

AMAZING SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.—INSIDE!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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**BAGGY TRIMBLE'S LATEST STUNT FOR
RAISING THE WIND!**

(See the splendid school yarn inside.)

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

The CHANGELING—



CHAPTER 1.

Castleton's Birthday.

"I SAY, Castleton, old man—"

Arthur Castleton, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, paused as he came down the staircase in the School House. Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, was waiting below, and there was an expression of eager friendliness on Baggy's podgy face. And when Baggy Trimble expressed friendliness towards anybody it generally meant that he wanted something.

"I've got some news for you, Castleton," continued Baggy. "I think it right good news, too!"

"That's very interesting!" said Arthur Castleton.

"As a matter of fact, there's a letter for you in the rack," went on Trimble. "And some postcards, too."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth came downstairs in advance of Blake, Herries, and Digby. And the swell of St. Jim's was looking severe. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed Baggy Trimble from head to foot.

"One moment, Twimble," he said frigidly. "Did I undahstand you to say that there is a lettah and some postcards for Castleton in the wack?"

"Yes, you did!" said Trimble, glaring. "But it's not your bizney!"

"Neithah is it yours, Twimble!" retorted Gussy sternly.

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"How do you know that there is a lettah and some postcards for Castleton?"

"Because I've seen them, of course!"

"Then you had no wight to see them," said Arthur Augustus. "I stwongly depwecate this habit of yours, Twimble, of pwyin' into othah fellows' affaihs. It is a

vevvy bad habit."

"Quite right, Gussy!" agreed Jack Blake. "Cut off, Trimble, before we bump you!"

"Oh, leave him alone," said Castleton, with a smile. "He can't help it."

"That's just like you, Castleton!" growled Blake. "But Trimble had no right to look into the 'C' slot of the letter-rack. I believe that he makes a point of getting down early, so that he can look through all the letters just to see if they contain any money."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I have frequently found my lettahs covahed with dirtay fingah-marks, and I have no doubt that Twimble is wesponsible."

Baggy Trimble backed away.

"I—I was only looking through the other compartments in the rack in case one of my letters had gone astray," he said lamely. "I—I'm expecting a special letter this morning, from my pater at Trimble Hall. I can't understand why it hasn't come. But there's a registered letter for Castleton—"

"Registered, eh?" said Herries. "That sounds interesting."

"Yes, rather!" said Trimble, with a nod. "I'll bet there's a fiver in the letter—a birthday present for Castleton."

Arthur started.

"Who told you it was my birthday?" he asked sharply.

Baggy Trimble grinned.

"Nobody told me," he replied coolly. "But there are

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-TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

-OF ST. JIM'S!

By Martin Clifford

No right to be at St. Jim's; no right to be occupying the position of popularity that Arthur Castleton, by his sportsmanship, has justly earned, ALAN Castleton, rotter as he is, knows that he has done his twin brother a grave wrong in passing himself off on Tom Merry & Co. as ARTHUR Castleton.

some greeting cards for you, as well as that registered letter. I'm a cute chap, you know, and it doesn't take me long to put two and two together!"

"Confound your impudence, Trimble!" said Castleton, annoyed. "I wish you would mind your own business!"

"Bai Jove!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "Is it weally your birthday, Castleton?"

"Since Trimble has told you all about it, there's no sense in denying it," replied Arthur, with a rueful smile.

"Many happy returns of the day, old man!" said Blake heartily.

"Same here!" said Herries and Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Many happy weturns, Castleton, deah boy!"

They crowded round him, and almost immediately afterwards Tom Merry and Lowther came down, and they, too, shook hands with Arthur Castleton, and wished him many happy returns of the day. Arthur was very uncomfortable—very embarrassed. The fellows were crowding round him, and showing him every sign of friendliness. In fact, they were over-effusive in their congratulations.

Of late Castleton had been suspected of all sorts of strange things, although he was comparatively a new fellow in the Shell. But Aubrey Racke and his unsavoury companions had done their utmost to discredit Arthur amongst his Form-fellows. They had utterly failed, and Arthur was now more firmly established in the Junior School's favour than ever before. Had he not saved the Headmaster's life a few days ago? And had he not kept it mum, until the truth came out by accident? He was a modest junior—a sportsman to his finger-tips. Everybody was drawn towards him, for he had a very winning way.

And it was his birthday to-day. He had meant to keep that a secret, too, fearing that the fellows would make a ridiculous fuss of him. At least, Arthur would regard it as ridiculous. And now Trimble, as usual, had "blown the gaff." It was just like Baggy Trimble. He knew everybody's business, and he always made a point of broadcasting it. Arthur felt like punching him.

"I say, old fellow, what about that registered letter?" asked Baggy, wheedling up to Arthur, after the other fellows had eased down somewhat. "I expect there's a fiver in it, and—"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Arthur shortly.

"Yes, but I told you about that registered letter," said Trimble. "The least you can do is to lend me a quid, Castleton!"

Arthur gazed at the fat junior in astonishment.

"But why should I lend you a quid, Trimble?" he asked. "I'm under no obligation to you. I should have found that letter without your uncalled-for information—"

"Well, I like that!" said Trimble indignantly. "Any decent fellow would lend me a quid if—"

"Outside!" interrupted Blake, seizing Trimble by the shoulder.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway thwow Trimble outside, Blake, deah boy!"

"I'll give him a chance to get out of his own accord, but if he isn't gone within twenty seconds I'll throw him out!" replied Blake. "Now then, Trimble—out!"

"I won't!" roared Trimble. "Castleton's one of my pals, and he's going to lend me a quid—"

"Scoot!" ordered Blake curtly.

"I don't see why— Yow!" howled Trimble. "Yaroooh!"

Blake had made a grab for Baggy's ear, but Baggy wriggled away and scooted.

But he didn't go far away. He hung about the School House steps, still hopeful that he might be able to extract that pound from Arthur Castleton. In his own way Baggy Trimble was very much of an optimist.

"Pway take no notice of the young wascal, Castleton," said Arthur Augustus. "His nerve is weally fwightful. I think Trimble is gettin' worse and worse ewevy day."

Arthur had obtained his correspondence by this time, and

he was now opening the registered letter. It not only contained one fiver, but two. There was a letter from his father, too, which he tucked away, so that he could read it in private and at leisure.

"My hat!" he exclaimed, smiling. "Ten pounds! Not a bad birthday present, is it?"

"A jolly fine birthday present!" said Tom Merry, with a smile. "We're not all so lucky, Castleton."

"My father is one of the best sorts under the sun," said Arthur softly. "I don't quite know what to do with all this money."

"What?" gasped Blake. "You don't know what to do with it?"

"Well, hardly."

"We'll show you!" said Digby promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Castleton!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble, rolling up. "Did I hear you say that you've got ten quid there?"

"Yes."

"That's twice as much as you expected," went on Baggy. "In the cirs, of course, you'll lend me that quid, won't you?"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"I'm not speaking to you, Gussy!" said Trimble coldly.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to be addressed in that familah way by you, Twimble!"

"Oh, don't bother me!" interrupted Baggy, turning his back on Arthur Augustus. "I'm speaking to my pal Castleton."

Arthur could not help smiling.

"Oh, well, I expect you deserve something for your cheek, Trimble!" he said. "I won't lend you a quid, but if five bob is of any use, you're welcome to it. It's all I've got, except for these two fivers—"

"Not likely!" interrupted Blake aggressively. "You're not going to lend five bob to this cadging rotter, Castleton! You're too generous, you're too easy-going and soft-hearted!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it's better than being mean," said Manners. "At the same time, it's an unwise policy to lend the money to Trimble. Don't do it, Castleton."

Baggy looked round, full of alarm.

"I don't see why you fellows should butt in!" he said hurriedly. "Castleton is one of my best friends—"

"You've been warned once, Trimble, and I shan't warn you again!" interrupted Blake. "This way, my son!"

"Yow!" hooted Trimble. "Oh dear! I—I didn't mean to— Yaroooh!"

Once again Baggy Trimble was booted outside, and this time he decided to keep out. He would catch Castleton by himself, and then he might have more luck. These other fellows were always spoiling everything!

"There wasn't any need to do that, really, Blake," said Arthur, looking rather distressed. "Trimble can't help it. He's just born that way. And I've got all this money and don't know what to do with it."

"Don't know what to do with it?"

"No."

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"There's something wrong with this chap," he said solemnly. "He's got ten quid in his possession, and is stopped for a means of spending it. I could name a thousand different ways, but I don't suppose he'd listen."

"I'll tell you a way," said Blake facetiously. "Lend a fiver to Kerruish. I rather think he could do with it."

"Yaas, wathah!" nodded Arthur Augustus. "And Kewwuish is quite a decent chap."

"But why should I lend a fiver to Kerruish?" said Arthur, without suspecting that his leg was being pulled.

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Blake. "But I believe that Kerruish wants to help a relative, or something. Anyhow, he's been jolly worried lately, and we all know that"

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he wants money. It's quite O.K. and above board—nothing about it. All the same, he wants some cash."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I am wathah afraid that Kewwuish will wefuse," he said. "I offahed to lend Kewwuish a pound or two yesterday, and he wefused point-blank. Kewwuish is wathah an independent boundah."

Arthur noticed the smiles.

"I say, is this really true?" he asked.

"Of course, it's true!" grinned Blake. "But we were only spoofing you. Even if you have got ten quid, it's no reason why you should go and part with half of it in one fell swoop. If you really don't know what to do with that money, just come to Study No. 6, and we'll give you a few tips."

"We've heaps of ideas for spending money," agreed Herries, with a chuckle.

"Besides, it's your birthday," went on Blake. "Every chap wants to spend something extra on his birthday. It's a half-holiday this afternoon, too, and you'll be able to go into Wayland and take your choice from the shops. It wouldn't be a bad idea to lay in some skates—in readiness for the frost when it comes. Nothing like being prepared in advance, and a good pair of skates cost a tidy sum. Just a suggestion, you know."

"Weally, Blake, I think it is wathah extwagavant to spend money on skates," said Arthur Augustus judiciously. "There is not much chance of a frost nowadays; and even if there is, one is hardly likely to last for more than a few hours—"

Gussy broke off, and glanced round towards the open doorway.

"Gweat Scott!" he added. "Whatevah is that fwrightful din?"

"Don't ask me!" said Blake. "I don't know anything about it!"

They had all heard the noise—a curious, jarring travesty of music, and it was coming from the quad. There were shouts of laughter, too, and the juniors, with one accord, made for the doorway.

CHAPTER 2. The Vagrant!

AUBREY RACKE started.

"By gad!" he said. "This is a bit thick, what?"

"Confound it, yes!" said Clampe, of the New House. "We'd better go and tell him to clear out, hadn't we? We don't want his sort hangin' about the quad!"

The black sheep of the Shell had just come out of the New House. Racke had gone over to visit his friend Clampe with a view to fixing up an appointment for the afternoon. They were now staring at the itinerant musician who was grinding his organ just inside the old quad. He was a harmless-looking old man—a vagrant. His organ was of the old-fashioned type—one of those that rest upon a single leg.

Judging by the sound, the organ had already seen its best days. The discordant jangle could not be called music at all, and there was no tune distinguishable. It was just an unholy noise.

Racke and Clampe had some justification for protesting, but they had no justification whatever for the action they took. After all, it was no business of theirs to send this old beggar away. They had no such authority.

But they approached the old man and stared at him aggressively. He was a queer old boy, rather undersized, with a wizened, wrinkled face, and much whiskery growth. His twinkling eyes had a whimsical expression in them, and he touched his forelock as the two Shell fellows came to a halt near him.

"Mornin', young gents!" he said in a wheezy voice. "Thankin' ye kindly—"

"Take that thing out of here!" interrupted Racke harshly.

"Beggin' yer pardon, young gents—"

"I don't want any arguments!" interrupted Racke. "Take that infernal thing out of this quad! Get off the premises altogether!"

"Or be kicked off!" added Clampe, enjoying the old man's discomfiture.

The vagrant lost his smile. He even ceased playing for a moment, so surprised was he by this attitude on the part of a pair whom he had at first taken for young gentlemen. A rather puzzled expression crept into his eyes. He wondered if these boys were joking.

"I'm doin' no harm, young gents," he said quietly. "We all get our livin' one way or another. This is my way, in a manner of speakin'. I ain't doin' no hurt!"

"You're playin' that confounded organ of yours—and it jars on my nerves!" retorted Racke. "Beggars aren't allowed here."

"Askin' yer pardon, young gent, but I ain't a beggar,"

said the old man. "Never 'ave been. I've 'ad me ups and downs, like most, but I've never begged."

"Don't you call this beggin'?" asked Clampe, with a sneer. "That rotten organ is only a blind. Anyhow, take it away! We'll give you ten seconds to get out!"

The old vagrant looked rather obstinate.

"Maybe one of your masters won't be quite so harsh, young gents," he said. "I've been 'ere afore, an' I was never ordered off. I ain't doin' any harm—"

"That's enough!" put in Racke jeeringly. "We've told you to go, so you'd better sheer off! If you don't, we'll smash your rotten organ!"

Clampe glanced round.

"Come on!" he muttered. "Let's hustle the old fool through the gates!"

And as the old vagrant commenced grinding the handle again, producing further discordant sounds, Racke and Clampe fell upon him. He was unprepared for the onslaught, and the organ broke away from him and fell. Racke gave it a hefty kick, and one of the side panels split up. The old man staggered away, his gaze fixed and dazed.

"My organ!" he muttered brokenly. "Young gents— young gents! Don't smash up my organ! It's the only thing I've got to earn a livin'—"

"Rats to your beastly organ!" said Racke. "We gave you a chance to clear out, and you didn't take it. Now you can pick that mouldy thing up, and—"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came hurrying across from the School House. A shout of laughter had just gone up from Mellish and Baggy Trimble and one or two other non-entities. They had seen the old vagrant's plight, and it amused them. But Arthur Augustus wasn't looking at all amused. His expression was one of righteous fury.

"Wacke!" he shouted, as he ran up. "Wacke, you wottah!"

Aubrey Racke turned.

"Clear off, D'Arcy!" he snapped. "Mind your own bizney!"

"Weally, Wacke—"

"Don't interfere in things that don't concern you, D'Arcy!" added Clampe.

"I wegard you as a pair of uttah wottahs!" exclaimed Gussy. "I have a good mind to give you a feahful thiawshin'! Pway take no notice of these boundahs, deah boy!" he added, turning to the old man. "They are a pair of wottahs. Allow me!"

D'Arcy, always polite, bent down and lifted up the battered organ. It had been in a decrepit condition for months probably. But Racke and Clampe had done a great deal of damage to the rotten woodwork. The precious pair now backed away, as Blake and Herries and Digby came up, followed by the Terrible Three. Figgins & Co., of the New House, arrived, too, to say nothing of Talbot and Gore. Everybody seemed to be arriving on the scene.

"You cad, Racke!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Can't you find something better to do than to destroy the property of a harmless old musician?"

"Musician?" sneered Racke. "The fellow's a beggar!"

Arthur Castleton turned upon him.

"You mean, contemptible rotter!" he said fiercely. "An old man like this is just about your mark, Racke! You ought to think yourself lucky that we don't kick you!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy. "I entirely agwee with Castleton!"

Racke and Clampe backed away.

"So you're takin' notice of that saint, are you?" he jeered, pointing at Arthur. "By gad! Haven't I told you that he's no good—that he's a hypocrite and a fraud? You'll find it out one of these days—and then I shall have the laugh on you!"

Tom Merry turned to Racke and eyed him coldly.

"We're not talking about Castleton now, Racke," he said. "We saw what you did to this old man's organ, and you'd better clear off at once."

"Why not make these cads pay for the damage?" asked George Figgins, of the New House.

"Damage?" shouted Clampe. "What damage? We haven't hurt his confounded organ!"

"Yes you have!" said Kerr. "You ought to be made to pay, you vindictive rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, let them go!" said Arthur Castleton. "Why not get up a collection for the old man? That'll be the simplest way out of it. He doesn't need Racke's money, or Clampe's, either."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I agwee with those sentiments, deah boy."

Racke and Crooke were hustled away. In fact, they were fairly booted off. Quite a number of juniors helped in this pleasant task. And the crowd heartily entered into the spirit of Castleton's suggestion. A collection was made.

Castleton went round with his hat, and all sorts of contributions were placed in that receptacle. "There you are, old chap," he said, as he tipped the whole collection in the old musician's hand, "and good luck to you!" "Heaven bless ye, young gents!" said the old vagrant. (See Chapter 2.)



Arthur taking round his cap. All sorts of contributions were placed in that receptacle.

Most of the fellows contributed a shilling, or half-a-crown, and Gussy, ever generous, protested that he had nothing smaller than a pound-note, and this he put into the cap. The old musician, in the meanwhile, stood by, looking very happy.

"There you are, old chap!" said Arthur, as he tipped the whole collection into the vagrant's hand. "No, don't say anything—just put it in your pocket, and good-luck to you!"

"Heaven bless ye, young gents!" said the old man, almost with tears in his eyes. "There's good sorts an' bad sorts in this old world, an' I reckon ye're one o' the best!"

Arthur smilingly shook his head.

"That's all right," he said, rather uncomfortably. "Don't trouble to thank us."

But the old man did thank them—thanked them in a quivering, emotional voice. He seemed to be a genuine sort. He was quite a character, too, and before he left he became effusive in his gratitude.

"It's a good thing we were on the scene," said Arthur, after the old fellow had gone. "Racke and Clampe would have smashed his organ to pieces if we hadn't arrived!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, nodding. "I wogard Wacke and Clampe as a pair of wogues. I think I shall give them a feaful thwashin'."

But the sounding of the breakfast-bell saved Racke and Clampe from this fate. D'Arcy went indoors with his chums of Study No. 6, and by the time breakfast was over the incident was forgotten.

Before going in to the meal, however, Castleton happened to run across Kerruish of the Fourth. Eric Kerruish was the boy from the Isle of Man, and he was one of the best. He was looking very worried and troubled. Nobody knew the exact nature of his present concern, but it was believed to be somehow connected with money. There was a rumour that one of his cousins was in a bit of a hole, and that Kerruish wanted to help him out.

Arthur stopped him in the passage, and coughed.

"Just a minute, Kerruish," he said. "I don't want to be inquisitive, or anything like that, but I understand that you're rather—well, short of funds?"

Kerruish shook his head.

"I'm all right, thanks!" he replied briefly.

He had coloured slightly, and Arthur knew that Blake had been telling the truth.

"You may be all right, Kerruish, but I dare say you could do with a fiver?" went on Arthur. "I'm rather lucky to-day. My father has sent me a whacking big birthday present—cash, too. If a fiver would be of any use to you, you're perfectly welcome to it."

Kerruish looked at the Shell fellow with considerable warmth.

"That's very decent of you, Castleton, but I'd rather not take it—thanks all the same," he replied.

"Pay me back when you like, you know," smiled Arthur. "Any time will do—next term, if it comes to that."

