Kitchener Road, Strood, Kent.

G. Brewin, Ward, Male 5, Borough Mental Hospital, Rowditch, Derby.

Miss P. M. Browne, 52, Mount Pleasant, Waterloo, Liverpool.

Miss M. Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Abbey Hill, Edinburgh.

P. E. Johns, 10, Norman Grove, Reddish, Stockport.

J. Ralph, 39, Holly Street, Liverpool.

H. Schofield, 3, Vale Street, Heywood, Lanes.

The correct solution was as follows:

Pug Logan, an ex-pugilist with a battered face, aids the Monk in his schemes occasionally. He lives on Catalina Island, right above an old mine, and owns a speedy motor launch. A trapdoor in Pug's room communicates with one of the tunnels in the mine, and the tunnel has a secret door. Logan is one of the Monk's most trusted servants.

The man was there still. He was flattening down the soil with the piece of wood he had used as a spade. There was no sign of the sack!

"He's buwied it!" breathed Gussy. "Back up, you fellows!"

And with that Arthur Augustus plunged from hiding and hurled himself at the suspicious-looking man.

There was a startled howl, and a still more startled yell, as Tom Merry, followed instantly by Jimmy Silver and the rest of the juniors, swarmed out of the trees and charged at the fellow.

D'Arcy's rush had fairly bowled him over, and the next instant the juniors were swarming over him.

He was flat on his back in another instant with several triumphant juniors holding him down.

"Now tie the beggar up!" called Tom Merry. "Yank him along to that tree, and we'll jolly soon see what he's buried!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Despite his terrified howls, the man was hauled to the nearest tree, and tied with his back to the trunk.

"Lemme be!" he almost whimpered. "Darn it, I ain't done no 'arm, young gents! Let a bloke be. Oh, crimes! Don't you dig that there sack up!"

But, with the piece of wood, Arthur Augustus was already at work feverishly. Lovell grabbed another chunk of wood, and soon the soil was fairly flying right and left.

The sacking was revealed at last.

It was a dramatic moment, especially for the triumphant Arthur Augustus.

With praiseworthy unselfishness, he allowed Lovell to have the honour of dragging the sack from the hole and untying it.

*The juniors gathered round, breathless with excitement. The sack was open at last, and into it Arthur Edward plunged an eager hand.

Then he jumped back with a startled yell, his hand empty.

"Bai Jove! What—what—"

shot," groaned the yokel dismally. "It were all done in a crack. I sees that durned cat sittin' on the barn roof, and I let's fly without thinkin'. An' durn me if I didn't 'it him fust go off. I hid the body in a ditch, and, not daring to do it in daylight, I leaves me room where I sleeps with old Garge, and I comes and buries it 'ere. I hopes you won't let on, young gents? If yer does, it's the sack for me, durn it! I swears as I never—"

The scared yokel was interrupted by a perfect howl of laughter. His pathetic story had proved too much for the gravity of Tom Merry & Co., and Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!" they roared.

And they were still laughing when they left the clearing, after releasing the yokel and comforting his apprehensive fears by promising not to "let on," and after Arthur Augustus had handed him ten shillings as compensation for the rough handling he had received.

"Well, my hat!" choked Tom Merry, wiping his eyes at last. "Gussy, old chap, you'll be the death of us yet. You're a giddy expert at discovering mare's nests."

"And dead tom-cats," grinned Lowther. "Anyway, I vote we get back to bed after this. I've had enough of hunting giddy thieves for one night."

"Hear, hear!"

It was a unanimous agreement from Rookwooders and St. Jim's fellows.

"We'll chuck it up for to-night, then," grinned Tom Merry. "But before we part, I think we ought to give Gussy a good, sound bumping, just to teach him not to jump at conclusions."

"Good egg!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Tom Mewwy— Yawwoooooogh! Leggo! I uttally wefuse— Yooop!"

Bump!

"Yarroooooogh!"

The silence of the summer's night was shattered by a

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series of fearful howls, as the hapless but well-meaning Arthur Augustus was soundly and solemnly bumped on the grassy sward. Then the laughing Rookwooders returned to their own camp, whilst Tom Merry & Co., leaving Arthur Augustus to follow when he had recovered, made tracks for home and bed.

CHAPTER 13.

A Dreadful Suspicion!

"LEAVE it to Pongo!"

"Eh? What's that?"

"Leave it to old Pongo!" said Wally D'Arcy emphatically. "You silly old Fourth and Shell asses have tried to hunt down the giddy thief, and all you've managed to hunt down so far is a dashed dead tom-cat and each other in turn."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Wally, you impudent young wascal

"Oh, you give your old chin a rest, Gus!" said Wally cheerfully. "You talk much too much, and don't think enough, old chap."

"Bai Jove!"

"Detective, eh?" jeered Wally, standing ready to bolt if necessary. "Fancy Gus as a detective, chaps!"

"Just fancy!" remarked Curly Gibson, with a chuckle. "I must say it was a good job it was only the funeral of a dead tom-cat that Gussy tracked down. It might have been worse."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the fags.

There was a chuckle among the Fourth and Shell chaps standing near, and Arthur Augustus went pink with wrath. Since the previous night's unfortunate events the story of the deceased tom-cat had become public property—how, nobody knew—and Arthur Augustus had heard a great deal about it—far more than he wanted to hear.

"You—you cheeky little wottahs!" he gasped. "If it wasn't for the fact that it would be infwa dig I would give you fags a jolly good lickin', bai Jove!"

"Jolly good thing for you, then, that there is such a thing as infra dig," remarked Wally coolly. "Do give your old chin a rest, Gussy. Now you fellows heard what I said just now. I said, 'Leave it to old Pongo,' and I mean it."

"Rats!"

