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The Wrong Fellow Goes In!

(See the amazing school story, featuring
Tom Merry & Co., in this issue.)

A GRAND, LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY INTRODUCING

UNDER

BY
Martin Clifford.

Scandal precedes the arrival of Arthur Castleton at St. Jim's; he's an out and out rotter. So terrific is his juicy reputation that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thinks that it is up to him to reform this wayward youth. But like the rest of the fellows at St. Jim's, Gussy is hooked for a surprise!

CHAPTER 1.

A Tough Customer!

"CASTLETON?" said Jack Blake, of the St. Jim's Fourth.

"Yaas, wathah!" "Never been there," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, it appeahs to be a waste of time to talk to you," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his famous monocle into his eye, and gazing at Jack Blake with stern frigidty. "If you had been listenin', you would not make such a vudiculous assertion."

"Nothing ridiculous about it," replied Blake. "How could I have been to Castleton when I don't even know where the place is?"

"You fwihtful ass!" roared D'Arcy. "Castleton isn't a place!"

"Not a place?"

"No!"

"Then what is it?"

"Castleton is a chap," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "He is the new fellow who is comin' into the Shell."

"Oh!" said Blake. "Then why didn't you tell me before?"

"Bai Jove! You are gettin' beyond enduance!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I have been talkin' to you for the last five minutes about the new fellow, and it is appawent that you have not been takin' the slightest notice."

"Bow-wow!"

"I do not wegard that as an intelligible wemark, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "I am afwaid it is uttably useless to talk to you!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were lounging near the School House doorway, waiting for the bell. It was nearly time for first lesson, and the morning was cold and rainy.

Racke, of the Shell, came in, accompanied by Crooke and Clampe. They were looking unusually cheerful, and the other fellows could not help noticing their animated expressions.

"Somebody's character is going through the mill, I'll bet!" said Herries, with a glare. "Those rotters are only happy when they're talking scandal."

Aubrey Racke frowned.

"Mind your own bizney!" he said. "As a matter of fact, we're talking about the new chap—Castleton. Not your affair at all. He's booked for the Shell, so you can keep your Fourth Form nose out of it!"

"Look here—" began Herries wrathfully.

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"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "What do you know about Castleton, Wacke?"

Racke grinned.

"I know a good deal," he replied. "I happen to have Castleton's character all indexed and tabulated. I know who he is, what he is, and how he's likely to shape at St. Jim's. I rather think I'm goin' to like the new kid."

"Then he's evidently an outsider," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed D'Arcy. "If the new chap is one of Wacke's kiduay he is evidently a wank wottah! But I wofuse to believe it. Wacke has never seen the man in his life!"

"That's true," admitted Racke. "But I've heard about him."

"Oh, have you?" said Blake. "Gather round, children! Here is a man who knows all about the new kid! Information given freely—particularly if it's of an unpleasant character. Scandal ad lib!"

Crooke frowned uncomfortably.

"Chuck it!" he said. "We don't want to drag the new man's name into the dust. Why not wait till he gets here, and then judge him for ourselves?"

"Bai Jove! That is wathah a bwainy suggestion, Cwooke," said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "It is fwihtfully bad form to cut the new chap's chawatah to wibbons before he awwives. It is only fair to give him a sportin' chance."

"Good for you, Gussy!" said Blake, nodding.

"What's the discussion?" asked Tom Merry cheerily, as he arrived with Manners and Lowther. "Who's going to be given a sporting chance?"

"Castleton, deah boy."

"Oh, the new man?" said Tom. "Yes, he's due to arrive this afternoon, and I understand he's coming into the School House Shell. Well, we'll give him a cheery welcome."

"Yaas, wathah," agreed D'Arcy. "It is distinctly up to

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Gussy's Wing

us to keep the new chap out of Wacke's hands. It will be wathah fwithful if Castleton walks blindly into the clutches of wogues and vagabonds without wealisin' it."

"Into the hands of the Philistines, eh?" said Monty Lowther.

"You silly idiots!" sneered Racke. "If Castleton chooses to recognise a fellow sportsman, it's his business, and nobody else's. I happen to know somethin' about the man. He's a bit of a blood."

"How do you happen to know this?" asked Tom Merry.

"I heard it from a pal of mine in London," grinned Racke. "No need to mention names. But Castleton is the fellow in question. Fresh from a grammar school—never been to a place like St. Jim's in his life. I've got him taped."

"Well, you're just about right, anyhow," admitted Tom Merry. "Mr. Railton mentioned to me that Castleton was coming straight here from a private school. If you know anything against him, Racke, you'd better keep quiet. We don't want to give the fellow a handicap."

"Heah, heah!"

"Yes, shut up, Racke!"

"Against him!" said Racke pleasantly. "Dear men, what

I know is distinctly in Castleton's favour. He was the star actor in a perfectly gorgeous rag in Piccadilly during the big vac. He biffed a bobby in the eye, knocked out a taxi-driver, and nearly got himself arrested."

"And this is distinctly in his favour?" asked Lowther politely.

"Well, isn't it?" said Racke. "It proves that the man has got plenty of spirit. He's one of the speediest 'bloodes' on record! He only escaped arrest by bunkin' half across the West End, and dodgin' into a night club."

"Oh, so he patronises night clubs, does he?" asked Blake.

"He's a member of most of them," said Racke, grinning. "What Castleton doesn't know about the gay life isn't worth learnin'!"

"He won't be able to teach you much!" said Herries gruffly.

"Oh, I don't know," said Racke. "The man's reputation is a bit staggerin'. Such games as banker and nap are too mild for him. He's more in favour of roulette and chemin-de-fer. And as for smokin', I hear he beats all records."

"It's just as well to be warned," said Monty Lowther. "If we notice a smell of shag about the place, we shall know where to look for the culprit. Cigarettes, of course, are too mild for this tough."

"Rats!" said Clampe. "The chap isn't a tough. He's a sportsman. He doesn't smoke shag, either."

"You surprise me!" said Lowther. "One is always liable to get a wrong impression. After hearing that this fellow is in the habit of knocking down bobbies, and 'outing' taxi-drivers, I rather expected to see a kind of bruiser, dressed in a striped sweater and a choker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthab, this is no time for wottin'," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I uttally wufuse to believe this scandal. Surely you fellows are not pwepared to take Wacke's word?"

"It doesn't make any difference whether you take my word or not," said Racke. "Castleton himself will be here this afternoon, and then you'll be able to form your opinions. But you can take it from me that he's a hot one."

"A goer," said Clampe. "A regular scorcher!"

"Clang, clang, clang!"

"Well, that finishes the discussion," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

They went into the Form-rooms, but nothing could alter the impression which Aubrey Racke had created. Castleton, the new fellow for the Shell, was obviously a tough customer!

CHAPTER 2.

The Parting of the Ways!

"MY heye!"

The old porter at Abbotsford Junction stared in wonder as the door of a first-class compartment opened and two passengers alighted. The train from London had just drawn in, and the platform was a-bustle. The old porter looked again, rubbed his "heyes," and shook his head.

"Fair beats me!" he said stoutly. "That's what it do—fair beats me!"

The two passengers were well-set-up youngsters of about fifteen. They were smartly attired in Etons, and they wore overcoats and caps. Each carried a small handbag.

But the most surprising feature about them was that they were absolutely identical in appearance. The old porter, looking from one to the other, couldn't see any difference at all.

"Like two peas out o' the same pod!" declared the porter. This description was superficially accurate. Arthur and Alan Castleton were amazingly alike. But as they were twins this fact was not particularly surprising. There was something almost uncanny in their exact resemblance.

"Oh, hang!" said one of them, with a frown. "Let's get away behind this pile of luggage! I can't stick being stared at!"

The other smiled.

"Getting sensitive, Alan?" he asked amusedly.

"Rot!" said Alan. "It's not a question of being sensitive. I don't like people gaping and mooning at us as though we were freaks out of a side-show!"

"Well, we're very much alike, aren't we?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, confound it! Too much alike!"

Alan Castleton did not seem to relish the stares of the populace, and he led the way behind a big pile of luggage, where there was a fair amount of privacy.

"Your train will be five minutes yet—perhaps ten," said Alan. "We might as well stay here. Too many curious eyes in the waiting-room. I hate to be gaped at by these fools! Haven't they ever seen twins before?"

Arthur was rather pained.

"Is there any need to be so ill-tempered about it?" he asked quietly. "We've only another ten minutes together, Alan. And after that we shall be parted for a whole term. You're going to St. Frank's, and I'm going to St. Jim's."

"Thank goodness for that!" muttered Alan.

"Alan!"

"Oh, well, you know what I mean," said Alan Castleton gruffly. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, old man, but this sort of thing is a bit too mouldy, if you ask me. It's a dashed good thing that we're going to different schools!"

Arthur frowned.

"I was rather cut up about it," he said. "I thought the pater would at least send us to the same public school."

"Rats!" said Alan. "It's the most sensible thing the pater ever did. I don't agree with him on most questions, but this scheme for sending me to St. Frank's and you to St. Jim's is brainy. The only word, old chap—brainy."

"You're keen on us being parted, then?"

"Oh, hang!" went on Alan. "We're not kids, are we? We don't want to be holding hands all the time, do we? It's far better that we should be at different schools, and make our own separate ways."

"Perhaps you're right," said Arthur quietly.

For a second he gave his brother a quick, penetrating glance—a glance which meant much. But Alan did not see it. He was taking a cigarette-case out of his pocket.

"Look here, you're not going to smoke, are you?" asked Arthur.

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"Why not?"

"Oh, do as you please," said Arthur wearily. "None of my business."

"Glad you admit it for once!" sneered Alan. "If you want to know the truth, Arthur, you're too confoundedly goody-goody for my liking! The pater was inspired when he decided to keep us apart. We're twins, and we're so much alike that people are always making idiotic mistakes. There'd be nothing but confusion if I came to St. Jim's with you. It's much better for us to keep out of one another's way."

"I expect father knows best," agreed Arthur, with a nod. "And we're not to meet, or communicate with one another—"

"Or even let anybody know that there are two of us," interrupted Alan. "At St. Jim's the chaps will think that you're the only Castleton there is. And at St. Frank's I shall keep up the same fiction. There's no need for us to tell anybody that we're twins."

"I don't see that it matters—"

"It matters a lot!" said Alan sharply. "Some people have got a crazy idea that twins are more or less deficient, either mentally or physically—or both. And that sort of rot is a handicap to a chap at school. No need to tell anybody that you're one of the twins, Arthur."

"Father said it would be better not to, so I won't," agreed Arthur.

"The pater knows something," nodded Alan. "Can't blame him, poor chap. He's a twin himself, and you know as well as I do that our uncle died years ago because he was constitutionally weak. We're different. We're as sound as two bells. Let's hoe our own rows."

Arthur was thoughtful for a few moments.

He was rather sorry that he and his twin were to be parted again. They had been at different grammar schools, where the same principle had been adhered to. They had only met during the holidays. Their father had not even informed the authorities at St. Jim's and St. Frank's that he had two sons, that they were twins, and that he was sending them to different establishments.

"It's better from every point of view," continued Alan. "If I went to St. Jim's with you we should have a ghastly time of it."

"Why?"

"Because we should be looked upon as curiosities," said Alan. "The fellows would single us out for all sorts of foolery, and there'd be endless confusion week in and week out. You would get mistaken for me, and I should get mistaken for you. There can't be any of that rot if we're at different schools."

Arthur was compelled to admit the force of this argument. A great deal of trouble would be saved by this simple expedient of separating them. At home, of course, everybody knew they were twins, and it didn't matter.

The only feature that Arthur disliked was his brother's obvious pleasure at the prospect of parting. He himself was not so indifferent. He and Alan had scarcely any pleasures in common, and even when they were together they frequently disagreed. Arthur had a feeling within him that he might help his brother if they went to the same school. But it was a subject which he could not broach. Alan would never consent to be helped. He would not even admit that he required help.

Their long separation at different preparatory schools had had a big effect in moulding their characters. While Alan had mixed with a thoroughly fast set, imbibing all their viciousness, Arthur, at his own school, had gone in mainly for sports. Although identical in appearance, the twins were vastly different in outlook, and in their general tastes.

And Arthur, knowing his brother's weaknesses, felt uneasy. But the plan was his father's, so it was his duty to keep to it.

"Look here, Alan," he said earnestly. "Goodness knows I don't want to preach or lecture you, but can't you be a bit different at St. Frank's?"

"What do you mean—a bit different?"

"You know what I mean," said Arthur quietly. "Why don't you go in for sports? It's a big chance, old man! Cut out this beastly smoking, and all your other rotten habits! Why not start in a different way at St. Frank's? Nobody knows you there, and it'll be a fine opportunity—"

"Is this a sermon?" sneered Alan.

"No!" muttered Arthur. "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to give you any sermons, Alan."

"What I do at St. Frank's is none of your business," said Alan. "And what you do at St. Jim's is none of mine. The pater made this arrangement, and we're going to stick to it. While we're at school, thank goodness, we can forget we're twins. It's a rotten handicap to a chap, and we're free of it like this."

"Well, this is my train, I suppose," said Arthur, looking round.

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A train had rattled to a standstill against the opposite platform. Doors were opening, and porters were awakening to a new, brief lease of life.

"Yes," said Alan. "They're calling out Wayland and Rylcombe. Rylcombe's your station, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Arthur, picking up his bag.

"I've got to wait for the next train, and then potter along some rotten branch line to Bannington, or some such hole, and then change again for Bellton," said Alan. "Rotten business, this getting to school!"

Arthur got into an empty compartment, closed the door, and leaned out of the window. He could not help noticing that Alan had turned his coat-collar up, and was keeping close to the train. He disliked people staring at them. Arthur himself was only amused by such curiosity on the part of strangers.

"Well, good-bye, old son!" said Alan warmly.

For a moment he dropped his superciliousness, and gripped his twin's hand with cordial affection.

"So long, Alan!" said Arthur huskily. "It may be better for us to go to different schools, but it's rough luck all the same. See you at the end of term."

"That's the idea!" nodded Alan. "No writing, mind you. No need for us to slobber over one another in letters."

"But in case of emergency—"

"Yes, that's true," admitted Alan. "All right, then. We'll only write if it's something jolly important. Hallo! There goes the flag! Cheerio, old bean! Best of luck at St. Jim's!"

"Same to you!" said Arthur fervently. "Best of luck at St. Frank's!"

The train steamed out, and Arthur Castleton found himself alone, speeding towards Rylcombe—and his new life at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

Grundy on the War-path!

"DISGUSTING!" said Grundy, of the Shell,

"Oh, rather!" agreed Wilkins.

"Awful!" said Gunn.

They didn't know what George Alfred Grundy was talking about, but it was always a safe policy to agree with him. The three Shell fellows were standing on the School House steps, enjoying the burst of pale sunshine which had followed the showers of the morning.

It was early afternoon now, and a half-holiday.

And as there was no football of any importance Grundy had been wondering how to spend the afternoon. An idea had suddenly come to him, and his eyes were gleaming. He regarded his henchmen of Study No. 3 in a speculative way.

"Three of us won't be enough," he said. "We shall want six, at least."

"Sure six will be sufficient?" asked Wilkins.

"Wouldn't a dozen be better?" inquired Gunn.

"No, six will do fine," replied Grundy. "Six ought to be able to give the chap the very welcome he deserves. A special welcome, too! While we're about it, we'll do the thing thoroughly."

"What thing?" asked Wilkins mildly.

"Something disgusting, isn't it?" murmured Gunn.

"Anyhow, Grundy was saying so a minute ago. He ought to know best."

Grundy frowned.

"You silly fatheads!" he said tartly. "I'm talking about that new chap—Castleton. It's disgusting that he should be shoved into the Shell. School House, too! What have we done to deserve it?"

"Deserve what?"

"This man is an outsider!" roared Grundy. "He's a chap who knocks taxi-drivers down! He's a night club rotter! In fact, he's no good, and we don't want him in the School House."

"We've only got Racke's word for all this," said Gunn.

"Racke is several kinds of a beast, but he wouldn't say all that about the chap unless he knew something," argued Grundy. "My idea is for us to get up a party, and we'll walk down the lane and meet Castleton as he comes up from the station. Then we'll show him what kind of a reception he'll get! We'll show him as plainly as daylight that he isn't wanted at St. Jim's."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in the doorway of the School House, indignant and red. He adjusted his eyeglass and examined Grundy from head to foot with great disdain.

"Buck up, Gussy!" said Blake, bustling out with Herries and Digby. "It's stopped raining now, and—"

"Pway wait a moment, Blake," interrupted Arthur Augustus. "I happened to overhear Gwunday's words, and I'm howfified! Gwunday, I veargd you as an uttahn



"My heye!" The old porter at Abbotsford Junction stared in wonder as the door of a first-class compartment opened, and two passengers alighted. They were two boys of about fifteen, and they were absolutely identical in appearance. "Like two peas out o' the same pod!" declared the porter. (See Chapter 2.)

wottah! I have a good mind to give you a feahful
thwashin'!"

"Never spoil a good mind, Gussy," said Blake. "Go ahead and pile in! I'll be your second. I'd love to see that topper biffed over your eyes!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"What's the idiot gassing about, anyhow?" demanded Grundy, with a glare. "What's the matter with him? What's he horrified about?"

"I am howwified, Gwunday, at your uttah lack of good bweedin'," said D'Arcy severely. "Am I to undahstand that you are plannin' to meet Castleton on his way from the station, and to wag him?"

"That's the general idea," said Grundy.

"Then I stwongly disappwove," said Arthur Augustus. "It is one thing to wag a wascal like Wacke, and anothah thing to wag a stwangah withia the gates. I am afwaid you have no sense of pwoportion, Gwunday."

Grundy snorted.

"Take this dummy away, and gag him!" he said gruffly.

"I wefuse to be gagged," said D'Arcy. "I also wefuse to be taken away, Gwunday. This is a mattah that needs careful handlin'. Castleton is a new fellow, and it is only wight and pwopah that he should be thowoughly welcomed."

Grundy nodded.

"That's exactly the idea," he agreed. "I'm just planning to give Castleton a thorough welcome. Didn't I say so, Wilkins?"

"You did!" agreed Wilkins solemnly.

"Your ideah of a welcome is to give the new chap a hot weception!"

"I'm not sure that Grundy isn't right for once," remarked Blake. "He isn't often right, and when he is right he's only right by accident. But this time it looks like the real thing."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Castleton is one of Racke's sort, only worse," said Blake. "Even Racke wouldn't knock policemen down and murder taxi-drivers—"

"Wats!" interrupted D'Arcy. "Castleton hasn't murdered anybody—and I vewy much doubt if he is half as black as he has been painted. Wacke is hardly the fellow to ccredit when he makes these scandalous statements."

"That's true enough," admitted Blake.

"Well, I believe the man's an outsider," said Grundy stubbornly. "What's more, I'm going to show him that he isn't wanted at St. Jim's. I don't believe in being down on a new kid just because he's a new kid. Fair play's a jewel. But this case is different. Castleton is an absolute rascal, and I want to show him that he'll have to watch his step."

"How do you propose to show him this?" asked Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! What is your ideah, Gwunday?"

"I haven't thought of one yet," retorted Grundy. "But when I do think of it, it'll be hot! It's no good messing about with a gay dog like Castleton. Straight from the shoulder—that's my motto!"