But Kerruish was rather an independent sort, and he again shook his head.

"No, Castleton, I'd rather not," he replied. "I'm not in any trouble myself, and—and— Well, it wouldn't be quite the thing to borrow your money. It's your birthday present, too. You're a decent chap, Castleton, but—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Arthur uncomfortably. "If this fiver is going to be of any use to you, Kerruish, take it."

The boy from the Isle of Man hesitated.

"Of course, I can send it to— No, I won't have it!" he added, with an obstinate little set of his jaw. "There's no sense in getting myself into debt. Thanks, Castleton; nothing doing. Don't think I don't appreciate it, because I do. You're a brick!"

He passed on rather hurriedly—fearing, perhaps, that he would be tempted. And Arthur sighed and put the fiver back into his pocket. Arthur was such a decent sort that it pained him to be rebuffed.

When breakfast was over Arthur Castleton looked thoughtful. He went off to his own study, and remained there for a few minutes, staring idly through the window. He was thinking of Kerruish, and he was thinking, also, of his brother Alan. He wondered how Alan was getting on.

Nobody at St. Jim's knew that there were two Castletons—that Arthur had a twin brother, so like himself that it was almost impossible to tell them apart. Castleton had already suffered much on account of his brother's misdoings. For Alan was by way of being a rotter, and rumours of his dark deeds had crept to St. Jim's. Racke had got to hear of them, and had spread the stories. But nobody believed them now. Arthur had established himself as a good fellow and a sportsman. His position at St. Jim's was firm and secure. And Arthur was happy—very happy, indeed.

He did not know that this day was to be a veritable day of Fate for him!

CHAPTER 3.

Caught in the Act!

AUBREY RACKE gave the fender a savage kick. "The chap makes me sick!" he said viciously. "And the way the other fellows crowd round him and lionise him makes me sicker! It's disgusting!"

Leslie Clampe yawned. "Oh, give him a rest, Racke, old man," he said. "Forget the rotter. What's that you were sayin' about a letter you had received this mornin'?"

They were in Clampe's study in the New House, and Racke had just been referring to Arthur Castleton and the incident of the old vagrant. He turned away from the fireplace and took a letter from his pocket.

"Yes, here it is," he replied. "From a fellow named Barker. Quite a decent sort. I met him in London during the holidays."

"Racin' man?" asked Clampe. "Bookie, or somethin'?"

Racke scowled. "Is that a sneer?" he asked unpleasantly. "My dear man!" protested Clampe. "What the thump—"

"Oh, all right!" growled Racke. "But anybody might think that all my friends are bookies and racin' touts by the way you speak, Clampe! As a matter of fact, this chap, Barker, is a saxophone player in a jazz band."

"That sounds interestin'," remarked Clampe, brightening up.

"He and his crowd have got an engagement in Wayland this week at one of the dance halls," said Racke. "Barker's a good fellow. Dotty on the Charleston, I believe, although he says the Charleston is dyin' out. Not that I care twopence about it. Anyhow, he's invited me to go over to Wayland this afternoon, to have tea with him at his diggin's."

"Any chance of a game?" asked Clampe.

"I don't see why we shouldn't have one," said Racke, with a grin. "Barker's pretty hot on solo whist, I believe, and he'll probably have time for a round or two. It'll be somethin' to do this afternoon, anyhow. Would you care to come along?"

"It'll suit me fine," replied Clampe, nodding.

"All right, then; that's settled," said Racke, as he went towards the door. "I'll be gettin' over into the School House now. By gad, though, I'd like to get even with that beggar Castleton! Nobody will believe any of those rumours against him now; he's wormed his way right into the good books of everybody. Wouldn't I just like to show him up in his true colours!"

Clampe looked rather impatient.

"What are his true colours?" he asked sarcastically. "As far as I can see, the man is of just the same brand as Tom Merry and Jack Blake and Figgins, and all the other little Erics."

"He may be just the same now, but he hasn't always been the same," replied Racke savagely. "What about that affair at Twickenham—the affair that Banks, the bookie, told us about? What about when Castleton nearly got arrested in Piccadilly? We've heard that he's an absolute blood—a real goer. Yet we can't prove anythin' against him, confound it!"

Clampe shrugged his shoulders. "Then the best thing we can do is to forget him," he said. "The chap isn't worth all this trouble, Racke."

"Well, I think he is," retorted Racke. "He's playin' a double game. He can't fool me! He's laughin' up his sleeve all the time, if these fools would only realise it. I'll bet he's up to all sorts of tricks on the quiet, behind their backs. But they're as blind as a set of bats! Just wait until my chance comes, then I'll have the laugh!"

He went out, and Castleton was still in his thoughts when he entered the School House, two or three minutes later.

He went upstairs, and ran into Baggy Trimble at the corner of the Shell passage.

"I say, Racke—" "Clear out of it, Trimble!" snapped Racke. "I'm in no mood for your rot!"

"But I've got something to tell you!" said Trimble eagerly.

"Tell it to somebody else."

"It's about Castleton!" said Baggy excitedly.

"What?"

Racke turned, after he had passed by, and looked at Trimble with new interest.

"About Castleton?" he repeated. "Well? Out with it!"

"You needn't look so jolly fierce!" said Baggy, backing away. "I—I just happened to go round the corner of the Fourth Form passage just now, and I spotted Castleton sneaking into Study No. 5. Julian and Hammond had come out a minute earlier, and Castleton must have known that the study was empty."

"Well, what about it?" asked Racke impatiently. "And what do you mean by sayin' that Castleton sneaked in?"

"So he did," replied Trimble. "He sneaked in, like a giddy thief! He didn't see me, of course—I was peeping round the corner—I—I mean, I happened to—to—"

"That's enough," interrupted Racke. "You were peeping round the corner. Well? Get on with it!"

"Well, Castleton looked up and down the passage, and then dodged into Study No. 5 as though he were afraid of being spotted," said Trimble. "I'll bet he's up to no good, Racke! I was just going after Julian and Hammond to tell them. I'll bet he's raiding their cupboards!"

Racke nodded.

"He's stolen a march over you—eh?" he retorted. "I suppose you had your eye on that study cupboard? Julian got a parcel this morning, I believe, full of his confounded Jewish food, I suppose."

"Rats!" said Baggy Trimble indignantly. "That Jewish grub is jolly good! Something different to the ordinary, and as tasty as you like! I'm always on the look-out when Julian gets a parcel—I—I mean—"

"That's enough," interrupted Racke curtly. "Cut off!"

"Yes, but—"

"Scoot!" roared Racke.

Baggy Trimble scooted, grunting with disgust. And Aubrey Racke went along the Fourth Form passage and paused outside the door of Study No. 5. With a sudden movement he flung the door open, and then stared.

Arthur Castleton was alone in the study, and he was bending over one of the desks. With a quick, guilty movement, he closed a drawer and spun round. His face was as red as a peony, and he looked extremely guilty.

"By gad!" said Racke, taking a deep breath. "Caught you in the act—eh?"

Arthur started.

"What do you mean?" he asked in a husky voice.

"I mean what I say, you confounded hypocrite!" retorted Racke, his eyes gleaming with triumph. "Pilfering from somebody's desk—eh? Just about your mark, Castleton!"

"You—you insulting!"

"That's enough!" interrupted Racke curtly. "You've been caught red-handed, Castleton. And now, perhaps, the other fellows will know you for what you are—a petty pilferer!"

Arthur clenched his fists, and his eyes blazed.

"Take that back, Racke," he said, in a low voice.

"Be hanged to you!"

"I came into this study for a different reason altogether—"

"Tell that to the others!" interrupted Racke sneeringly.

"Hi! Blake—Levison—Cardew!"

He shouted at the top of his voice, feeling certain that some of the Fourth-Formers would be within earshot. He was right, too, for a moment later Blake & Co. came into the study—having arrived from next door. There were a good many others, too.

"What's wrong here?" asked Blake, staring from Racke to Castleton.

"Yaas, wathah! What evah is the mattah?"

"Oh, it's nothing!" said Arthur hastily. "I don't see why you should all come in like this—"

"Don't take any notice of him!" interrupted Racke. "I came into this study two minutes ago, and I found Castleton nosing in one of those drawers. He's still at the same desk!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's Kerruish's desk," said Levison curiously. "Of course, I don't believe you, Racke."

"All right!" snarled Racke. "Ask Castleton! He'll probably deny—"

"Did Racke find you at the open drawer of Kerruish's desk, Castleton?" asked Blake.

"Yes," said Arthur. "But—"

"And you were alone in the study?"
 "Yes, until Racke came in."
 "Does Kerruish know that you were going to his desk?" he asked again.
 "No; and I don't want him to know!" muttered Arthur.
 "I wish you wouldn't press for answers like this—there's nothing in it. Racke says I was pilfering, but I know you won't believe that."
 "Wathah not!" said Gussy promptly. "We know you beittah, Castleton, deah boy!"
 But there were a good number of jeers from the rear.

"Bowled out!" said Mellish, with a cackle. "So Racke found him pilferin' Kerruish's desk, did he?"

"Better send for Kerruish!" said Blake grimly. "Dig, be a sport, and rush off and find Kerruish!"

"Weally, Blake, I twust you are not suggestin' that Castleton may be guilty?" asked D'Arcy, gazing at Blake with disfavour.

"I'm not suggesting anything, Gussy!" growled Blake. "But Castleton has admitted that he went to Kerruish's desk, and Kerruish ought to be here."

"Exactly!" nodded Racke. "He'll have to look through the drawer to see if there's anythin' missin'!"

"You insulting cad!" shouted Arthur hotly. "You'd better not call me a thief!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"Actions speak louder than words!" he retorted mockingly.

As it happened, Kerruish was just outside, and he was soon brought in. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came in, too, wondering what all the excitement was about. They looked grave when a dozen voices imparted the facts to them.

"This isn't true, is it, Castleton?" asked Tom Merry sharply.

"Oh, why ask?" asked Arthur. "If you think I'm a thief, I've nothing else to say!"

"We don't think you're a thief, old man," replied Tom quietly. "But you were at Kerruish's desk, and there ought to be some sort of explanation—"

"Look through your desk, Kerruish, and see if anythin's missin'!" interrupted Racke. "I found Castleton in this study alone, and he was rummagin' through your desk."

Eric Kerruish frowned.

"I don't believe it!" he said bluntly. "Castleton wouldn't do a thing like that!"

"Better look through the desk, Kerruish," said Tom Merry. "I don't suspect Castleton of doing anything wrong, but, for his own sake, you'd better take a look—just to clear Castleton of suspicion."

Arthur stood with his back to the desk, and there was an expression of alarm in his eyes.

"No!" he panted. "Don't look in the desk now, Kerruish!"

Everybody gazed at him in surprise.

"Why not?" asked the Manx junior curiously.

"Because—because— Well, I don't want you to look, that's all!" said Arthur desperately. "I give you my word there's nothing wrong—"

He was interrupted by a yell from Racke and Mellish and two or three others.

"Why, the fool is accusin' himself!" sneered Racke. "He doesn't want you to look in the desk—eh? Why not? Because he jolly well knows that you'll find somethin' missin'!"

"I don't believe it!" shouted Kerruish.

"I wegard you as a fwrightful wuffian, Wacke!" said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "You have no wight to make these foul accusations against Castleton!"

"Oh, cheesse it, Gussy!" said Blake. "Don't talk so much!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You'd better look through your desk, Kerruish," said Tom Merry. "I don't know why you're acting like this, Castleton, but it looks—well, it looks rather queer."

Arthur stared at him in amazement.

"You don't think—you don't think I was thieving?" he gasped.

"Of course I don't; but this behaviour of yours is—is—"

"Suspicious?" suggested Racke.

Arthur stood there acutely conscious of the fact that his position was a ticklish one. And it was idle for him to expect these fellows to let him have his own way. So he stood aside, and Kerruish, with a muttered word, went to his desk.

He opened the drawer, and rummaged in it carelessly. He did not suspect Arthur of doing anything wrong, and this examination of his was only cursory. Then suddenly he grew rigid.

"Hallo!" he said, in a startled voice.

"What's this?"

"All your money gone?" asked Racke.

Kerruish twirled round.

"Why can't you be quiet, you insulting beast?" he shouted hotly. "There was no money in this desk—not a penny! And now there's a fiver here—in this drawer!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What?"

"There's a fiver here!" repeated Kerruish, holding it up. "It's not my fiver! It wasn't here ten minutes ago, when I left the study. Did you put it in this drawer, Castleton?"

Arthur flushed more deeply than ever.

"Ye-es!"

"What the merry dickens for?" asked Kerruish, staring.

"I—I thought if you found it in your desk, you might accept it," muttered Arthur, very embarrassed. "Just as a loan, you know. You refused it when I offered it before breakfast, but—"

"Gweat Scott!" interrupted Arthur Augustus. "So this is the way Castleton pilfers? I twust you will be decent enough to apologise, Wacke? Instead of stealin', Castleton was doin' Kewwuish a good turn!"

Racke was utterly discomfited.

"I—I don't believe it!" he said. "I don't believe—"

"You'd better get out of here, Racke, while you're safe!" interrupted Tom Merry grimly. "It's just like you to interfere in things that don't concern you! What right had you to come into this study, anyhow? Clear off!"

Racke went out with a scowl, and a few cheers went up for Arthur. Once again he had proved himself to be true blue—all the way through. His reputation, instead of being marred, was only enhanced.

Once again Racke was done. He went to his own study, gritting his teeth.

CHAPTER 4.

A Welcome Diversion!

"B LESS my soul!"
 Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, uttered that exclamation as the door of the class-room opened and three figures came in.

First of all there was Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,024.



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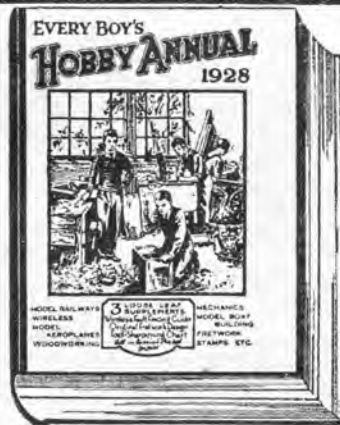
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the School House; then came the old vagrant who had been playing his dilapidated organ in the quad that morning; and, finally, the ample figure of P.-c. Crump. They entered like a procession.

Morning lessons had been progressing very satisfactorily up till now—very dully, perhaps, but that was nothing new. Everybody had been vaguely hoping that somebody else would start a minor rag or something, just to relieve the monotony.

And the sudden advent of these visitors brought great relief to the Shell.

"Bless my soul!" repeated Mr. Linton, adjusting his glasses and regarding the fresh arrivals in astonishment. "Really, Mr. Railton, I—I—"

"I hope you will pardon this interruption, Mr. Linton, but the matter is rather serious," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I shall not detain your Form for more than a minute or two."

Mr. Linton looked relieved and the Shell looked disappointed.

"Really, I—I quite fail to understand," said Mr. Linton, regarding the village policeman with disfavour. "Why is this police officer here?"

"He is in charge of this old man," replied Mr. Railton. "I understand that the unfortunate vagrant is under arrest—"

"That's right, sir!" nodded P.-c. Crump heavily. "I arrested him down in Rylcombe not a hower ago. Seems like he's been thievin' up at the school 'ere. He's confessed as he was at the school afore he came down to the village—"

"It's not true!" said the old man, agitated and distressed. "I ain't stole nothin'! Mebbe I'm a tramp—mebbe I'm a poor old wanderer along the roads—but I ain't no thief! I've bin in the work-houses, but I've never seen the inside of a prison. 'Tain't fair to arrest me like this—"

"All right, my good man!" interrupted Mr. Railton hastily. "I am not accusing you of anything. I only hope that your story will prove to be true—although, to be quite frank, it seems very unsatisfactory."

"No, I've never see'd the inside of a prison!" went on the old musician indignantly. "Simon Weggs—that's me—has 'ad his ups an' downs in this 'ere life, but honesty 'as always bin my policy. Sometimes I've near starved, but I ain't never done no stealin'."

"That's about enough!" interrupted the policeman gruffly. "Be quiet, you!"

The school was very entertained. This was a decidedly welcome diversion. They knew the old musician, too—for they had made a collection for him in the quad that morning. And everybody was wondering why he had been brought here by P.-c. Crump. It was quite like old Crump, of course, to make a mistake. In the opinion of the St. Jim's Shell, Crump had about as much brain power as a withered turnip.

"Will you be good enough to explain, Mr. Railton?" asked the master of the Shell, in a cold voice.

"It is a very simple matter, Mr. Linton," replied the Housemaster. "This old man—Weggs, as he calls himself—was arrested in the village not an hour ago. It seems that he went to the post office and attempted to change a five-pound note. The postmaster was naturally suspicious—"

"Why naturally?" asked Mr. Weggs with warmth. "I come by that five-pun note honestly."

"If you did, all well and good," replied Mr. Railton quietly. "As I was saying, Mr. Linton, the man was trying to change this five-pound note, and the postmaster thought it advisable to inform the policeman. He was arrested, and he told a rather remarkable story of having obtained the note at St. Jim's before breakfast this morning. He claims that one of the boys gave him the money."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Linton, with scepticism.

"Just what I say, sir," nodded P.-c. Crump. "A bit too tall, if you ask me! A bit too tffin to 'old water! 'E never got that five-pun note from one o' the young gents!"

The Shell fellows were looking at one another in astonishment now. They had certainly made a collection for the vagrant, but nobody had been lavish enough to give a five-pound note. Most of the donations had taken the form of shillings or half-crowns. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only fellow who had been known to put a note into the hat, and that note had been of a pound denomination.

"I have already been to the Fourth Form room, but nobody there knows anything about the matter," continued Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy, it appears, gave the man a pound-note this morning, but I have been unable to discover any information concerning the fiver."

"Ay, an' you won't find no hinformation, neither, sir," said P.-c. Crump. "This ole boy stole it, an' he's goin' down to the lock-up as soon as we've finished. But he was so insistent about that story of 'is that I thought it just as well to bring 'im up to the school to make hinquries."

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"That was very sensible of you, Crump," said Mr. Railton. "Now, my man," he added, turning to Mr. Weggs, "I sincerely hope that you will be able to clear yourself of this charge. You have said that one of the St. Jim's boys gave you that five-pound note. Would you know the boy again if you saw him?"

"Ay, that I would, sir," nodded the vagrant.

"Is he in this room?"

Mr. Weggs looked round, screwing up his eyes.

"Can't see him, sir," he muttered. "My eyesight ain't what it used to be."

"Go nearer, and take a closer look," invited Mr. Railton.

And the old man did so, Mr. Linton fuming in the meantime. He hated any interruption of this sort, for it took his boys off their work, and they would be disturbed for the rest of the morning. In Mr. Linton's opinion, the whole thing was outrageous. It was an unwarranted interruption. He only wanted to get it over.