"I tell you I mean it," said Wally grimly. "Pongo's the very dog for a job like that. He's got a nose for crime, that dog has. I bet if he gets on the trail he'll jolly soon run the thief down. Leave it to Pongo!"

"Wubbish!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "That wretched animal is of no earthly use to anyone, Wally. He is nothin' but a twial and a twouble to the whole community, bai Jove! Hewwies' bulldog, Towsah, once twacked down a wed hewwin, I believe, but Pongo would nowah even do that."

"You'll see," said Wally darkly. "He wouldn't dig up a dead cat, anyway."

"Wats!"

"No; I said a cat," said Wally cheerfully. "I say, you fellows, seen old Pongo during the last ten minutes?" he added suddenly. "I haven't seen—Hullo, there he is just coming out of your tent, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

In great alarm Arthur Augustus blinked over towards his own tent. He was just in time to see Pongo trot out worrying something fluffy in his mouth.

"Only a slipper or something," said Wally in sudden relief. "I don't think it will harm the old chap."

"Harm the bwute!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Can't you see he's got one of my best slippahs in his wotten teeth? Bai Jove! This is weally too much!"

And with that Arthur Augustus started off at top speed to meet Pongo, with the light of battle in his noble eye. As a general rule Gussy gave Pongo a very wide berth indeed, but the sight of the mischievous little terrier worrying one of his best slippers almost drove Gussy frantic.

He made a blind rush at Pongo. Pongo waited until he was a yard away, and then he moved unconcernedly to one side, and Gussy blundered past him.

Pongo then trotted away again, the slipper still clutched between his white teeth.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, whilst the fellows roared. "That dog is the limit!"

The laughter made Arthur Augustus more wrathful than ever, and he made a really ferocious rush at Pongo this time. And this time Pongo saw he meant business, and he turned and bolted—still carrying the slipper.

Arthur Augustus went after him like the wind.

"Go it, Pongo!" bawled Wally D'Arcy. "Put it on, old chap!"

"Two to one on Pongo!" yelled Jameson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Past tent after tent went the chase, and then quite suddenly came disaster.

Pongo was just about to dash past Mr. Lathom's private tent when Mr. Lathom emerged hurriedly. There was a brief vision of Pongo mixed up in Mr. Lathom's legs, and then the Fourth Form master sat down violently, whilst Pongo, after a brief hesitation, raced on.

That was not all, however. Unable to pull up in time, the luckless Arthur Augustus tripped and went sprawling over Mr. Lathom.

"Poof!" gasped Mr. Lathom, as the swell of the Fourth sprawled over him.

"Oh; crumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus in great dismay. "Oh, by Jove! Gweat Scott!"

In horrified dismay Arthur Augustus scrambled up breathlessly, and then he held out a helping hand to Mr. Lathom. Mr. Lathom sat in the doorway of his tent and gasped and gasped. He ignored Gussy's hand, but as Tom Merry and Blake raced up the next instant he allowed them to help him to his feet.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "How vewy, vewy unfortunate! My deah sir, pway allow me to express my gweat wegwet for what has happened."

Mr. Lathom mopped his brow and glowered at the luckless swell of the Fourth.

"Rascal!" he gasped. "Careless young donkey! I shall punish you most severely—poof!—for this, D'Arcy! Poof! Poof!"

"Weally, Mr. Lathom, as one gentleman to another—"

"Silence!" bellowed the irate master, getting back his breath suddenly. "You had no business to be rushing about in such a reckless and dangerous manner, D'Arcy! You will enter my study—my tent, I should say—and await me there! At the moment I have urgent business with Dr. Holmes. I have just remembered that I had arranged to visit him now. On my return I propose to cane you severely, boy! Go!"

"But weally, sir, that wretched dog—"

"You were chasing the dog," raved Mr. Lathom, "and I hold you responsible for the accident. As for the dog, I shall request Dr. Holmes to cause its removal from this camp. I have already had occasion to speak to your brother regarding it, D'Arcy. I have found it more than once in my tent, and it has caused me much annoyance. Slip into my tent and await my return, D'Arcy."

"Oh, yaas, sir!" groaned Gussy, and he entered the tent.

"Poor old Gussy," murmured Blake. "Always getting it in the neck!"

"Serves you jolly well right, Gussy!" snorted Wally, appearing in the doorway of the tent. "What the thump did you want to chase old Pongo like that for, you awful ass! Now Lathom's ratty, and means to get Pongo shifted, blow you!"

It was the last straw for Arthur Augustus.

Usually he was very patient indeed with his young scapegrace of a brother, but on this occasion Arthur Augustus let himself go.

Rushing at Wally, he grasped that reckless fag by the collar, and dragging him into the tent, he started to shake him with no little vigour.

"Leggo!" roared Wally furiously. "Leggo, or I'll hack your shin, Gus! I mean it!"

Shake, shake, shake, shake!

Arthur Augustus continued to shake regardless, until suddenly he gave a fiendish yelp as Wally kept his word. He hacked Gussy's shin, and as Arthur Augustus leaped into the air he neatly tripped him up and shot through the crowd in the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd in the doorway were highly entertained, and they roared as Wally vanished, while his less fortunate older brother went headlong once again, and sprawled with his head half under the bed.

For some seconds Arthur Augustus lay where he had fallen. Then he gave a cry, and was about to scramble up, when just as suddenly he seemed to pause. Then he poked his head under the bed again.

"Hurt, Gussy?" exclaimed Blake in great alarm, rushing into the tent. "What—"

Arthur Augustus did not answer for a moment. He remained grovelling under the bed, and then he slowly backed out and rose to his feet, dusty and panting, but with a strange and utterly horrified expression on his red face.

Then Blake suddenly caught sight of something in his chum's hand, and he yelled.