"Slaughter him first, and ask questions afterwards—eh?" grinned Blake. "Well, I'd like to take an interest in the programme, but I haven't got time. Besides, Castleton is a Shell fellow, and that lets us out. Come along, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to come along!"

"We're in a hurry."

"Pway wun off, deah boy, and leave me heah!" interrupted Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wefuse to stand by and see this new fellow wagged by Gwunday. It is a disgwaceful exhibition of wotten form."

"Look here——", began Grundy.

"Whatevah Castleton has been, whatevah Castleton is, he awwives at St. Jim's to-day to start a new life, and it will be a wank injustice to the fellow to slaughtah him

before he has had a chance to show what he's made of. It is our duty to give him a polite and gracious welcome."

"Grundy's planning the welcome, Gussy!" said Blake.

"I have no faith in Gwunday's methods," replied Arthur Augustus. "It needs a fellow of tact and judgment to handle the mattah. So I shall meet Castleton myself, and take him undah my wing."

"But what's the chap done?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"I fail to compwehend!"

"Why should he be punished like that?"

"You uttah ass!" said D'Arcy. "In takin' Castleton undah my wing I shall endeavour to give him a few timely hints. If Gwunday attempts anythin' of the sort he will make a hopeless mess of it. New fellows need careful handlin', and I wathah pvide myself—"

"You'd better stop priding yourself, Gussy, and come down to earth," said Blake. "Take my advice, and leave the new fellow alone. That does for you, too, Grundy. I don't suppose you'll take any notice of me, but that's your misfortune. A new chap ought to be left to himself—so that he can shake down."

"When I want your advice, I'll ask for it!" said Grundy tartly.

"Weally, Blake, I must agree with Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus. "Your advice on this mattah is unnecessary. I shall take Castleton undah my wing, and do my best to weform him."

"Better go easy," said Herries. "Reforming isn't in your line, Gussy. You'll only get disliked for your pains."

"That is a mattah which entirely depends upon the method of going to work," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I shall naturally use tact, and Castleton will have no ideal that I am weformin' him. That is the whole essence of successful diplomacy. When it comes to disewetion, I wathah think I am the man for the job."

Blake shook his head.

"Poor old Gussy!" he said sadly. "You will go about asking for trouble, won't you? Well, don't say we didn't warn you!"

D'Arcy's chums walked off, and Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn walked off, too. But as none of them walked towards the gates, Arthur Augustus felt that he was left in victorious possession of the field.

Castleton was due at the station at any minute, and the swell of St. Jim's thrilled within him as he strengthened his resolve to reform this fellow who brawled in Piccadilly, and who knocked taxi-drivers down with impunity!

CHAPTER 4.

A Friend in Need!

"HERE she comes!"

Baggy Trimble of the Fourth watched the train eagerly as it clanked into Rylcombe Station, and came to a halt against the platform. Trimble's little eyes were agleam with expectation, and he eagerly watched the carriage doors as they opened.

This was no difficult task, for only one or two passengers alighted. Baggy gave a chirrup of satisfaction as he beheld a well-set-up youngster emerging from a first-class compartment with a bag in his hand.

"That's the chap!" muttered Trimble.

He feasted his eyes on his prey.

Baggy had ideas of his own. While George Alfred Grundy was arguing the point, and while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was preparing to come down to the village, Baggy Trimble was on the spot. A new fellow was fair game.

New fellows had several advantages for Baggy Trimble. The all-important fact was that they didn't know him. He could generally do quite a lot of sponging before they gauged his character. New fellows were generally in funds, too. And it was always a good plan to meet them at the station, because it was necessary to pass the bunshop on the way to the school.

Not that Baggy had any intention of letting his victim pass the bunshop. Passing the bunshop was out of the question. Trimble's chief aim was to steer the new fellow into the bunshop.

He knew all about Castleton. He had heard it all from Aubrey Racke. He even knew that Grundy was preparing to get up a rag against the new chap. Grundy was not very particular about his plans being overheard. And Baggy Trimble, in the fulness of his heart, had decided that it was his plain duty to come down and warn Castleton of what was being hatched.

If the fellow had any gratitude at all, he would naturally stand Baggy a feed. That was the least that could be expected. Trimble had made up his mind to be a friend in need. There was certainly no doubt that he was in need!

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But his friendliness would all depend upon Castleton's willingness to "whack out."

Trimble rolled along the platform, and came into Arthur Castleton's vision just as the latter had paused to find his ticket. In order to have his hands free he had put his bag down. Trimble seized it lovingly.

"Are you the new chap for St. Jim's?" asked Baggy.

Arthur looked at the fat junior without much enthusiasm.

"I am for St. Jim's, yes," he replied.

"Castleton—eh?"

"Yes, my name's Castleton."

"Good man!" said Baggy heartily. "My name's Trimble—Bagley Trimble of the Fourth. You're for the Shell, but that doesn't make any difference. We're both School House chaps. Jolly pleased to meet you, Castleton!"

There was no doubt about the warmth of Trimble's greeting, and Arthur felt that he must have gained a wrong impression.

"You surely didn't come down especially to meet me?" he asked.

"Yes, I did!" said Baggy promptly. "Most of the other chaps are beasts, but as soon as I heard you were due this afternoon I decided to come and meet you. No, it's all right—I'll carry this bag. I'm going to show you the ropes—see? Always willing to oblige a new chap."

Arthur warmed with appreciation.

"That's awfully decent of you, Trimble!" he replied. "I didn't expect anybody to come and meet me, as a matter of fact. It's nice of you to welcome me like this—a perfect stranger."

Baggy expanded visibly.

"Oh, we Trimbles are all like that," he said coolly.

"Of course, you've heard of my pater's place—Trimble Hall? We Trimbles are rolling in money, you know. Only the best people come to Trimble Hall—we don't admit the other sort. I'm not altogether sure that my people would approve of me chumming up with you, Castleton. But I'm rather more broadminded."

"Oh!" said Arthur.

He began to readjust his focus again. This fat, unpleasant-looking youngster was not quite so genuine, after all. There was something particularly unctuous about him, and Arthur began to feel uncomfortable.

"I'm not proud, of course," went on Trimble fatuously. "Your family may not be so toney as mine, but I hope I'm not a snob! Well, come on—let's get out of the station. Leave yourself in my hands, and I'll look after you."

"Thanks awfully!" said Arthur, not knowing what else to say.

"I always like to be decent to a new kid," went on Trimble. "New kids are naturally nervous and all at sea. Leave everything to me, Castleton, and I'll see you through. Here we are!" he added, as they arrived at the exit. "Got your ticket ready?"

They passed outside, and Baggy was gratified to see that nobody else was in sight. It would rather spoil his programme if Grundy or any of the other fellows butted in just now.

"I suppose your trunks and things came on in advance, eh?" said Trimble. "Well, come on—let's walk to the school. I'll give you some tips on the way."

"Is it far?" asked Arthur.

"Oh, not far—just through the village," replied Baggy. "Of course, I'm taking a bit of a risk allowing myself to be seen with you like this," he continued magnanimously. "I know all about you, Castleton, and I happen to be a particular chap. Still, I'll risk it just for once."

"Don't put yourself out," said Arthur gruffly. "I can get to the school by myself—"

"Not likely!" interrupted Baggy hastily. "You've got to treat me at the bun—I—I mean, you've got to treat me as a pal! I'm ready to be your friend, Castleton—and it ought to be worth a lot to you. I've got influence at St. Jim's. I'm one of the most important fellows in the Fourth."

"Form captain, I suppose?"

"Well, no," admitted Baggy. "Not exactly. That beast Blake is the skipper of the Fourth. But I should have been elected long ago if it hadn't been for favouritism and jealousy. But look here! I want to give you a warning about the chaps."

"A warning?"

"Yes, rather!" said Trimble. "Of course, we've heard all about you at St. Jim's. So you needn't try to spoof me. We know what a goer you are."

"A goer?"

"We know what a blood you've been!"

"Blood?"

"Come off it!" grinned Trimble. "You can't spoof me with that innocent tone. Didn't you get squiffy in Piccadilly once? Didn't you knock a taxi-driver out, and only escape arrest by the skin of your teeth?"

"My hat!" said Arthur blankly.

"You only got here this afternoon, but your reputation arrived long ago," said Baggy coolly. "One of our chaps—Racke, of the Shell—heard all about you from a pal of his. We know exactly what you are, Castleton. Hot as mustard, eh? A regular flyer!"

"Great Scott!" muttered Arthur. He heard Trimble's babbling voice, but took no notice now.

A great truth had suddenly dawned upon him. It wasn't his reputation that had reached St. Jim's beforehand, but Alan's! This friend of Racke's was evidently a friend of Alan's! And Arthur was in danger of starting life at St. Jim's saddled with his twin's character!

That was a shock which he had not been prepared for. He felt somewhat bitter as he walked into Rylcombe with Baggy chattering at his side.

He knew exactly what Alan was, but he had always tried to delude himself. He always attempted to excuse Alan. But he knew, in his heart, that his brother was a thorough-paced young rascal.

And he was in a delicate position, too.

It was impossible for him to explain that Alan was the real author of that disgraceful incident in the West End. In the first place, they had agreed that there should be no mention of twins. And, secondly, Arthur could only put himself right by informing against his brother. And it was not his character to do that sort of thing. He knew that he would have to keep silent.

"Here we are!" said Baggy Trimble.

"Eh? Oh, I—I'm sorry," said Arthur, flushing. "I—I'm afraid I wasn't listening. Trimble! I didn't quite catch—"

"That's all right," said Trimble brightly. "I was just saying that you needn't take any notice of Grundy and that crowd. As long as you're with me you're safe. They won't dare to touch you while I'm about!"

"Touch me?" said Arthur still groping.

"Haven't I told you that Grundy and his pals are coming down to rag you?" said Trimble. "But you're safe now. We're here."

"Here!" said Arthur looking round. "But this isn't St. Jim's!"

"Of course it's not St. Jim's, you ass," said Trimble pityingly. "This is Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop! It's always my custom to take new fellows in and to treat them."

"Oh, I see!" said Arthur.

But he didn't see. It was undoubtedly Baggy Trimble's custom to take new fellows in—but he always allowed the new fellow to do all the treating!

CHAPTER 5. Gussy's Little Way!

BAI JOVE!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, striding elegantly down the village street, was just in time to see Baggy Trimble steering the new boy into the tuckshop. And Arthur Augustus grew warm with indignation. "That fidgetful young boundah is up to his twicks again!" he murmured wrathfully. "I shall have to wescue Castleton from Twimble's clutches, or he will be wooked of quids!"

Arthur Augustus knew the quality of Trimble's appetite, and he was glad that he had arrived in time. He even forgot his dignity in his haste to get into the bunshop.

In the meantime, Baggy was ordering a lavish supply of eatables, and Mrs. Murphy was listening with considerable misgivings.

"That'll do to start with," said Baggy at length. "And I hope you have the money to pay, Master Trimble!" said the lady suspiciously.

"Oh, rather! I—I mean—" "That'll be all right," put in Castleton. "I can't allow you to stand treat, Trimble. I'll do the paying. It's my privilege—as a new chap."

"No!" said Trimble firmly. "All right," smiled Arthur.

"I couldn't allow—" "If you really insist—"

"I—I mean, you can pay if you want to!" gasped Trimble hastily. "I suppose it's only right, you being a new kid. All right, Mrs. Murphy! This chap will pay for the stuff. I wasn't going to let him, but as he's so insistent I don't mind being treated for once. A change for me, eh?"

"Bai Jove!" Trimble looked round in alarm, and found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the doorway. And the swell of St. Jim's was looking very indignant.

"You fidgetful young wotiah!" he said warmly. "Bai Jove! Are you spongin' on the new chap already? You know vewv well that you have nevah tweated anybody in the whole of your wewpwehensible cawceer!"

"You mind your own bizney!" roared Trimble, in dire alarm. "Don't take any notice of this chap, Castleton! He's—he's only half-witted!"

"Gweat Scott!" "He's the fathead of the Fourth!" said Trimble desperately.

"Weally, Twimble—" "He's off his rocker—"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, striding forward and seizing the egregious Baggy by one of his ears. "It is with gweat wewlucance that I act in this way, but I find it necessary to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Yow!" howled Baggy wildly. "Ow!"

Bump! "Yaroooooooooooh!" hooted Trimble.

"Clear off before I give you what you deserve!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I awwived in the nick of time, it appears! Kindly excuse me, Castleton, while I wun this young wascal out of the shop. He is the worst scandalmongah undah the sun!"

"You leave me alone!" roared Trimble desperately. "Castleton is my pal! He's— Yow! Yaroooop! I—I— Oh dear!"

He was bundled out, and Arthur Augustus closed the door. Then he dusted his hands, and smoothed his ruffled jacket. "Pway forgive this unfortunate scene, Mrs. Murphy," he said graciously.

Mrs. Murphy didn't look very pleased. True, she had no great liking for Baggy Trimble, but he had given a big order, and the new boy had agreed to pay the bill. Arthur was quick to notice the good lady's frown.

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CAN YOU FIND THESE? HIDDEN NAMES!



In each of the following sentences you will find concealed the names of a number of St. Jim's characters who figure in Martin Clifford's stories. Study the sentences carefully, and see how many names you can discover. The complete solution will be published in our next issue.

1. We go regularly on capital botany tours through summer rye, and dig by crooked paths for red ferns.
2. We like Virgil more, but will risk no Xenophon.
3. The holidays have begun now; we go by rail to-night to Greyfriars, and to-morrow we gather at Cliff House.
4. When fellows yell "Ow!" there is a poker, red-hot, to explain it!
5. An injury obtained in football fray needs lint on; then rest leg erect.
6. Our cooks bake really delicious cakes, surprisingly nice; James, on seeing them, an enthusiastic howl emits.
7. We are all at home, and agree there is no blessing like the study feed we now enjoy.

"It's all right about the tuck," said Arthur, smiling. "I'll pay for it."

"Then I'm glad that Master Trimble has gone," said Mrs. Murphy promptly.

"I say, Castleton—"

Trimble was at the door, hot and anxious.

"Gweat Scott!" roared D'Arcy. "If you come in heah again, Twimble—"

"Oh, let him have this tuck," interrupted Arthur good-naturedly. "How much?" he added, turning to Mrs. Murphy. "All right, Trimble—come and help yourself."

"Weally, Castleton—"

Arthur paid up and walked out of the shop, leaving Baggy Trimble in full possession of the spoils.

"Weally, Castleton, that was fwightfully good-natured of you," said Arthur Augustus, as he accompanied the new boy. "Twimble doesn't deserve such treatment. He is a howwid young sponah."

"I gathered that," said Arthur, with a nod. "But he deserved it for his cheek. And we've got rid of him, anyhow."

"That is twue," agreed D'Arcy. "Pway allow me to introduce myself," he added, beaming. "My name is D'Arcy, of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite at your service."

"We're namesakes," smiled the new boy. "My name's Arthur, too—Arthur Castleton."

"Bai Jove!" said the swell of St. Jim's, as he shook hands. "How fwightfully wippin'! Weally, I'm gwatified—Ahem! At the same time, Castleton, I must wemembah your shockin' wecord."

For a few moments Arthur Augustus had responded to the new fellow's personality. There was something strangely attractive about Arthur Castleton. If he had been a girl, charm might have described it. It was something indefinable—something which was felt immediately one came in contact with him. He was so obviously true blue. His eyes were so frank, his face so open.

And yet—

D'Arcy remembered this fellow's reputation. He also remembered that he had decided to take Castleton under his wing, and to use discretion and tact in an endeavour to reform him. It wouldn't do to be influenced by a charm of manner.

Castleton had become quiet. His good-natured smile had gone. So this amiable dandy had heard about his "record," too! Arthur bit his lip with vexation. The situation looked like becoming uncomfortable.

And yet there was a humorous side to it. And Arthur Castleton, who possessed the happy faculty of seeing humour in anything, already allowed a little twinkle to appear in his eyes. He could easily afford to smile at these rumours which had gone round concerning his supposed reputation.

"Yes, deah boy, I must wemembah your fwightful wecord," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Pway don't imagine for a moment that I am attemptin' to pweach. A fellow who pweaches is generally a howwid pwig. And I should hate to be pwigish."

"What's the trouble, then?" asked Arthur gently.

"I wewet to say, Castleton, that your weputation has already weached St. Jim's," replied D'Arcy, in a pained voice. "It is not for me to wewove you, or to give you a lecture. But you are a stwangan within the gates, and I thought it would be wathah the thing to take you undah my wing!"

"Oh, I see!"

Castleton chuckled inwardly. There was a vast difference between this well-meaning kindness and Baggy Trimble's snobbish superiority.

"I trust you will not take offence, Castleton," went on Gussy earnestly. "But, weally, I am onlay tellin' you this as a fwend. If you wish to, wemonstwate, please do so now, before I go any furthah!"

"That's all right," said Castleton. "Carry on!"

"I feel it is my duty to point out the ewwah of your ways," continued D'Arcy. "At St. Jim's a fellow is judged by his standards, you know. He is expected to take an intwest in footah and in sports."

"Yes, I see."

"There is a fwightful wascal in the Shell named Wacke," continued Gussy. "I have no wish to wun the fellow down, but I should like to warn you against him, Castleton. Wacke is a wank outsidah, and so is Clampe. Cwooke is pewpaws a twifle bettah, although I am not so sure of him. Howevah, if you will pwomise to have nothin' to do with these wascals—"

"Racke, Clampe, and Cwooke," said Arthur gravely.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Thanks for the tip, old man," said Castleton. "I'll remember. And if it's going to please you at all I'll promise to steer clear of all the outsiders. I've come to St. Jim's with the firm intention of going straight."

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"Bai Jove!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "Weally?"

"Yes, really."

"And you'll pwomise to take an intwest in footah?"

"Footer," said Castleton, "is a great game. I'd love to get into my House team, and to play for the School."

"Bai Jove! This is fwightfully gwatifyin'!" said Arthur Augustus delightedly. "Weally, old bean, I'm most twemendously hwaced. You pwomise to steeah cleah of the wottahs, and to take an intwest in footah?"

"I promise," said Castleton solemnly.

Inwardly, he was filled with laughter.

There was something comic in this game of cross-purposes. Gussy, of course, had taken it for granted that the new fellow had been a rotter. And he was immensely pleased with his success. His famous tact was already working!

But D'Arcy didn't know that Arthur Castleton had come to St. Jim's fully prepared to do all these things that he was now promising to do.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy's Special Welcome!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was supremely happy. Here was a repentant sinner—a fellow who had lived the fast life at his previous school, and who had come to St. Jim's with the firm determination to go straight! And he had responded nobly to Gussy's celebrated tact!

Castleton had no intention of undeceiving his companion. To do so would mean an explanatory word-concerning his twin, and that was impossible. Now that he came to review the situation, he did not see that the rumours of Alan's misdeeds would hurt him much.

For Arthur was straight. He couldn't help being straight. There wasn't an ounce of deceit or duplicity in his whole composition. He had a temper, and he was just as liable to be in the wrong as anybody else; but when it came to a question of wholesomeness, he was wholesome because he couldn't be anything else. It was against his nature to be otherwise.

So why should he worry about Alan's miserable reputation?

"Yes, D'Arcy, I've come to St. Jim's with the intention of running straight," he said gravely. "I want to take an interest in footer, and in all the other sports. And you needn't be afraid that I shall get mixed up with any of the rotters."