"You see," he said, after a few moments, "the old man is only trying to waste time. He does not recognise anybody. Nobody in this room gave him a five-pound note—and I doubt if anybody else did. I do not wish to accuse without adequate grounds, but the story is certainly fantastic in the extreme."

Mr. Weggs looked round, puzzled and worried.

"I can't see the young gent 'ere, sir," he said.

But Mr. Railton was looking across at Arthur Castleton.

"Castleton!" he said sharply.

Arthur looked up, flushing.

"Yes, sir?" he said.

"Why are you holding your head down, Castleton?" went on Mr. Railton. "When Weggs was examining the class you persistently held your face down so that he could not see it. Why did you act in that way?"

"I—I—"

"I think Weggs had better have another look at Castleton, sir," said Tom Merry. "It was Castleton who went round with the hat, and it was Castleton who gave the money to the old musician."

"Yes, rather!" said eight or nine other voices.

"Castleton!" said the Housemaster. "Stand forward!"

Arthur got up, the blood rushing to his cheeks.

"I—I'd rather not, sir!" he said. "I didn't give—I mean—"

"That's 'im!" shouted Mr. Weggs suddenly.

He pointed a quivering, gnarled finger at Arthur.

"That's 'im!" he repeated. "That's the young gent what give me the five quid!"

A buzz went round the Form.

"Silence!" said Mr. Railton. "Castleton, is this true? Did you give this man a five-pound note in addition to the money which had been collected?"

Arthur Castleton gulped.

"Must—must I answer, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, you certainly must!"

"Then—then I did, sir," said Arthur unhappily. "It's not fair that he should be arrested—and I wanted to speak all the time. And yet I didn't want everybody to know—I mean—The policeman ought to let him go. He hasn't stolen anything at all!"

"If you gave the man this five-pound note, then he is certainly cleared of the charge," agreed Mr. Railton.

"Crump, you had better let him go at once. The matter is cleared up. And you, yourself, can leave now. You have done your duty."

"My heve!" said the constable, in disgust. "Then—then I ain't made no arrest!"

"Obviously you haven't!" agreed Mr. Railton dryly. "I am very sorry, Weggs, that this suspicion should have been brought against you. But you must surely realise that it was—ahem!—rather unusual for a man in your—ahem!—position to be in possession of a five-pound note. The mistake was quite logical."

Mr. Weggs nodded.

"I ain't sayin' nothin' about that, sir," he agreed, with relief in his eyes. "Mebbe, it did seem queer for a bloke o' my sort to 'ave a five-quid note in 'is possession. But there's the young gent as give it to me. A rare, generous young gent, too. 'Tain't often I meets the like of 'im!"

"Good old Castleton!" went up a murmured chorus from the Shell.

"Castleton, you say that you gave this man the five-pound note!" continued Mr. Railton, turning to Arthur. "Why did you do so?"

"I don't see why I shouldn't have done so, sir," said Arthur quietly. "We were all making a collection, and everybody contributed something. So I gave the fiver."

"My only hat!"

"He must have been dotty!"

"Don't you realise, Castleton, that such a contribution was totally out of proportion?" went on the Housemaster.

"I can find nothing but praise for your generosity—for

"Better look through your desk, Kerruish," said Tom Merry, "just to clear Castleton of suspicion!" Castleton stood with his back to the desk, and there was an expression of alarm in his eyes. "No!" he panted.

"Don't look in the desk now, Kerruish!" (See Chapter 3.)



your charitable thought. But, my dear boy, was it not unwise to make such a substantial gift?"

"I don't think so, sir," replied Arthur. "The circumstances were exceptional."

"How do you mean?"

"I'd rather not explain, sir!" said Arthur.

"But you must explain!" replied Mr. Railton sharply.

"I insist upon an explanation, Castleton!"

Arthur took a deep breath.

"Well, sir, somebody—no need to mention names, sir—somebody had bowled the poor old man over, and his organ was badly smashed. The side was completely broken in, and I thought it was ruined, and no longer of any use to him. And that organ is the old man's livelihood, sir. Without it, he can't earn any living at all."

Racke, on the other side of the Shell Form-room, drew a breath of relief. He had been half-expecting that the story of his and Clampe's caddish act would come out. But Arthur wasn't that sort.

Mr. Railton now looked at him with a different expression in his eyes.

"Yes, Castleton, I quite see your point," he said softly. "The circumstances were indeed exceptional. You saw that the old man's organ was smashed, and so you gave him the wherewithal to purchase a new one? Is that it?"

"Yes, sir!" muttered Arthur.

"That was a very generous action, Castleton—and I am pleased with you," said the Housemaster warmly. "I only wish that all my boys were so charitable—so good-hearted. Naturally, I shall take no further action in the matter whatever—except to change this man's five-pound note, and to give him small money in its stead. I only hope that he will appreciate the magnanimous nature of your gift."

"The young gent is a rare good 'un, sir!" said Mr. Weggs heartily. "One of the best livin'! Not in twenty

years 'ave I come across 'is like! No, sir, not in twenty years!"

"Good old Castleton!"

And the Shell gave Arthur a rousing cheer. Mr. Railton smiled as he listened to it, and said nothing. He escorted the old man out of the class-room with a kindly hand, and the door closed. And, instantly, a renewed chorus went up.

"This chap's too good to live!" Monty Lowther was saying. "First of all he gets a ten-pound tip from his pater, and then he gives five of it to an old vagrant. Then he tries to slip the other five into Kerruish's desk. Good man! There's nothing wrong with Castleton!"

"No fear!"

"Boys—boys!" protested Mr. Linton mildly. "Castleton, you can go back to your place! I congratulate you upon your—"

"Please, sir!" interrupted Arthur huskily.

They could all see that he greatly disliked this demonstration, and, by tacit consent, the Shell became silent.

But Arthur had established himself more firmly than ever. His popularity had been increasing by leaps and bounds during the past few days, and now, unquestionably, he was held in the highest possible esteem. The very idea that this fellow could be a goer or a reformed blood was utterly ridiculous!

CHAPTER 5. The Invitation!

"I WATHAH think—"

"You shouldn't, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Thinking is too much of a strain for you, old man," went on Blake solemnly. "It's not fair to your

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head. All soft things ought to be treated delicately and gently."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed Blake up and down coldly.

"You fwabjous ass!" he said witheringly. "Are you weferwin' to my bwain, Blake?"

"It doesn't matter, Gussy," said Jack Blake, with a grin. "Give it a rest!"

"Gussy's brain?" grinned Herries. "It needs it!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, do dry up, Gussy!" put in Digby. "We were talking about footer, weren't we? Castleton's fit again now; that leg of his is all serene again, I believe."

The chums of Study No. 6 were lounging outside the School House. Lessons were over, and they all had the comfortable feeling that generally affected the juniors after morning lessons on a half-holiday. No more work that day—except prep, of course, in the evening. But the afternoon was theirs, to do as they liked with.

"I wathah think, deah boy—"

"We can't allow it," said Digby firmly.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Besides, when you think, Gussy, it generally means a lot of talking," went on Digby. "You always talk too much, if it comes to that—"

"I uttably wufuse to stand heah and listen to any more of this wot!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am about to suggest an ideah concernin' Castleton."

"The chap who gives fivers to tramps?"

"Yaas, wathah!" nodded Gussy. "There is no end to the fellow's good qualities. Didn't I say fwom the vewy first that he was a wippah?"

All the Fourth, of course, had heard about the affair of Mr. Weggs and the five-pound note. And Arthur Castleton's stock, so to speak, had gone up many points.

"Yaas, I wathah think that we ought to do somethin' special," continued Gussy thoughtfully. "Somethin' to show our genuine fwienliness towards Castleton. I am afraid that some of you fellows have tweated him wathah shabbily of late—"

"Grrrrr!"

"Weally, Blake, I do not wegard that as an intelligible remark," frowned Arthur Augustus. "And it is all vewy well to make those wudiculous sounds. What I said was perfectly twue. I am the only chap who has believed in Castleton fwom the vewy first. I always said he was a wip—"

"Yes, we know that!" interrupted Blake hastily. "Give it a rest, Gussy!"

"Pway wemembah that to-day is Castleton's birthday," continued the swell of St. Jim's. "It is wathah a good opportunity for us to wally wound and to show Castleton that we wegard him with appwoval. There were lots of wumours goin' wound last week, but now they are killed. Castleton has pwwed, by his actions, that he is as stwaight as a die!"

"We agree with all this, old scout, but what's the idea?" asked Blake patiently. "Didn't you mention that you had a scheme of some sort?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy. "Supposin' we give Castleton a wippin' birthday-party to-night in the Wag?"

"A birthday-party," said Blake thoughtfully. "In the Rag?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Sounds pretty good," remarked Digby.

"Of course, we shall have a wegal feed," continued Arthur Augustus. "Somethin' exceptionally special in gwub, you know."

"It's a brain-wave!" said Herries promptly. "How ever did you think of it, Gussy?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I'm all for it, of course," said Blake. "But there's a snag, Gussy. I may be wrong, of course, but I've always had an idea that regal feeds—and birthday-parties in general—cost money. And I'd like to remind the shareholders of this company that at the present moment I'm so short of funds that I'm in liquidation!"

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"You needn't let that wowwy you!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "Natuwally, I will stand the wacket. I thought about speakin' to Tom Mewwy about it, and invitin' a few othahs, too. We'll make it a wippin' birthday party, with music—"

"I'll play my cornet!" offered Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I said music!"

"A distinction with a difference!" murmured Blake, grinning.

"Doesn't my cornet provide music?" roared Herries.

"Ahem! I am afraid not, deah boy," replied Gussy. "Howevah, we will not pursue the subject. But I must wemind you, Hewwies, in passin', that your cornet is strictly pwohibited!"

"Hear, hear!" remarked Monty Lowther, as he came out of the doorway with Tom Merry and Manners. "I don't believe in Prohibition, as a general rule, but when it comes to prohibitin' Herries' cornet, I'm all for it!"

"You silly ass!" yelled Herries.

"What's the discussion about, anyway?" asked Tom Merry, smiling.

"Gussy's going to hold a big birthday party in honour of Castleton," explained Blake. "A sumptuous affair in the Rag, with a special symphony orchestra and champagne!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"No champagne?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"It's a good idea," said Tom Merry, before Gussy could reply to Blake's facetious query. "But Castleton is a Shell fellow, and we're the fellows to get up this birthday party, Gussy. At any rate, you'll have to let us pay our whack towards the exes."

Arthur Augustus looked doubtful.

"Of course, Tom Mewwy, if you weally insist—" he began.

"Yes, Gussy, we really insist!" replied Tom. "Of course, we shall want you to be there—just to give the affair some tone."

"That's vewy nice of you, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "Bai Jove, here's Castleton now! I wathah think it is a good opportunity to invite him to the partay."

As Castleton came out he was promptly collared.

He flushed with pleasure when he heard about the proposed party, and he was somewhat embarrassed, too.

"You shouldn't trouble, really!" he protested. "There's no need to get up a party especially for me—just because it's my birthday! Why go to all that trouble?"

"No twouble at all, deah boy," said Gussy. "It is a weal pleasure!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We want you to enjoy your birthday, Castleton, old man!"

"Rather!"

"Just leave ewewythin' to us, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "You will not be permitted to entah the Wag until ewewythin' is weaday. We're goin' to give you heaps of surprises. I have all sorts of ideahs—"

"Then keep them to yourself, Gussy," interrupted Manners.

"If you go on talking you'll give all the surprises away!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Leave him to us!" said Blake. "He'll take him in hand!"

Before Gussy could reply, Aubrey Racke came out, accompanied by Clampe, of the New House. The two Shell fellows paused and looked at the group.

"Anythin' excitin' goin' on?" asked Racke.

"Oh, it's very exciting!" replied Lowther. "We're just getting up a special birthday party for Castleton, with an extra big feed in the Rag this evening. Owing to a pure oversight, Racke, you haven't been invited!"

Racke scowled.

"Do you think I want to come to your kiddish parties?" he asked sneeringly. "By gad, Clampe! A birthday party now! I suppose they'll have crackers, and then they'll play kiss-in-the-ring and musical chairs!"

"I shouldn't be surprised!" grinned Clampe.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S "HIDDEN NAMES" PUZZLE!

1. Having run, dying for food, the pig got to the tuck-shop for a feed, which he polished off in no time. (Grundy, Piggott, Finn.)

2. I had an egg Sunday; ham Monday; a wriggly nice eel Tuesday; and a mussel by the seashore Wednesday. (Dane, Hammond, Glyn, Selby.)

3. The wildrakes drove their car in a manner so reckless, nor thought of danger till the brook engulfed them. (Wildrake, Manners, North, Brooke.)

4. The aeroplane can skim poles, and almost trim bleak hedgerows, and see where it goes to by Mars' heavenly light. (Skimpole, Trimble, Toby Marsh.)

5. The German master is a Herr I especially dislike; I am not at all at home with him. (Herries, Lathom.)

6. When you are ill you owe nice compliments to the nurse; her tonic lives in your memory. (Reilly, Owen-Clive.)

7. Pell-mell I shall rush for my GEM on Wednesday; the rush denotes my enthusiasm. (Mellish, Rushden.)

They walked out into the quad, followed by the glares of the other juniors. But Racke was not feeling in a very sweet temper. In point of fact, he was furious.

Arthur Castleton was more firmly established than ever! That one fact stood out above all others. Every effort of Racke's to trip this fellow up had been futile. And now it seemed that nothing could disturb him from his pedestal.

"By gad, I'd like to show the beggar up in his true light!" muttered Racke, as he and Clampe went to fetch their bicycles. "I'd give a month's pocket-money—"

"Oh, chuck it!" interrupted Clampe impatiently. "What's the good of harpin' on the same string? Forget the man! Why get yourself into a sour temper over him?"

"I'm not in a sour temper!" snapped Racke.

"No?" said Clampe. "Then I hope I shall never see you in one!"

"Don't be funny!" said Racke, with another scowl. "But there's something about Castleton that gets my rag out. He spoofs everybody! They all think he's a saint—and they're slobberin' round him in a disgustin' way. Think what a triumph it would be if I could expose him in his true colours at this birthday party this evenin'! Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!"

"Dry up!" said Clampe. "What's the good of talkin' about a fall? You'll never pitch Castleton off his perch. Leave the fellow alone! You'll only get yourself into trouble if you bother with him any longer!"

"All right—I'll forget him," said Racke with reluctance. "And this afternoon we'll have a fine time with this pal of mine—this chap Barker. I've got his address, and if we're lucky we might be able to have a little game of cards."

"Why not give cards a rest for once?" suggested Clampe. "I was hoping that the chap would give us some lessons on the saxophone. I've always wanted to play the saxophone!"

"Then the sooner you get rid of those ideas the better," retorted Aubrey Racke. "Herries' cornet is bad enough in the School House—without any beastly saxophones!"

They got their bicycles out and were soon on their way to Wayland. And although Racke had said that he would forget Castleton, he didn't forget him. He was thinking of Arthur all the time. He had always had his knife into this new fellow, and he had never been able to injure him.

And yet Racke felt, with absolute conviction, that Arthur was a fraud. All those rumours could not be false. Banks, the bookmaker, had met Arthur in Wayland, and Arthur had rejected him. Banks knew him personally, had done business with him. He knew all sorts of discreditable things about Castleton, too.

But then, of course, Aubrey Racke did not know that Mr. Banks had been referring to Alan Castleton—Arthur's twin brother. That little point, of which nobody at St. Jim's knew anything, had been creating quite a lot of misunderstanding. And it wasn't cleared up, even now.

CHAPTER 6.

News for Racke!

"HALF a minute, Racke!"

Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was standing in the middle of the lane, waving his fat arms. Racke and Clampe had nearly got to Rylcombe, on their way to Wayland, and they were not feeling

inclined to dismount from their machines in order to chat with Baggy Trimble.

"Clear out of the way, Trimble!" shouted Racke.

"Just a minute, old man!" urged Baggy. "There's something important I want to tell you—"

"Rats!"

"I want your advice, Racke!" shouted Baggy urgently. "I've got a wonderful idea for making some money—"

"We don't want to hear it!" said Racke, as he coasted past. "You can go to the dickens, Trimble!"

He strongly suspected that Baggy's idea for making money would involve a certain amount of shelling-out on Racke's part. He knew what Baggy Trimble's schemes were like. So the two Shell fellows cycled past, and Baggy was left on the edge of the ditch—where he leapt wildly in order to escape being run over.

"Yah! Rotters!" he hooted. "I shan't let you into this scheme now! I'll do it all myself!"

"You have our blessing!" sang out Racke.

"Mouldy bouncers!" growled Baggy, as he watched the two black sheep turning a bend. "I only need about a quid, and I can make this idea a huge success. Oh, well, I might be able to work it without Racke's rotten money! Blow him!"

He leaned disconsolately on a gateway, and then his gaze suddenly fell upon a scarecrow which reposed in a field two or three hundred yards away. Baggy's eyes lit up.

"My only hat!" he gasped. "The very thing! Why should I hire special clothes when I can find them here—on this giddy scarecrow?"

He climbed the gate, looked cautiously up and down, and then rolled off across the meadow, making a bee-line for that scarecrow. His eyes were glittering with anticipation and he was flushed with excitement.

In the meantime, Racke and Clampe continued on their way, forgetting all about Baggy Trimble. And when they arrived in Wayland, Racke led the way to a quiet side street and jumped off his machine in front of a small, select-looking house.

"This is the place," said Racke.

They both left their bicycles in the front garden, and knocked at the door. A stoutish lady answered them, and she had an inquiring look in her eye.

"Is this where Mr. Barker lives?" asked Racke. "He's stayin' here for the week, isn't he?"

"Why, yes, to be sure," replied the lady. "Young Mr. Barker is in his room now. Come in!"

And a minute later Racke and Clampe were ushered into a sitting-room, where they found young Mr. Barker lounging on an old-fashioned sofa, busy with his saxophone and an oilcan. He put them aside and grinned cheerfully.

"Hallo, Aubrey, old kid!" he said. "Didn't expect to see me in your neighbourhood, did you? Who's this—one of your pals? Pleased to meet you!"

Clampe was introduced, and Racke brought out his cigarettes.

"Naughty boy!" laughed Barker. "I thought smoking was strictly prohibited?"

"So it is," said Racke. "But we're safe enough here, aren't we?"

"My dear chap, you can smoke your head off if you like," invited Barker good-naturedly. "It's nothing to do with me. If you'd care for a solo on the saxophone—"

"Thanks all the same, but is it really necessary?" asked Racke hastily.

SEE HOW MANY YOU CAN DISCOVER, BOYS!

HIDDEN NAMES!



This week, by way of variety, we are introducing the names of a number of characters at Rookwood School, most of whom appear in our serial story—"THE ROOKWOOD DICTATOR." See how many names you can "spot" in the following sentences! The solutions will appear in our next issue.