"Gussy! What—what—"

He broke off aghast; and no wonder!

For in one hand Arthur Augustus held a gold watch, with guard complete, and in the other hand a wallet—an expensive-looking wallet!

"That—that's your watch, Gussy!" stammered Blake.

"Quite right, Blake," said Arthur Augustus in a curious

voice. "And this, unless I am vewy much mistaken, is Mornington's missing wallet."

"Great pip!"

There was a buzz of utter amazement round the doorway, and Tom Merry ran in.

He stared transfixed at the glittering watch and the handsome, but sadly dusty wallet.

"Great pip! D-d-did you find those under Lathom's bed, Gussy?"

"Yaas. How—how feahfully wotten!"

Apparently Arthur Augustus had forgotten all about his little difference with Mr. Lathom now. He was looking scared and utterly bewildered.

"It was hidden in a hole—wathah a big hole in the floorboards, and the earth appeals to have been dug out into a hole also," he mumbled. "I happened to see my watch shinin', bai Jove! It is a most remarkable and disturbin' thing, deah boys. And there are othah things in the hole also, I am afwaid."

"Phew!"

It was a staggering surprise. To find the stolen articles hidden under the bed of the Fourth Form master was the last thing they would have dreamed of.

"It is wathah wotten," said Arthur Augustus. "But it is uttaly absurd to suspect Mr. Lathom of havin' stolen them. I—"

"What—what—Bless my soul! What did you say then, D'Arcy?"

It was Mr. Lathom again. He stood in the doorway of the tent, and he gazed angrily at the fellows in the tent—and especially at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Apparently he had overheard D'Arcy's last words.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 14. The Mystery Solved!

IT was no wonder Mr. Lathom looked angry.

But his anger gave place to utter amazement as he saw the gold watch and the wallet in Gussy's hands.

"D'Arcy!" he gasped. "What—what is that? Can it be your gold hunter—the watch you have lost recently?"

"Yaas, sir!" stammered Arthur Augustus, going pink. "And—and this is the wallet Mornington, fwom Wookwood, has lost. I—I have just found them under your bed, sir."

"Wha-at?"

The master was thunderstruck.

There was a dead silence. The rest of the juniors gathered round the doorway waited for the storm to break.

Mr. Lathom glanced from face to face, and his own face grew pink.

"You—you dare to tell me that you—you found those articles hidden under my bed, D'Arcy?" he gasped, in a faint voice.

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered the hapless Arthur Augustus. "But, weally, sir, pway allow me to assure you that not for one moment do I suspect that you know anything—that is to say—"

Arthur Augustus almost collapsed under Mr. Lathom's glare. He realised suddenly that he had put it rather unfortunately.

He had.

Mr. Lathom's face was a study.

"Bless my soul!" he articulated at last. "This—this is



Mr. Lathom looked in utter amazement at the gold watch and the wallet in Gussy's hands. "D'Arcy!" he gasped. "Can it be your gold hunter—the watch you recently lost?" "Yaas, sir," stammered Arthur Augustus, going pink. "And this is—this is Mornington's wallet. I—I have just found them under your bed, sir!" (See Chapter 13)

too much! Never have I been so insulted by a pupil in all my scholastic experience!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Silence!" bellowed Mr. Lathom.

"But, sir—"

"Silence! So you are kind enough to assure me that you do not suspect me of having stolen these articles," went on Mr. Lathom, with grinding sarcasm. "Oh, very good! You will come with me to Dr. Holmes at once, D'Arcy, and you will bring those wretched articles with you. Found them under my bed, you dare to say? Stuff and nonsense!"

"But, sir, pway listen—"

"Silence! Come! Follow me!"

Arthur Augustus gasped like a stranded fish, and obeyed. As Mr. Lathom had an iron grip on his collar he had no choice in the matter. And as master and pupil left the tent Tom Merry gave a low whistle.

"Well, my only Sunday bonnet!" he breathed. "If that doesn't run off with the giddy dog-biscuit! Poor old Gussy!"

"It is poor old Gussy!" groaned Blake. "Oh, the awful ass seems as if he's born for trouble! Let's go and see what happens to him, for goodness' sake!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors left the tent and started off for the Head's tent, through the doorway of which Mr. Lathom, with his grip still on the unlucky Arthur Augustus' collar, was just vanishing.

But just as the juniors were hurrying towards it, Tom Merry halted abruptly.

"Hold on!" he breathed. "Look at old Pongo, you chaps!"

"Blow Pongo! What—" began Blake crossly.

"But watch him!" murmured Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "The little beggar's waiting for us to clear, I do believe. Look at the guilty crafty look on his chivvy! And he's still got Gussy's slipper."

"Well, what the thump—"

"Go on—keep on!" muttered Tom Merry. "You'll see in a sec."

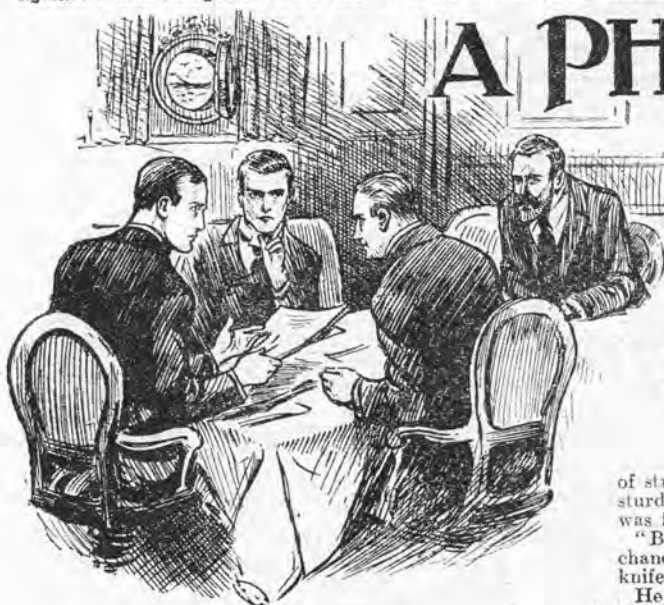
And Tom Merry walked on with his chums for a few yards, and then quite suddenly he looked back over his shoulder.