"Bai Jove! You've finished with those boundahs for ewah—what?"

"Haven't I just told you—"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I should like to whispah that cigarette smokin' is considahed to be very bad form at St. Jim's."

"I don't smoke," said Castleton.

"Given it up, old scout?" beamed Arthur Augustus.

"Smoking is a silly game, anyway," said the new boy guardedly.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed D'Arcy. "I am fwightfully pleased to heah you say so, Castleton! I am weally delighted—"

"Here he is!" said a powerful voice.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy looked up, and became aware that George Alfred Grundy was bearing down upon them. And Grundy was accompanied by Wilkins, Gunn, Serope, Mellish, Gore, and two or three others. They were all looking warlike.

"Hallo!" said Castleton. "What's all this?"

"Pway leave it to me, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "This is most distwessin'! I wish Blake and Hewwies and Digby were here! I wish Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Low—"

"Out of the way, Gussy!" said Grundy, as he came to a halt. "Oh! So this is the chap, eh? This is the sportsman?"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"This is the celebrated goer!" said Grundy disdainfully.

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Clear off, Gussy! You're dead in this act!" said Serope.

"Weally, Sewope—"

"Is there anything you want?" asked Castleton steadily. The crowd had made a circle round him, and he had not failed to notice their warlike attitude. But he remained perfectly calm. He had been prepared for a ragging, anyhow.

"You're Castleton, are you?" asked Grundy.

"Yes, if you don't mind."

"I don't want any cheek!" said Grundy darkly. "What's your other name?"

"Arthur."

"You look it!" said Grundy.



"Weally, Gwunday, I pwotest!" said D'Arcy wrathfully. "There is nothin' the mattah with the name of Arthur! I must wegistah a stwong pwotest against this wuffianly conduct!" Castleton has pwomised me that he will go stwaight—"

"Of course he'll go stwaight," said Grundy, nodding. "Stwaight where I want him to go! You buzz off while you're safe, Gussy! I'm in charge now, and I don't want any interference!"

"Weally, Gwunday, you are the fellow who is intahfawin'. I wefuse to allow you to victimise—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Bai Jove! I weally object—"

"Take it away, somebody!" said Grundy wearily. "Now, Castleton, look here! We've heard about you."

"Yes?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, we have," said Grundy. "Goodness knows, I'm not the sort of chap to pass judgment on anybody. But you seem to have been a bit of a rotter. You've painted the town red, eh?"

"You seem to know all about it," said Arthur quietly.

"Bad news travels fast," said Grundy, with a nod. "Not that I'm saying anything about your character, or what sort of life you led before you came to St. Jim's. That's not my concern, and I'm not interfering. It doesn't matter to me whether you were a sinner or a saint. It doesn't matter a rap. I'm only interested in you because you're a new kid."

"I see," said Arthur smoothly.

"Yes, and I can see, too!" snorted Grundy. "You're too calm, my lad! All new kids are too jolly cocksure! The very first thing they need is a cooling, and I'm going to give you one now."

"But you're quite wrong," said Arthur. "I don't need cooling at all. I'm far cooler than you are."

"Is there anything you want?" asked Castleton steadily. The crowd of St. Jim's juniors had made a circle round him, and he had not failed to notice their warlike attitude. But he remained perfectly calm. "You're Castleton?" asked Grundy darkly. "Yes, if you don't mind!" was the cool reply. (See Chapter 6.)

"Oh, are you?" roared Grundy. "Did you hear that, you chaps?"

"Give him a bumping!" said Mellish.

"Hear, hear!"

"Smash him, Grundy!"

"No, I'm not going to smash him," said Grundy. "It's not my habit to fight with new fellows. But I'm going to dip him in the pond, all the same—just to show him that I mean business!"

"Good idea!" said Mellish viciously. "We've heard all about him—we know what kind of a blackguard he is! A smoky, card-playing rotter! A fellow who gets tipsy! We'll show him how we treat his sort at St. Jim's!"

Arthur listened to this talk with perfect calmness. Again he was listening to Alan's character, and not his own. But it hurt him, all the same. Alan was his twin brother, and much as he detested Alan's ways the tie which held them was the strongest of all.

"Shut up, Mellish!" said Grundy, with a frown. "For two pins, I'll chuck you in the pond, too!"

"Look here, you Shell ass—"

"So I will!" roared Grundy wrathfully. "You're a big accuser! Why, you're just as bad yourself, only you haven't got any pluck!"

"I don't get squiffy in Piccadilly!" hooted Mellish.

Arthur winced.

"Is it worth argu'ing about?" he asked quietly.

Grundy glared.

"No, it isn't!" he retorted. "As I said before, your

reputation is nothing to do with me. I'm not your judge, thank goodness! But you're a new kid, and you're too jolly cocksure! I'm going to cool you off!"

He seized Arthur by the arm, and several of the other fellows hustled Castleton on the other side. They all moved off towards the village pond. This was promising to be a first-class rag.

"Gwunday!"

"You dry up, Gussy!" said Grundy curtly.

"I uttably wufuse to dwy up!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wufuse to allow this wuffianly conduct! Castleton is thowoughly cool already."

"He'll be cooler soon," said Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I call upon you chaps to dwag Gwunday away!" roared D'Arcy, appealing to the others.

"Go away, Gussy!"

"Clear off, you dummy!"

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Burr!"

"I wegard it as distinctly wepwehensible on Blake's part to run away at a time like this!" said D'Arcy indignantly, appealing to the empty air. "And Hewwies and Dig are no bettah! As for Tom Mewwy, and Mannahs, and Lowtah, I am disgusted with them! When they are weally wanted they are not heah!"

"Don't worry about me, D'Arcy!" sang out Castleton. "If these fellows want to amuse themselves, I've no objection."

"It would be all the same if you had!" said Grundy tartly.

"It's all in the day's work, I suppose," added Arthur, with a cheery grin.

George Alfred frowned. He didn't quite like the way Castleton was taking it. Grundy wasn't a bad sort, and he had an uncomfortable feeling that he was acting rather like a bully. But he was an obstinate fellow, too—and he wouldn't admit that he was in the wrong. Yet there was something peculiarly likeable about Arthur Castleton. Without actually knowing it, Grundy had taken a fancy to the new boy. His coolness and his cheery grin were infectious. But this business of ducking him in the pond had to be proceeded with—or Grundy would find himself the laughing-stock of the school.

"New kids have got to be squashed!" said Grundy, with emphasis.

He spoke with more forcefulness than was necessary—probably in order to bolster up his flagging determination.

"Here we are, Grundy!"

"In with him!"

"Gwunday!" roared D'Arcy. "I pwotest—"

"Rats!" bawled Grundy. "When I start a thing, I finish it!"

They had come to a halt on the edge of the pond—which, at the moment, was looking particularly muddy and sinister. Grundy, with his usual rashness, was standing on the very brink, with his back to the murky water.

"Now then!" he said gruffly.

"Are you going to chuck me in there?" asked Arthur steadily.

"Yes, I am!"

"But, my dear man, what on earth for?"

"Don't ask silly questions!" roared Grundy. "You're a new kid, and you need cooling! You're going in!"

"If I am, you might as well go in first," said Arthur calmly. "I hate having all the fun to myself."

He gave George Alfred Grundy a sudden shove, and Grundy uttered a fiendish yell as he felt himself sagging backwards. In vain he tried to recover his balance, but it was too late!

CHAPTER 7.

Arthur's Winning Way!

SPLASH!

And a wild howl!

George Alfred Grundy vanished below the surface for a moment, and then sat up in about two feet of muddy water. He was spluttering in the most fiendish manner. And he looked quite comical as he sat there, with the water running out of his hair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" shouted D'Arcy. "Jollay good, Castleton!" But Arthur wasn't laughing. Already he had regretted his impulsive act. It wasn't that he had any fear of the consequences. But he instinctively felt that Grundy was only a bluffer, and a good fellow at heart. To see him there, drenched to the skin, brought swift remorse to Arthur.

"Oh, I say! he shouted. "I'm frightfully sorry, old man!"

And, without a second's hesitation, he leapt into the

pond, and waded through the mud. He seized Grundy by the shoulders and steadied him.

"You—you—"

Grundy was incoherent. His chief emotions were rage and amazement. Rage at being subjected to this indignity in public, and amazement at the very fact that a new kid should have had the nerve to treat him in that way. He—George Alfred Grundy—biffed backwards into the pond! And this new fellow had done it deliberately. Grundy was stupefied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter was general, and Grundy's ears burned beneath their coating of mud and water. Even his own chums were grinning like Cheshire cats and cackling like hyenas. They had not failed to appreciate the comic side of this incident. Their leader had brought Castleton to this pond to tip him in, and he had been tipped in himself! But Grundy failed to see the joke.

"You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Gwunday!"

"Choke it up, old man!"

But Grundy was still incoherent.

"I say, you know—awfully sorry!" repeated Arthur, as he helped Grundy to wade towards the edge of the pond. "Let me help you out, old man. I didn't mean to shove you in like that. It was just an impulse."

"My hat!" muttered Grundy thickly.

He had been filled with wrath at this new kid's unutterable nerve, but now he was filled with astonishment. He had expected Castleton to crow over him and to laugh with the rest. But through his muddy eyelashes Grundy could see that Arthur's expression was one of deep concern. His eyes were filled with serious contrition.

"You—you biffed me in on purpose!" said Grundy thickly.

"I know I did," admitted Arthur. "But you were going to fool about, so I acted first. I ought to have had more sense, of course. Sorry I've ruined your suit like this."

"Great Scott!" said Grundy dazedly.

There was no doubt that his suit was ruined. But Arthur's own clothing was in no better way, for he was already smothered. But the new boy didn't seem to notice that in his anxiety to express his regret.

"I ought to have had more sense," went on Castleton. "It was only a jape, wasn't it? All right, Grundy, I'll pay the piper. If you'll let me know the damage, I'll whack out. Hope you're not wild, old fellow?"

George Alfred Grundy felt helpless.

A minute earlier he had been speechless with rage. But there was something so extraordinarily disarming about this new kid that his anger oozed away. It simply evaporated and left him powerless.

"Wild?" he repeated staring. "Well, I don't know. Like your beastly nerve, of course, but—That's all right! Don't maul me about, you ass!"

"I'm genuinely sorry—"

"Dry up about being sorry!" interrupted Grundy aggressively.

"Yes, but—"

"Rot! It was my own fault!" said Grundy. "And as for you paying the damage, don't talk piffle! My hat! Doesn't this mud whiff?"

They reached dry land, and the other fellows carefully avoided them.

"Weally, Gwunday, this is watah sportin' of you!" said D'Arcy, with approval. "I am glad you have forgiven the new chap—"

"I haven't forgiven him!" roared Grundy.

A glance round had told him that his companions were amazed. And they were obviously amazed at his meekness. It was all rot! He would have to smash Castleton forthwith, just to show him—

Then Grundy changed his mind.

Arthur was standing quite close to him, still concerned and earnestly contrite. How the merry dickens could he go for the chap? Never before had Grundy felt so helpless. Arthur's appearance was disarming, and Grundy was beginning to like him more and more. There was something indefinably winning about him.

"Aren't you going to biff him, Grundy?" asked Mellish.

"No, I'm not!" said Grundy firmly. "He's apologised, hasn't he? He's offered to pay the damage! It's not my habit to fight with new kids, anyhow! Here's my hand, Castleton. Sorry there was a misunderstanding!"

Grundy glared round defiantly, and offered his muddy fist. Arthur took it warily, and D'Arcy winced as they gripped. A squelching sound accompanied that handshake.

"Fine, Grundy!" said Arthur cheerfully.

He warmed towards this burly, aggressive St. Jim's fellow. And Grundy, for his part, came to the conclusion that there must have been a mistake. Who could help

liking that chap, anyhow? It was all rot to say that he was an outsider!

"I'm going to have a word with Racke!" said Grundy grimly. "I don't believe all that rot about Castleton! I believe he's a sportsman!"

"Not a doubt about it!" said Wilkins. "He's proved it!"

"Rather!" agreed Gunn.

"Bai Jove!" beamed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am fwightfully glad that you have wevealed a gwain of sense, Gwunday! Didn't I tell you that Castleton was a wippah?"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Arthur flushing.

Mellish snorted.

"You chaps are easily fooled, aren't you?" he sneered. "This is just what Racke warned you against! The chap's a proper trickster! I expect he's laughing up his sleeve all the time."

"You shut up!" roared Grundy, glaring.

"He's right!" said Baggy Trimble, from the outskirts. "Mellish is right! Castleton is a beastly fraud! Don't believe him, you chaps!"

"Bai Jove! You fwightful young wuffian!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "Is that all the gwatitude you can show aftah Castleton tweated you to all that tommy? Pway come here, Twimble!"

"Why should I come there?" asked Trimble.

"Because I'm goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Yah!" roared Trimble. "Try it on!"

There was nobody in sight, so he walked upstairs. And then, as luck would have it, a cheery whistle sounded in the Shell passage, and Tom Merry came in sight. He halted at sight of the new boy.

"Hallo!" he said curiously. "Castleton, I suppose?"

"That's me," said Arthur.

"Pleased to meet you, Castleton!" said Tom cordially, as he extended his hand. "I'm Tom Merry—Junior skipper. Shake!"

CHAPTER 8.

Welcome, Stranger!

TOM MERRY was not influenced in the slightest degree by the rumours that had gone round concerning the new fellow. Tom believed in judging a man by his actions, and not by hearsay. So he extended a hearty welcome to the new fellow.

But Arthur hesitated before accepting Tom's hand.

"Er—the fact is, I'm a bit grubby," he apologised.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry cheerily. "Shake!"

As a matter of fact, he had taken an instant liking to Castleton's face. He had read nothing but frankness and decency in Arthur's eyes. And Tom was very quick to "sense" another fellow's qualities.

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Grundy looked round impatiently.

"We've had enough of this!" he said, in a gruff voice. "We made a mistake, and there's an end of it! If any of you chaps say anything against Castleton, I'll smash you! I'm a good judge of character—and I know a sportsman when I see him!"

And for once it seemed that George Alfred Grundy was right. Castleton was only too glad to escape, and he managed to slip away while Grundy and the other juniors were arguing the point. Even Gussy failed to see him go.

"I rather like Grundy!" murmured Arthur to himself, as he passed through the school gateway. "A forceful beggar, but he's decent enough."

He paused in the quad and looked about him.

"So this is St. Jim's!" he murmured. "By Jove! Jolly good!"

He viewed the picturesque old buildings with genuine pleasure, and instinctively made his way towards the School House. He quickened his steps as he suddenly remembered his muddy condition. It would never do to meet a prefect or a master in this condition!

As he mounted the steps he wondered how on earth he should proceed. He didn't even know if his trunk had arrived, and the interior geography of the House was a mystery to him.

"I'm awfully pleased to meet you," said Arthur, his eyes brightening. "To—tell you the truth, I rather wanted to nip into the dormitory and do a quick-change act."

"I don't wonder!" grinned Tom. "Had an accident?"

"Well, no," said Arthur. "Hardly an accident."

He was evidently reluctant to go into details, and Tom Merry did not press him. He led the way to the Shell dormitory, and Arthur was gratified to find that his trunk had arrived. He proceeded to change his clothes.

In the meantime, Tom Merry chatted with him. And the more he chatted the more he felt drawn towards the new boy. It was impossible to believe that Castleton was the blackguardly "goer" that rumour had proclaimed.

"I suppose you've met some of the fellows?" asked Tom.

"Yes, rather!" said Castleton. "Grundy, and D'Arcy, and—and— Well, I don't think I know any more names, except Trimble's. I like Grundy. He's a sport."

"Grundy's all right," agreed Tom. "A bit aggressive, but one of the best."

"I tipped him into the duck-pond," said Arthur apologetically.

"The dickens you did!"

"Then I helped him out," grinned Arthur. "I wasn't!"

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going to tell you anything about it, but perhaps I'd better do so."

And he explained the circumstances.

"Just like old Grundy!" chuckled Tom Merry.

He felt more warmed than ever towards this new boy.

"D'Arcy is a brick, too," went on Arthur. "He's promised that he'll take me under his wing, and that he'll reform me!"

Tom looked at his companion keenly.

"Reform you?" he repeated. "What for?"

"D'Arcy didn't explain that," smiled Arthur. "Still, he seemed to know an awful lot about my character—a lot more than I know myself, in fact. And I've promised him that I'll take an interest in football and other sports."

"Oh!" said Tom.

He didn't quite know what to make of this.

"Yes," said Arthur. "I'm quite keen on football, particularly. And as I've given D'Arcy my word I must keep to it. Is there any chance for a new man, or must he wait?"

"You'll have as much chance as any of the others," replied Tom Merry. "It all depends how you show up at practice. But look here, old scout. Are you implying that you never took an interest in football before you came here?"

"If I implied that I didn't mean to," replied Arthur. "To tell you the truth, I'm as keen as mustard on all kinds of sport."

Tom looked at him more curiously than ever. The sparkle in Arthur's eye proved that he was telling the truth. Yet Racke & Co. had definitely declared that he was a sportsman of another type. And Tom was reluctant to ask any personal questions. He didn't like pumping new fellows.

They went out of the dormitory, and as they entered the Shell passage Racke and Crooke hove into view. The pair halted at once, and Racke came forward with an exclamation of delight.

"Why, it's Castleton!" he said genially. "Jolly pleased to meet you, Castleton! By gad! I've been lookin' all over the place for you!"

"That was very decent of you," said Arthur.

One glance at Racke was enough for him. He didn't like Racke's pasty complexion, and he didn't like Racke's shifty eyes. Crooke was a little better, but even Crooke wasn't the type that Arthur cared for.

And yet they were all over him, so to speak.

"We haven't met before, but I know all about you," said Racke enthusiastically. "A pal of mine in London is one of your pals, too. A bit of a dog—eh?"

He dug Arthur in the ribs, and chuckled.

"You seem to know everything!" said Arthur quietly.

"By gad, so I do!" grinned Racke. "It's no good you trying to spoof me, old bean! You might be able to kid these other chaps, but I'm not so young! Come along to the study, and we'll have a jaw about old times! I want to hear how you got away from that bobby in Piccadilly!"

"Yes, I expect you're quite interested," said Arthur.

He bit his lips as he noted that Tom Merry had abruptly walked away. And the next moment he was seized by Racke and Crooke, and fairly swept into Study No. 7. Racke closed the door and turned the key.

"We don't want to be interrupted," he said, with a wink.

In the meantime, Tom Merry wondered. He was sorely puzzled. His brief chat with Arthur Castleton had nearly convinced him that the new fellow was a worthy addition to the Shell. And yet Racke had hailed him as a pal, and had marched him off to his own study with an air of complete ownership. And Castleton hadn't said a word to refute the black sheep's imputations.

"We thought about coming down to meet you," said Racke, as he produced a cigarette-case, "but Clampe kept us over in the New House. Just a little friendly game of nap, you understand. Have a cig?"

"No, thanks," said Arthur grimly.

"It's quite safe."

"Very likely; but no, thanks."

"Kildare's out, you ass," urged Racke. "He's the head prefect—a bit of an interferin' rotter. It's safe enough this afternoon."

"Don't press him if he doesn't want to," said Crooke gruffly.

Racke closed his cigarette-case.

"Feelin' a bit strange, eh?" he grinned. "I understand, old thing! But you can't fool me that you're no smoker. By gad! What about those six cigars you smoked, one after the other?"