1. Having raced downstairs, the new "Co." meets every morning to negotiate a jape on the doddering old porter.
2. How ardently the Rookwooders play footer! They shape elegantly in their jerseys and shorts, and are seldom guilty of mugging a goal.
3. "I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby"—that is my theme to-night. Tenor and alto neatly harmonise.
4. Wherever we go we relish the scenery; on a smart, racy motor-bike, or in a car, the world seems wonderful.
5. Of great detectives, surely the monarch is Holmes. We know lesser lights, but none so brilliant as he. Shun evil, lest you fall into his hands.
6. Tom Anderson tramped wearily till he reached the town's end; then Tom acknowledged he felt "whacked."

Barker laughed.

"Perhaps you're right!" he admitted. "There were a few complaints from the neighbours yesterday, when I was practising. It's a funny thing how people don't appreciate good music. You'll have to come round this evening and listen to the whole band."

"We'd like to—but I don't think it'll be possible," replied Racke, shaking his head. "Our Head is so beastly old-fashioned. Dance-halls are absolutely out of bounds. In fact, if we were seen in one of them it would mean a flogging, and perhaps we should get sacked."

Barker shook his head.

"I don't envy you kids," he said. "It must be rotten, living in a public school like St. Jim's. Restrictions here and restrictions there—until you're like a lot of prisoners."

"Yes, it's a bit rotten, takin' it all round," said Racke. "Of course, we ignore the rules now and again—when it's safe. We're all right here, for example. This is a respectable house, and—"

"I'm a respectable chap, eh?" chuckled Barker. "All the same, you wouldn't like one of your masters to pop in and see you now, would you?"

Racke became thoughtful as he sat in one of the easy-chairs smoking his cigarette. In fact, he was so thoughtful that Clampe grew impatient.

"What's the matter with you, Racke?" he demanded. "I thought you were goin' to suggest a game, or something?"

Racke started.

"It's all right—I was only thinkin' of Castleton," he replied. "If we could only trick him into visitin' this dance-hall, and then tell the Head—"

"Oh, forget Castleton!" interrupted Clampe impatiently. "For goodness' sake, give the chap a rest!"

Barker looked up curiously.

"Castleton?" he repeated. "I've heard of a chap named Castleton—but he can't be the same one as you're referring to."

"How do you mean?" asked Racke curiously.

"Well, that fellow I'm talking about wouldn't mind visiting any old dance-hall," replied Barker. "In fact, during the holidays he used to go to the night clubs in London. He was nearly arrested in Piccadilly once for being mixed up in a brawl—"

"By gad!" shouted Racke. "It's the same fellow!"

"Can't be!" said Barker. "The Castleton I've heard about is a regular young blood! A goer of the first water! Nothing is too fast for him!"

"That's right!" said Racke eagerly. "There you are, Clampe! Didn't I tell you all along that Castleton is a reformed blade? Didn't I tell you that he's been spooin' everybody?"

"Reformed, is he?" asked Barker. "About time, too! By the way he was going on, he was heading for the dogs!"

Racke was quivering with eagerness.

"But how do you know this?" he asked. "Have you met this fellow, Castleton? Do you know him?"

"I don't exactly know him," replied Barker. "But Willis does."

"Willis?"

"A young fellow in our band," replied Barker. "Plays the banjo."

"I suppose this Willis met Castleton in London, eh?"

"Wrong?" laughed Barker. "As a matter of fact, Willis used to be at the same grammar school as Castleton. He was a monitor there. His people are furious because he joined our jazz band, but he doesn't care a snap. He even chucked up his prospects so that he could—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Racke. "You say that this chap Willis used to be a monitor at Castleton's old grammar school?"

"Yes."

"How long ago?"

"Only last term," replied Barker. "He practically ran away from home—and I admire him for it. His people wanted to send him into the engineering, or something idiotic like that. But Willis is a musician; and he means to hoe his own row. He knows Castleton better than I know you, Racke."

Racke sat back in his chair, his eyes glittering.

"I'd like to meet this chap Willis," he said slowly. "So he was at Walsing Grammar School with Castleton, eh?"

Barker shook his head.

"Not Walsing Grammar School," he replied. "That wasn't the name."

"Not Walsing?"

"No. It was another grammar school," said Barker. "Let me see—Yes, I've got it! Barton Grammar School. That was the name of the place. Willis was a monitor there, last term."

Racke jumped to his feet.

"Then—then this explains a lot!" he said excitedly. "Not

Walsing Grammar School, eh? Then Castleton must have been fooling everybody—just as I said from the very start! No wonder we couldn't get much information!"

"You seem pretty interested in the man?" said Barker, with a stare.

"I want to get even with him!" snapped Racke. "I hate the chap—loathe him! And if only I can expose him in his true colours I shall be thunderin' pleased. I'm sick of him and his goody-goody ways. Since he's been at St. Jim's he's turned over a new leaf—or he's supposed to have turned over a new leaf. But I believe he's foolin' the fellows, and laughin' up his sleeve all the time."

"Well, I daresay you'll get quite a lot of information out of Willis," replied Barker. "You ought to, considering that they were both at the same school together. Willis isn't much more than seventeen himself, although he looks older. A good player, too. We wouldn't like to lose him."

"Is he a goer?" asked Clampe.

Barker grinned.

"A goer?" he repeated. "There's nothing that you can teach Willis, believe me! And, according to all I hear, he learned most of it from your pal Castleton!"

"I say, old man, could we meet this Willis?" asked Racke eagerly. "Is he here—in the town?"

"Of course he is," replied the other. "He's got lodgings lower down the street. He often pops in here."

"I'd love to meet him," said Racke. "I—I was wonderin' if you would be good enough to introduce us, Barker. I want to question Willis about Castleton. I want to find out all the information I can."

Barker glanced at the clock.

"He ought to be in now," he said. "He was going to do some practising this afternoon, so he's bound to be available. Would you like me to fetch him?"

"Thanks awfully!" said Racke.

"That's all right—it'll only take me a minute," replied Barker, rising to his feet. "You fellows stay here, and I'll bring him round. It might be a good idea, too—because he'll make a fourth. Then we can have a few rounds of solo-whist, eh? Or perhaps a rubber of bridge. Anything to while the afternoon away."

Barker went out, and Racke paced the sitting-room, his eyes gleaming.

"You're crazy!" growled Clampe. "Why the dickens can't you leave Castleton alone? This'll only lead to more trouble, Racke! Far better to have a quiet game, and to—"

"Rot!" interrupted Racke savagely. "Here's my chance to show up this rotter as he deserves! And I'm not goin' to let it slip through my fingers! It's the chance I've been waitin' for for weeks!"

And he could hardly contain his impatience. He went to the window, and looked up and down the street—waiting for Barker to come back with the fellow who had been a monitor at Castleton's old school!

Another little misunderstanding!

How was Aubrey Racke to know that it was Alan Castleton who had attended Barton Grammar School—Alan Castleton who had been on such friendly terms with Willis? Arthur Castleton, of course, had come from Walsing Grammar School, as he had always stated.

But this little mistake was liable to lead to a few more complications!

CHAPTER 7.

Planning a Little Surprise!

HERE we are!"

Barker came into the sitting-room of the lodging-house, and with him was a tall young fellow, who certainly looked older than seventeen. He was not a very pleasant youth, either. He was thin, weedy, and his face was pasty. There were bags under his eyes, too, and it was quite evident that he had been "leading the life." It was small wonder that his parents were annoyed with him. They regarded it as no sort of career for him to enter a jazz band—and a very third-rate band at that. But Willis, no doubt, like many another young fool, believed that he was displaying a proper amount of the modern independence.

"A couple of young fellows from St. Jim's," said Barker, waving his hand towards Racke and Clampe. "I've known one of them for some time—Aubrey. This is Willis, Aubrey. Get together!"

Racke and Clampe were left to introduce themselves, and within a few minutes they were all chatting agreeably. There was a rather curious expression in Willis' eyes—for Barker, no doubt, had given him a few hints as to what Racke wanted.

In fact, Willis proved this by his own words, a minute later.

"What's this you want to hear about Castleton?" he asked.

"You know him, don't you?" asked Racke. "I mean, he was at the same school?"

"He was at Barton Grammar School with me, if that's what you mean," replied Willis. "A hole of a place, take it from me! I was infernally glad to get away from it. My people wanted to send me to Cambridge, but I didn't think much of it. I had the opportunity of joinin' this band, so—"

"Yes, so I understand," interrupted Racke. "But about Castleton. If you were one of his pals, Willis, you probably know a good many things about him, eh?"

"I do!" agreed Willis, nodding. "He was one of the worst goers at Barton. How on earth he escaped the sack beats me. He was nearly on the point of being booted out time after time. But he had the most astounding luck. Always managed to slip out of it, somehow—always succeeded in foolin' the masters."

"Well, he's at St. Jim's now," said Racke.

"Yes, I understood that he was bein' sent to one of the big public schools," nodded Willis. "He was talkin' to me about it once. Yes, and I remember he said it was in Sussex, too. So he's here, at St. Jim's, eh? I'll bet he's makin' the fur fly, isn't he? Paintin' the place red, eh?"

Racke scowled.

"He's doin' nothin' of the sort," he replied. "At St. Jim's he's a kind of saint. He looks upon cigarettes with horror—he wouldn't touch a pack of cards with a barge-pole! An' as for puttin' a bet on a horse—why, the very thought of it makes him shudder."

Willis stared.

"Then this chap has changed!" he said, with conviction.

"In fact, he can't be the same fellow. It must be another Castleton."

"But it isn't," said Racke. "Banks, the bookie, recognised him—and Castleton tried to make out that he'd never seen Banks in all his life!"

And Racke gave a close description of Arthur Castleton—the colour of his hair, the colour of his eyes, his facial appearance, and every other detail. At the end of it, Willis nodded.

"Yes, that's the man all right," he agreed. "You've described Castleton to a tee. But it's a bit of a staggerer to learn that he's turned over a new leaf. Of course, it's high time that he did. If he continued as he was goin', he would have ended in a reformatory!"

Barker nodded.

"There's nothin' surprisin' in it," he remarked. "I expect Castleton found that he was goin' the pace too thoroughly. So when he went to St. Jim's he put the brake on. Lots of fellows do that sort of thing. An' when they change—well, they become models of everything that's good. It's a kind of fever, I suppose, like a crook who gets the religious mania, and then reforms."

"That's just what I think," said Racke. "But you can't get away from the fact that Castleton was a blood at Barton Grammar School. An' I want to show him up in his true colours. I want St. Jim's to know that this rotter isn't so good as he makes himself out to be."

Barker frowned slightly.

"Why trouble?" he asked gruffly. "If the fellow has turned over a new leaf, and is trying to live decently, why disturb him? Wouldn't it be better to forget all this scandal? No need to be vindictive, Racke. Leave the man alone!"

But Racke shook his head.

"You don't understand," he said. "I've got a grudge against Castleton. No need to go into details, but I owe him an awful lot! It happens to be his birthday to-day—"

"That's right!" nodded Willis. "I've just remembered

the date. Last year, at Barton, we had a little celebration. Castleton nearly got squiffy, what with drinking champagne and one thing and another. Yes, this is his birthday."

Racke's eyes gleamed.

"Then that proves it beyond question!" he said gloatingly. "It proves that he's the same Castleton, eh?"

"Of course it proves it!" said Barker. "At the same time—"

"They are makin' a special party for him at St. Jim's," continued Racke. "All the goody-goody chaps, you know! They're lionising him, an' treatin' him like a young lord! I was wonderin', Willis, if you could come along to St. Jim's this evenin'?"

"Come to St. Jim's?"

"Yes," said Racke. "I'd like you to meet Castleton face to face—at this party! By gad, what a shock for the others! Don't you see?"

"Not exactly."

"But it's obvious!" went on Racke eagerly. "You walk in on this party, shake hands with Castleton, and start talkin' about old times. He can't deny it, because you know him—you were at the same school with him. Don't you see what a show-up it will be? He won't be able to pretend—"

"I can realise what your game is!" interrupted Willis. "But it can't be done. Have you forgotten that I'm due to play in the band this evening?"

"What time do you start?" asked Racke.

"Half-past eight."

"And when must you be at the dance hall?"

"Oh, it's all right if I get there just on the stroke of half-past."

"Then it's easy!" said Racke, his eyes glittering more than ever. "This birthday party will be in full swing at about seven. If you walk in then, it'll be fine. Supposin' you leave St. Jim's at half-past seven—after you've shown up this Castleton—you'll still be able to get away back to Wayland in time for your show. I'll pay the cost of a taxi for you—both ways!" Willis considered.

"Of course, I could do it all right," Willis admitted. "But I don't see why I should butt in on this birthday party. It's none of my business."

"But it's mine!" urged Racke. "I particularly want you to do it, old man. Be a sport, you know! You've only got to meet Castleton face to face. He'll be exposed for what he is, a hypocrite and a fraud!"

Willis was thoughtful for a time.

"Oh, all right, if you're particularly keen on it," he said at length. "And especially if you're willing to pay the taxi fares. I don't mind, and, in a way, I'd rather like to have a look at a school like St. Jim's. I'll do it for you."

"Good man!" said Racke eagerly. "Thanks awfully!"

"I don't believe in these reformed bloods," went on Willis, with a frown. "And if I know anything of Castleton, he's doing it all with an object. He's a tricky young blighter, and he twisted me at cards more than once! And I may as well tell you that he owes me three quid. No reason why I shouldn't go along to St. Jim's and collect it."

Barker chuckled.

"So that's why you're agreeing to this kid's proposal?" he asked. "I thought there was something behind it!"

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"Well, three quid is three quid!" growled Willis. "He can't very well refuse to pay me, if I ask for it in front of all his guests. He'll probably deny that he owes me the money, but it's a debt of honour."

"All the better!" said Racke. "A card-playin' debt—eh? Gad, that'll show him up fine!"

"Talkin' about card-playin'," said Clampe sarcastically, "wasn't there some idea of us havin' a rubber of bridge this afternoon?"

"Good man!" said Barker, rising to his feet and taking a pack of cards from the mantelpiece. "Let's forget about Castleton, and enjoy a quiet game."

And they settled round the table, and were soon playing. But Aubrey Racke, for once, did not take much interest in the cards.

He was thinking of the triumph that would be his that evening. Willis had agreed to go to St. Jim's, and to ask Castleton for the money that he—Castleton—had lost at cards! And Willis would make all sorts of references to Castleton's previous escapades. And all at that crowded birthday party!

Seldom, indeed, had Racke felt so light-hearted. Banks, the bookie, could have shown Castleton up in the same way, but it was impossible to take Banks to St. Jim's. To be seen in the man's company was risky enough, and to take him to St. Jim's was simply asking for expulsion.

But Willis was different.

Willis was a grammar school boy—a monitor who had been with Castleton the previous term. He could even be introduced to the masters at St. Jim's with impunity! Nobody could raise any objection to an old grammar school boy paying a friendly visit!

Racke and Clampe stayed to tea with Barker, and Racke decided that they would all go back together in the hired taxi. He would time it to arrive at St. Jim's at seven o'clock, to the minute—by which time the birthday party would be in full swing.

It was particularly fitting that this meeting should take place to-day—on Castleton's birthday! Never before had Castleton been held in such high esteem by his Form-fellows. He was at the pinnacle of his popularity.

And Racke could see that he would fall down in one crash—he would topple off his pedestal, and he would be exposed for what he actually was!

CHAPTER 8. The Telegram!

ARTHUR CASTLETON was very happy.

All the clouds had gone, and it seemed to him that his life at St. Jim's would now be peaceful. There seemed very little danger of Alan's shady reputation harming him any more.

For the first week or two he had had a good deal of trouble, but now everything was all serene.

Not only his own Form-fellows, but the Fourth were showing a great friendliness towards him. They were getting up a great birthday party in his honour—and Arthur did not fail to appreciate the compliment.

Tom Merry approached him as he strolled about in the quad, and Tom was dressed in football attire. There was no match on that afternoon, but some of the juniors were bent on putting in some practice.

"Any chance for me?" asked Castleton, as Tom Merry came up.

"Not yet, old man," replied the junior skipper. "That leg of yours is getting on well, but you mustn't strain it too much. When you saved the Head's life the other day you crushed your leg badly—"

"Oh, don't bring all that up again!" said Arthur, flushing.

"Sorry!" grinned Tom. "I forgot that you were sensitive! Still, there's no reason why you shouldn't go along to Big Side and watch the senior match. It starts in about ten minutes."

"Yes, rather!" said Arthur, his eyes sparkling. "I wanted to watch the seniors. They're playing Rookwood, aren't they?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "It ought to be a first-class game, too. After half an hour's practice I shall change and come along and watch the senior match, too."

Tom went off with a cheery nod, and Arthur gave a little sigh. He had badly wanted to indulge in some footer practice himself, but he knew that his leg was still just a little bit crooked. It would be all right on the morrow, and,

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indeed, it was quite all right to-day—in Arthur's opinion. But Tom Merry had been very emphatic.

"Heah we are, deah boy!"

Arthur turned, and found D'Arcy beaming upon him. The swell of St. Jim's was so effusive that Arthur was rather afraid of him. It gratified him to know that everybody was so decent to him, but Gussy's particular type of friendliness was liable to become embarrassing.

"I twust you are comin' along to Big Side, deah boy?" went on D'Arcy. "Theah is a wippin' game this afternoon. St. Jim's versus Wookwood, you know."

"Yes. I wouldn't miss it for worlds," said Arthur.

"I am vewy much afraid that I shall have to leave befoah the game is ovah," continued Gussy. "Theah are certain pwepawations to make in the Wag. I might as well tell you, Castleton, that we are pwepawin' a wathah pwiceless spwead in your honah!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Linton, as the door of the Form-room opened, and Mr. Railton, followed by the old vagrant and the ample figure of P.-c. Crump, entered the room. "I hope you will pardon this interruption, Mr. Linton, but the matter is rather serious," said the Housemaster quietly. "I shall not detain your Form for more than a minute or so!" (See Chapter 4.)



"Oh, don't make it too elaborate, Gussy," said Arthur earnestly. "There's no need to make a fuss—just because it's my birthday. I'd much rather have just an ordinary feed—something modest."

"Kindly wemembah, Castleton, that this affair is nothin' to do with you," said Arthur Augustus. "You are merely the guest of honah! It doesn't matter how much you pwotest, we shall go ahead with our pwepawations just the same."

And D'Arcy, having spotted his chums of Study No. 6 at that moment, hurried off. He wanted to rope them in, as there was a lot of work to be done in the Rag. Gussy was



determined to make that party a huge success. It had been his idea in the first place, and no stone was to be left unturned.

Arthur remained in the quad, and just as he was thinking about going indoors for a few minutes, preparatory to making his way to Big Side, a telegraph messenger arrived on his red bicycle. He jumped from his machine and produced a buff envelope.

"There's a telegram for Master Castleton," he announced.

"Eh?" said Arthur, who had not been taking much interest. "For me?"

"That's right!" said the telegraph boy. "You're Master Castleton, aren't you? Here you are, young gent."