As he expected, Pongo had vanished from sight.

(Continued on page 27.)

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"HOCH DER KAISER!" Even in these days there are thousands of Germans ready to raise that shout. More than that they are prepared to risk life and limb to see the ex-Emperor restored to the throne. But these Royalists come up against a stiff antagonist in Ferrers Lord, for if their plot succeeds all Europe will be in a blaze of war and revolution!



A PHANTOM THRONE

By Sidney Drew

An Amazing Story of Breathless Adventure and International Intrigue.

A Narrow Escape.

ONE blow of the German's clenched fist that was like a gorilla's would have knocked Dave senseless.

"Oh, get on with it, then!" said Dave bitterly.

"I've got no earthly chance with you, so you needn't be too rough. I don't think you've got much earthly, either. When they miss me there'll be a round-up, and as they know I'm not fool enough to tumble off the island and drown myself they'll soon find out that I'm up here!"

The spy laughed as he gave the cord a few hitches round the shaft.

"Ach," he said, "I am a goot fighter and a goot shot and I haf many card tricks. Best of all, I haf you! So, so! And I am gind man and vill not hurt you mooch if you are—dunder, I vorget the vord you haf in your vile English! Ah, yes—dractable! You one shoud make, and I by the neck dake you and dwist your headt off your pody!"

He allowed Dave enough cord to enable him to sit on the floor, but anchored him fast by tying one of his ankles to a heavy cog-wheel.

Dave felt unutterably miserable as he remembered he had been set on watch and ought not to have left his post, although after making sure, as he had, that there was nothing in sight, there was little harm in going to the mill for a drink of water. There was one tiny grain of consolation in the thought that if he had not left his post the spy might have escaped unseen and unsuspected.

The masked man peered out of the narrow windows in turn.

"You make no sound if I go oop there?" he asked.

"I'll promise nothing," said Dave sullenly.

"Ach, you not led me be gind!" said the big man, with a grin. "You not promise, so I have to gag your mouth!"

"Get on with it, then, you overgrown hog!" said Dave.

Dave, unable to resist, was gagged with his own handkerchief, and, very nimbly, for a man of his weight, the spy climbed to the roof. Kneeling there, he lighted the stump of a cigar, and then saw something of interest. Wigland had just pulled aside a heap of sea-grass, and was hauling his dinghy out of the sand. He dragged the boat down the sloping shore so that it would be ready to launch when the time came to tow up the raft.

Shading his eyes with his hand, the spy made sure that the sculls were in the dinghy, and chuckled as he saw Wigland turn away and go back across the sand. The spy watched him until he had disappeared down the man-hole, and then, handling it gingerly, he took a canvas bag from underneath an old mackintosh.

"These fools have made it easy for me," he thought. "But the poy. That pig dog of a Ferrers Lord would call the rest fair play, but if I kill the poy he will call it murder and fill the earth with his bloodhounds to hunt me down."

Very faintly came the sound of hammers, and, after looking that way once or twice, the spy shrugged his shoulders, and began to lower the bag to the ground with a piece

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of string very carefully. The prisoner saw his big feet and sturdy legs come through the hole, and a moment later he was freeing Dave.

"Boy," he said, "I am no murderer, so I gif you a chance of your life. You have a knife, yes? I will haf the knife!"

He had to take it from the youngster's pocket, for Dave would not help.

"I am going to plow oop the mill," went on the spy, knotting the strong silken cord round the shaft as he spoke. "You stay here and you go oop also. You shall follow me, and if you break your neck that is the fault of you. Oop then, quick, for I must wreck the aeroplane, and now the vay is clear to do it."

He lifted Dave to the bar, and Dave scrambled through in frantic haste, and tore the gag from his lips. There was no luck, for Klarspargen was as deserted above ground as the North Pole in mid-winter, and the freshening breeze blew back his shout for help. He managed to dodge a cuff from the angry spy which would have sent him headlong over the parapet if it had taken effect.

The spy threw the knotted cord over. Being made of the finest silk, though the cord was so slender, it was enormously strong.

"You cannot bite that, and you cannot break it, poy," said the German. "I haf dreated you fairly, you cannot deny. I go first, and when I gall to you, follow for the life of you, quick! Six seconds only I dake to put the bomb in the mill, and thirty seconds I dime it to explode. Down mit you, then, faster than you ever go down, and run faster than you ever ran. And if you live out of it, poy, and meet Herr Ferrers Lord, tell him you haf met Baron Von Stolzenburg!"

Giving the cord a twist round his wrist, the spy lowered himself over the parapet. Swinging there, he tore off the mask and laughed. He was a fine figure of a man, and handsome, too, in spite of the bristles on his chin and the dirt on his face. He went down with his feet against the stonework, and if the cord had snapped he would have broken his back. He reached the ground safely, and took a mahogany box, with a dial on it, out of the canvas bag and held it up.

"Thirty-six seconds, poy!" he cried, and dashed round to the door.

Dave wasted no time, but slid down the cord at break-neck speed, and fell the last ten feet of it. He had seen the boat, and he ran for it. Out came the German, yelling curses and threatening to shoot, but Dave raced on. In the heavy sand Dave was speedier than his pursuer. He was within three yards of the boat when he heard a terrific roar behind him, and a hundred red-hot hands seemed to seize him and hurl him into the air.