"Ah!" said Arthur guardedly.

"You were as sick as a hog afterwards, but you won your bet, didn't you?" chuckled Racke. "Ten quid for smokin' half a dozen cigars! I wouldn't mind takin' on a bet like that!"

"And what about the time you got turned out of a night club?" asked Crooke. "You're a bit too speedy for St."

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Jim's, Castleton! There aren't any night clubs down here, and you'll be lucky if you get even a smell of champagne."

Arthur compressed his lips.

He wasn't flattered. These two cads were under the impression that they were speaking about his daring exploits. But Arthur knew well enough that they were Alan's exploits. He was learning something. He had always suspected that his twin brother was a young fool, but now he was finding it out in earnest. Racke and Crooke were so certain of their facts that there could be no doubting them.

And Arthur was in a dilemma.

Even if he denied these imputations, he wouldn't be believed—and to deny them might involve an explanation. And it was impossible for him to give Alan away. Not only had he promised Alan that he would tell nobody he had a twin brother, but his father desired this pretence to be kept up, too. His father, of course, had no suspicion that anything awkward might develop out of this silence. Even Mr. Castleton had no suspicion of Alan's real character.

There was one ray of hope. Neither Racke nor Crooke had actually met Alan and in time, perhaps, they would assume that they had made a mistake. But it would be risky to deny the identity at once. For, to all intents and purposes, Racke and Crooke were right. It was Arthur's other self, so to speak—his twin—who had done these things.

And there was another reason why Arthur held his tongue.

He wanted to find out just how far these two young rascals would go. They had taken him into their arms as a pal, but he had not the slightest intention of remaining within that unpleasant embrace. But it would be informative to discover exactly how far they desired to go.

Arthur was a stranger within the gates, and he knew hardly anybody yet. He wanted to get the hang of his companions as quickly as possible, and he also wanted to learn how much these rotters knew of Alan. So his only course was to lead them on.

"I can see it's not much good trying to throw dust into your eyes, Racke," he said, with assumed craftiness. "You know everything, don't you?"

"I know everything about you!" replied Racke, nodding.

"Who gave me away?"

"Rot!" said Racke. "There's no question of givin' you away. I was jolly pleased to hear that you were comin'. We need a man like you at St. Jim's to buck things up a bit. We're pretty slow down here just at the moment."

"And you're relying on me to paint the place red?"

"You'll paint it red all right," grinned Racke confidently. "A man with your reputation couldn't do anything else. I've heard that you're full of wheezes, and that you'll soon—"

"Just a minute!" interrupted Arthur. "We might as well get things straight. Who did you hear this from? Who told you about that affair in Piccadilly, and about those six cigars?"

Racke grinned.

"An old pal of mine," he said. "You'll know him when I give you his name. You've done lots of business with him."

"Business?" said Arthur, staring.

"You bet!" chuckled Racke. "Banks, the bookie."

Arthur did not reveal the blankness which filled his mind. He had never heard of Banks the bookie, and the name was quite new to him. But it was perfectly clear that Alan had had dealings with the rascal.

"Oh!" said Arthur slowly.

"So you needn't try to pull any wool over our eyes," grinned Racke. "Banks knows you well, and he happens to be in Wayland. In fact, he lives in Wayland. We'll eat you over to see him to-morrow!"

Arthur Castleton experienced a shock. This was an unexpected blow. One of Alan's rascally associates actually lived in the local town—and this man was a friend of Racke's! Arthur mentally decided, then and there, that nothing should ever take him into Wayland!

CHAPTER 9.

A Bit of an Enigma!

BAGGY TRIMBLE dug a fat finger into the spotless rear of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's jacket.

"Seen my pal, Castleton, anywhere about?" he asked.

"Bai-Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Baggy with disdain and aversion.

"Pway keep your dirty fingahs to yourself, Twimble!" he said. "I wufuse to be jabbed in the back by your filthy paws!"

"I'm looking for my pal, Castleton—"

"I wufuse to believe that Castleton is one of your fwends, Twimble," said D'Arcy coldly. "I have formed the opinion that Castleton is a wippah, and any fellow who is a wippah cannot be a fwend of yours."

"But look here, Gussy——"

"I wufuse to be called Gussy by you, Twimble!"

"All right, Gussy," said Baggy calmly. "Just as you like. But you might tell me where——"

"Pway wun along, Twimble, and leave me alone," interrupted Gussy. "You must wemembah that we are in public, and I am wathah particulah about bein' seen with you! I do not know where Castleton is——"

"You'll probably find him with Racke, if you're looking for him," interrupted Blake tartly.

The chums of Study No. 6 had just come into the School House, and Arthur Augustus regarded them indignantly.

"I wathah think that I am a bettah judge of Castleton than you are, Blake," he said. "You have nevah even met the chap."

"I'll admit that," said Blake. "But I've heard enough. We've been over with Figgins and Co., and Castleton's behaviour has even been heard of in the New House. Figgins thinks he's lucky. He was afraid that the new chap would be boarded on his side of the quad."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I am surprised, Blake—surprised and pained—that you should listen to this frightful scandal. I have already met Castleton, and I have come to the conclusion that he is a wippah!"

"I expect he flattered you, Gussy," said Herries. "You wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I'm not the kind of chap to stand flattewy! I met Castleton in Wylcombe, and we had an investin' chat."

"I suppose he told you that you were handsome, and that he had never seen such priceless bags?" asked Blake. "Anybody could spoof you, Gussy."

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "Castleton nevah mentioned my bags. He pwomised me that he would weform, and that he would take a great interest in footah."

"Oh!" said Digby. "Then he admits he needs reforming?"

"Yaas, wathah," said Gussy. "But pewwaps not," he added. "I don't seem to wemembah him confessin' to any wascally habits."

"That was very remiss," said Blake solemnly. "He ought to have confessed his sins to you, Gussy. But I suppose we ought to be satisfied with his promise to reform. But I'm not so keen on these promises. And Castleton has proved already that he was only kidding you."

"How has he pwoved it?"

"Because he went off with Racke and Crooke, as friendly as you like," replied Blake tartly. "Now what have you got to say?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Is that all?"

"I uttably wufuse to believe you, Blake," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "Pway don't imagine that I am accusin' you of tellin' whoppahs, but you must have been misinformed."

"Tom Merry informed me."

"That's wemarkable," said D'Arcy, with a frown. "It is not often that Tom Mewwy is w'ong. But he is certainly w'ong this time."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ass!"

"Bai Jove! I wufuse——"

"Tom Merry was talking to Castleton when Racke and Crooke came up," said Blake tartly. "They linked their arms with his and marched him away. And Castleton has been in Racke's study ever since."

D'Arcy looked startled.

"This is vewy wemarkable," he said, with a frown. "Natuwally, Blake, I cannot wufuse to believe you now. Pway accept my apologies for doubtin' your word. At the same time, I wufuse to believe that Castleton is a wottah. He distinctly pwomised me that he would weform——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally, Blake——"

Blake and Herries and Digby went up to Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, and Arthur Augustus was left alone. He was worried. He didn't feel like tea yet. There was something mysterious about this new boy.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Gussy. "This is most wemarkable. Eweybody seems to think that Castleton is a wascal, and yet I am willin' to sweah he is twue blue. Even Gwunday was stwuck by the new chap's decency. I wufuse to believe that he is a boundah!"

And D'Arcy, sorely troubled, wandered along to Study No. 6.

In the meantime, Baggy Trimble was improving the shjinnig hour. Any kind of scandal was meat and drink to him, and if he could involve the new boy in trouble on his very first evening he would be pleased.

So Baggy went to Study No. 7 in the Shell passage. Not that he had any intention of entering. Trimble had methods of his own. He approached the door with extreme caution, rather worried by the fact that it was nearly tea-time. The Shell fellows would be coming indoors, and there was more than a chance that he would be discovered at his nefarious practice.

But it was worth the risk. "Banks knows you well, and he happens to be in Wayland," came Racke's voice through the keyhole. "In fact, he lives in Wayland. We'll cart you over to see him to-morrow."

Truly, Baggy had arrived at an unfortunate moment! "You needn't look so serious," went on Racke's voice. "Banks knows you as well as he knows me, Castleton. I got all my information from Banks. He'll recognise you the instant he meets you again."

"Yes!" came Arthur's voice. "I suppose he will."

Baggy Trimble quivered with suppressed excitement. Here was the new chap admitting that he knew Banks, the bookie!

But Arthur was only talking mechanically. Banks would certainly recognise him if they met—for it was a moral certainty that Banks would mistake him for Alan. They were as alike as two peas, and Banks would naturally be fooled, since he knew nothing of a twin.

"Of course he'll recognise you—he'll be only too pleased to do some more business with you," continued Racke. "You were one of his best customers, old bean. Didn't you make a practice of makin' five quid bets with him?"

"I don't seem to remember Banks," said Arthur steadily. "By gad!" grinned Racke. "You've dealt with so many bookies that you've lost count, eh? Well, I'm not surprised—after all I've heard about you. But Banks will know you as soon as you meet."

Arthur resolved that they never should meet, if he could in any way prevent it. He was getting rather sick of Racke's company, and he turned towards the door.

"Not goin'?" asked Crooke.

"I haven't reported to the Housemaster yet," said Arthur. "I don't want to get into trouble. I ought to see the Head, too, perhaps."

"All right—I'll show you Mr. Railton's study, if you like," said Racke obligingly. "Just a minute, though. Which is your study?"

"I don't know yet."

"How about diggin' with us, in here?" invited Racke.

"I think I'll have a word with Tom Merry, if you don't mind," replied Arthur. "He's the Form captain, isn't he?"

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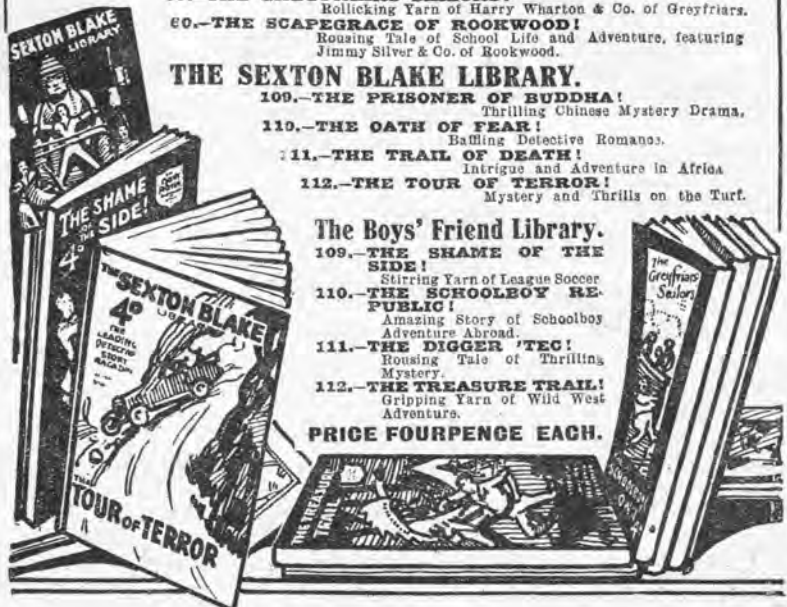
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"Yes, but never mind Merry——"

"I'd rather talk to him first," interrupted Arthur.

"Well, there's another thing," said Racke. "How about comin' along to this study after tea for a little game of nap or banker? What do you say? A little friendly game to celebrate the occasion, what?"

Arthur grinned.

"A friendly game?" he repeated. "Quite friendly, eh?"

"Yes, of course—strictly friendly!" said Racke, with a wink. "Will you come?"

"Rather!" replied Arthur promptly. "There's nothing I like better than a little friendly game. I'll be along at half-past six. How's that?"

"It'll suit us fine!" said Racke.

He gave Crooke a meaning glance. Castleton was bound to have plenty of money on him. And Racke knew quite a lot of things about banker and nap that the inventors of those games had never even thought of!

CHAPTER 10.

Not Very Profitable!

"OH crumbs!"

Baggy Trimble scooted down the Shell passage like a streak. But he was too late. A tramp of heavy footsteps followed in his wake, and a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder as he tried to turn the corner.

"Just a minute, you eavesdropping worm!"

Baggy turned round, trembling. Grundy, of the Shell, was holding him tightly, and there was an expression on Grundy's face which Trimble didn't like. And there was a determined set about Grundy's jaw which Trimble liked even less.

"Lemme alone!" gasped the Fourth-Former. "I—I——"

"You young spy!" roared Grundy. "You were listening at one of these doors!"

"Yow! I—I wasn't!" gasped Trimble. "I—I mean, I was only tying my shoelace——"

"What!" thundered Grundy.

"Yaroooooh!"

Trimble jumped. Grundy had done nothing as yet, but he looked like doing things. And Trimble realised that the worn-out "gag" of tying his shoelace would be of no avail now.

"Wait a minute, Grundy!" he panted. "I—I've just heard something about Castleton! I—I found it out by accident, you know! He's——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Grundy ominously.

"After what happened down in the village, I thought you'd be interested, old man," went on Trimble eagerly. "Castleton isn't such a saint as you seem to think! In fact, I can tell you a few things——"

"I don't want to hear 'em!" shouted Grundy.

"If you'll lend me five bob, I'll tell you what I know," went on Trimble. "It's worth five bob, Grundy! I haven't said anything to a soul yet. You'll be the first—— Ow! Leggo! Yow!"

"You want to borrow five bob, do you?" roared Grundy.

"I—I'll be satisfied with half-a-crown——"

"What?"

"Or—even a bob——"

"You little worm!" said Grundy disgustedly. "I'll give you something just for your nerve! You deserve it!"

Baggy Trimble breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh, good man!" he said. "If you could make it two bob——"

"I'll give you something, but I doubt if you'll be satisfied," went on Grundy grimly. "This is it, my son!"

He seized Trimble's head and banged it against the wall.

"Yaroooooh!" hooted Baggy wildly.

Thump, thump!

"Yow! Ow!" roared the fat junior.

"Now you can clear off!" said Grundy, with disdain.

"I'm killed!" gasped Baggy. "You—you murderer! You've cracked my skull!"

Judging by the way he shot down the passage, however, he still seemed to have plenty of life in him. Grundy turned towards Study No. 3, and mentally decided that two other heads would be bumped against the wall if Wilkins and Gunn hadn't prepared tea.

Then the door of Racke's study opened, and Arthur Castleton emerged.

"Right you are, old fellow!" said Racke from inside the study, his voice full of cordiality. "We'll see you back at half-past six, then? Don't be late, will you? We'll be ready!"

"Rely on me!" said Arthur smilingly.

He closed the door, and found George Alfred Grundy glaring at him.

"Friends of yours?" asked Grundy ominously.

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Arthur was rather taken aback.

"No," he replied. "I only met them twenty minutes ago."

"You haven't taken long to get on intimate terms, have you?"

"Racke took me into the study, and I couldn't very well insult him," said Arthur quietly. "I don't know who's who yet——"

"That's enough!" said Grundy curtly. "I understand!"

He tramped off, uttering a snort. Obviously, the rumours about Castleton had been justified, and his—Grundy's—impression at the pond had been a false one. Any fellow who could make friends with Racke so promptly was no good. Decent chaps didn't take to Racke at all.

Arthur bit his lip, and walked away.

Another example of how Alan's reputation was dogging him. But he only worried for a moment. He saw no reason why he should concern himself. He had nothing on his conscience, and so he immediately regained his natural sunniness.

As it happened, he met Tom Merry just as the latter was coming out of Study No. 10 with Manners and Lowther. The Terrible Three gave Arthur some straight looks.

"Just come from Racke's study?" asked Manners pointedly.

"Yes."

"I hope it wasn't too difficult to drag yourself away?"



Thud! Biff! Crash! The three cads recoiled from Castleton's onslaught. They gasped and yelled as the new boy's swift blows got Jack Blake & Co. stared in wonder. "By jingo, this chap's a fighter!" Blake admiringly. (See Chapter 14.)

asked Monty Lowther. "Racke's company is most delightful, according to all I've heard."

"Don't rot, Monty!" said Tom, frowning. "Have you decided to share that study with Racke and Crooke, Castleton?"

"Great Scott, no!" said Arthur. "Isn't there anywhere else I can go?"

"You'd better come along to No. 2," said Tom Merry. "I'll introduce you to Frere. Mr. Railton asked me to see you into No. 2. Frere's quite a good chap."

"Thanks!" said Arthur, smiling.

And Tom Merry instantly came to the conclusion, again, that the new boy was "all right." One look at his smiling face was enough to dispel all Tom's troubled doubts. This chap was as right as rain!

Blake & Co. didn't think so, however. Just then Baggy Trimble was in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, imparting his news. Baggy was hoping to make some profit out of it, but so far he had only received some bangs on the head.

"Of course, I heard it quite by accident," he was saying.

"Racke was ass enough to leave his door open, and I couldn't help hearing what they said."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is far more prowable that you had your beastly eah to the keyhole, you eaves-dwoppin' boundah!"

"I didn't!" denied Baggy. "If you don't want to hear about Castleton, just say so! Only I thought——"

"Pway wemove yourself, Twimble!"

"Yes, clear out!" said Herries.

"Wait a minute," said Blake grimly. "We might as well hear this."

"Weally, Blake——"

"You dry up, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "It seems to me that Castleton ought to be squashed at once. Let's hear what you've got to say, Trimble."



"It's all truth!" said Trimble indignantly. "You know that I always tell the truth! Castleton is a friend of that beast, Banks. He's arranged to go to Wayland with Racke to-morrow."

"Oh, has he?" said Blake.

"I wefuse to believe——"

"Yes, and he's going to Racke's study at half-past six to play banker!" said Trimble triumphantly. "I heard them fix it up! Castleton promised to go!"

"I utterly wefuse to cwedit——"

"Dry up, Gussy!" growled Blake. "Even Trimble wouldn't be fool enough to say a thing like this unless he had actually heard it. We've only got to go to Racke's study at half-past six, and we shall be able to verify it. If Castleton isn't there, we shall know that Trimble's been lying, and then we'll deal with him."

Baggy Trimble nodded.

"Yes, that's right," he said eagerly. "If Castleton doesn't go to Racke's study at half-past six, you'll know that I invented the story—and I'll let you bump me as much as you like!"

"Bai Jove!"

"This is concrete evidence!" said Blake. "If Trimble gives us permission to bump him, you can be certain that he heard the appointment fixed up. For once he's telling the truth."

Trimble nodded.

"Yes, they're going to play banker, or nap," he said. "That's the kind of chap we've got into the School House! He's even worse than Racke——"

"No matter how bad he is, we've already got somebody to beat him," said Blake. "May we be preserved from another like you, Trimble! Clear out, you spying rotter!"

"Aren't you going to give me something?" roared Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy promptly. "I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, look here, Gussy——"

"Clear off, Trimble!" growled Blake. "Don't breathe a word of this to anybody else. Understand? Not a word! We'll deal with it ourselves."

"Oh, but I think——"

"Never mind what you think!" interrupted Blake. "If you tell anybody else what you've heard, we shall soon know about it, and then we'll slaughter you! That's all! Clear!"

"Oh, I say; but——"

"Scat!"

"But I thought——"

Four chairs were pushed back, and Baggy Trimble bolted to the door and shot out. He rolled disconsolately down the passage. He had made no profit whatever, and there was no prospect of making any. Baggy had too great a respect for his skin to ignore Blake's warning.