He handed the telegram over, and Arthur looked at it in surprise—and in a state of anxiety, too. Who could be sending him a telegram? Perhaps it was from his father, or from his mother— But still, what was the use of conjecturing? A glance at the superscription told him it was certainly for him—"Arthur Castleton, School House, St. Jim's." He gave the messenger a shilling tip, and then turned aside.

A moment later his face was expressive of consternation. He had read the telegram, and he did not seem particularly pleased.

"From Alan!" he murmured. "I can't understand it! Why does he want me to meet him at Abbotsford this afternoon? He says I can just catch the afternoon train—and I believe I can, too. He wants me to take photographs of the Shell and the Fourth, if I can get hold of them. Why? What on earth does it mean?"

He pondered over the telegram in wonder.

Of course, it was impossible for him to tell any of the other fellows. He was not supposed to have a twin brother at all! So he could not explain that he had had a wire, and that he had to go to Abbotsford to meet his twin! In fact, Alan had made it quite clear, in the wire, that the whole affair was to be kept strictly private. There was an element of mystery in that communication. It breathed of extreme urgency—and Arthur was such a good-natured fellow that it never occurred to him for a moment to refuse Alan's request.

"I shall have to go, of course," he murmured, frowning. "There's no time to send a telegram to tell Alan not to come! He's probably on his way by this time!"

He was glad that Alan had named Abbotsford as the meeting place. It was quite a good distance from St. Jim's, and there was no chance of anybody seeing them together there—anybody, that is, who was likely to know them. Arthur had no cause to be proud of his twin brother.

But he was greatly worried.

Would he be able to get back in time for the birthday party? It would be terrible if he arrived late—after all the trouble that the fellows were taking. It would be a slight on them—practically an insult. And he wouldn't be able to explain his lateness, either! That was the worst of it.

He looked at the clock, and found that he had ample time to get down to the station before the afternoon train left. He would be able to take it easily. And perhaps it would be better to go straight away, so that he would avoid any awkward questions.

He thought for a while, and smiled. Of course, it was his birthday, and Alan's birthday, too. No doubt, Alan was feeling in a very friendly mood, and, as it was a half-holiday, he had thought it a good scheme to meet his twin brother, so that they could have a little celebration together. That seemed to be the most likely explanation.

As for the photographs, no doubt Alan wanted to see what sort of chaps there were at St. Jim's. Arthur could always be trusted to think of some innocent explanation. His mind was not capable of evil suspicions.

He hurried indoors and soon came out again, wearing his overcoat, his muffler, and his cap. He started off towards the gates, but was pulled up by a hail from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The chums of Study No. 6 were bearing down upon him, and a few other juniors were hanging about, too.

"Heah we are, Castleton, old scout!" said D'Arcy. "Just goin' off to Big Side? Theah's plenty of time befoah the match starts!"

"I—I shall have to miss the match, I'm afraid," said Arthur, colouring.

"Miss it?" asked Blake. "My dear chap, you don't realise the importance of this match! You can't afford to miss it, you chump!"

"He is only spoofin' us," smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Not five minutes ago Castleton told me that—"

"Yes, I know, Gussy, but—but I've changed my mind," said Arthur quietly.

"Bai Joye! Whatevah for?"

"I'm going out instead," replied Arthur. "I shall just have time to get to the station—"

"Station!" broke in Herries. "What the merry dickens are you going to the station for?"

"Well, people generally go to the station to catch a train," said Blake. "It's none of our bizney, Castleton, but—"

"I'm going to Abbotsford," said Arthur. "If I'm a little late for the birthday-party this evening, I hope you'll excuse me—but I'll try to get back in heaps of time."

"Gweat Scott!" said Gussy, staring. "Weally, Castleton, this is remarkably sudden! An' why are you goin' off to Abbotsford?"

"I—I— Well, I've suddenly decided to go," replied Arthur, with such obvious embarrassment that the juniors were staring at him in wonder. "But I shall be back soon after tea, if I can manage it. It's beastly having to miss the senior footer match, but it can't be helped."

Arthur hardly knew what to say. He could not explain; it was even impossible for him to say why he was going to Abbotsford at all. So far as the St. Jim's fellows were concerned, he had no twin brother. They knew nothing whatever about Alan, and Arthur did not want them to know, either. His one desire was to keep Alan and Alan's shady doings from the ears of his school fellows.

So he was in the awkward position of compulsory secrecy—and Arthur hated secrecy. He wanted to explain everything to these good-natured chaps, but it was impossible for him to do so. He would have to go off, leaving them in wonder. And even when he came back it would still be out of the question for him to explain. It would just be another of those strange little incidents which had continually happened since he had come to St. Jim's.

And it was Alan's fault again. Alan was a beastly nuisance! Why couldn't he keep to himself? Why couldn't he— But Arthur thrust these thoughts aside. They weren't fair. Perhaps Alan was a much better chap now. Perhaps he was doing splendidly at St. Frank's, and Arthur would be glad of the opportunity to have a quiet talk with his brother.

Not once had Alan written from St. Frank's—not once had he sent any report of how he was getting on. So this meeting would come in useful. The only worrying point about it was that Arthur would have to keep it secret.

"Do as you like, of course," Blake was saying. "But it seems a dotty idea to me—to go off to Abbotsford when there's a big match on at St. Jim's. Come on, you chaps! Let's get along to Big Side."

"But, weally, Castleton—" began Gussy.

"I'm awfully sorry, old man, but I hope you'll excuse me," said Arthur earnestly. "I'll try not to be late this evening."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Don't bother him, Gussy," interrupted Blake. "Can't you see that he's determined? He's going to Abbotsford, and it's none of our bizney, either. We don't want to question him as to why he's going, or who he's going to meet."

"Bai Jove! Is he goin' to meet somebody?"

"Well, he wouldn't go to Abbotsford just to look round the town," retorted Blake tartly.

"No, I wathah think you are wight," agreed D'Arcy. "Hovevah, if you are determined, Castleton, there is nothin' for me to say. But I twust you will wemembah

that we are gettin' up a vewy special party for you, an' that it will be fighthfully bad form if you are late."

"I know that, Gussy, and I shall do my utmost to be on time!" declared Arthur. "Still, I'm telling you in advance, aren't I? If I can get back by tea-time I will; but I may not catch the train, and the next won't land me here until nearly seven o'clock—that is, if I catch the evening train."

"Well, you'll still be in time," said Herries. "The party isn't due to start until seven."

"I shall be back by seven," declared Arthur. "So long, you chaps!"

He walked away, feeling that further conversation would only add to his embarrassment. He knew that he had created a somewhat unfavourable impression already. These fellows were wondering why he was going—they knew nothing about the telegram, thank goodness. By great good fortune Castleton had been alone in the quad when the telegraph messenger had arrived. It was quite likely that nobody else would ever know of it. And, after all, he was his own master on a half-holiday and could go where he liked. It wasn't even necessary to get a permit to go to Abbotsford. As long as he was back before calling-over, no questions would be asked.

So he walked rapidly to the gates and passed outside. Then he paused. Just outside in the lane a stout, short tramp was making hideous sounds on a tin whistle. It was a very battered tin whistle, and the tramp hadn't started playing until Arthur actually appeared.

He was a weird-looking specimen, dressed in rags and tatters, and with his face covered with dirt. In fact, it was so smothered that Arthur stared at him. He had seen many tramps in his time, but he had never seen one so grimy as this individual.

"Spare a copper, guv'nor!" whined the vagrant. "I—I mean, spare half-a-crown!"

Arthur stared harder than ever. There was something familiar in that tone—something that struck a chord in his mind.

"Great Scott!" he muttered under his breath.

"Spare half-a-crown!" said the tramp eagerly. "Or—or you can make it five bob if you like!"

"I heard you the first time!" said Arthur dryly.

"I've smashed my organ, young gent!" continued the tramp. "It went busted this morning, and now I'm likely to starve. If you can make it ten bob—"

"Whoa!" said Arthur. "You're a bit speedy, aren't you?"

He looked at the tramp rather pitifully—not because he had any real sympathy for him. For he recognised behind those rags and tatters—behind that grime—the podgy form and fat face of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth!

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CHAPTER 9.

Not Very Successful!

BAGGY TRIMBLE!

After Arthur's first shock of surprise, he was rather disgusted. It was quite characteristic of the fatuous Baggy to get up a "stunt" of this sort. He had taken a tip from old Mr. Weggs, and was idiotic enough to believe that he could make a success of it! There was no other junior in the whole of St. Jim's who would have had such misplaced optimism.

A collection had been made for Mr. Weggs, and Arthur D'Arcy had contributed a pound note—and Castleton had added a fiver. In addition to this, quite a number of other juniors had put half-crowns and shillings into the hat. Trimble thought it was such a good scheme that he had decided to adopt it himself. As usual, he was hard up, and any means of obtaining money—so long as it was new to the juniors—was favourable to him.

At first he had been worried about the necessary attire. He couldn't very well appear as an old vagrant, wearing Etons. No matter how he disguised his face, such clothing would give him away. But the scarecrow had provided a solution to this problem.

Baggy Trimble had borrowed the clothing from the scarecrow, and had donned it over his own attire. And now, with much dirt smeared over his face, he believed that he would be able to fool everybody into giving him money! Baggy did not seem to realise that his own identity was apparent to anybody with half an eye.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur glanced round as D'Arcy appeared in the gateway, and he grinned.

"Here's another vagrant, Gussy," he said dryly. "If you're feeling in a generous mood, you might as well give him a sixpence."

"A sixpence!" roared the vagrant. "What's the good of a six—I mean, spare a copper, guv'nor! I'm a poor old tramp, without no home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't you going to give him a fiver, Castleton?" asked Monty Lowther, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, there is no need to wag the poor old chap!" he protested. "I wathah think you are twyin' to be funnay!"

"That's all right, Gussy!" said Blake. "This old tramp doesn't mind. Besides, we're going to make a collection for him later on, and we deserve something in return, don't we?"

"Yaas, wathah, but—"

"You dry up, Gussy—and get into the background!" said Herries firmly. "We're going to have some fun with this old merchant!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Play up, tramp!" sang out Blake. "Let's have a tune!"

Baggy Trimble drew a deep breath, and commenced on his tin whistle. The sounds he produced were excruciating. He knew about as much of playing on a tin whistle as he knew of honesty. And that, in other words, meant that he knew nothing.

WHILE Alfred Quantrell, the Bradford winger, was on his summer holidays, he made a habit of walking four or five miles before breakfast every morning. No wonder he started the season "fit as a fiddle," to use his own words.

Mr. A. E. Fogg, one of our best-known referees, thinks that the standard of refereeing is higher than it used to be. He admits that there is still room for improvement, though. Referees can't afford to stand still.

Here is rather a surprising tribute to lawn tennis made by a famous footballer, Micky O'Brien, of Derby County: "There was a time when tennis was regarded as a 'mug's game,' but it is one of the most strenuous recreations we have."

When the Blackburn Rovers' club recently made it known that they were prepared to consider the qualifications of young players for their third team, they received nearly three hundred applications. Another First Division club recently had applications for a trial from forty half-backs. Footballers may be scarce, but there is no scarcity of people with ambition.

William Fairhurst is the left-back with Middlesbrough, and his brother David is a left-back with Walsall. There would seem to be a family liking for this position, as their father used to play at left-back.

There are two players named George Richardson in the Hartlepool United eleven. They are not related. Clubs which sign on two players of the same name have obviously no thought for the fellows who write for the newspapers.

The Burnley left wing consists of Devine and Page. Our office-boy has hit on this, and suggests that they ought to write a Divine Page in football history this season.

There are over twenty cases in big football of brothers being connected with the same club.

"Not this time!" replied Arthur. "I'm in a hurry, and I can't stop. I've got to catch my train."

He went off, and the crowd of juniors collected round Baggy Trimble, and Arthur was momentarily forgotten.

"Now then, old chap, give us a tune!" invited Blake.

"Play us the latest fox-trot!" said Levison, with a grin.

"Buck up, old chap!"

Baggy Trimble's eyes were gleaming with satisfaction. Evidently the juniors had not recognised him! They were inviting him to play—and that meant that later on there would be a collection!

Baggy quite overlooked the fact that his leg was being pulled. Everybody—with, perhaps, one exception—had seen through his disguise on the instant. But they were keeping up the deception. There was no reason why they shouldn't have a little fun at Trimble's expense. He deserved to be ragged, anyhow, for his nerve in coming to the school in disguise.

The one exception was the scandalised Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.



It is rather surprising to recall that it is thirty years since Sheffield United won the championship of the First Division. However, there are some clubs almost as old who have never yet won it. Arsenal, for instance.

Quite close to the ground of a certain prominent football club there is a house which has this notice in the window: "Comfortable board residence for two or more footballers, or any respectable men."

While most clubs are hunting for even one good centre-forward, Reading have four men for this position who have all gained a big reputation.

There is nothing new in football. The white ball idea tried before the start of this season was supposed to be very new. Yet a game with a whitened ball, and in artificial light, was played in Glasgow nearly thirty years ago. The trouble with that white ball—and all the other white balls—is that there is no way of keeping them clean. When the experiment was first tried pails of water were placed round the pitch into which the ball was dipped from time to time.

One of the mysteries of football is why players who wear striped shirts look bigger than those who are dressed in a shirt of one colour. Yet it is so.

There are two players in the Swindon Town team—both inside-forwards—who have played with six different clubs as professionals. They are Flood and Roberts.

It is often said that Haines, the Portsmouth centre-forward, knows how to plough his way through opposing defenders. He ought to do, for he is a farmer by profession.

Bolton Wanderers have the record "long service" team. Of the men who regularly appear in the side only three have not yet stayed the necessary five years to qualify for a benefit. Vizard, the outside-left, has had three such benefits.

"Hi!" howled Lowther. "That's enough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rather think we'll excuse you from playing, old chap," said Blake. "We'll make a collection, and, with luck, you'll be able to buy a bar of soap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I protest against these insultin' remarks!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "I will admit the twamp is fwrightfully dirtay, and—"

"Then, if he's frightfully dirty, he ought to have a wash," said Blake. "That's settled. So I vote that we make a collection. What do you other chaps say?"

"Yes, rather!" replied the crowd promptly.

Baggy Trimble listened, and his heart was thumping rapidly. That was even better than he had hoped for. For, deep down within him, he had half believed that he would be spotted. But here the fellows were thinking about making a collection! The scheme was working!

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"Spare a copper, young gents!" he whined. "I haven't had a bite to eat for nearly two days—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old living skeleton!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys!" said Gussy, scandalised. "Is it necessary to widdle the poor old boundah?"

"You dry up, old son, and whack out your contribution," said Blake. "Come along—something substantial."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I think a pound note will do, Blake, deah boy."

"Then you'd better think again!" said Blake.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Baggy Trimble, looking eagerly at Gussy. "A— a pound note is just what I was expecting— I mean, I was hoping— I was really relying on you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble didn't quite like that general laugh, but he suspected nothing. He did not know that Blake and Monty Lowther had winked heavily to all the other fellows, and that this collection was liable to provide a little surprise. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in spite of his protests, was pushed to the background, and he was kept there. In the meantime the collection went on—Blake himself going round with the cap.

"You want somethin' from me, dear man?" asked Ralph Reckness Cardew, as Blake approached him. "Certainly! It is one of my greatest delights to help the poor! I am in a generous mood!"

"Good man!" said Blake heartily.

He grinned as he noted what Cardew had dropped into the cap, and he passed on to the other fellows. And Baggy Trimble, in the meantime, was looking on eagerly. He had forgotten all about his tin whistle—he had forgotten that he was supposed to give some sort of return for this collection.

"Here we are!" said Blake heartily, as he came forward with the cap. "We've made a big collection, old fellow, and, with luck, you might be able to raise sufficient cash to get a bar of soap. I'm a bit doubtful of it, but you can never tell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble took the cap eagerly.

"Oh, thanks awfully!" he gasped. "This is jolly ripping of you chaps— I—I mean, thanks, guv'nor! You're all real young gents! I've allus said— Hallo! What the— Great Guns!"

He stared into the cap in blank amazement.

He had been expecting to see many coins there—most of them half-crowns, florins, and shillings. He had even hoped that there might be a ten-shilling note or two. Nobody would be mean enough to give mere coppers.

But the actual contents of that cap gave Baggy a frightful start.

His gaze rested upon a large number of old buttons and one or two odds and ends of lead pencils. A couple of farthings, with holes in them, were in the collection, too—to say nothing of a squashed caramel, a peppermint lozenge, and two or three pieces of bent wire. Taken as a whole, that collection was worth, perhaps, a halfpenny. And Baggy Trimble would have found it very difficult even to raise this sum. He stared into the cap like a dazed being.

"What—what's this?" he asked blankly.

"This is the collection!" said Blake. "Haven't we been generous?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus came pushing forward, and he gazed into the cap.

"Good gwacious!" he ejaculated. "What evah is this, Blake?"

"It's the collection!" explained Blake.

"Then I wegard you all as a set of wottahs!" said Gussy indignantly. "It is altogether too bad to wag the poor old twamp like this!"

"But, my dear old Gussy—"

"I disapprove of the whole pwoccedin'," continued Arthur Augustus coldly. "It is a twavesty of chawity! I shall make a point of givin' this poor old twamp a pound-note by way of compensation!"

"Oh, thank'ee, young sir!" said Baggy eagerly. "I knew I could rely on you—"

"Chuck it, Gussy!" said Herries. "You're not going to give this fathead a quid, are you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Your mistake, Gussy—you're not!" said Blake. "Keep your pound notes in your pocket! Now, then," he added, turning to Baggy Trimble, "scoot!"

"Oh, really—"

"Bunk!" roared Blake. "We've fooled you, you tricky young ass, but if you get up to any more of these games we'll jolly well bump you!"

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"And boot you round the quad, too!" said Levison.

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus regarded the juniors in amazement.

"I pwotest!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Good gwacious! How dare you tweat this old twamp in such a shabby mannah?"

"Yes, how dare you?" roared Trimble, recovering from the shock of his disappointment. "You—you rotters! Gussy was going to give me a quid just now—"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, staring at the "tramp."

"I—I mean, this 'ere young gent 'was goin' to be generous!" added Baggy hastily. "He's one of the kindest-earted young gents—"

"Twimble!" ejaculated Gussy blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Twimble, you twickay young wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "It is you all the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy—always the keen sleuth!" grinned Blake. "So unsuspecting that you didn't even take a second look! My dear ass, we could tell that it was Trimble all the time! That's why we ragged him!"

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy, adjusting his eyeglass and staring at Trimble in disgust. "No wondah you tweated him with such short shwift! I had no ideah that Twimble could be so wascally! I wegard this as a fighful exhibition of wantonness! A St. Jim's chap dwessin' up as a twamp and beggin' for alms!"

"Disgusting!" said Monty Lowther. "And look how dirty he is, too! All dirty tramps ought to be washed! How about chucking him into the ditch on the other side of the road?"