The German went down and rolled over and over like a shot rabbit, and the mad force of the explosion flung Dave sheer across the dinghy and plunged him headlong into the sea.

The Rescue!

MIDSHIPMAN VAL HILTON was half-way up the iron ladder when he heard the roar. Barry O'Rooney and Maddock dropped their hammers, and Prince Ching Lung left the saw sticking in the plane he was cutting.

"Bedad, phwat's that at all?" said O'Rooney. "Is ut a thunderbolt?"

"A thunderbolt, my leg!" growled the bo'sun: "Did you ever know a thunderbolt, souse me, with a sky as blue as a starling's egg? It's some old Dutch hooker loaded with dynamite and T.N.T. that's drifted ashore and gone up in the air with a bang!"

Val scrambled up the ladder and saw a huge cloud of black and yellow smoke rolling away westwards. The mill had vanished except for a ragged stump of brick and stonework. He ran towards it, followed by Ching Lung.

After them came Barry O'Rooney, the bo'sun, and the interpreter. Then Val stopped and gazed about him with startled eyes as he remembered his chum had been keeping watch above ground.

"Where's Dave, Ching?" he asked hoarsely.

"Where's young Master David?" asked Maddock at that moment. "By honey, where's he got to?"

All round the sand was littered with ruins. They had all halted except Ching Lung, who kept on. The old door had been blown to splinters, and the stump of the mill, as the prince looked in, was choked with rubbish. He climbed over the rubbish, sick at heart, and came out on the other side. He heard O'Rooney shout, and then saw a man rise out of the sand, stagger a few paces, and fall. Val was the first to reach him, beating O'Rooney in the race by about a couple of yards. The man had staggered to his feet again when Val gripped him.

"Your friendt, your young friendt," he said, "is, I think, in the sea. I see him blown over the post. If he is deat, I am sorry. It is not what I vish or intend."

Then the German shut his eyes and became a limp and heavy weight in O'Rooney's arms. A feeble cry sounded.

"There he is, sir, there he is!" shouted Wigland excitedly. "There's Master Ap Rees, sir!"

He pointed down the channel. The wind was against the tide and the water had become choppy. Fifty yards away they saw Dave trying to swim feebly against the current, and Ching Lung caught Val by the collar as he was about to dive into the sea.

"Keep your head, son!" said the prince, in a low voice. "You're in command, you know!"

"Out with the boat, Maddock and Wigland!" said Val. "Now, prince!"

Luckily, the sculls were still lying in the dinghy, and the bo'sun plunged in neck deep to push her off, while Barry O'Rooney bawled encouragement to the swimmer through his cupped hands. Dave was still afloat, but he could make no headway against the current, and as the prince rowed desperately, Val took off his coat and shoes.

"Stick it, old man, stick it!" he bellowed. "Keep your chin up, Dave, we're coming!"

A moment later he knew that Dave was beaten, for he threw up his arms and vanished. Glancing over his shoulder, Ching Lung, who was perfectly cool, marked the exact spot, and brought the boat's nose round. Val nearly went overboard as he made his clutch, for he was under

water up to the armpits. He missed the shadowy object he had clutched at, but Ching Lung saw it, too, and dived over the bows.

The prince came up with one arm round Dave.

"It's no use trying to get him into the boat," he said. "Unhitch your painter, make it fast to the thwart, give me the end of it to hang on to, and then tow us in. Look lively, son! Dig holes in it!"

Maddock had sent Wigland for brandy, and he came back with it as they were helping the prince out of the water with his burden. Dave was as white as a corpse, and did not appear to be breathing. They worked at him for five minutes, pumping his arms backwards and forwards, before life began to struggle back, and the German who had lighted the stump of a cigar watched and nodded.

"Goot!" he said. "I am glad. A boy, like a cat, haf nine lifes. Nearly eight of them he lose, but one is quite enough. Derrible stuff, that lyconite, and I time it too short!"

"Get some blankets, Maddock," said the prince. "and bring a spade to make a shelter from the wind. He'll be better up here than down in that musty old hole. Bring a rope, and we'll see about drying our clothes, too."

"Are you sure he'll pull through, Ching?" asked Val anxiously, as he bent over his white-faced chum.

"Not a doubt about it," answered the prince cheerfully. "He's as hard as nails!"

"This has put the lid on it!" said Val, with a dismal whistle. "Who are you?" he added, turning to the German.

"He was with the smugglers, sir," said Wigland. "He's no smuggler, and I think I know his face."

"There about it is no secret, gentlemen," said the prisoner. "I am Baron von Stolzenburg, late of the staff of the Kaiser, and still the Kaiser's man, and a Royalist, and proud of it. My mistake is that I gif not time enough to that infernal machine. It is a new explosive, this lyconite, and more powerful than I need. My skin veel as if I am beaten with sticks. May I ask your goot hospitality Herr Midshipman, to a drink of brandy?"

Val handed him the bottle and the glass.

"Where were you hiding?" he asked.

"Oop in the mill. I came with the smugglers, but with them I did not go, as you see. Your young friendt goon oop to eggsplore, and so we discovered each other. We haf a little argument, and I am too strong and win, but he fight well, so I arrange that he get away when I plow oop the mill. I do not get away because I do not understand how powerful is this lyconite, and so undertime it. Had I gif it sixty seconds I am not here. Gentlemen, your good health!"

Val whistled still more dismally, for everything they had done had been done in vain. The parts of the aeroplane they had succeeded in landing after so much trouble, were worthless scrap-iron. Five minutes later, with a blanket wrapped round him, he was pacing up and down like an uneasy Red Indian, while his clothes were drying in the breeze.

"And now, gentlemen," said Baron von Stolzenburg, "I will gif twenty pounds in the notes of your Bank of England to be rowed over to the second islandt yonder, and that is a goot price for a passage so shordt."