CHAPTER 11.

Gussy Doesn't Approve!

STUDY No. 2 was empty when Tom Merry ushered Arthur Castleton into it. Harry Frere was, apparently, taking tea elsewhere.

"This is your shanty," said Tom cheerily. "Not a bad hole, Castleton. I think you'll be comfortable enough with Frere. Pity he isn't on hand so that I can introduce you."

"That's all right," said Arthur. "He'll probably come in."

"If you haven't made any arrangements about tea, you're quite welcome to join us in Study No. 10," went on Tom. "But perhaps you've accepted an invitation somewhere else?"

Arthur hesitated.

"All right!" said Tom Merry. "I won't press it."

He concluded—quite wrongly—that Arthur was going to have tea with Racke and Crooke. He couldn't understand it, but it was none of his business. And he had no desire to force anything on the new boy.

"You haven't seen Mr. Railton yet, have you?" he asked.

"No," said Arthur. "As a matter of fact, I thought—— Well, I had an idea that the Housemaster might want me to stay to tea. That's why I wasn't sure about accepting your invite just now."

"Oh!" said Tom.

He realised that he had done Arthur an injustice. The new fellow was quite right, too. It was more than likely that Mr. Railton would invite him to tea. And an invitation from a Housemaster was a command.

Tom Merry felt annoyed with himself. It seemed that

"I twust you are not pwepared to accept Twimble's word, Blake?" asked Gussy indignantly. "Twimble is always tellin' whoppahs——"

"Rats!" said Trimble, emboldened by Blake's support.

"You keep quiet, Gussy!"

"Weally, Twimble——"

"We don't want to be bothered with your chattering!"

"Bai Jove! You fwightful young wuffian! I'll——"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!" said Blake impatiently. "I'm going to let Trimble talk, and if I think he's lying, I'll pulverise him! Go it, Trimble, and if you value your skin you'll stick to the truth!"

Castleton was being misunderstood every minute, and all because of those confounded rumours! The fellow was all right—anybody could see that with half an eye!

Tom took him along to Mr. Railton's study, and, sure enough, he was kept there for a cup of tea.

And when Tom got back into the Shell passage he found Blake & Co. in full force.

"Just the man we want!" said Blake briskly.

"Short of supplies?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile.

"No, we've had tea, thanks!" said Blake. "We've come here to talk to you about that new chap—Castleton."

The Shell captain frowned.

"What about him?" he asked. "The fellow's all right." He led the way into Study No. 10, and Blake & Co. crowded after him.

"Don't mind us!" said Monty Lowther genially. "If you like, we'll take the table out of the room altogether. How many more? Manners, you'd better get into the cupboard!"

"Cheese it!" said Blake gruffly. "Castleton's all right, is he? Don't you believe it, Tom Merry! The man's two-faced! He pretends to be smiling and open, and all the time he's a rotter!"

"Weally, Blake, I must protest!" said Arthur Augustus. "You have never met Castleton yet, and it is wicid for you to pretend that you know him."

"Yes, you'll have to do better than that, Blake, old man," said Lowther. "What do you know about Castleton? The fellow's got two faces, and you haven't even seen one! Where's your sense of proportion?"

"I've just left Castleton," said Tom Merry quietly. "And I'll stake my life that he's true blue!"

"Heah, heah!"

"If there's anything crooked about Castleton I'll eat my hat!" went on Tom. "You can generally tell a fellow after a minute or two's talk—but one second is enough with Castleton. He's as open as a book. I don't believe all these scandals!"

"There's something uncanny about the chap," said Manners. "As soon as you come face to face with him you've got to believe in him!"

"A hypnotist—eh?" said Blake grimly.

"Rats!" said Tom. "He's the last fellow in the world to hypnotise anybody. But, somehow, you can't help liking him. Why, even Grundy forgave him for chucking him into the pond!"

"Well, what are you going to say when I tell you that Castleton has arranged to go to Racke's study at half-past six for a game of banker?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry smiled.

"I'm going to say that you're wrong," he replied.

"I'm not wrong!" growled Blake. "It's a fact!"

"I uttaly wufuse to believe it!" said D'Arcy. "It is not often that I desiah to disagree with you, Blake, but on this occasion I must do so. I wufuse to believe in Twimble's tittle-tattle."

"Trimble's?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you hear this from Trimble?"

"Yes," said Blake, with a glare.

"Going dotty?" asked Tom politely.

"Oh, I know Trimble's word isn't to be accepted, as a rule!" said Blake defensively. "But you know as well as I do, Tom Merry, that Castleton went into Racke's study arm-in-arm with Racke and Crooke. Is that right or not?"

"Yes," said Tom grudgingly.

"That sneak Trimble eaves-dropped, and heard Castleton making an appointment for half-past six—to go and play a friendly game of cards."

"Friendly?" asked Manners.

"Well, you know what it means," said Blake. "We've heard all about Castleton. He's got the hottest reputation on record."

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"We've only heard rumours——"

"Rats!" said Blake. "The chap isn't in the school half an hour before he fixes up an appointment for playing cards! Isn't that good enough?"

"But pway wemembah that Twimble is unweliable——"

"Trimble says we can bump him all we like if the thing doesn't come off!" growled Blake. "My only hat! Don't we know when Trimble's lying and when he's telling the truth? We ought to be by this time! And by some sort of miracle he told the truth this afternoon!"

"Well, it's simple enough," said Tom Merry quietly. "Soon after half-past six we'll go along to Racke's study and look him up. If Castleton's there, I'll put a stop to the game, and tell him a few home truths."

"Hang it, the fellow can do as he likes," said Manners. "Why should we set ourselves up as his giddy keepers?"

"I'm not going to lecture him, if that's what you mean," said Tom, frowning. "But I'm the junior skipper, and it's my duty to tell Castleton what he can't do and what he can do. That's all I shall trouble about. If he chooses to play those rotten games after his eyes are opened, it'll be up to him to take the consequences."

"Can't do more than that," said Blake.

"But I don't believe that Castleton will play cards," continued Tom. "There's something rummy about the fellow. I don't quite know what to make of him. But I'm willing to bet he's straight."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I would like to point out, dear boys, that I stwongly disappwove of the whole affair!"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to dwy up!" said Arthur Augustus. "Castleton has pwomised me to wun stwaight. He has assuahed me that he will avoid the wottahs——"

"He's kept his promise, hasn't he?" asked Blake tartly. "I wufuse to pass judgment before I have heard Castleton's explanation," said D'Arcy. "I intend to go to him stwaight away, and to ask him why he went into Wacke's studdy, and why he is goin' back——"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" interrupted Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"You'll simply choke him off that card-playing stunt, and then we shall never know whether he meant it or not," went on Blake. "If he's one of those rotters, we want to know the truth at once. Then we shall know how to go on."

"Castleton is a wippah!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Whatevah he has done in the past is dead. It is fwihtfully mean to dig up the old disgwaces, and flaunt them in his face. He has pwomised to wuform, and it needs a fellow of tact and judgment to befriend him. Castleton is undah my wing——"

"According to the look of things, Castleton needs to be under something heavier than a wing—my fist, for instance!" said Blake wrathfully. "This is his first evening in the school, and he's already making shady appointments with Racke! We're going to squash him!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave it up.

CHAPTER 12.

Arthur Means Business!

TAP! "Come in!" sang out Racke.

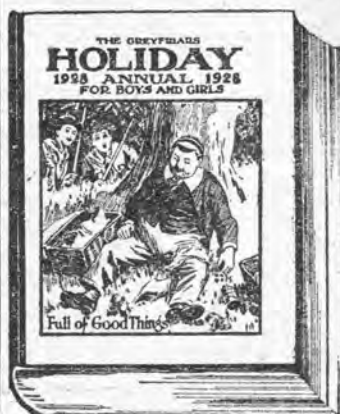
It was exactly half-past six, and Study No. 7 was looking very innocent. A cheerful fire was burning, the table was neat and tidy, and the only odour in the room was that of recently cooked sausages.

"Here we are!" said the visitor.

"Oh, it's you, Clampe," said Racke indifferently.

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"You seem disappointed," said Leslie Clampe, of the New House.

"No—only I was expectin' Castleton," said Racke. "He's due. But he'll be along in a minute or two, I expect. Perhaps old Railton has been keeping him."

Clampe sat down in the easiest chair.

"I'm rather keen on meetin' this new chap," he said. "A famous blood, isn't he? Come here to paint the school red, what? If he's anythin' like you say, Racke, he'll help to level the term up wonderfully."

Racke grinned.

"He's deep," he replied. "I can't quite get to the bottom of him yet. He admits that he knows Banks, of course, but he doesn't say much else."

"Well, that's only natural," put in Crooke. "He's strange here, and he's a man with brains. His reputation proves that. He's not goin' to talk much until he knows where he stands. Sensible chap, if you ask me."

"I said he was deep, didn't I?" replied Racke. "We

Aubrey Racke grinned.

"I can see there's no need to teach you the ropes!" he chuckled. "Yes, we'd better have the door locked. Let me introduce Clampe, of the New House—one of our set. Clampe, this is the new chap."

"Pleased to meet you, Castleton!" said Clampe cordially.

They shook hands, and Arthur took about ten seconds to come to the obvious conclusion that Clampe was worth about as much as Racke. He wasn't quite so sure of Crooke.

"Well, now we can start," said Racke briskly. "We'll light up first, eh? Kildare's still out, and we're safe for an hour, at least. Help yourselves, old beans! Plenty to go round!"

He flung a box of cigarettes on the table, after helping himself to one.

"I'll not smoke, thanks," said Arthur. "There was some talk about a game, wasn't there? I'm a sociable chap, and—"

"You want to get down to the cards, what?" grinned

At least two members of the Bolton Wanderers team started training on the club ground a fortnight before they were officially called up. Evidently their view is that the early bird gets the goals.

At a recent athletic meeting there was a race between football managers. They have often raced in the past, but after players, not after each other.

Surely there will never be such a close finish to a football season as there was to the last one. Portsmouth got into the First Division in front of Manchester City on goal average, and the difference between them was one two-hundredth part of a goal. How's that for hard luck on Manchester City?

The players of several football clubs are forbidden to ride motor-cycles owing to the risk of injury. Which club will be the first to forbid its players to cross a main road for the same reason?

George Cammell, the centre-forward of Middlesbrough, has given the goal-scorers a nice little job to break his record. Last season he scored 59 goals in League matches. By George!

Sheffield Wednesday started the season by their captain being presented with a live owl. A succession of defeats would probably mean quite a lot of 'owls in the district.

By the way, it cannot be said that the donor of the owl mascot was tempting the Wednesday club to be extravagant, for he only offered the bird to the club after they had obtained Sead.

A white football has been experimented with during the last few weeks. After five minutes on some of the muddy grounds in November a white ball is expected to be spotless—black all over!

rather pride ourselves on bein' swift, but we're back numbers compared to Castleton. And yet he looks as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth! I hear that old Grundy has taken to him, and that ass, D'Arcy, won't hear a word against him."

"It must be useful to have a nerve like that," said Clampe enviously. "I've heard that confidence tricksters are the same. Nicest fellows in the world to speak to, you know. They make you think they're your best friends—then they bone your wallet!"

"That's the kind of chap Castleton is," nodded Racke. "He can look you straight in the eye and seem as innocent as—"

"Shush!" murmured Crooke. "He's comin'!"

A footstep sounded out in the passage.

"Don't forget!" murmured Clampe. "It's going to be a nap! We've got a few special tricks we can work off—"

Tap!

"Come in!" said Crooke genially.

Arthur Castleton entered and shut the door. He was smiling genially, and he winked to the occupants as he turned the key in the lock.

"We don't want to be disturbed," he said coolly.



Harry Green, who left Sheffield United for Notts Forest during the close season, made a startling first appearance in the City of Lace. He was crossing a bridge over the River Trent to put in his first training for his new club when he saw a girl struggling in the water. He jumped in and rescued her in gallant fashion.

Preston North End have ten Scottish players on their books at the present time. In this connection it is interesting to recall that it was

presence of Scottish players at Preston many years ago which led to the recognition of professionals in the game. It was agreed that the Scots didn't come to Preston for nothing.

It is reckoned that for every pound paid to the shareholders of football clubs the Government gets five pounds in Entertainment and Income Tax. In other words, the country scores.

The ground of the Bournemouth and Boscombe club has recently undergone considerable improvement, and an interesting fact is that the skeleton of the new stand, as well as most of the new fencing, came from Wembley. One of these days Bournemouth hope to go to Wembley.

The manager, the secretary, the trainer, and the assistant trainer of the Chelsea club have all completed twenty years service with the organisation. This, however, is not the explanation of why Chelsea are called Pensioners.

Has it ever struck you that the footballer who puts on too much weight usually ends by being but a shadow of his former self?

Many football clubs now have a gramophone in their dressing-rooms. Cardiff City have one, and, as their trainer says, it is all right doing training by music so long as the proper record is put on.

Racke. "All right—we shan't keep you waitin'. But you might take a fellow's cigarette when he offers it to you!"

"Thanks all the same, but I don't smoke," said Arthur.

"You don't smoke?"

"No!"

"Then what about those six cigars?"

"Never mind the six cigars," said Arthur. "I don't smoke!"

Racke grinned.

"Feelin' your way, eh?" he said admiringly. "Gad, you're a deep bouncer, Castleton! Well, we'll make it nap," he added, laying a pack of cards on the table. "What about the points?"

Arthur looked at him amusedly.

"Cheese it!" he said. "We're playing for nuts, aren't we?"

"Nuts?" gasped Racke.

"Or matches."

"Matches!" roared Clampe.

"Well, I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The black sheep of the Shell yelled in unison.

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"You're a bit of a humorist, Castleton!" grinned Racke. "By gad, that's a good one! Nuts! Or matches! I shall have to tell that to Cutts when I see him! He'll howl!"

"But why?" asked Arthur, in surprise. "Aren't we going to play for nuts? These games are more interesting if we have nuts or counters."

"Chuck it!" said Racke. "Sixpence a point is our game."

It was very seldom they played nap for sixpence a point, but Castleton was a new chap, unaccustomed to their ways, and they were almost certain to win. It was a good opportunity to skin him.

"Sixpence a point?" said Arthur quietly. "Are you suggesting that we should gamble? Do you mean that we should play for money?"

They stared at him queerly.

"A joke's a joke!" growled Racke. "Hasn't it gone far enough, old bean?"

"Don't let's have any misunderstandings," said Arthur. "I'm new in this school, and I like to be agreeable. You asked me to come here for a friendly game, so I accepted. Well, my idea of a friendly game is to play for nuts or counters. There's no joke about it, and I mean it."

"The man's mad!" said Clampe, staring. "Great Scott! I thought you said he was as hot as pepper, Racke?"

"So he is!" snarled Racke. "He's only tryin' to be funny!"

But he had to admit to himself that Arthur didn't look funny. In fact, Arthur looked very unfunny. At the moment he was peeling off his jacket, and there was a calm, determined look on his face which boded ill for the black sheep.

"What are you takin' your coat off for?" asked Crooke uneasily.

"You'll see before long," replied Arthur. "We might as well be easy, anyhow. There's going to be some warm work, so it's just as well to be prepared."

His manner was more significant than ever. He even proceeded to roll up his shirtsleeves, and there was something suggestive in the clenching of his fists. Incidentally, it was worthy of note that his arms were muscular and firm.

"Look here, Castleton! Haven't we had enough of this rot?" asked Racke viciously. "What's the fool idea?"

"I came here on your invitation to play a friendly game," said Arthur. "I find it isn't a friendly game you're proposing, but a gamble. And I regard that as an insult."

"A which?" roared Racke.

"An insult!"

"Why, you confounded idiot—"

"And I'm not in the habit of taking insults lying down," proceeded Arthur ominously. "I know, I'm a new kid, and it's like my nerve to act in this way on my first day. But you've tricked me, and I want to show you straight off that I'm not going to be tricked again. The sooner we all understand each other the better."

"You're mad!" snapped Racke. "You can't fool us like this, Castleton! We know who you are, and what you've been. This game's gone far enough, and you'd better chuck it! Sit down and stop rottin'!"

Arthur eyed them grimly. They had heard so much about Alan's reputation that they were certain of themselves. Arthur was determined to give them an eye-opener. He would take double pleasure in doing so, for not only would it gratify him to punch their faces, but he would be doing Alan's character a bit of good at the same time. For Racke & Co. would undoubtedly cease to circulate the rumours of Alan's "doggishness."

"You asked for this, and I'm perfectly willing to oblige," said Arthur coolly. "Which one shall I take first?"

"You silly fool—"

"Or shall I thrash you all at once?" asked Arthur contemptuously. "I'm perfectly indifferent. One at a time or all at once! It's up to you to decide."

"You—you—"

"And I'll give you ten seconds," added Arthur. "One—two—three—four—"

And there was such a light of grim purpose in Arthur Castleton's eyes that the black sheep of the Shell knew that he meant business.

CHAPTER 13.

Very Surprising!

"HEAH we are, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked into the Shell passage, and a crowd of other fellows were with him. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were there, to say nothing of the other members of Study No. 6. Talbot of the Shell had joined them, too, and Grundy had also got wind of the affair.

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"The best thing will be to barge straight in," said Blake briskly. "We'll catch them by surprise. We don't want them to have any chance of hiding the cards away, and concealing the evidence."

"Weally, Blake, I pwotest!" said D'Arcy.

"Cheese it, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to cheese it!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is onlay a mattah of common politeness to wap on a fellow's door when you pay a call. It is feahfully bad form to barge in without knockin'!"

"You ass, we want to surprise them!" explained Blake.

"That is all vewy well, but—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "We're here, anyway!"

He seized the handle of the study door and turned it. But the door refused to budge. It was locked on the inside.

"Hi!" roared Blake. "Racke!"

A gasp came from inside.

"Just a minute!" came Racke's voice. "I'll unlock—"

"No, you won't!" came another voice.

Arthur Castleton's voice!

"Bai Jove!"

"Sorry, you fellows, but I'd rather you didn't interrupt me just now," went on Arthur. "We're rather busy at the moment. Keep where you are, Racke. Don't move! I'll deal with this!"

"Gweat Scott!" said D'Arcy blankly.

"There you are! What did I say?" asked Blake, with a glare. "This new chap is a bigger rotter than Racke himself. He's made himself the leader of the whole bunch!"

"Ordering Racke about!" said Grundy, in amazement.

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"There is somethin' funnay about this," said Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to cwedit that—"

"Leave it to me, Gussy!" interrupted Tom Merry quietly.

"I hate these affairs, but it seems that we were fully justified in coming along."

He thumped on the door.

"Castleton," he shouted, "open this door!"

"My dear old article, I'm fearfully sorry, but it can't be done," replied Arthur. "I am very busy in here, or I shall be busy in a minute or two. I'd much rather you didn't butt in."

"Cheek!" said Manners wrathfully.

"Either you'll open this door, Castleton, or we'll break it in!" said Tom Merry, in a grim voice.

"But there's really no need—"

"Grundy, get your shoulder ready," said Tom Merry.

"You're the heaviest chap here, and one of your shoves ought to be enough."

"I'm game!" said Grundy promptly. "This chap fooled me. I thought he was a decent sort, and he's only a rotter of Racke's breed. As soon as I get in here I'm going to punch his head!"