"Rather!"

"Jolly good idea!"

"Yah!" howled Baggy Trimble, dodging away.

"Yarob! Don't touch me, you rotters!"

They made a rush at him, and Baggy bolted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After all, that collection of buttons and things was better than a bumping for him," said Blake grinning. "He won't get up to any more of these games, the unscrupulous young rascal! And Gussy was going to give him a quid, the poor simpleton!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Even Castleton saw through Baggy's disguise!" put in Percy Mellish. "But he went off before the fun started—to catch his giddy train. I hear he's gone to Abbotsford."

"You shouldn't believe all you hear," said Levison shortly.

"But it's true!" insisted Mellish. "And I'm not so sure about Castleton, either. Why has he gone to Abbotsford?"

"That's his business!" growled Blake.

"I suppose you know that there's a race-meeting on at Abbotsford to-day, don't you?" went on Mellish, with a sneer. "I don't believe in all these stories about Castleton's goodness. I'm rather inclined to agree with Racke. There's something funny about Castleton. He's foolin' you all the time—"

"Dry up, you rotter!"

"Yes, shut up, Mellish!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I can speak if I want to!" said Mellish obstinately. "I'm entitled to my own opinion. I suppose?"

"Then keep your rotten opinion to yourself!" said Manners curtly. "We don't want to hear it! It's like your beastly mind to assume that Castleton has gone to the Abbotsford Races. You haven't got an atom of proof—not a tittle of evidence—and you jump to conclusions like that! As far as I'm concerned, I'm perfectly content to take Castleton's word."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy. "Castleton is a wippah!"

"A sportsman to his fingertips," agreed Blake, nodding. "Does anybody else want to say anything against Castleton? If so, here's my fist all ready!"

And Mellish promptly shut up. "Nobody at St. Jim's would believe anything against Arthur Castleton now! He had established himself thoroughly as a good fellow, and he was accepted among all the decent fellows on his face value."

CHAPTER 10.

The Changeling!

"HALLO, Castleton, old son!" George Figgins, the lanky leader of the New House juniors, uttered that cheery remark in the dusk of the evening in Rylcombe High Street. And Castleton, who had just come from the station, paused and nodded.

"Hallo!" he said, rather awkwardly.

"Got back in good time, then?" went on Figgins. "Gussy and all those other chaps are waiting for you, you

know. Something special on this evening for your birthday."

"Yes, I know," said Castleton. "Jolly decent of them, what!"

"We shall probably look in later," remarked Fatty Wynn carelessly.

"Just in case there's any of the grub left," explained Kerr, with a grin.

"You fathead!" growled David Llewellyn Wynn.

Figgins and Kerr chuckled, and after nodding cheerily to Castleton, they went into one of the shops. And Castleton continued his way towards St. Jim's.

It was not much after six-thirty, so he would be in plenty of time for the party. He was looking very thoughtful and grave—quite different to usual. But in the dusk, Figgins & Co. had not observed this. Castleton's journey to Abbotsford had apparently affected him in some peculiar manner.

A minute later he happened to pass Kildare and Darrell, of the Sixth. And they, too, gave him a cheery word.

"How's the leg, Castleton?" asked Kildare.

"The leg?"

"Yes," said Kildare. "You surely haven't forgotten—"

"Oh, of course not," said Castleton hastily. "It's—it's fine, thanks! Getting on a treat!"

"Castleton!" said Mr. Railton. "Stand forward!" Castleton got up, the blood rushing to his cheeks. "I—I'd rather not, sir!" he said. "I didn't give—I mean—" "That's 'im!" shouted Mr. Weggs, pointing a quivering finger at Arthur. "That's the young gent what give me the five quid!"

(See Chapter 4.)

was Arthur Castleton's twin brother, and he had never been to St. Jim's in all his life before!

It was a great adventure.

And Arthur Castleton was now on his way to St. Frank's—Alan's school—on his way to walk headlong into a hornet's nest! On his way to receive the scorn and the vituperation of all the St. Frank's fellows! That was the grim truth of the situation.

For Alan had left St. Frank's because he had made the place too hot to hold him! He had fled—and was afraid to go back! And so, in his extremity, he had wired to Arthur, had met him, and had changed places with him! He had never really hoped that the dodge would work, but Arthur's good nature had been prevailed upon, and he had consented.

"Well, everything seems to be going all right," murmured Alan, as he continued his way up Rylcombe Lane. "By gad, I fooled Arthur all right! He's practically at St. Frank's by now, poor fathead! I wonder what sort of reception he'll get? They'll half slaughter him when he arrives—and I know that he's idiot enough to keep quiet. He'll never let on that he isn't me! As soft as putty—that's Arthur!"

As he walked he pondered over the events of the afternoon.



"That's good!" said the captain of St. Jim's. "Well, you'd better get a hustle on, my son! I think they're preparing a special welcome for you, or something. I hope you enjoy yourself."

"Same here!" nodded Darrell, with a friendly smile.

"Thanks!" said the Shellfellow.

He walked on, and he drew a deep breath when he found himself alone again.

"By gad!" he muttered. "I don't know any of these beggars from Adam—and yet they spotted me in a tick! It's working! It's working like a dream!"

A glitter had come into his eyes—a glitter that Arthur Castleton's eyes had never contained—a glitter which Arthur Castleton's eyes could not contain. For this wasn't Arthur at all.

The returned junior was Alan Castleton!

And Figgins & Co., and Kildare and Darrell had accepted him without a word—without a single question! This fellow, walking up to St. Jim's, was a changeling! He

He reviewed, too, the things that had been happening recently at St. Frank's. Matters had grown from bad to worse, and Alan had been compelled to flee. He had committed many unsavoury tricks, and he had aroused the ire of the entire lower school. Such fellows as Edward Oswald Handforth, Nipper, and Reggie Pitt, were dead against him—were waiting to put him through the mill when he turned up again! He had been in no fear of expulsion—but he had certainly known that his school-fellows would have made his life hardly worth living. And to this fate he had condemned the unconscious Arthur!

It seemed to weigh very lightly upon Alan's conscience, for he grinned as he continued his walk.

"It was a pretty tough job, getting the ass to agree, but he succumbed in the end!" he murmured gloatingly. "He thought it was only a joke—a game—until Saturday! But when Saturday comes, I'm dashed if I'll go back to

St. Frank's! Arthur can stay there, and good luck to him!"

He chuckled at the very thought of it. And he wondered how he, himself, would get on at St. Jim's. In all probability, Arthur had a jolly good name there. Alan knew what a thoroughly decent fellow his brother was. Besides, the very tone that Figgins & Co. had adopted—the friendliness of Kildare and Darrell—had been eloquent enough. Alan knew, already, that Arthur was a popular fellow at St. Jim's. And he was now in Arthur's shoes. In a way, he was actually Arthur himself. At all events, he would have to act the part of Arthur, and it almost came to the same thing.

He was so relieved at the success of his trick that his only sensation at the moment, was one of triumph. True, a tiny voice whispered within him that he had committed a dirty trick—a despicable act. But that voice was so small that Alan hardly heard it. And he was so excited that when he did hear the faintest whisper of it he thrust it aside, and ignored it.

The simple truth was, Alan Castleton was a rotter!

He was the fellow who had known Banks, the bookie! He was the fellow who Willis, the Barton School junior, had known as a "goey young blood!" Both Banks and Willis had exaggerated Alan's habits, but there was no doubt that Alan was several kinds of a young rascal. This very act of his, now, proved that beyond question.

and, in fact, all the prominent fellows. He had tried to memorise them. The names were difficult, too! They were all so different to the names at St. Frank's. There were bound to be one or two slips at first, but Alan had sufficient confidence in himself to overcome these difficulties. Once over the first hour or two, and everything would be all serene.

"The best of it is, even if I do make one or two slips, nobody will take any notice," he told himself. "They'll accept me as Arthur without any question, and they'll simply think I'm absent-minded if I call one of the chaps by his wrong name. I can pretend to be tired—got a headache! Anyhow, I'll make some excuse if I come a cropper over one of the names, or something. Trust me to do the thing properly!"

He chuckled again, and for a moment he had a mental picture of Arthur entering St. Frank's—and receiving the trouble that had been prepared for himself—Alan!

And then, again, that small voice of conscience, tried to make itself heard.

The picture of Arthur entering St. Frank's, and finding himself in a sea of trouble, made Alan realise that he had played a low-down trick. Would Arthur allow it? Or would he come back to St. Jim's, and face his brother with this matter? The thought of Arthur arriving, and spoiling everything, gave Alan a bit of a stab for a moment. But then he shrugged his shoulders.

Afraid to Face the School!

At last Alan Castleton's caddish actions reach a climax. He deliberately sets out to get Nipper, Handforth, and one or two other juniors expelled from St. Frank's. How he goes about this and how, later, he is afraid to face the wrath of his school-fellows is told in:

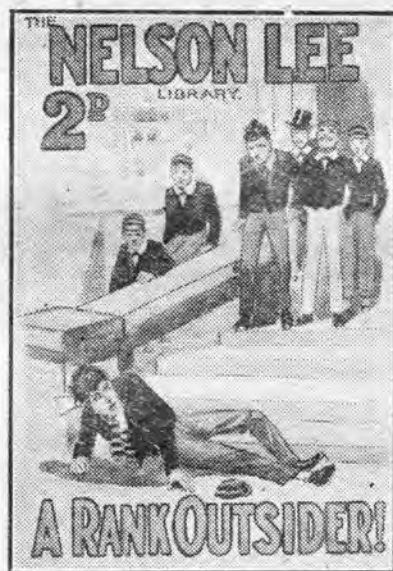
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The trick he had played upon Arthur was one of the most contemptible that could be imagined. Having made St. Frank's too hot to hold him, he had changed places with his twin brother, and Arthur had gone off, knowing nothing of the real truth. He had been made to believe that it was a simple, good-natured joke. And by the time he found out the actual truth—the grim reality—it would be too late for him to do anything.

And here was Alan, coming to St. Jim's—to fill Arthur's shoes. The whole experience was likely to prove novel. And Alan had always longed for something with a thrill in it—something spicy. In all his young life, he had craved for excitement. It was this craving for excitement which had led him into many of his despicable escapades.

"I've tried a few stunts in my time, but this is the richest of them all!" he murmured, as he turned a bend in the lane. "Yes, here's the little rise—just as Arthur described—we shan't be long now, before we come to the giddy school!"

He was fascinated.

This was a topping experience—something to talk about later when he met some of his confidential friends again. Wouldn't they yell! And wouldn't he grin, himself, too!

Coming in the train, he had carefully examined the photographs of the Shell and the Fourth that Arthur had brought. He had studied such faces as those of Tom Merry, Jack Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Levison,

"No need to worry!" he muttered. "Arthur's as soft as the dickens—he won't come here. He'll realise what I've done—and he'll realise that I've made things pretty hot for myself at St. Frank's. Arthur's a silly fool, anyhow! He'll just stick it out and face the music that was intended for me! Oh, well, he shouldn't be such a chump!"

And in this cavalier fashion, Alan dismissed his twin brother from his mind. He gave himself up wholeheartedly to the ordeal ahead of him—an ordeal which was likely to prove very interesting.

He had nothing to fear here.

Arthur was held in high esteem, and so he would be able to stroll in, chat cheerily with the fellows, and gradually get to know where he stood. The whole thing would be entertaining from start to finish. And he would also have the benefit of getting acquainted with another great public school.

He had heard that St. Jim's was a wonderful place—one of the finest schools in the kingdom. Well, now he would be able to enter it as one of its scholars—and obtain inside information without anybody realising that he was actually an intruder. That was the rich part of the whole affair. Here he was an utter stranger, about to walk into St. Jim's as though he had a perfect right there!

And nobody would know that he was an impostor.

"Of course I shall have to be jolly careful," he told himself. "Arthur's a bit of a slow-coach, and it won't do for me to be seen smoking, or anything like that. And

if they ask me to play footer, I shall have to make some excuse. Arthur's pretty hot at footer, and I'm no more interested in the game than a hedgehog! Still, I can wangle everything all right. I've never met a situation that I couldn't wangle yet!"

Alan had a great conceit of himself. His vanity, indeed, was one of his worst failings. He was the exact antithesis of his twin brother. Arthur was modest—too modest, perhaps. But Alan easily made up for him. Alan's opinion of himself was so good that he could not even see any of his own faults. In his own opinion, he was a paragon of everything that was splendid. His conceit was colossal.

And so he arrived at the gateway of St. Jim's, full of confidence.

Nature had endowed him with a cool brain—a clear head. He was in no way nervous. Even his heart was beating at normal speed. There was something very sophisticated and supercilious about Alan Castleton.

"Now, let's see where I stand," he murmured. "Study No. 2, in the Shell passage of the School House. My study-mate is a chap named Frere. A quiet sort of fellow, without much to say for himself. All right, I shall know how to treat him."

He went over all the other details that Arthur had given him. He knew exactly where the School House stood—he knew precisely where to go once he had got indoors. Upstairs, and then by devious paths to the Shell passage. It was all quite clear in his head.

He, too, had given Arthur instructions about St. Frank's—but he was pretty sure that Arthur would be all in a muddle. Arthur was liable to get excited and confused over a thing like this. But Alan wasn't! He knew exactly where he stood, and he was looking forward with great eagerness to the experiment.

The contemptible nature of Alan's trick was really appalling. He told himself, again and again, that it was only a joke—and that Arthur would forgive him, later, after the first flush of his anger had gone. And yet, all the time, that little voice of conscience was there—somewhere inside Alan's head.

Much as he tried to dismiss it, he could not do so. In a vague sort of way, he knew that his conscience was talking to him—but he wouldn't admit it. He cast it aside—he flung it out. And yet it always came back.

"Oh, hang!" he muttered savagely, as he came within sight of the gates of St. Jim's. "What do I care about Arthur? He's at St. Frank's by now—in the thick of it! Well, he shouldn't have been such an idiot as to agree! He's only got himself to thank for what happens!"

And, amazingly enough, Alan Castleton actually tried to make himself believe this! It was he who had engineered the entire thing from start to finish—and yet he wanted to make himself believe that Arthur would have no grudge against him. He hurried his footsteps—eager to get to the school quickly. Once he was there, he would meet some of the fellows, and then he would not be able to think so deeply. His mind would not be reverting to Arthur, and Arthur's predicament.

Here, in all truth, was a sure sign that Alan's conscience was working—was pricking him more deeply every minute. He did not want to think—he did not want to be alone! And this proved that he was conscious of his own dirty trickery. He wanted to forget it—he wanted to be amongst others—so that his mind would have no chance of reminding him of his rascally behaviour!

CHAPTER 11.

Racke Fails Again!

"**B** AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation as he heard the school clock chiming the hour of seven.

It was the time for the big birthday party, and Arthur Castleton had not yet arrived back from Abbotsford! Gussy was very worried and very deeply concerned. The Rag was full of chaps—Blake & Co., the Terrible Three, Talbot and Noble, and Bernard Glyn. All the prominent fellows of the Shell and Fourth were waiting—waiting for Castleton! And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had come out to see if there was any sign of the missing guest of honour.

"Weally, this is wathah frightful!" murmured Gussy, as he peered across the dusk of the quad. "I sincerely twust that—"

He broke off as he observed a figure entering the gateway. And, with a chirrup of delight, he recognised Castleton. Arthur and Alan were exactly alike in form and facial characteristics. It was practically impossible to tell them apart.



"By gad!" exclaimed Racke exultantly. "Here's the giddy chap himself! Come on!" Racke & Co. hurried up and surrounded Alan Castleton just as he was passing through the doorway. Alan spun round, and instantly recognised one of the party. Racke could see the light of recognition leap into Alan's eyes. "Why, Willis!" said Alan involuntarily. (See Chapter 1.)

"Heah we are, deah boy!" sang out Gussy, as he ran forward. "Bwavo! You've got heah on time!"

Alan looked up, and instantly recognised the voice. He had never heard it in his life before, but Arthur had told him all about Gussy and his characteristic ways. There could be no two juniors with a voice like that!

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Alan coolly, as Arthur Augustus came up. "Am I late?"

"I was wathah afwaid that you were goin' to be, deah boy," beamed Gussy. "But it is quite all wight. We are just weady for you now. Come along indoors!"

"Haven't I time for a wash first?" asked Alan, who wanted to waste a little time. "I thought about going along to the study, and then—"

"I wealise, of course, that it is necessary for a chap to have a wash aftah a twain journey, but, in the special

cires, you'll have to forgo it, Castleton," said D'Arcy firmly. "Evevrythin' is weady in the Wag."

"In the what?"

"Oh, I see—in the Rag?" asked Alan. "Rag—Wag! Good old Gussy!"

For a moment Arthur Augustus frowned. He did not quite like Castleton's tone. Somehow, he was different. But, then, the innocent D'Arcy dismissed the thought, and clapped Alan on the back.

"Come along, deah boy!" he said genially. "We must hawwy!"

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Alan. "You go along to the Rag, and tell everybody I've arrived, and I'll be there in two minutes. How's that? I must wash my hands, Gussy!"

"Vewy well," conceded Arthur Augustus. "Pewhaps you are wight, deah boy! It is a fwihtful expewience to sit down to suppah with dirty hands! I will wun along, an' I shall expect you in two or three minutes."

"Fine!" said Alan, nodding. "That's the style!"

Arthur Augustus went without a single suspicion. True, there was a little idea in the back of his head that Castleton was somehow different, but he did not give it a chance to grow into anything definite. He hurried off, and Alan stood looking at the School House and at the general buildings of St. Jim's.

He was just beginning to enjoy himself.

And then at this moment a taxicab came into the gateway and drew up near by. Four figures emerged. They belonged to Aubrey Racke, Clampe, and Willis, the late monitor of Barton Grammar School. Scrope was with the little party, too—Scrope having been picked up on the road. He knew all about the coming exposure, and he was full of anticipation. Scrope was almost as big a rotter as Racke himself.

Alan hardly gave the little party a glance. He walked into the School House in the full light which came streaming out. And then Racke gave a little shout.

"By gad, here's the chap himself!" he exclaimed exultantly. "Come on!"

They hurried up and surrounded Alan Castleton just as he passed through the doorway. Alan spun round, and of those four figures he instantly recognised one. Racke could see the light of recognition leap into Alan's eyes.

"Why, Willis!" said Alan involuntarily.

"How goes it?" asked Willis, extending a hand.

"I—I—"

Alan Castleton paused, his coolness deserting him for a second. He knew, in that flash, that he had made a blunder. He was Arthur now—not Alan! And, as Arthur, he did not even know Willis!

"Well, what about it now?" grinned Racke. "We've bowled you out, Castleton, you confounded hypocrite! You've recognised Willis, and you've accepted him as an old pal! You've given yourself away!"

"Rather!" said Clampe and Scrope.

"I—I haven't!" panted Alan, with a feeling of alarm.