"There's nothing doing, souse me!" growled Maddock.

"Herr Midshipman, by your kindness," cried the big German, "allow me with you a word."

"What is it, baron?"

"Only that I wish one of your men to row me over to the second islandt, Herr Midshipman. I am no beggar, and can pay. Twenty pounds I can gif," said Von Stolzenburg.

Val shook his head.

"I am afraid I can't do that," he said. "You must consider yourself a prisoner."

"A brisoner? Are we at war, yes? What haf I done wrong, then? I am Baron von Stolzenburg, and these poor islands are part of my estate, my own broberdy. The mill was my own broberdy. Am I not allowed to destroy my own if I vish? Is it my fault that without bermission you drespass on my estate and place goots in my mill and so lose them? As one gentleman to another, Herr Midshipman, I ask you to admit that you are in the wrong. To holdt me a brisoner you haf no right in the world. It is a monstrous oudrage and against every law!"

Val knew quite well that this was true—perfectly true. He glanced at Ching Lung for help, but the prince, who was sitting in the sand, with one arm round Dave, did not raise his head.

"It is the act of brigandage," added the baron, "the act of bandits."

"I am sorry, Herr Baron," said Val, "but I cannot let you go. If, as you say, you own the island and owned the mill, I quite agree with you that legally we are in the

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.

Under the command of Midshipman Val Hilton, Prince Ching Lung, David Ap Rees, Benjamin Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and a number of ordinary seamen are ordered to proceed to an island named Klarspargen. Here, in accordance with the orders of Ferrers Lord, they meet James Wigland, an interpreter and ex-spy, who leads them to a rectangular underground chamber—a one-time German submarine base—built below an old mill.

Later, David Ap Rees, who is on guard, is suddenly pounced upon by a masked spy, in whose strong grasp he is overpowered and made prisoner.

"I go, or I shoot you," says his German captor threateningly; "so put out your hands, or I knock you senseless!"

(Now read on.)

wrong; but, all the same, I can't let you go. Take the baron down, Mr. Maddock. You had better close up, for that raft will be no use to us now. I assure you, Herr Baron, that you will be as comfortable as we can make you, and that if I am doing something wrong you will be fully compensated."

"Very good! Mind you, Herr Midshipman, I give no parole and make no promise that I do not escape," said the German.

The bo'sun and Wigland took charge of the burly prisoner and led him away.

"Bedad, that spalpeen could be a dangerous lump in a fight!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Wan of the ex-Kaiser's pets, is he? And how's young Masther Dave, sir?"

"Pulling round, Barry," said the prince. "He's asleep, and he'll be better for it when he wakes up. How goes it, Val?"

"Rotten," said Val. "This has messed up everything. What frantic idiots we were not to search the mill! Everything seems to have come unstuck. We don't know the chief's plans, but it's obvious that somebody did, or Von Stolzenburg wouldn't have been here waiting for us when we landed. And others know that he's on the island and why he came. This is a pretty fine kettle of fish, Ching. We've lost the plane, and the only bit of comfort I can scrape out of it is that we haven't lost old Dave. If you've got any advice to give, give it, for the love of Mike, for I've got the K.O., and I'm down and out!"

"I'm not advising, son," said the prince. "I'll have a think presently, but it wouldn't be a bad notion to take the skulls out of the dinghy, and the plug, too—Hallo, Dave! Waking up, old scout, eh? How do you feel?"

Dave muttered something that Val did not wait to listen to; for, his blanket flapping in the breeze, he ran to the man-hole, shinned down the ladder where the massive door of steel and concrete was closing. Maddock had given the baron a cigarette, and, after he had lighted it, he stood watching the door with some interest as it climbed upwards.

"It is nine years since I blace foot on this vile sand-bank," he said, "and not till I vatch you dig this morning did I guess that this blace was not plown in and flooded out. I am unfortunate, for if the boy had not found me I would have saved the lyconite for this, and let the oldt mill standt."

"The wireless, Mr. Maddock," said Val breathlessly. "Is it amongst this stuff, or did we leave it in the mill?"

"Better fetch O'Rooney, sir," said Maddock. "I think he saw most of it packed."

"Give him a chi-ike, then," said Val. "What a dander-head I am! If there isn't wireless, somebody ought to be shot, and it's the very first thing I ought to have thought about. Why didn't somebody remind me?"

Maddock put his head out into the sunshine and bellowed for Barry O'Rooney.

"Where's the wireless, you goat?" demanded the bo'sun. "Mr. Hilton is asking for it."

"In a flat case wid red chalk marks on ut," said Barry O'Rooney. "And not so much of your goat, or O'll put my boot in your face and push you back in the coal-cellar again where you belong. Oi'm mighty sorry, Ben, but Oi don't think we shifted the wireless unless you and Jimmy did ut. She was a bit of a hefty load wid the batteries. Anyhow, bhoy, ut's a square packet, wrapped in tarpaulin, with three or four red chalk marks on it."

"Right," said Maddock, "or, more likely wrong, souse me, for I don't remember humping any dunnage with red chalk marks on it. Seems to me things are getting a bit twisted. Come down yourself and have a look."

Five minutes later the bo'sun informed Val that the wireless had not been brought down.

"Whew! There's a big black mark up against me," said Val. "Just what I ought to have attended to. Now I'm for it, and I'll get told I'm a bonehead, and not fit for the job. I jolly well wish the chief had put Ching Lung in command!"

Baron Von Stolzenburg rubbed the back of his hand over his chin, and asked if he could borrow a razor.

"The few little trifles I had," he explained, "were in the pockets of my old raincoat, and in my hurry I forgot to rescue them. The opportunity of to shave and of to wash myself is a favour one gentleman will offer to another, Herr Midshipman."