"Weally, Gwunday, I twust you will do nothin' wash," said Arthur Augustus anxiously. "I assuah you that Castleton is a wippah."

"Go and eat coke!" said Grundy, getting his shoulder ready.

"Just a minute!" said Tom. "We don't want any prefects up here unless we can help it. Castleton, are you going to open this door?"

"Oh, all right, if you're so insistent!" replied Arthur.

"But I'd much rather you went away."

The key turned in the lock, and Arthur Castleton flung the door open. He stood aside and allowed the invaders to crowd into the doorway.

"Why, hallo! What the—"

"Bai Jove!"

"We thought—"

"Take this fool away!" snarled Racke hurriedly. "If he hadn't opened the door we should have opened it! Take him away and bury him!"

Tom Merry and the other juniors regarded the little scene with complete surprise. It was so different to what they had expected.

Instead of the air being blue with cigarette smoke it was perfectly clear. For none of the black sheep had lit up, owing to Arthur's peculiar behaviour at the beginning of the proceedings. The playing cards were already in the fire, having been tossed there by Arthur.

The study looked peaceful and normal, and the invaders knew well enough that tobacco smoke, at least, could not have been eliminated in that short space of time.

Racke and Crooke and Clampe were all wearing expressions of anxiety and alarm, and there was positive relief in their eyes as they looked at the group in the doorway.

But Arthur Castleton was in his shirtsleeves, and although he was smiling his sunny countenance also possessed an expression of unmistakable determination.

"Sorry, Merry," he said apologetically. "I don't know whether I'm doing anything very terrible, but if so I hope you'll excuse me. I'm rather new here and don't know the

ropes yet. Is it too much of a nerve for a new man to thrash some chaps who have insulted him?"

"Thrash them!" stuttered Blake.

"Are you really going to thrash them?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, that was the general idea," said Arthur. "Awfully sorry—"

"My dear old scout, don't apologise to me," grinned Tom Merry. "You're as welcome as the flowers in May! It isn't strictly the thing for a new chap to start fighting on his first evening, but we're always ready to waive a point. Besides, if these fellows have insulted you that gives you carte blanche in any case."

"Thanks!" said Arthur, with a smile.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Blake faintly.

"Bai Jove!" beamed D'Arcy. "What did I tell you deah boys?"

But the invaders were rather at a loss for any further words. They could only stare at Arthur Castleton in a dazed sort of way. They had come here on purpose to bump him for his misdeeds, and here he was, preparing to thrash three fellows at once! There was something decidedly humorous in the situation.

And Arthur's cheery grin had immediately endeared him to Jack Blake, Herries and Digby were equally caught under the spell. Without any question, there was something unusual about Arthur's smile. It was the most attractive smile under the sun. To dislike him was out of the question.

And the audacity of it too! The new fellow really seemed to imagine that he could thrash these three cads! And it seemed that Racke & Co. had the same impression, for they were in no way impatient to put the matter to the test.

"Can't you take the idiot away?" demanded Racke fiercely. "We only invited him to our study for a little chat—"

"I came here for a game of cards," interrupted Arthur. "I was perfectly willing to play—"

"What?" asked Grundy, staring.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Castleton—"

"Well, there's no harm in a game of cards, is there?" asked Arthur. "At my other school I used to play bridge with my Form master quite often. I naturally thought that it was just a friendly game—for counters, or nuts, or something."

"Ye gods and little fishes!" breathed Blake. "He thought Racke was going to play for nuts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then they insulted me," said Arthur grimly. "No need to go into any further details, is there?"

"I think we can guess," said Tom Merry, smiling.

"Why can't you all clear off?" demanded Racke. "I'm sick of this rot! If this fool starts any scrappin' there'll be a prefect up here, and then we shall all be gated, or something."

"Don't let that worry you, old man," said Blake politely. "We'll post a scout at either end of the passage, and we'll have the door closed, too. Go it, Castleton! You'll be safe enough!"

"And if you want any help, just say the word!" added Grundy.

"No, I'll have a shot at them alone, if you don't mind," said Arthur. "It's my quarrel, and I don't want to drag anybody else into it. They can either come one at a time or all together—I'm not particular which."

"Look here!" roared Clampe, in alarm. "I'm not in this! I'm a New House man! Let me get out of here, and—"

"Not likely!" said Manners. "You stay where you are, Clampe."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am feahfully interestwed to see Castleton wipe up the floah with you. I twust he will allow me to give you a feahful thwashin', Clampe."

"You cool down, Gussy," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I wefuse to cool down," said Arthur Augustus. "Didn't I tell you from the very start that Castleton was a wippah? Didn't I say that he was willin' to be weformed? My influence is already havin' a we remarkable effect."

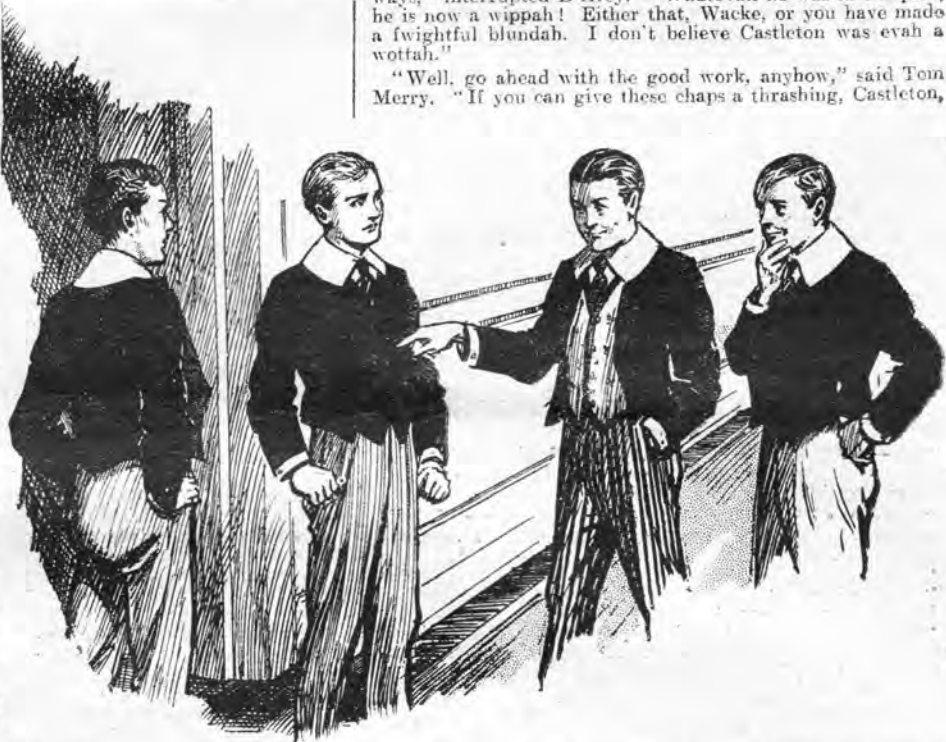
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It strikes me that Castleton didn't need your influence or anybody else's," said Tom Merry. "He's not Racke's sort, and never has been."

"You fools!" shouted Racke. "I tell you that this fellow was a perfect dog at his last school! If you don't believe me, ask Banks, the bookie! Castleton is a celebrated blood! He was nearly expelled for smokin' and drinkin', and he's almost been arrested—"

"Castleton has decided to cowwect the ewwah of his ways," interrupted D'Arcy. "Whatevah he was in the past, he is now a wippah! Either that, Wacke, or you have made a fwightful blundah. I don't believe Castleton was ewah a wottah."

"Well, go ahead with the good work, anyhow," said Tom Merry. "If you can give these chaps a thrashing, Castleton,



"We haven't met before, but I know all about you," said Racke, and he dug Arthur in the ribs and chuckled. "A bit of a dog? Come along to the study, and we'll have a jaw about old times. I want to hear how you got away from that bobby in Piccadilly!" (See Chapter 8.)

you'll be a wonder. Three to one is a tall order. But it is your own idea, and we won't interfere."

And scouts were forthwith posted, and the door of Study No. 7 closed with an ominous click. The events of the next five minutes promised to be entertaining. Not that Racke & Co. held this opinion!

CHAPTER 14.

More Surprising Still!

ARTHUR CASTLETON was quite cool. He was glad that the other fellows had allowed him to proceed with the good work. He felt highly incensed. They had taken it for granted that he was one of their own unpleasant kidney, and he wasn't flattered. He had rather prided himself that he did not look the part. And he wanted to make Racke & Co. smart. Even this was doubtful, however.

As Tom Merry had said, it was a case of three to one. But Arthur was prepared to stand the risk. He had plenty of confidence in his own fighting ability, and he was by no means impressed by the trio's physical condition. But if he

went under he would not grumble. As feast, he would give a good account of himself before that happened.

"Look here, you idiot!" said Racke desperately. "You're a new kid, and we don't want to hurt you. I don't know what your game is, and I don't think you know what it is yourself! But we're willin' to let you off."

"Yes, rather!" said Crooke.

"Thanks all the same," said Arthur, "but I don't want to be let off."

"Wathah not!" put in Arthur Augustus. "If you are in any twouble, Castleton, wely on me. I am perfectly pweared to help you to give these wascals a feaful thwashin'!"

"Keep off it, Gussy!" growled Blake. "Leave it to the new chap!"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Racke & Co. made a sudden rush. Perhaps they expected to sweep Castleton off his feet before he could defend himself. Once on the floor, he would be practically at their mercy. A crowd of other fellows pressed themselves against the end wall, but they were not likely to interfere. Castleton had willingly entered into this scrap, and he had asked the onlookers not to butt in.

But that rush was futile.

Arthur was ready, and two swift smacks rang out on the air. Racke reeled back, and Clampe sagged sideways.

"Yaroooh!" gasped Racke. "Oh dear! What—what was that?"

Arthur's bare fist had felt like a bludgeon. And he was so swift in his movements that the cads were bewildered from the very start.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

They reeled from one side of the study to the other, and never for a moment was Arthur at a loss. His coolness was fascinating to watch. Racke and Clampe attacked him at the same second, but he swept them both aside. And he seemed to give an impression that he was using only a portion of his real strength.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Lowther. "That's one for your knob, Clampe! How do you like 'em?"

"This hammering will do them a bit of good!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pile in, Racke!" said Blake. "What's the matter with you? My hat! Three to one, and you can't floor him! I always thought you were dud fighters!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "They are fightin' desperately. But Castleton appeahs to be a wegular wizard, bai Jove!"

"He's certainly hot stuff!" murmured Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Chuck it!" snarled Racke desperately. "Look here, confound you! If you're willin' to stop this foolery now, we'll let you off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Before I stop, I mean to mark all three of you!" said Arthur steadily. "You thought I was a smoker and a gambler, did you, Racke? Well, there's a mark for you—to be going on with!"

Crash!

Racke tried to dodge, but it was too late. Arthur's knuckles caught him on the nose, and he reeled backwards, hooting fendishly.

"Yaroooh!"

"That's tapped his claret!" grinned Blake. "Oh, good shot, Castleton!"

"Bullseye!" said Lowther.

Clampe was the next to get marked. Arthur's fist delivered a blow which would ultimately lead to a black eye, and Clampe reeled dizzily away. But Racke was more savage than ever now, and he returned to the attack with redoubled fury. Crooke, who had not been at all enthusiastic, joined in in real earnest. And Clampe backed up his cronies. They made a devastating onslaught.

Thud! Biff! Crash!

All three of them recoiled as though they had collided with the wall. And Arthur still stood there, cool and unmarked, with a calm smile on his face. This was no rough-and-tumble, either. The cads were revealing no skill, it is true, but the new fellow's exhibition was an education in itself.

His boxing was amazing.

Seldom had the juniors seen such swift, effective blows. And Arthur's footwork was as perfect as anything could be. He did not waste an atom of energy.

And while his ill-conditioned adversaries were wearing themselves out he betrayed no sign of exhaustion.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,022.

"By jingo, this chap's a fighter!" said Blake admiringly. "Yaas, wathah!" beamed D'Arcy. "Somethin' of a fire-catch—what? Bai Jove! Did you see that pviceless uppah-cut, deah boys? There goes Wacke!"

"Yes, he's whacked!" said Monty Lowther, grinning. "And the other two aren't far off!" said Herries excitedly. "Great Scott! This chap is a perfect demon!"

Tom Merry, who was watching the fight closely, was struck by one fact more than anything else. While Racke and Clampe were gasping for breath, Castleton was breathing quite evenly.

This told a tale of perfect physical condition. And what could that imply? One thing only. If Castleton had been the same sort as Racke & Co. he would have crumpled up under this terrific strain. But he was obviously in a wonderfully fit condition. And all the rumours about the fellow were given the lie by as eloquent evidence as the juniors desired.

"Good man, Castleton!" sang out Tom Merry. "I say, you chaps! Look at the fellow who smokes cigars and drinks champagne!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at the chap who has decided to reform!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The man's a dark horse!" said Blake, grinning. "Racke & Co. must have got hold of the wrong end of the stick! Castleton was never a blade, or I'm a Hottentot! Why, his boxing is sheer class!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yow!" moaned Racke. "Oh dear! Chuck it, you fool! That's about enough, Castleton! Stop it, confound you!"

"Help!" shrieked Crooke. "Pull him off!"

"Rats!" said Blake. "He's hardly started yet!"

"Yaroooh! Draggimoff!" howled Clampe wildly.

Punch, punch, punch!

Arthur was going at it steadily, and, to tell the truth, he was thoroughly enjoying himself. His knuckles were hurting him badly, but he took no notice of this. He took the keenest pleasure in hurting these rascals who had dragged Alan's name into prominence—or, to be more exact, Alan's reputation. Arthur's was the name that bore the actual brunt.

"That'll be about enough!" said Arthur, at length. "I thought it was going to be a fight, but I'm disappointed. You rotters don't know a thing about boxing, or else you've forgotten it all."

"It isn't that!" grinned Tom Merry. "You're so jolly smart yourself, Castleton, that they seem washouts by comparison! By Jove! You put in some good stuff there!"

Arthur gave a glance of contempt at the cads as they crouched back on the other side of the room.

"I really wanted to knock them out, but it isn't worth it," he said, taking a deep breath. "Anyhow, I've shown them plainly enough that I don't want their company—or their beastly gambling! Let's get out!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, clapping Arthur on the back. "Deah boy, kindly allow me to offah my congwats. Whatever you were in the past I now wegard you as a reformed chawactah."

"Thanks awfully!" said Arthur dryly.

He was carried out in triumph, and the news of his prowess spread far and wide throughout the passages and studies of the School House.

CHAPTER 15.

A Mistake Somewhere!

"OW!" groaned Aubrey Racke.

"Wow!" moaned Crooke.

"Yow!" gasped Clampe agonisingly.

The black sheep were left in sole possession of Study No. 7. Racke was sprawling in the easy-chair, breathing hard, and dabbing his nose with a handkerchief. Leslie Clampe was lying full-length on the table, trying to recover. And Gerald Crooke leaned heavily against the mantelpiece, gazing wanly at the caricature of himself that looked out from the mirror.

"You fool!" said Crooke savagely.

He was the least hurt of them all. Perhaps Arthur had purposely spared him, for he had an idea that Crooke was less rascally than his associates. At any rate, Crooke was taking advantage of his condition now.

"You fool, Racke!" he repeated. "Didn't I tell you to leave the new kid alone? Didn't I warn you—"

"Oh, hang!" snarled Racke. "How was I to know?"

"I told you—"

"You told me nothing!" interrupted Racke savagely. "I thought the man was one of us! You know as well as I do that Banks said he was the hottest thing that ever walked! And Banks ought to know—he's seen him often enough."

The three cads stared at Castleton in amazement, for the new junior was pulling off his coat and rolling up his sleeves, and there was a calm, determined look on his face. "What are you doing?" asked Crooke. "You'll see before long," replied Arthur. "There's going to be some warm work in a minute!" (See Chapter 12.)



Clampe roused himself.

"Banks must have been talking about somebody else!" he said fiercely. "That's the only possible explanation. You were mad, Racke, to ever interfere with the chap! You've made a ghastly blunder!"

"I haven't!" snapped Racke harshly.

"You haven't?" shrieked Crooke. "Look at us!"

"I mean, I didn't make a mistake about Castleton!" said Racke stubbornly. "It's not a common name, is it? Castleton! That's the name that Banks told us. And he came from a grammar school, and his father—"

"Oh, rot!" said Clampe. "This can't be the fellow!"

"I tell you he is!" insisted Racke. "Banks wouldn't make a mistake like that. He told me the whole of Castleton's history, and even described him. I'll bet ten quid he's the same chap!"

Racke was utterly disconcerted. He had been so certain that Banks had given him authentic information that he had approached Castleton with every confidence. Thus the present catastrophe was all the more shattering.

In a way, Racke had been very unfortunate.

How could he have guessed that the new boy was the exact replica of the Castleton that Banks had known? Even the bookmaker himself had no suspicion that there were two! Alan had never made any mention of a twin brother. So the mistake had been a perfectly natural one.

But Racke was sorely puzzled over it. He was, indeed, forced to the conclusion that he must have made a mistake over the name, after all, although he wouldn't admit this to Crooke and Clampe. He resolved to seek Banks at the earliest opportunity, and to question him. That coming interview promised to be exceptionally interesting! For it seemed only too obvious that a chat with Banks would only add to the mystery.

Racke knew very well that his own lungs were impaired by smoking and by his general slackness. Yet he had considered himself to be athletic compared to Castleton—the fellow who smoked cigars and drank champagne! He had believed that he and his cronies could make mincemeat of the chap.

Instead, he had made mincemeat of them!

One against three, and yet he had thrashed them with almost contemptuous ease. It was a terrible humiliation. Racke writhed when he thought of it. By this time the whole school was laughing over his discomfiture. And Castleton was triumphing!

"By gad!" hissed Racke. "I'll make him sit up for this, the hound!"

"It's all very well to talk like that!" snarled Clampe. "But what do you think you can do?" He glanced into the mirror. "Oh dear! Look at this eye of mine! I shan't be presentable for a week! And old Linton will make pretty close inquiries to-morrow, hang him!"

"We're all in the same boat, aren't we?" asked Crooke savagely.

Racke breathed hard.

"We'll get even!" he said darkly. "All the chaps are treatin' Castleton as a giddy hero now, I expect. But we'll topple him off his beastly pedestal! Wait until I've seen Banks! Wait until I get some more facts! Then we'll have the rotter on toast!"

Clampe snorted.

"Don't you be so jolly sure of it!" he snapped. "I don't believe he's the man at all! You've made a mistake, Racke, and after this you can keep to yourself! I've had enough of you!"

The black sheep of the New House tramped off, sore and furious. And Racke and Crooke stole away to wash themselves and to make themselves presentable before a prefect or a master saw them.

In the meantime, the Common-room was becoming crowded.

Arthur Castleton was there, and juniors were coming in continuously just to have a look at him. The awe-inspiring news had spread like lightning. Here was a new chap who had practically wiped up Racke & Co. with one hand! And he was the fellow that everybody had regarded as a rotter!

Even Figgins & Co. came over from the New House.

"Pax!" said Figgins, as he marched into the School House Common-room with Fatty Wynn and Kerr. "No larks, you chaps! We've just come over to look at the exhibit!"