"I—I don't know this fellow! I've never seen him—"

"Come off it!" said Willis, with a glare. "Weren't we both at Barton together?"

Alan knew very well that they had been, but he took a deep breath and backed away.

"No!" he panted. "I tell you I don't know you!"

"You're lyin'!" snapped Racke. "An', what's more, you know you're lyin', Castleton! It's all over your face! I've never seen such guilt there before, an' we've got you!"

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The situation was acute.

A minute earlier Alan had been telling himself that he would soon spoil Arthur's reputation. He knew that Arthur was honoured here at St. Jim's. Arthur was mixed up with all the best fellows—the so-called decent ones, the milk-and-water chaps, in Alan's opinion. He had been telling himself that he would soon bring about an alteration.

Alan had forgotten that he had acted like a cad and a cur—that he had treated Arthur more dirtily than any stranger could have treated him. And yet he was his twin brother!

And now he was face to face with this leering Willis! He had always known Willis to be a rotter at Barton Grammar School. Willis had been a weakling, a craven wretch who had never dared to take part in any of the escapades. He had wanted to do so, but he hadn't had the pluck. Alan knew his character inside out, and he was alarmed that this fellow should be here, at St. Jim's. It was the very last thing he had expected.

But he remembered that he was Arthur, and his one policy was to deny that he had ever seen Willis. But he was lying—obviously he was lying. It was as clear as daylight to Racke & Co.

"Come on, we've got him!" said Racke triumphantly. "Let's drag him to the Rag now an' have the exposure! By gad, what a show up! What a triumph for us!"

"Look here!" panted Alan. "Take your hands off—"

"Rats!"

"You fools!" shouted Alan. "What the thump—"

But his protests were in vain. He was seized by the four, and pushed forcibly along the passage. For a moment he wondered if he should take these chaps into his confidence—they seemed to be the sort he generally mixed with. They were his own breed! Why shouldn't he tell them? Why shouldn't he explain that he was Alan, and that he had come back in Arthur's place?

But now—he dismissed the thought. Everything might be spoilt if he did that. He couldn't trust these chaps; he didn't know them sufficiently. In all probability they would blurt out the whole story, and then the fat would be in the fire. He would be sent back to St. Frank's, and his whole plan would tumble to the ground a wreck.

At all costs, he had to keep silent.

And then he found himself pushed forcefully into the Rag, and everything was confusion.

"Hallo! What the merry dickens—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Clear out of it, Racke! You weren't invited!"

There was an uproar. Alan could see that the apartment was filled with fellows. There was a festive air about the place, too. The tables were covered with white linen, and there were heaps of foods—all sorts of good food, too. A massive cake stood in the centre of the principal table, and there were festoons of decorations, and the whole place was gay with laughter. The juniors had certainly prepared a splendid party in honour of Arthur Castleton.

"Wait a minute!" shouted Racke, above the din. "We've got somethin' to tell you!"

"Rats!" shouted Blake. "We don't want to hear it!"

"Wathah not!"

"You've got to hear it!" roared Racke. "Haven't I always told you that Castleton's a fraud an' a swindler? Haven't I warned you that he was a hypocrite—"

"Yah! Shut up!"

"We don't want to hear you, you cad!"

"Castleton was never at Walsing Grammar School at all!" yelled Aubrey Racke. "This chap here is named Willis, an' last term he was one of the monitors at Barton Grammar School! An' Castleton went to Barton Grammar School, as Willis will prove!"

"That's right!" said Willis. "I can tell you straight that Castleton is an out and out rotter! He owes me three quid, and he cheated all sorts of fellows—"

"That's a lie!" shouted Alan hotly.

It was rather fortunate for him that he made that outburst at such a moment, for it only served to prove to the fellows that he was innocent. And, as a matter of absolute fact, Alan was innocent. He had frequently played cards with the "bloods" at Barton Grammar School, but he had never cheated anybody. His conscience was perfectly sound on that point. He was every kind of a rotter, but he wasn't a thief or a cheat.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wacke, I regard you as a fwihtful outsidah!"

"He'll be an outsider in a minute—when he's outside," said Monty Lowther grimly. "How would you like to go, Racke? On your neck, or on your face? Just say the word, and we'll oblige!"

"That's right!" said Blake. "Let's chuck him out!"

"Yaas, wathah! An' we'll chuck out these other wottahs, too!"

"I tell you—" began Racke desperately.
 "We don't want to hear it, Racke," said Tom Merry quietly. "If you've only come here to tell a lot of lies about Castleton, you'd better go out again, and go quickly! We've heard enough rumours about Castleton—we've heard enough scandal—and we won't hear any more!"
 "Not a syllable!" said Talbot, nodding.
 "But—but you don't understand!" raved Aubrey Racke.
 "We've got proof this time—absolutely positive proof!"
 "Rats!"

"Go and eat coke, you rotter!"
 "Racke's right!" declared Willis. "I know Castleton myself—I know him well! Racke's a friend of mine, and I've come here especially—"

"That's enough for us!" interrupted Tom Merry. "If you're a friend of Racke's you're no friend of ours! And you're no fit company for this party! I don't usually speak so bluntly to a stranger within the gates, but the circumstances are exceptional. You'd better clear out while you're safe!"

"You infernal young idiot!" shouted Willis furiously. "If I have any of your cheek—"

"Well, what will you do?" asked Tom.
 "I'll knock you down!" retorted Willis fiercely.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look who's going to knock Tom Merry down!" said Blake with a chuckle. "Does this weedy fathead think he can fight a chap like Tom Merry? As for his yarns about Castleton, we don't believe them!"

"No fear!" said Manners. "Castleton has proved himself to be one of the finest chaps—and we're all ready to accept him at his face value!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Castleton's all right!"
 "Yaas, watah! Castleton is a wippah!"
 Racke danced with helpless rage.

"But if you'll only listen, I'll explain!" he raved. "If you'll only give me two minutes—"

"We won't give you two seconds, even!"
 "But I can prove to you—"

"Oh, what's the use?" asked Blake. "We shall have to take action, after all. Come along here, Castleton, and take your place in the seat of honour. We'll deal with these chaps—we'll pitch them out on their necks!"

"Hear, hear!"
 About a dozen fellows advanced upon Racke & Co. and Willis. The four of them backed away in alarm. Racke was nearly mad with fury. Once again he had failed—failed because these fellows were blindly deceived by Castleton! And here he was, with the definite proof! It was an exasperating situation for Aubrey Racke.

"Look here!" he panted. "Just half a minute!"

"Rats!" said Levison. "Outside!"

"But if you'll only listen—"
 "Outside!" thundered a dozen voices.

In vain Racke shouted. He and the others were hustled through the doorway—hustled down the passage, and then hustled outside. They had failed—failed signally.

And Tom Merry & Co. went back to the Rag, satisfied that they had done some excellent work. Castleton was here now, and the party could proceed. Everything, in fact, was all serene!

CHAPTER 12.

Alan's Resolve!

"MANY happy returns of the day!"

"Heah, heah!"

"Long life to the guest of honour!"

"Good old Castleton!"

In steaming hot tea, Arthur Castleton's health was drunk. But it was Alan Castleton who found himself on his feet to reply.

He was in a whirl of amazement. He was the hero of the hour. And all this had hit Alan like a blow. He had expected to find that Arthur was popular, but he had never dreamed of anything like this! Nothing was too good for him! The friendliness of these fellows was almost overpowering in its force. And the whole party was so sparkling with gaiety that even Alan began to feel the joyousness in the atmosphere.

"Speech—speech!"

"Go it, Castleton!"

Alan rose to his feet, utterly confused. He had never believed that it would be possible for him to lose his confidence so much as he had lost it now. He was realising, vividly and with a great shock, that Arthur must have endeared himself amazingly to these St. Jim's fellows. And they didn't know the difference! They didn't know that

they were entertaining an impostor—that this junior whom they were honouring was not worthy of their esteem!

They had accepted him without question—and Alan had been mightily pleased by the fact that he had been placed in a position where the direct light did not fall upon him. Not that there would have been any danger even if he had been. For he resembled Arthur so closely that nobody would have noticed the difference. And just now Alan was not allowing any of his supercilious sneers to mar his face.

His expression was mainly one of astonishment and confusion.

"Speech—speech!"

"I—I hardly know what to say!" muttered Alan huskily.

"Thanks awfully, you chaps, for—for all this! I didn't expect— I mean, there's no reason why you should—"

"All right, old man, we'll forgive you!" smiled Tom Merry. "We know what a modest chap you are—we know how unassuming your nature is—so we'll excuse you from any more speechifying."

"Thanks!" said Alan gratefully.

He sat down again, his heart beating wildly. He hadn't known what to say, and he had been half-afraid that he would make an awful mess of things. He wanted to be alone—to think! His brain was in a tumult. He was completely overwhelmed by all this friendliness.

Arthur hadn't mentioned anything about this birthday party, and it had hit Alan all of a heap. He dimly remembered that Arthur had mentioned something about a special feed, but never had Alan expected anything of this sort.

He was not merely being lionised, but these St. Jim's fellows were making a hero of him. In these short weeks Arthur must have made a very, very deep impression.

The only fellows in St. Jim's who had been against him were Racke and his friends! And Alan knew, well enough, that Racke & Co. were the rotters of the school. With something of a shock he also realised that they were the very fellows he would have chummed with, under ordinary circumstances.

For the first time in his life Alan was being hailed as a good fellow by the majority. He had always been one of a clique—one of a despised set. And he himself had generally looked upon the crowd with contempt. He was just beginning to appreciate that the crowd consisted of the really decent fellows. It was so novel—so completely new to him.

He hardly remembered the later stages of the feed.

All he wanted to do was to get away. And he succeeded at last. Everything has to come to an end in time, and even this birthday party reached its climax.

The fellows went their various ways—mostly to their studies, to do their prep. And Alan, still in a whirl, managed to find his way to the Shell, and to get into Study No. 2. He was half-afraid that he would find Frere there, but his relief was great when he saw that the little room was empty.

A glance at the books told him that this was Arthur's study.

He poked at the fire, and then sat down in the easy-chair. And he stared into the fire absently, his face drawn and tense.

There was a curious sensation within him. It almost seemed to him that his heart was heavy. He sat there stunned. With a devastating shock he was beginning to realise the truth.

What had he done?

Arthur was one of the finest fellows under the sun. He had proved that this afternoon by consenting to go to St. Frank's, when he knew a fine party had been prepared for him. He had given all that up for the sake of his brother—he had let Alan come to this school, knowing what a rotter Alan was. And he had gone to St. Frank's—gone there unsuspecting of the dreadful truth.

"Oh!" muttered Alan. "Why did I do it? Why did I do it?"

He had turned pale, and he still stared into the fire in that dazed fashion. Realisation was coming upon him—stark and gaunt. For the first time in his life he was seeing himself as he actually was—a conceited rotter, a cad and a bound.

"What do you think of yourself now?" asked that voice within him. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Aren't you aware that you're one of the biggest cads under the sun? What have you done to Arthur?"

"I—I didn't realise it!" he muttered feverishly. "But I can see it now—after what's happened this evening! He's one of the best chaps breathing—or all these fellows wouldn't make such a fuss of him! And I was coming here to spoil his name—to ruin his reputation at the school! I was going to take pleasure in doing it—just for a lark!"

His conscience was not merely pricking him now—it was
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stabbing him fiercely. He was aware of a positive hurt. It was like a pain within him—an acute agony which gnawed at his very vitals.

His previous indifference vanished.

He knew what he had done—he knew that he had sent Arthur to St. Frank's to enter a hornets' nest! And it was he—Alan—who had stirred up that fearful trouble! It was he—Alan—who should have faced the music. And yet he had sent Arthur there—the innocent, good-natured, easy-tempered Arthur! What a filthy trick it had been—what a rotten piece of work!

Alan rose to his feet and paced up and down for a minute or two. He was trying to still that voice of his conscience. He was trying to tell himself that everything would be all right. It was only a matter of a few days, and then—

"Why should I worry?" he asked himself fiercely. "If Arthur was such a fool as to go, then why should I take the blame? And why should I worry about what happens here, at St. Jim's?"

But it was useless.

With a hollow sort of groan, he sat down in the chair again and covered his face with his hands. To tell himself such things was futile. He knew all the time that he was unfit to be touched. It had never occurred to him like this before. It hadn't struck him that he was a young blackguard. And now, once his conscience was thoroughly awakened, it was likely to disturb him much! It was something that would grow—something that would increase hour by hour, and fill his mind so completely that he would have no peace—no rest.

"What's happening to Arthur?" he asked himself again and again. "He's been at St. Frank's for some time now, and perhaps he's been sacked! Perhaps he's been drummed out by all the other chaps! And I sent him into that—I pitchforked him into the whole wretched affair! Oh, heavens! What have I done? I must have been mad—absolutely mad!"

With a further shock, he came to realise that he had done something really crazy. How could he possibly square things afterwards? Arthur had already found out, and he would want a reckoning! Perhaps he would even come to St. Jim's! And—

"No, he would never do that!" Alan told himself with relief. "That wouldn't be like Arthur! He wouldn't let everybody know that there were two of us—"

Then he paused again. Perhaps, under these exceptional circumstances, Arthur might do so! Perhaps he would come here to have a reckoning! But not until to-morrow, anyhow. He couldn't possibly get to St. Jim's before the morrow!

"And I'm here, now, anyhow!" muttered Alan. "I'm in Arthur's shoes, and I've got to act like him! I'm supposed to be a decent chap here, and yet I'm only a worm! I'm only a cad and a blackguard!"

With a sudden fierce action he pulled out his cigarette-case, and emptied the contents into the fire. He wouldn't be tempted! He wouldn't allow himself to have a smoke, for fear that he would be seen, for fear that he would do something to mar Arthur's fine character.

And that sudden action of his made him enter upon another resolve. There was a strange light in his eyes as he looked up, as he stowed his cigarette-case away.

"I came to St. Jim's, meaning to have a fine game at Arthur's expense. I meant to laugh up my sleeve while I did all sorts of things to harm his character—to discredit him among the fellows. But I won't do it now—I swear I won't!"

He paced up and down for a few minutes, and then came to a halt, his fists clenched.

"No, I won't do anything at St. Jim's to besmirch Arthur's name!" he vowed solemnly. "I've been a rotter in the past—a cad in every shape of the word, but I'll do nothing to harm Arthur's fair name!"

He sat down in the easy-chair, quivering. He was affected, as though by the ague.

"That's the first thing of a decent sort you've ever resolved, Alan Castleton," came that voice from within him. "But you needn't kid yourself! You're still a rotter, you're still a contemptible cur! You sent Arthur to St. Frank's to face the storm that you, yourself, should face!"

Alan shook violently.

"Don't—don't!" he muttered fiercely. "Don't talk to me like that!"

And then, with a start, he realised that he was alone, that that voice was nothing. It was only his conscience—talking to him from within him.

An astounding change had come over Alan Castleton.

And all in the space of an hour or two! When he had
(Continued on page 28.)

THE TWIN TANGLE AT ST. JIM'S.

A wise old Johnny once said: "There is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us," etc. Certainly the latter part of this old saying is applicable to Alan Castleton, for at the eleventh hour his conscience takes the upper hand of his wayward nature and—



—points out to him in startling fashion just how much of a rotter he is.

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The Rookwood Dictator!



A GRAND NEW STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

A Surprise for Knowles!

FOR some moments the "dear men" lent their ears. Then they acclaimed Morn's scheme with approbation.

"Don't forget, then!" said Mornington, nodding coolly. "This is goin' to put a holy fear of the Dictator into every bully in the school!"

And the committee left the end study, the plan of action approved. Tea was a late but very cheery meal with the Fistical Four that afternoon. After tea their actions might have surprised a fellow who knew them.

"Come on, Lovell!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh dear! This is going to be torture!" groaned Lovell.

The two juniors strolled into the masters' corridor, and Jimmy Silver knocked respectfully at the door of Monsieur Guillaume Monceau, the French master at Rookwood.

"Come in!"

Jimmy Silver entered the study, with his most demure expression.

"Vat is it you vant viz me, Silvair?" asked Monsieur Monceau.

"We—ahem!—Lovell and I—would like you to translate a difficult passage from—from Victor Hugo, please, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

"Cairtainly, mes garçons! I am pleased to see that you are interested to study the works of Victor Hugo in your spare time! Vat is the passage?"

Jimmy Silver pointed out the passage, and Monsieur Monceau plunged gaily into a detailed enunciation of the wonders of that great French author, Victor Hugo. Jimmy Silver and Lovell listened, more or less attentively. Monsieur Monceau probably thought them very assiduous and enthusiastic pupils. Had he known what was uppermost in their minds, he would have been considerably startled.

"Your deal, Catesby!"

Cecil Knowles of the Modern Sixth puffed out a little cigarette smoke, and smiled.

Catesby and Frampton looked cheerful, too, though at present a small pile of winnings in front of Knowles represented most of their spare cash. They had hopes before the evening was out of winning it back, perhaps with interest.

And there was a general atmosphere of good will among the little party as Catesby dealt.

"By gad," chuckled Frampton, lighting up from Knowles' cigarette, "I shan't forget young Silver's face in a hurry! Looked like a boiled lobster when we'd finished with him!"

"He had what he asked for!" grinned Knowles coolly.

"Carthew can't handle the kids, but we can—what?"

"No doubt about that," agreed Catesby. "And it's Lovell to-morrow, isn't it?"

"What can we do to take it out of Lovell?" asked Frampton thoughtfully.

"All in good time!" answered Knowles easily. "Clubs are trumps! I'll go four!"

The game was nap, and for the next few minutes the three Sixth-Formers were deeply engrossed in the play.

It was the hour set aside by the school authorities for prep; but Knowles & Co. rarely thought of prep when there was a chance of a "little flutter" to while away the evening. With the fellows in their studies, there was small chance of interruption, and, to make assurance doubly sure, Knowles invariably locked the door. What Dr. Chisholm would have said could he have looked into that Sixth Form study just then it was impossible to imagine; certainly it would have meant the end of Knowles & Co.'s career at Rookwood. But the sportive Sixth-Formers had come to disregard the risk. They played on cheerfully, the pile of winnings before Knowles increasing steadily.

It was a faint sound from the corridor that caused Catesby to glance up suddenly.

"What was that, Knowles?"

"Eh—what was what?"

"I heard something—as if somebody were creeping along the passage!"

"Rot, old man! You're getting nervy! Get on with the game!"

Catesby listened, but the sound was not repeated. He took up his hand again uneasily.

"My hat!"

It was a sound this time beyond doubt, and all three of the Sixth-Formers turned startled glances to the door. At that moment they were deeply thankful that it was locked.

Rap, rap!

"My—my hat, we're caught!" gasped Catesby, in a fright.

"Keep cool, you idiot!" hissed Knowles. "It's probably only Carthew!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,024.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood, angered by the persecution of Mark Carthew, a bullying prefect of the Sixth, form a secret organisation called the Fascist Band of Rookwood, under which guise they intend to avenge themselves.