"Lend the baron a razor, Mr. Maddock, and anything else he wants," said Val. "The baron is in Wigland's charge."

Presently the prince and Dave arrived. Dave had been violently sick, and had thus got rid of the last of the salt water he had swallowed, and this had done him more good than sleep or brandy.

"I'm not feeling too bad," he told Val, "except that my back tingles as if I had been rolling in a bed of nettles without any togs on. The prince says it was the sand that hit me when the mill went up. I was sprinting for the boat to shove her off before the German guy could get her. Did you search him? He had a revolver."

"I've got that, Val. I picked it up in the sand," said the prince. "Get into one of the hammocks, Dave, and make yourself comfortable for an hour or so, and then you'll be as right as rain. More troubles, eh, son? What's gone bust now?"

"The wireless, Ching."

"That's nasty," said Ching Lung. "All I can say for it is to sit tight and wait. Fortune doesn't seem in a smiling mood, does she? Without any wireless we're marooned like old Robinson Crusoe."

Dave discovered the big German standing in front of a cracked mirror lathering his chin.

"Aha!" he cried. "Welcome back! We haf a goot fight together, so I am blease you are not drown. I am mistaken not to give more time to that explosive. Derrible stuff, derrible stuff! I have not hurt you much, did I?"

Master David Ap Rees spread his blankets and climbed into his hammock and watched Baron Von Stolzenburg as he scraped away with the razor the bo'sun had lent him. The baron wiped the razor, sponged his cheeks, and trolled a snatch of a German song in a rich, mellow voice.

"You seem pretty cheerful about things," said Dave, who bore no ill-will for what had happened.

"Always it is better to sing than to moan, friendt," said the baron. "Ach, yes, I like to keep a good heart! But I will sing no more and you shall sleep. All I ask is that I shall be treat by the young Herr Lieutenant as one gentleman shall treat another. And I am hungry, for it is a whole day since I tasted food."

"You'd better go and ask for some, then," said Dave, "for it's no use ringing for the waiter."

With a thud, a bundle of garments came tumbling through the manhole. Barry O'Rooney followed.

"Oi cleared the clothes-line quick, sor, for there's a plane up," said Barry. "She's coming off the land, and I didn't want them to see our washing."

"Give me a blanket—one of the khaki-coloured ones," said Val.

Lying flat on the edge of the manhole, Val picked up the advancing aeroplane with his binoculars. He could not make out her marks, but she was a big machine, and she was flying far too low to belong to any one of the passenger services. Crawling out, Val secured four stones and tied them to the corners of the blanket.

"Is she on the prowl, son?" asked Ching Lung, from the ladder.

"I think so," answered Val. "She's heading straight for us and dropping lower. I'm just camouflaging our top window a bit."

As the thunder of the aeroplane's propeller grew louder, Val pulled the blanket, which was practically the same colour as the sand, over the man-hole. Then he wriggled forward, turned on his back, and looked upwards from under the edge of the blanket. The aeroplane passed overhead, scarcely three hundred feet above the sandbank, and Val saw that her marks had been obliterated by a coat of whitewash or paint.

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She climbed rapidly, turned, and headed back towards the coast.

"Mr. Maddock!" shouted Val.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"If you have got any flour make some thick paste, something that will stick," said Val, who had an uneasy feeling that the aeroplane had not gone for good. "I want this door covered with sand and grass. Knock together some sort of a wooden rake, and scrape away our tracks, for we've made a regular footpath. She's down!" he added.

The aeroplane had alighted on the island to which their prisoner had offered twenty pounds to be rowed.

The Baron Speaks Out!

MIDSHPMAN VAL HILTON was very worried, and he told Dave so as they stood in the moonlight beside the ruins of the mill, with the easterly wind still blowing.

"I'm all at sea, kid," he said, "absolutely adrift, and nothing will go right. It's giving me a dromedary's double hump!"

"Well, it's the right sort of a place for a dromedary, this old sandheap," said Dave. "I know no more of what the game is than you, but it can't be much of a game if that Hun with the bomb has absolutely ruined it. Won't the prince help?"

"He says he's only a passenger and an outsider, and knows nothing at all. And that plane's still over there. They've been looking for the baron, and you can bet your boots they'll come back!"

"You're about right there, and speak the giddy words of truth," said Dave, "for I think I can hear her engine. Or is it fancy?"

"I don't hear anything, but I'm expecting unwelcome visitors. Go back and tell them to pull up the shutters. I'll fetch the dinghy along and put it inside. Take your rake with you and cover up your trail."

Val listened again before he pushed the dinghy into the water. Since the explosion they had seen no sign of a boat. As the mill had been a seamark, it was almost certain that the crew of the first boat that came along would come ashore to see what had happened to the old tower.

"I'm not afraid of the merchants," he thought; "but I don't like those blighters in the plane. If Stolzenburg wasn't lying when he said he thought the old submarine cellar was bombed and flooded, his pals may think the same, or they may not even know that it ever existed. Gosh! I wish it would blow harder!"

It was blowing quite hard enough for the loose sand to fill up most of the tracks they had made. In the moonlight, Val overshot the mark, and a shout from Maddock recalled him. He rowed back into the channel.

"You can close up again, Mr. Maddock," he said. "I'm going out again. Feel fit enough for it, Dave?"

"Fit as a drayhorse, old scout," said Dave. "More sand-raking and walking backwards like giddy crabs, which I know don't walk backwards but sideways, so you needn't correct me. Wait till I've had a cup of tea, and I'm with you."

The baron had made himself comfortable in the officers' quarters, and was sitting near the electric radiator, smoking one of Prince Ching Lung's cigars. He looked very big and healthy, and quite dwarfed Ching Lung.