"Which way to the side-show?" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Cheese it!" said Blake. "You don't want to insult the chap by calling him an exhibit! Castleton is a corker!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Castleton, deah boy, pway come ovah heah and meet old Figgay! Figgay, allow me to introduce you to Castleton! I may wond you that Castleton is undah my wing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pleased to meet you!" said George Figgins, looking at

Arthur curiously. "I hear that you've been doing some pretty marvellous things over here."

"Then you've heard wrong!" growled Arthur. "There was nothing marvellous in thrashing those smoky, ill-conditioned worms! Why, a fag in the Third might have tackled them!"

"That's only your modesty," said Figgins. "Racke's a pretty hefty fighter, and Clampe isn't a duffer, either. I'll admit they're in a rotten condition; but, even so, you took on a pretty big job!"

"Of course, you mustn't take too much notice of Figgins," said Blake indulgently. "In a way of speaking, these three chaps belong to St. Jim's, but yet they're only makeweights, so to speak."

"What's that?" asked Figgins & Co., in one voice.

"They belong to the New House," explained Blake, smiling at Castleton. "Well, it's not exactly a House," he added kindly. "It's more or less of a barn, if you understand me. A mouldy sort of shed, really!"

"You funny ass!" hooted Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You School House idiots!" roared Fatty Wynn. "If our place is a barn, what do you call this ramshackle shanty?"

"A rabbit-hutch!" said Figgins disdainfully. "And here are all the rabbits!"

"Yah! New House fatheads!"

"Biff them out!"

"Great Scott!" said Castleton staring.

"This is nothing!" grinned Blake. "We're always having rows with these poor half-wits from the New House. They can't help it, you know; they're only allowed to stay in the school on sufferance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—" began Figgins wrathfully.

"Peace, children!" chuckled Tom Merry. "What's the idea of ragging our honoured guests? Figgins, don't take any notice. You said 'pax' as you came in, and pax it'll be. But don't call us rabbits again!"

Figgins grunted.

"I won't!" he promised. "But you can't stop me from thinking!"

Arthur Castleton was highly amused, and his heart was beating rapidly with delight, too.

What a change within a short space of half an hour! Previously, the juniors had more or less despised him. They had tackled Alan's reputation to him, and he had been unable to disown it. But now he had won their respect.

It seemed to Arthur that the spectre of his twin brother's misdeeds would no longer dog him. He had feared that these insistent rumours would fasten themselves on him for good, and hamper his career at St. Jim's.

He rather wondered how Alan was getting on at St. Frank's in the meantime, and he was relieved when he learned, by cautious questioning, that the two schools, although in the same county, never exchanged football matches. The St. Frank's fellows never came within the radius of St. Jim's. Arthur was consoled when he realised that the two schools were sufficiently far apart to make it unlikely that any awkward meetings should occur. His twin was leading his own life at St. Frank's, and Arthur was starting his career at St. Jim's.

He was even beginning to find that the stigma of Alan's reputation was now doing him good. For when the fellows discovered that he was decent, they were embarrassing in their assertions of friendship.

"I would like you all to wemembah that I was wight fwom the vewy first," D'Arcy was saying. "I told you he was twue blue as soon as I set eyes on him."

"You did, Gussy," agreed Blake.

"Even Gwunday had sense enough to wealise it," went on Gussy. "In futuah, I twust you will pay more attention to my judgment, deah boys. Didn't I tell you fwom the start that Castleton was a wippah?"

"It's no good trying to keep anything from Gussy," said Blake solemnly. "He's the marvel of the age."

"Weally, Blake—"

"He takes this desperate character under his wing, and in a couple of hours the man's completely reformed," put in Monty Lowther. "A marvellous piece of work! Gussy, however did you do it?"

"Pway wefwain fwom wottin', Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus. "I claim no cwedit for Castleton's chawactah. I have a vewy stwong ideah that Castleton nevah needed weformin'."

"Marvellous!" said Blake. "There's no end to what Gussy can see!"

Arthur Augustus went off to the other side of the room in a very contented frame of mind. He was still pleased to consider that Arthur was his protege, and he was looking on with a fatherly eye.

And then, suddenly, he gave a yell. And it was such a yell that everybody in the room turned and stared at him in astonishment.

CHAPTER 16.

Captain of the Walsing Grammar School.

THE swell of St. Jim's was excited. "Bai Jove!" he shouted. "This is most wemarkable!"

"What's the matter with the ass?" asked Blake, frowning. "What are you yelling like a rhinoceros for, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to be compared to a whinocewos!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Weally, Blake, I must insist upon an immediate apology."

"Rats!" said Blake. "What's that paper you've got?"

"Unless you wetract that insultin' statement, Blake, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!" said D'Arcy warmly. "Besides, whinocewoses don't yell at all!"

"Then why argue?" asked Blake.

"Grab the silly ass, and get that paper!" said Manners. "He must have seen something very special in it, or he wouldn't have given that yell!"

"As a mattah of fact, there is somethin' fwightfully intwestin' heah," said Arthur Augustus. "For the moment I will ovahlook Blake's wewehensible conduct. Deah boys, heah is a staggewin' surpwise."

Arthur Augustus was grasping that paper with renewed excitement. It was an illustrated weekly—and had only been brought into the Common-room that evening. It was, in fact, the current issue, published that very day.

"Pway wait!" went on Gussy, as several hands reached for the paper. "I must wequest you to wemain calm, deah boys! There have been all sorts of fwightful wumours goin' about concernin' Castleton."

"Blow Castleton!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"With all due respects to Castleton—blow him!" said Blake. "What's that item of news in the magazine, Gussy?"

"Before I pwoceed, I must insist upon an apology to Castleton," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "It is fwightfully bad form to blow him—I mean—"

"Grab him!"

Arthur Augustus backed away in alarm.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "You wottahs! Heah is a wippin' piece of information concernin' Castleton, and you wefuse to—"

"Concerning Castleton?" interrupted Tom Merry quickly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"In that paper?"

"Yaas; and a photogwaph, too."

"He must be dreamin'," said Arthur, in surprise. "I don't have my photogwaph in the illustrated weeklies. I'm not a celebrity, thank goodness!"

"I wathah think we diffah on that point, deah boy," said Gussy. "You are certainly a celebrity—and heah is your photogwaph to pprove it. An excellent likeness, too, bai Jove!"

"Well, let's look at it!" bawled Blake.

"Pway wait—"

"Are you going to show us that paper, or shall we slaughter you?" asked Blake darkly.

"I should wefuse to be slaughtered, Blake!"

"Oh, help!" groaned Manners. "Let's rush him!"

And Gussy was rushed. He was swept completely off his feet, and he descended to the floor with a hard bump. The illustrated paper came into Tom Merry's hands, and with a crowd round him he turned over the pages. Arthur himself was just as curious as the others. He was quite certain, in his own mind, that D'Arcy had made a mistake.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wuffians!" gasped Arthur Augustus, sitting up. "My twousabs are all cweased! My waistcoat is wuined!"

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry suddenly. "Well, I'm blessed!"

He held up a page of the weekly, and all eyes craned to see a photograph at the page. It was undoubtedly an excellent likeness of Arthur Castleton. And it really was Arthur—much to the latter's relief.

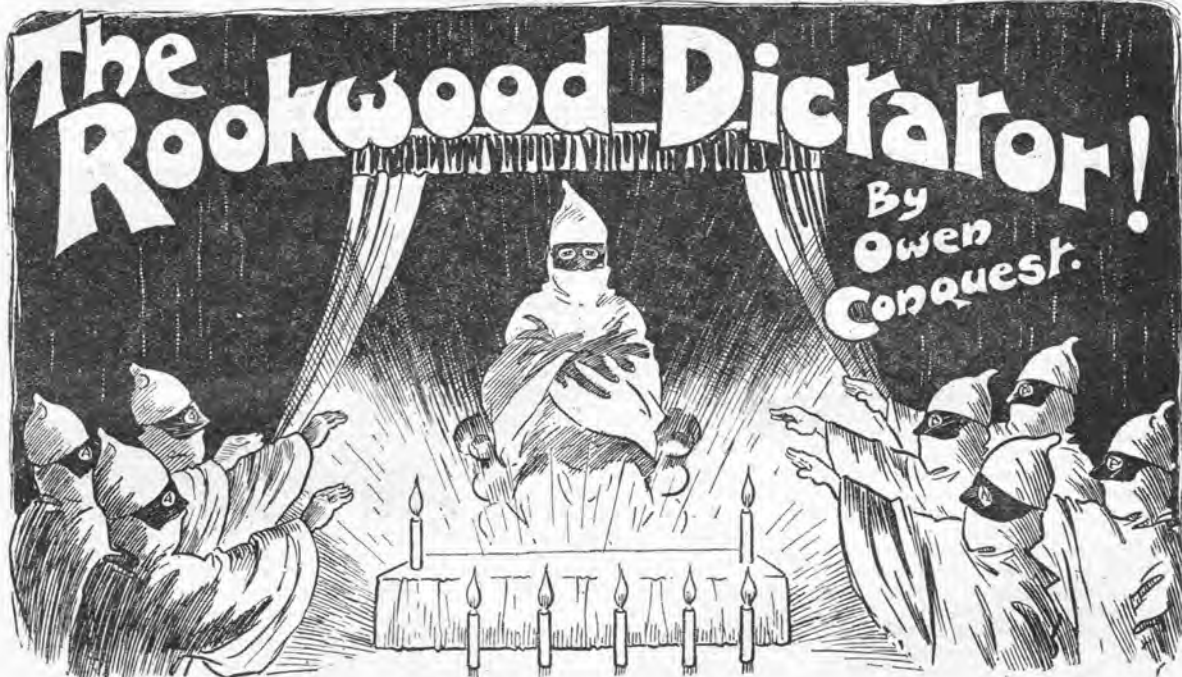
An alarming thought had come to him that it might be a picture of Alan, in some questionable escapade. The fellows, of course, would have taken the portrait for Arthur without question—especially as the name was given as "A. Castleton," which stood equally well for either of the twins.

But one glance brought relief to Arthur. He recognised himself in cricketing attire, wearing the colours of his old school.

"I say, this is pretty interesting!" sang out Tom Merry. "Castleton, you spoofer, where are you?"

(Continued on page 28.)

HERE'S A ROLICKING STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE HEROES OF ROOKWOOD!



(Introduction on page 24.)

Carthew Pays the Price!

CARTHEW'S look spoke volumes as Brother Serge approached him, bearing a paint brush and palette. It needed little imagination to perceive Brother Serge's intentions; and Carthew wriggled miserably in apprehension.

"Keep still!" ordered Brother Serge, as he moistened his brush. "If you move, it may spoil your beauty."

"Hold his head!" commanded the Dictator.

Two brothers held Carthew's head, and Brother Serge began to lay on the oils.

He painted Carthew's nose a bright blue, and Carthew gasped and wriggled without avail. Then he began on the prefect's cheeks, and gave them a sickly yellow tint. With a brush loaded with crimson, Brother Serge proceeded to paint huge circles round the prisoner's eyes, giving him an altogether remarkable appearance. The bright crimson enhanced the ferocity of Carthew's venomous glare—and in spite of the severity of the atmosphere, there was a smothered chuckle among the Fascists.

"Now his ears," remarked the Dictator.

Brother Serge's assistants hung on to Carthew's hair—what there was left of it—while their brother attended to the prefect's ears. He painted one a vivid green, and the other a deep purple. He finished covering Carthew's forehead with spots of every-colour on the palette.

When he stood back the complete effect was startling.

It was some moments before the Dictator was able to speak.

"Brother Serge, you have done your work well. This will lead to advancement in our Order. Have we a looking-glass?"

"Here, O Mighty One."

"Regard yourself, Carthew!" commanded the Dictator, holding the looking-glass before the prefect's vivid countenance.

If Carthew had been glaring before, he surpassed himself when he glimpsed his features in the mirror. From behind his gag came a succession of deep and expressive, though muffled, ejaculations.

"Mmmmmmm! Grunugh! Ymmmmmm!"

"Prepare for the fourth and final part of the sentence," announced the Dictator coldly. "So far, you have been lightly treated. In comparison with your offences, the punishments have been in the nature of warnings only. You will now be bound to your chair and taken to your study. I trust you will pass the remainder of the night in comfort."

"Gerruugh! Groooooogh!"

There was no doubt that Carthew wanted badly to say something. But the Fascists were in no mood to listen to his remarks. At a motion from the Dictator, ropes were produced, and several of the brothers busied themselves

with fastening Carthew securely in his seat. With ropes securing his arms and his legs and twining round his body and under the chair, there was little chance of Carthew being able to free himself.

"Bring him along!" ordered the Dictator coolly.

"Mmmmmmm! Grrrrrrrroogh!"

Carthew was making terrific efforts to speak, but they resulted in nothing more than muffled growls. With eyes like coals, he watched the Fascists lift him bodily on the chair and bear him out of the council chamber into the draughty corridor.

As they emerged, Carthew glanced eagerly about him. At least he would know in what part of the building the council chamber lay—and there might be a clue to be found there in the morning. Already Carthew was promising himself a terrific reckoning—with floggings all round in the very best style. He gave a fresh and really ferocious growl as a handkerchief was slipped over his eyes. The knowledge of his whereabouts was denied to him now. He grunted and gasped savagely behind the gag—and the party proceeded.

"Mmmmmooooh! Grrrrrroooooh!"

Where he was he could not tell—it seemed that a longer route was being taken than when he had been brought to the chamber. With a feeling of baffled rage he realised that the Fascists were probably taking him back to his study by a roundabout route, in order to avoid the possibility of his remembering the way.

There was nothing to do but sit tight and hope for the best.

Carthew, seething, resigned himself to sitting tight.

He heard a door open, and he was carried into a room. The chair was set down, and the handkerchief taken from his eyes. With a gasp of relief he saw that he was back in his study again—though still gagged and fast bound to the chair.

There was the faint sound of a closing door.

Staring into the darkness, Carthew realised that he was alone.

Biting desperately on the sponge, Carthew strove to shout. But the only sounds he succeeded in making were too faint to carry to the next study, where Bulkeley lay sleeping.

"Mmmmmmm! Groooooogh! Gerrruuuugh!"

In the silence of the study Carthew desisted at last.

Not Guilty!

"**M**Y only sainted aunt!"

"Gerrruuuuuugh! Groooooogh!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

Carthew grunted furiously.

It was morning; rising-bell had tolled nearly half an hour previously.

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That particular morning had seemed to Carthew as if it would never come. Bound and gagged in his chair, he had dozed fitfully throughout the remaining hours of the night. He had watched the dawn come in at the window, from the very first beam till the summer sunlight was streaming across the room. With infinite relief he had heard the rising-bell tolled by old Mack, and the sounds of Bulkeley getting up in the next study had raised his hopes high.

But Bulkeley was an athletic fellow; he liked a sprint in the quad before breakfast, and he did not even think of looking into Carthew's study before he left the Sixth Form corridor. Neither, as it happened, did any of the Sixth. With fellows moving on every side, so to speak, Carthew was obliged to sit and glower at the door and grunt frantically.

It was doubtful if his muffled grunts would ever have been heard; but at breakfast his absence was at last noticed. Very good-naturedly George Bulkeley left the breakfast-table and slipped up to Carthew's study. If he thought anything, it was that the prefect had overslept.

When, upon knocking, there was no response, Bulkeley opened the door, fully expecting to find Carthew still in bed and asleep. What he did find drew a gasp of astonishment to his lips.

Certainly, George Bulkeley had never seen a Sixth-Former in Carthew's remarkable plight before. In spite of the seriousness of the matter, Bulkeley grinned. Carthew was really more than flesh and blood could be expected to stand.

And his desperate grunts, though he was far from imagining it, added to the effect.

"Mmmmmmm! Grrrrrrrrrr!"

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Bulkeley. "Hold on a minute! I'll soon have you undone!"

He drew a knife, and speedily cut Carthew free. Carthew did not jump up. On the contrary, he rolled out of his chair, and would have fallen had not Bulkeley supported him.

But he recovered the use of his voice as the captain of the school jerked the gag out of his mouth.

"Ow! Wow! Pins and needles!"

"How ever long have you been tied up like this?" ejaculated Bulkeley.

"Yow-wow-wow! I've got the cramp! Ow! Since last night, you burbler!"

"What?"

"Silver and a crowd of the young fiends!" gasped Carthew.

"Suppose you start at the beginning?" suggested Bulkeley, in amazement.

"Wow-wow! It's getting better. Oh, won't I take it out of their hides! Won't I just!"

"Take it gently, old bean," advised Bulkeley coolly.

"Now, then, how did you get in this fix?"

"Wow! The young hounds tied me up and—and you can see what they've done to me!" ground out Carthew.

"Phew! You look like—like—"

Bulkeley broke off. It was really impossible to say exactly what Carthew looked like. In his present state he was unique.

"I'm all right now!" snapped Carthew. "Get out of the way, Bulkeley. I'm going to Dalton!"

"What, in your dressing-gown?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"Get out of the way!" snarled Carthew, beside himself with rage.

"But—"

As Bulkeley did not offer to remove himself Carthew took him by the shoulder and fairly whirled him across the study. A moment later and Carthew, his dressing-gown trailing behind him, and his face still decorated in the highly original manner of Brother Serge, had dashed out of the study, en route for Mr. Dalton.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Bulkeley. "The—the raving maniac. Dalton will think he's off his onion—and I don't believe he will be far wrong!"

And the captain of Rookwood hastened after Carthew, his mind still confused as to how the prefect came to be in that really phenomenal condition. As for Carthew, he was fairly boiling over with rage and humiliation. In a cooler moment he would have hesitated to present himself

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to Mr. Dalton's gaze attired and decorated as he was just then. But rage made him blind to his own appearance. His overruling desire was to get within cuffing distance of Jimmy Silver, whom he firmly believed to have been the "Dictator."

Floggings and even expulsions flitted through Carthew's mind as he headed with long strides for the Fourth Form master's study. Already he could hear the music of the birch as it descended on the person of the Dictator. Beside that consummation all other considerations paled.

The Form master's door loomed ahead, and Carthew hardly paused to knock.

"Rap, rap, rap, rap, rap!"

"Come in!"

Mr. Dalton, a little surprised by that urgent series of raps, glanced up curiously as Carthew entered the study. As Carthew dawned properly upon his horizon, so to speak, Mr. Dalton gasped.

The master of the Fourth was used to surprises in his scholastic career. But this was more than a surprise—it was a sensation. Mr. Dalton passed his hand across his eyes and looked again. Carthew, spluttering for words, was still there.

"Carthew! Is that you?"

"It is I, sir," answered the prefect, controlling himself only with an effort.

"What—what ever has happened, Carthew?"

"Those young imps—"

"What?"

"Those young hounds—"

"Carthew!"

"Those young rascals—"

"What young rascals?" gasped Mr. Dalton.

"Silver, Lovell, and the rest! They did me up like this. Cut my hair, and trimmed my eyebrows, and—and painted my face—"

"And tied me up in a chair and left me all night!" wound up Carthew, his voice rising to a hoot.

"Tied you up in a chair?"

To Mr. Dalton it felt as if his head were turning round. "They've got to be flogged!" roared Carthew. "Flogged till they howl—and then some more! Silver will have to be expelled—"

"Calm yourself!" said Mr. Dalton severely. "You are speaking without thought, Carthew. I can perceive that you have great provocation—"

Carthew stuttered.

"But pray keep cool. We shall arrive at the truth much sooner. What has happened?"

"Look at me, sir!" gasped Carthew.