Carthew is one day brought up for trial before the band, all disguised in white robes, and given the ragging of his life. The Fascists are careful to cover up their tracks by electing only a few of their numbers to act on each occasion.

Next on the list of victims are three Modern Side prefects, Knowles, Catesby, and Frampton. A meeting of the band is called to discuss ways and means of dealing with these bullies, who have been making themselves extremely unpleasant towards the Lower School juniors.

Valentine Mornington is in the "chair" and, having declared that he has formulated a safe plan of action, asks the juniors to "lend their ears" to what he has to say.

(Now read on.)

Rap, rap, rap!

"Clear the table!" hissed Knowles. "Get those cards out of sight, and wave a paper about to clear out the smoke! Quick!"

"Knowles!"

Frampton and Catesby were hurrying to obey when that voice smote their ears from the corridor. At the sound of it their blood ran cold.

"The Head!" muttered Frampton, his face white.

"Quick!" gasped Knowles, striving hard to retain his nerve. "Open the window, and let out the smoke! Chuck some school books on the table—pens, ink! I'll pretend the key's fallen out of the lock!"

"Knowles, are you there, my boy?"

Knowles set his teeth and took a breath. He steadied his voice before replying.

"Is that you, Dr. Chisholm?"

"Whom should you suppose it to be, if not myself, Knowles?"

"Ahem! I've been busy studying, sir! Just—just a moment while I unlock the door!"

"Is it your custom to keep your door locked, Knowles?"

"Oh, no, sir! Only when I'm studying!"

"I see! Pray open it! I wish to speak to you!"

Knowles took an anxious glance around the study before approaching the door. Catesby had pushed up the window, and most of the tobacco-smoke had cleared out by now, and Frampton had concealed the cards and money in a drawer. So long as the Head did not notice that there had been smoke, Knowles knew he could bluff it out.

"Knowles, am I to wait in this corridor while you unlock the door? What is the matter with you, my boy?"

"Ahem! The—the key has fallen out, sir!" gasped the prefect. "Just a moment!"

"I am beginning to suspect that there is something in your room that you do not wish me to see, Knowles!" came in a grim voice from the corridor.

"Oh, no, sir! I've found the key!"

"Then kindly waste no more of my time!"

Knowles took a last glance round the study before turning the key in the lock. The traces of his little party seemed to have gone now, and but for the faint odour of stale smoke there was nothing to fear. And that risk had to be taken.

"All ready!" murmured Catesby, opening a work of Plato.

"Right away, Knowles!" muttered Frampton, assuming a scholarly interest in elucidating the mysteries of *Æschylus*.

Click!

Knowles turned the key in the lock, and threw open the door. His smile, in readiness for the Head, froze on his face.

"What—"

He got no further than that.

There was a rush—a rush of white-robed figures—and in a flash the prefect was borne back into his study, innumerable hands grasping him.

"What the thump—"

"A rag!" gasped Catesby, Plato going to the floor.

Frampton and Catesby had no time for further exclamations. A flood of white-robed, white-cowled figures had invaded the study. In the twinkling of an eye the three seniors were grasped, and handkerchiefs wound tightly round their mouths. They were whirled towards the door, struggling fiercely, but with no chance of escape. Behind their gags they grunted and gasped, but in vain.

Knowles' glittering eyes were upon each of the robed figures in turn, seeking to discern their identity, but the robes and cowls, with black masks completely concealing their faces, baffled him.

One of the number stepped to the doorway and glanced along the corridor. It was deserted.

"Bring them along!" rapped the figure, in a deep, unrecognisable voice.

Two of the figures stepped back, and as Knowles was forced through the door, they slipped a mask over his head, blindfolding him. As Catesby and Frampton passed, they were served in like manner.

The door of Knowles' study was closed silently by the last of the procession. Seething with wrath, but unable to utter a sound or catch a glimpse of where they were being borne, the three Sixth-Formers were half rushed, half carried along the corridor.

There was a turn and a flight of stairs. Then two more turns, and more stairs. Their footsteps seemed to be echoing in a long corridor, but in what corner of the building, it was impossible to surmise. A faint click told

the prisoners that a door was being opened for them, and after that came another turn and more stairs, and finally another click of a lock.

The sound of a door closing warned them that they had reached their destination, wherever it was.

"Let the prisoners see!" commanded a deep, unemotional voice.

The masks were ripped from the Sixth-Formers' eyes, and they saw.

They were in a draped chamber, with a canopy facing them, beneath which, on a draped throne, sat a quiet, ominous figure in the white robe and cowl and jet mask of the order.

That they had been conveyed via the connecting passage between the Classical and Modern sides of Rookwood, and were now on the Classical side of the quad, did not occur to Knowles or his cronies. But there was no doubt that Knowles, at least, was almost bursting with rage.

"Remove the gags!" commanded the seated figure.

The handkerchiefs were unwound, and the prisoners could speak. Knowles, his face crimson with rage, did not hesitate to begin.

"You—you young rascals! Do you think for one moment you can impress me with your tomfoolery? You will release us at once, and—"

"One moment!" interrupted the seated figure coldly.

"You may be interested to know that you have been summoned before the Grand High Council of the Fascist Band of Rookwood! You have to answer to the Dictator for certain acts this day at Rookwood! I have the honour to be the Dictator!"

"You'll have the honour to be flogged and expelled!" snarled Knowles. "Chuck this before I lose my temper—"

"Silence!" snapped the Dictator.

"I tell you—"

"If the prisoner is not silent, he will be gagged again!" said the Dictator coolly.

Knowles, his face livid, bit his lip. He was beginning to realise that he was in the power of the Fascist Band, and that they knew it. Whatever he might do afterwards, he was theirs to wreak their will on now.

"Knowles, Catesby, and Frampton," continued the Dictator coldly, "you are accused of having exercised your powers as prefects in order unlawfully to oppress certain members of the junior school! In this you are suspected of acting on the suggestion of one Mark Carthew, with whom this council has had cause to deal previously! Am I not right?"

The seniors were silent.

"I take your silence to mean assent! We have dealt with Carthew, and, if necessary, will do so again! With you we propose to deal at once! Have you any defence?"

"You dare not touch us, you young sweeps—" began Knowles.

"That is not a defence! The sentence upon which we have decided will be carried out forthwith!" commanded the Dictator.

"Just you dare—"

"Silence!"

Knowles suppressed his feelings as best he could. Rage was uppermost in his mind, but both Catesby and Frampton were looking scared. Carthew's experience at the hands of the Fascists was fresh in their minds.

As the Sixth-Formers watched, three chairs were placed in a line, and three robed figures took up their stand behind them.

"Seat the prisoners!" commanded the Dictator.

In the grasp of many hands, the seniors had no alternative. They were seated in the three chairs, behind which, cold and implacable, stood three robed figures with shears in their hands.

"The first portion of your punishment will proceed!" announced the Dictator calmly. "Your hair will be trimmed!"

"Touch my head, and I'll—I'll have you flogged till you can't stand!" burst out Knowles, beside himself with rage.

Complete silence greeted his outburst.

Clip, clip, clip!

Under Knowles' horrified eyes, a lock of hair fell over his shoulder into his lap, and then another, and another. Knowles fairly gasped with helpless rage. And the steady clipping of the amateur barbers continued, while Catesby and Frampton writhed unavailingly beneath the same punishment.

It seemed an age to Knowles before the Dictator gave the order for the clipping to cease. It seemed to Knowles that there could hardly be a hair left on his head.

"Leave their eyebrows!" commanded the Dictator. "Proceed with the adornment of their faces!"

"Yes, O Mighty One!"

Three "brothers" with three palettes confronted the prisoners, and three brushes, loaded with colour, began to adorn the faces of Knowles and Catesby and Frampton.

With green circles round his eyes, and a crimson nose and yellow ears, Knowles presented quite a startling sight. Catesby and Frampton speedily rivalled him in effect.

The seniors were gasping, but the Fascists remained deadly serious. Not once did a chuckle go up while Knowles & Co. assumed those remarkable make-ups.

"That will suffice!" said the Dictator at last. "Now affix the beards and moustaches!"

"The—the what?" ejaculated Knowles dazedly.

"You—you touch me again, and I'll—I'll— Yoop! Gug-g-g—" Catesby broke off.

A brush, laden with gum, met his chin, and a good deal of the gum penetrated into Catesby's mouth. Gum, in liberal quantities, was painted on the chins and upper lips of all three seniors.

Then, while Knowles and Catesby and Frampton watched with horrified amazement, the three silent brothers approached them bearing long, curly beards and curling moustachios!

The Mystery Unsolved!

"HOLD their ears!"

Knowles hardly dared to breathe as the Dictator gave that command.

A finger and thumb fastened on either ear with a grip like a vice, and Knowles' head was held stationary.

Before him, coolly and unemotionally, the white-robed Fascist prepared to affix the long, flaming beard which he held in his hand.

Knowles gasped.

His upper lip and chin were running with gum—a thick, oozy concoction that the prefect had tasted without relish. Indeed the gum was of a very special admixture. Much time and trouble had been spent by the Fascists in assuring themselves that it would hold, and hold firmly. There was gum, and there was glue, and there was secotine in that oozy solution. There was a dash of rubber solution binding the whole to a nice consistency. That much Knowles could plainly see. He had a feeling that the beard, once affixed, would take some getting off.

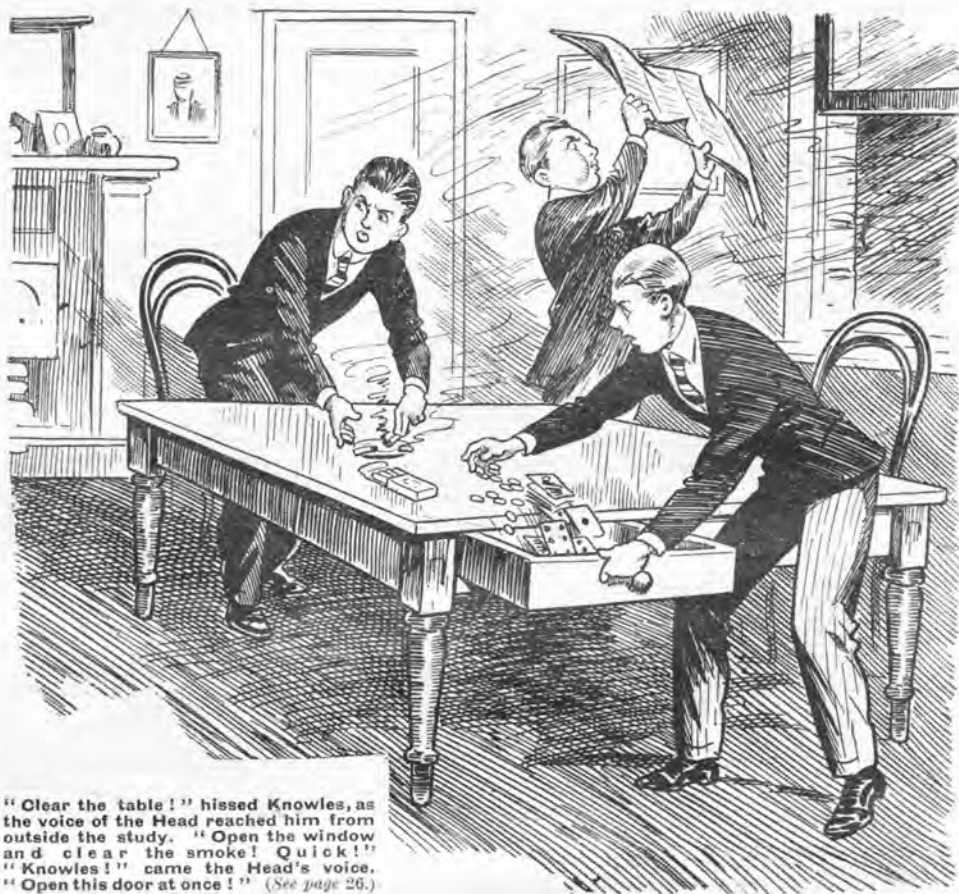
And there was no opportunity of dodging the attentions of his tormentor. The slightest movement of the head resulted in agonising pains from one or other of his ears.

"Affix the beards!"

"You dare—" panted Knowles, straining in his seat. "Yoooooop!"

The latter exclamation was the result of a tweak at his ear—a warning to keep still. Fuming, but helpless, Knowles kept still.

The beard—a long, curly one, flaming red in colour—was placed against his chin and pressed tightly there. While the



"Clear the table!" hissed Knowles, as the voice of the Head reached him from outside the study. "Open the window and clear the smoke! Quick!" "Knowles!" came the Head's voice. "Open this door at once!" (See page 26.)

prefect spluttered and gasped furiously, that awful mixture of gum and glue and secotine and rubber solution began to do its work. The beard was fixed at last, and the robed figure stood back.

"You've put it on crooked, Jimmy!" came a whisper from one of the Fascists.

A sudden gleam leaped in Knowles' eyes.

"Silence!" rapped the Dictator.

Nothing further was said, but Knowles had heard enough. There was only one junior at Rookwood who was called familiarly among his friends by the name of "Jimmy." Knowles knew now, beyond the shadow of a doubt, who it was that had affixed that flaming beard to his chin. It was some comfort to the prefect to reflect upon the punishment which awaited Jimmy Silver when he should be released.

"The beards have been affixed, O Mighty One," said one of the Fascists.

"Then attend to the moustachios, brother."

Catesby had a long, ragged grey beard, giving him an appearance reminiscent of Rip Van Winkle, and Frampton had a short, spiky appendage that rendered him more like a Guy Fawkes than anything else. Catesby and Frampton gasped in idle rage as their tormentors approached them with long, curling moustachios.

But Knowles found the indignity easier to bear now.

He watched in grim silence while the robed brother fastened two black moustachios to his upper lip, contrasting remarkably with the red beard beneath. Knowles was thinking of the retribution to come.

Over Catesby's long, grey beard were affixed two crimson wisps that appeared to have strayed from Knowles' beard, and over Frampton's spiky appendage were placed deftly two patches of the "Charlie Chaplin" variety. Catesby and Frampton gazed at each other and at Knowles in mute rage as the brothers stepped back to admire their handiwork. Only Knowles was cool.

"I think that will do," announced the Dictator from his raised seat. "Prisoners, are ye repentant for the misdeeds which have brought ye to this pass?"

"No, hang you!" snarled Catesby.

Knowles and Frampton were silent.

"You should be. Let this be a warning to you, at the least. If the Grand High Council has occasion to deal with

you again. I cannot promise such lenient treatment. Any attempt to revenge yourselves on totally innocent youths will be visited with summary punishment, and of a kind that you will not readily forget."

"Wait till I get you before the Head!" ground Frampton.

"Enough! Gag and blindfold the prisoners!"

Knowles and Catesby and Frampton submitted to the indignity of having their mouths bound and their eyes masked; they could do nothing else. But about Knowles there was a quiet grinning which Catesby and Frampton could not share.

"The court will now adjourn," announced the Dictator.

The three seniors could see nothing now, but their arms were gripped, and they were led towards the door. They felt the corridor beneath their feet, and then came a flight of stairs. As before, the way lay round unexpected turns and up and down flights of stairs, all invisible to them in their present state. There was again the clicking of a key in a lock, and the sound of a heavy door being opened. The Sixth-Formers felt themselves shoved unceremoniously through the aperture, and there was the sound of a door closing. The shooting of bolts followed. Then silence.

For some moments they stood, listening, waiting to be hurried on again. But there was no sound beside their own breathing.

The truth dawned suddenly on Knowles.

He reached up and tore the gag from his mouth, then the mask.

Catesby and Frampton were standing by his side, but of the Fascists there was no sign.

With a gasp, Knowles realised where they were standing—on the Modern side of the connecting door between the Classical and Modern buildings at Rookwood.

"My hat! Take off your gags, you idiots! And your masks! They've left us!"

"What?"

Catesby and Frampton wrenched away the handkerchiefs and masks from their faces, and gasped.

"By Jove! Then we've been across to the Classical side without knowing it!" ejaculated Frampton.

"And the young rascals have escaped!" ground Catesby.

"They're safe on the other side of that door, by Jove!"

"Safe—for the present!" snapped Knowles. "But I know who they were—or at least one of them!"

"Oh, good! You recognised one of 'em? Dashed if I could!" admitted Frampton, in great excitement.

"No. One of them called the other 'Jimmy'!" rapped Knowles. "That doesn't need much thought, does it? Carthew swore that Silver was responsible, in spite of Dalton accepting the kid's denial. Now we're sure of it—what!"

"By gad, yes!"

"(Little did Knowles & Co. realise that they were making the mistake of their lives, and that Silver would be able to clear himself. Read how he accomplishes this in next week's great instalment.)"

THE CHANGELING OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 24.)

come to St. Jim's he had been the cool, supercilious Alan, of St. Frank's. But now he was nothing better than a shivering wretch. His sins had come home to him. He knew well enough what he had done, and what he deserved. He tried to pull himself together, so that the other fellows wouldn't know the difference in him.

And, later on, Frere came in, and Alan pretended to be busy with his prep, and he complained of a headache, and Frere noticed nothing.

When Alan went to bed, in the Shell dormitory, he was struck by the fact that everybody was talking in low tones. They knew that he had a headache, that he was not feeling well, and so they were acting like this out of sheer consideration for him. How many juniors in a great school could have commanded such attention from his fellows? Truly, Arthur must have made a very deep impression upon these fellows.

And Alan's resolve was strengthened.

That conscience of his was working as actively as ever—more actively than ever, in fact—and he vowed to himself again and again that he would be decent—that he would live cleanly, as he imagined Arthur lived.

And now that he had come to this decision, Alan saw himself as he was. He saw the mean, despicable nature of his former mode of life. It had never occurred to him before; he had never even thought of it in that light. Now he knew it—he knew what a young rascal he had been. And he was horrified by the mental picture of his own character. He seemed to be looking at himself as though he were some stranger—some outsider. He could see all his faults now—faults that he had never known to exist.

It was the first sign of decency in Alan Castleton—the first indication he had given that, deep down within him, there was something better.

But there was one thing that Alan Castleton did not realise.

It was Arthur's influence that was responsible for this change in him—Arthur's influence for good. Here, at St. Jim's, Arthur was honoured. And Alan was now in Arthur's shoes, being honoured in Arthur's stead. Yes, it was Arthur who had brought about this remarkable change in his twin brother. And Arthur had done it all unconsciously.

Alan's life at St. Jim's in the near future promised to be interesting indeed!

He was afraid to look upon the morrow, for fear of what might happen. But in all Alan's wildest dreams he could not possibly have pictured the facts and the happenings that were actually to take place!

THE END.

(Next week's long story of Tom Merry & Co. winds up this excellent series starring the Castleton twins and no Gemite should miss it. Note the title, "Under False Colours!" and be prepared for something extra good.)

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