"Ach, prince, you do not understand," he said with a laugh. "All the best of us in the Fatherland are for the Kaiser. 'We are a military people and a nation of soldiers, and that no defeat can crush out of us. On our platforms men get oop and declare they will haf no more kings, and that they are Socialists and Republicans. That is all lip-talk and lies. When we are ready, and the banners fly and the bugles blow from one end of Germany to the other, it will be 'Hoch der Kaiser!' Ach, I know!"

Ching Lung concealed a yawn behind his hand.

"Do you think the change of affairs will affect Russia, baron?"

"I am a soldier and not a politician, but those who know tell me yes, Russia will help, and we shall help Russia. They are as tired of Socialism and Soviets as we are of our foolish Government. The Tsars may at times have been harsh, it is true, but what of these ignorant upstart Bolsheviks? Come, you are a prince and I am a gentleman. Come then, what government is fit for a gentleman to live under except a royalist government? That is what we are struggling for, and we shall soon have it. You may think we are poor and broken, but we shall surprise the world. Oh, yes, yes, there will be war, much war, but that also is a gentleman's game, and I shall welcome it!"

(Fortunately for the peace of Europe, the Baron's view is not shared by everybody. All the same for that, Fervers Lord means to leave no stone unturned in his efforts to nip the German Royalist plot in the bud. Mind you read next week's grand instalment, boys.)

HONOURS EVEN!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Now do you see?" breathed Tom Merry, his eyes dancing. "Now, after me—sharp!"

And Tom Merry dashed back to Mr. Lathom's tent and rushed inside. And after him went his startled and wondering chums.

They were just in time to see Pongo, looking very sheepish, and with his tail dragging, crawl from under the bed.

The slipper was not in his mouth now.

"Hold the little beggar!" snapped Tom.

Blake jumped at Pongo and grasped his collar, and held him despite his whines and struggles. Tom Merry dragged away the bed with a wrench. As it swung aside, a hole in the floorboards was revealed, below that was another hole, apparently scraped out of the earth.

Tom Merry dived a hand inside and brought forth the silk-covered slipper, and then he produced from the hole, first, Cardew's gold cigarette-case, and then several other articles of less value.

There was a pocket-book, half chewed to pieces, and there was a piece of broken mirror, and a silver photograph frame, and several other smaller articles of like value. And all of them were either chewed and torn, or had clear teeth-marks on them.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Blake.

"Pongo!" said Tom Merry quietly. "I thought so when I saw him hanging about outside just now. Pongo, the little rascal, is the thief!"

"Phew!"

"Well, I'm blown!"

For a moment the startled juniors looked at each other, and then, with one accord, they doubled up and roared with laughter.

They could not help it.

They remembered several significant things now. They remembered that Pongo had been present at the raid on the enemy camp on the night when the wallet had vanished, and they knew he had been in the tent at the time. They also remembered that on the night when Gussy had lost his watch and Cardew had lost his cigarette-case, Tom Merry had insisted upon Pongo remaining behind when they started out to raid the Rookwood camp again. Moreover, Pongo's mischievous nature was well known. As Wally had said, it was very obvious that Pongo did like bright things—and some things not bright.

"Well, the little wretch!" choked Tom Merry, at last. "My hat! Won't those Rookwood chaps roar when they hear the news? Come on, chaps! We'll take these things straight away to the Head, and we'll jolly soon prove it when we show him the teeth-marks on everything!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

And they went. And two minutes later Dr. Holmes and Mr. Lathom were listening in amazement to Tom Merry's theory, while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy almost fell down when he heard it.

But there was no doubting the proof.

Pongo was the thief! The teeth-marks without the other evidence was sufficient to bring his guilt home to him. And little Mr. Lathom—his usual good-nature restored again

(Continued overleaf.)



2

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HONOURS EVEN!

(Continued from previous page.)

now-joined with the Head and Mr. Railton in hearty laughter when all was clear.

In fact, all St. Jim's and all Rookwood laughed over the disclosure, and the only fellow who did not laugh was Wally D'Arcy, Pongo's master. And Wally was indignant—wildly indignant—at the foul charge, as he expressed it, brought against his pet.

But in the end he had to admit that Pongo was guilty; but Wally still had something to be indignant about, for the sentence passed on Pongo for his crime was that he be returned to St. Jim's without delay.

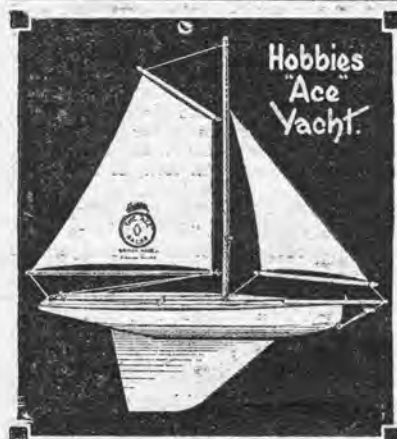
Indeed, so indignant was poor Wally that he actually went to the Head himself about it, and the Head—grand

old man—gave way to his pleading, and Pongo remained—greatly to the regret of Arthur Augustus, it must be feared.

So ended the great camp mystery; but it did not end the rags and raids between the rival schools under canvas by any means. St. Jim's—after many smaller japes—carried out a gigantic raid a few nights later, and more than squared accounts with the Rookwood heroes. And when, at last, brown as berries and chirpy as crickets, the St. Jim's fellows and the Rookwood fellows returned to their respective schools at the end of the summer camp, it was generally agreed on both sides that it was Honours Even!

THE END.

(There will be another topping yarn of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's next week, entitled "Grundy's Feud." This is one of the best yarns Martin Clifford has written, so no "Gemite" should miss reading it.)



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