"I am looking. You are certainly in a most remarkable state, my boy."

Carthew gulped. To him it appeared more than merely remarkable.

"Those young hounds—Silver and the rest—"

"Please control your language, Carthew," said Mr. Dalton sharply. "Tell me connectedly what has occurred."

Carthew took a grip on himself.

"When I went to bed last night—"

"Yes?"

"A crowd of masked figures came into my study and dragged me away to a room—I couldn't recognise it—and affected to try me at a mock court. It ended by a young scoundrel calling himself the dictator—Silver—ordering them to cut my hair and eyebrows, and—and make me up like this. Then they carried me back to my study and left me, tied to a chair, where Bulkeley found me a few minutes ago, sir."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Dalton.

"That's all, sir," said Carthew. "Enough, too, I should think. The cheeky little rotters! Wait till I get my hands on them and I'll flay them alive!"

"That will do, Carthew, thank you!" said Mr. Dalton, with asperity. "The matter must be investigated at once, of course. I appreciate its seriousness, but you must keep your temper, my boy. You say Silver was the ringleader of this—this extraordinary affair!"

"Yes, sir," gasped Carthew savagely. "Or else Lovell, or—or one of the young rascals!"

"There is a considerable difference between Silver and Lovell, Carthew," said Mr. Dalton sharply. "Surely, if

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

LOVELL minor, a fug in the Third Form at Rookwood, in debt to CAPTAIN PUNTER, appeals to his major, ARTHUR EDWARD, for monetary assistance. Lovell major bluntly refuses, but in company with his chums, JIMMY SILVER, RABY, and NEWCOMB, known as the Fictical Four, he meets the rascally bookmaker and forces him to give up the fug's I.O.U. To level matters, Punter offers to liquidate the debts of CARTEW, the bully of the Sixth, providing he will help him score off Jimmy Silver & Co. Carthew realises he must obey the captain or face the consequences of an exposure at the school.

And whilst the bullying prefect is pondering uneasily over the subject, Jimmy Silver & Co. are scheming a deep plot against him which they feel sure will level all the old scores between them. This scheme is carried out one night. Carthew is awakened by the appearance of a band of hooded figures calling themselves the Fascist Band of Rookwood, who make him a prisoner and carry him off to a room especially prepared for the occasion. Here the hooded figures give Carthew the ragging of his life—cutting his hair and eyebrows. Then they proceed to paint his face!

(Now read on.)

you recognised the leader you can say which one it was?"

"I couldn't recognise any of them!" roared Carthew, his temper blazing out again. "How could I, when they wore black masks over their faces, and white robes and cowls? But I know it was Silver or Lovell. It must have been!"

"I fail to see how you have arrived at your suspicions at all, Carthew!" exclaimed the Form master, a little grimly. "If you could not recognise your assailants it is ridiculous to bring charges against boys who may be perfectly innocent. I have always found Silver and Lovell respectful in their manner. I should be loth to suspect either of them. Why do you give their names, Carthew?"

"Because—" Carthew paused. He could hardly explain to Mr. Dalton that it was because he had made a point of being "down" on his old enemies lately that he suspected them most strongly. In Mr. Dalton's eyes the dictator might have been any fellow in the school.

"Well?" The Form master's impatience was plain. "They—they've been giving me a lot of trouble just lately, sir. I have had to correct them a good many times. And now I come to think of it, I did recognise Lovell, sir."

Carthew watched Mr. Dalton keenly to observe the effect of that lie. He was sure, in his own mind, that the Fistical Four had been at the bottom of his punishment, and he did not intend seeing them slip through his fingers at any cost.

But even Carthew coloured a little as Mr. Dalton's lip curled.

"I think you are letting your anger get the better of you, Carthew," said the Form master coldly. "I will send for Silver and Lovell to satisfy you. If they are guilty they shall be punished with severity. But I see no reason to suppose them so at present. But, in any case, rest assured that every effort will be made to punish the real culprits, my boy. Try to look at the matter in an impartial light."

Carthew gulped. He could not reply to that. But he waited with grim satisfaction while the Form master sent Toby for Silver and Lovell.

There were footsteps in the corridor, and two demure faces appeared in the study doorway.

"Come in, my boys!" said Mr. Dalton kindly.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell involuntarily.

The sight of Mark Carthew in the broad light of day was a little too much for Lovell's equilibrium.

"Those are the young scoundrels!" said Carthew fiercely.

"Kindly leave this matter to me!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "Silver and Lovell, I have summoned you here to ask you a question. Carthew, as you see, has been shamefully treated by a number of boys of this school. He tells me it occurred during the night, that he was dragged out of bed, and—ahem!—painted, after which he was tied in a chair and left till this morning. Now this is a most serious matter."

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell, stifling a chuckle.

"I cannot bring myself to suspect either of you, and I should not have sent for you myself. But Carthew lays a very serious accusation. Which of these juniors was it you accused of being the—ahem!—dictator, Carthew?"

Jimmy Silver grinned.

It was evident that Mr. Dalton was annoyed at the flimsy

evidence Carthew had to offer, and he had not much patience with the prefect.

But the prefect's look as it rested on the Fourth-Formers was malevolent.

"Lovell, sir," he answered thickly. "And I remember Silver, too. He was the rascal who painted my face!"

"You hear what Carthew says, my boys," said Mr. Dalton seriously. "I may say that all I require is your assurance that you were not among the band who apparently kidnapped Carthew last night. I shall believe you in what you say. Were you the dictator, Lovell?"

"No, sir," said Lovell, grinning at Carthew.

"Were you, Silver?"

"No, sir."

"Were either of you out of your dormitory last night at all?"



That shove of Tommy Dodd's was disastrous, for Lovell reeled against the juniors at his back with the result that they all collapsed in a yelling, struggling heap at the foot of the steps. (See page 27.)

"No, sir," answered Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell together.

Mr. Dalton nodded, a smile playing round the corners of his mouth.

"Very well, my boys. I am sorry to have suspected you. You may go."

"They're lying, Mr. Dalton!" panted Carthew, leaping forward, his eyes glittering. "I tell you—"

"That will be all for the present, Carthew," said Mr. Dalton icily. "I will institute investigations at once, of course. But it is plain that your suspicions against Silver and Lovell are unfounded. You had better go and—ahem—clean yourself, I think."

And, with feelings really too deep for words, Carthew went.

Carthew's Strategy!

"O H, my hat!" "Oh dear! I shall burst a boiler in a minute!"

"Did it work?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four were waxing hilarious. A crowd of

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the Fourth were roaring with them in the Hall—all apparently in possession of some jest of unusual dimensions.

"Were you out of dorm, Jimmy?" sobbed Lovell.

"No, old chap. Were you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad! What a sell for poor old Carthew!" chortled Mornington.

"Thought he had us in the palm of his giddy hand," grinned Lovell. "We were going to be hanged, drawn, and quartered if Carthew had had his way. You fellows should have seen his face when old Dicky said we could go!"

"Poor old Carthew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a fresh roar at the expense of the unpopular Sixth-Former.

Whatever the joke, it was plainly against Carthew. And it was not difficult to surmise that it had something to do with the mystery of the Rookwood Dictator—at present unidentified.

That secret council in the End Study had borne fruit—and the strategy of "Uncle James" had, so far, outwitted the cad of the Sixth. Jimmy and Lovell had been able to answer with perfect truth that they had not been concerned in the happenings of the night. They had been fast asleep in the Fourth Form dormitory—according to plan, as Lovell put it.

Who was the Dictator? That secret was known only to the select Fascist Band themselves—whoever they were. But Jimmy Silver and Lovell were innocent enough—as Carthew had learnt.

The chuckling crowd of juniors were waiting for Carthew now—waiting with keen anticipation to see his face after his interview with Mr. Dalton. They had been waiting some time, for Carthew, at the conclusion of that interview, had adjourned wisely to a bath-room to remove the traces of the night's escapade.

In the bath-room he found there was plenty to occupy him. His cropped hair and eyebrows were beyond immediate aid. Time alone could restore them to a reasonable length. But the paint could be removed—and with pumice stone and much elbow grease Carthew proceeded to remove it.

He was hot and breathless and simmering with wrath when he had finished—and more than one trace of Brother Serge's decorations remained even then. But he was at least presentable. Carthew greased his hair and combed it, scowling into the mirror with a fixed scowl. The Fascists had been merciful. He looked no worse than if he had had a close—a very close—crop at the barber's. But Carthew was not feeling grateful.

He left the bath-room with glittering eyes, and headed for the stairs. The situation, in Carthew's opinion, called for lickings of the most severe kind for every Fourth-Former on the Classical side. Whether they had been concerned in the outrage did not matter a great deal. The innocent could suffer with the guilty, in order that the prefect might be avenged on the latter.

Unfortunately, Mr. Dalton did not view the matter in that light; he had excused Jimmy Silver and Lovell, evidently trusting their statement that they had been in their dormitory all night. Carthew did not believe that; he was not likely to believe any statement of the juniors' in his present mood. But after Mr. Dalton had dismissed them, Carthew could not pitch into Jimmy Silver and Lovell on suspicion. He realised that if the culprits were to be brought to book, he had to "get at" them some other way. It did not occur to Carthew that the Dictator had another identity altogether.

As he came down the stairs into Hall, his scowl deepened.

The crowd of juniors below had been in a hilarious mood; at the sight of the prefect they became more so.

"Hallo, Carthew! You look worn!"

"You've missed your breakfast, old bean!" drawled Mornington.

"Feeling feverish, Carthew?" inquired Lovell solicitously, as Carthew descended the stairs.

The Sixth-Former did not reply.

As he strode amongst the juniors, he let his ashplant slip down into his hand. Oswald bumped quite accidentally against him, and the ashplant thwacked.

"Yoooooooooop!"

Oswald sprang away from Carthew, rubbing his shoulder. The prefect was evidently not a fellow to bump against just then.

"Make way for Carthew!" sang out Mornington, with mock ceremony. "Scatter, you varlets. Way for Carthew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors scattered—partly as a joke, and partly to avoid receiving the ashplant.

Carthew, with a set face, marched between the two ranks. He halted as his burning eyes fell on Jimmy Silver's cheery countenance.

"Silver!"

"Yes, Carthew?" answered Jimmy demurely.

"Mr. Dalton does not think that you were concerned in the—the outrage last night. I'm warning you—touch me again and I'll get you thrown out of the school, neck and crop—do you understand, you young villain?"

"But I'm not a young villain!" ejaculated Jimmy, grinning. "I haven't touched you yet. Do you think I should spin a yarn to Dicky if I had?"

Carthew breathed hard.

"Well, I've warned you!" he snapped.

"Dear man. He wants another dose," murmured Valentine Mornington to his chum Erroll.

"What was that, Mornington?"

Carthew's quick ears had caught the whisper.

"By gad. It wasn't meant for you, dear man."

"Meant or not, I heard it," snapped the prefect. "Repeat it in full, Mornington."

"Sorry, old bean."

"Then hold out your hand!"

"Oh dear. What a fag."

Mornington, his lips set, held out his hand as commanded. He could do nothing else. Carthew was in the right now—and he knew it.

Swish, swish, swish.

"Now the other!"

"By gad! You're goin' it, aren't you?" ejaculated Morny. But he did as he was ordered.

Swish, swish, swish.

Carthew looked a little happier after he had inflicted that punishment. He glanced coolly at the rest of the juniors.

"Anybody else got anything to say?"

Apparently nobody had.

Carthew grinned, and tucked the ashplant under his arm. He strode out of the House with quite a jaunty air, feeling that he had got a little of his own back, at least.

"The cad! Picking on you like a beastly Prussian!" growled Lovell angrily, and putting a hand on Mornington's shoulder. "He wants another dose, right enough."

"All in the game, dear boy," said Morny, forcing a grin. "As it happened, he wasn't far wrong in his choice—a whin! Lucky for me Carthew was only actin' on supposition, really!"

"Well, yes," assented Lovell. "If Carthew knew—"

"Mum's the word!" put in Jimmy Silver warningly. "Carthew's gone over to the Modern side for some reason, probably to see Knowles and Frampton. Let's run over and rag Tommy Dodd & Co., and keep an eye on Carthew at the same time."

"There's a few minutes before classes," agreed Lovell.

"Come on, then!"

Carthew had gone over to the Modern side, looking and feeling very much better. A group of the Fourth followed him at a distance—a safe distance. They saw the prefect disappear into the House, and Tommy Dodd & Co., sunning themselves on the steps before classes, turn to stare after him. Carthew's shorn appearance and the traces of paint round his eyes and ears had rather startled them.

"Cheerio, Tommy!" called Jimmy Silver, as the Fistical Four approached. "Pax, you know."

"Pax if you like," agreed Tommy Dodd. "Always ready to oblige you if you change your mind, though. I say, what have you been doing to your pet Carthew?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Did you like his hair?" roared Lovell.

"His hair and his eyebrows—"

"And the paint?"

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"You haven't been ragging him?" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

"We have. We has."

"And—and you're still alive? Why, if we touched Knowles or Catesby, or any prefect, he'd skin us afterwards!"

"I bet we could handle Knowles for you in the same way!" grinned Lovell at once.

"Classical fathead!"

"Modern ass!"

"Pax, you dummies!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver pacifically. "We've come over to keep an eye on Carthew, Tommy. He's come to see Knowles, I fancy."

"But—but how on earth did you manage to rag him like that without getting slain?" asked Tommy Doyle, deeply mystified.

"If it's a way of handling the prefects without them being able to retaliate, we're on!" said Tommy Dodd, with emphasis. "Suppose you tell us what you're driving at? We'll keep mum, of course."

"Not that I suppose it will be much good, as it's a Classical wheeze," added Tommy Cook.

"You fatheads! Of course, you'll be junior officers to commence with—" began Lovell.

"Shut up, Lovell!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Junior to you idiots!" roared Tommy Doyle. "Faith, an' I like that! Sure I do! What shall we with them, Tommy?"

"They want rolling down the steps," said Tommy Dodd decisively. "It'll take some of the bounce out of 'em!"

"Just try it, that's all! Yarooop!"

Lovell broke off with a wild yell.

The three Tommies were at the top of the steps. Their visitors were half-way down. The Moderns had the advantage of position, and they took it. A violent shove in Lovell's chest sent him reeling backwards, and he let out a yell of alarm.

"Wooop! Look out, you idiot!" roared Jimmy Silver desperately.

"Yarooogh!"

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"Oh, we've got our ways and means on the Classical side!" remarked Lovell airily.

"You silly jabberwock!"

"Jabberwock yourself!" retorted Lovell.

"Pax!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, but how did you work it?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "There must be a catch somewhere."

"There was. We caught Carthew!" grinned Lovell, enjoying the mystification on the faces of the three Tommies.

"Wouldn't you fellows like to join?"

"Join what?" asked Tommy Cook.

"We can do with some more members," assented Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "Owing to the—ahem!—circumstances, we can't all be on the spot at the same time. Care to join, Tommy?"

"Join what, fathead?" asked Tommy Dodd. "You're talking double Dutch to me!"

"Keep it dark!" urged Lovell. "Awfully, fearfully, dreadfully dark! Once the beaks get a murmur the game will be up. Catch on?"

"Dashed if I do! You talk such a lot of rot, you know!"

"What?"

Crash!

Bump, bump, bump!

"Wow-wow-wow-wow!"

That shove of Tommy Dodd's was disastrous.

Lovell reeled against Jimmy Silver, and Uncle James, of Rookwood, lost his balance. He crashed on Raby, and Raby in turn landed on Newcome and Conroy. Conroy bowled over Mornington, and Morny, being in the rear, bore the full brunt of the collapse. He was the undermost of the yelling, struggling heap at the foot of the steps.

Serene at the top, Tommy Dodd & Co. roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silver!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The yelling ceased suddenly.

A window had shot up not far distant, and the grim features of Knowles, captain of the Modern side, appeared in the aperture.

(Jimmy Silver & Co. are in for another row, the nature of which you'll read in next week's long instalment of this fine school story.)

UNDER GUSSY'S WING!

(Continued from page 22)

"I'm here," said Arthur.
 "You merry fraud!"
 "But I don't see—" began Arthur.
 "Listen to this, you chaps!" shouted Tom Merry. "Here's Castleton's photograph with a lot of wording under it. You can't all look at it, so I'll read out what it says."
 "Go ahead!"
 Tom Merry "went ahead."
 "Listen!" he said. "A. Castleton. Above is a portrait of A. Castleton, late captain of Walsing Grammar School."
 "Captain!"
 "My only hat!"
 "Late captain of Walsing Grammar School," repeated Tom Merry. "Castleton is to be congratulated on his wonderful record. Under his able leadership, Walsing Grammar School won every match of the past season, home and away. And in general sports this able young skipper took first prizes in running, jumping, and swimming. In addition, he gained the boxing championship of the school for three years in succession, and is considered to be the best footballer that Walsing ever produced. He is the son of Mr. Graham Castleton, J.P., D.L., of Castleton Manor, Swanfield, Suffolk."
 "Why the merry dickens didn't you tell us all this?" demanded Tom Merry sternly.
 "Well, dash it!" protested Arthur. "I didn't want to talk about myself like that, did I? Besides, it's all rubbish."
 "Isn't it true?" demanded Blake.
 "Well, yes, I suppose so."
 "Then it can't be rubbish!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.
 "Bai Jove! Didn't I say that Castleton was a wippah!"
 "You mustn't take any notice," said Arthur uncomfortably. "Walsing Grammar School is only a small place, a tiny spot compared to St. Jim's. There was nothing very creditable in being first at sports there. Most of the other fellows were duffers. I—I couldn't help it."
 "That won't do, old son," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "Here's the evidence in black and white. You were

captain of the school, and you steered your cricket team to victory at every match."

"Yes, I know; but—" "But nothing!" interrupted Tom. "You took first prizes in all the sports, and you won the boxing championship—" "And on the top of that lot—if it wasn't enough—this chap is the best footballer that Walsing ever produced!" went on Tom Merry. "Castleton, old man, come to our arms!"

"Yaas, watbah!" Arthur was supremely uncomfortable. His modesty was genuine, and these acclamations made him positively nervous. He had hoped against hope that his fine record at Walsing Grammar School would never come out. He had wanted to start at St. Jim's without anybody knowing of what he had accomplished. And now the cat was completely out of the bag, and all because of some interfering journalist!

Not that Arthur did not feel a certain glow of satisfaction, too. If anything had been wanting, it was now supplied. Alan's shadiness was not likely to hamper him again.

"What about those rumours now?" asked Tom Merry, smiling. "If Racke & Co. hadn't been so thoroughly thrashed we'd dig them out and give them a bumping. They're the rotters who started these rotten yarns!"

"Yes, rather, Castleton is O.K., and that's settled," said Jack Blake.

"By Jove, rather!"

"Good old Castleton!"

"Welcome to St. Jim's!"

And Arthur Castleton, as he listened to these cheery shouts, warmed inwardly. There was no fear of Alan's murky escapades hurting him now. It was proved beyond doubt that the new fellow in the Shell had never been in the habit of going the pace. As Jack Blake had said, the two didn't go.

Little did the St. Jim's chums realise that there were two Castletons. And little did Arthur guess how closely his rascally brother's career was to be wrapped up in his own.

THE END.

(Don't miss the sequel to this splendid story, chums, in "The Boy Who Held His Tongue!" Gemites will find a rare treat.)

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