

"LEAVING IT TO GUSSY!"

This week's amusing and amazing story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

THE GEM 2^d

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D'ARCY DABBLES IN DECORATING!

(An incident from this week's amusing, long complete school story of St. Jim's.)

LAUGH? YES, YOU'LL LAUGH WHEN YOU READ THIS ROLICKING SCHOOL STORY FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO., THE FAMOUS CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

LEAVING IT TO

MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

The Misadventures of Gussy!

"THIS studay," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically, "is a disgwace."
"Speak for yourself, old scout," said Jack Blake cheerfully. "Anyway, no need to make a song about it. If you do think yourself a disgrace—"
"Bai Jove, you misundahstand me, Blake! I was not wefewwin' to the fellows in it."

"We know that, old chap. You were referring to yourself only—singular, not plural. Well, now you've admitted that you're a disgrace—"

"I have not admitted anythin' of the kind, Blake," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "You are delibahwately misundahstandin' me, you wottah! I was refewwin' to the state of the study itself."

"Then why don't you say what you mean?" said Blake, winking at the grinning Herries and Digby. "If you ever mean anything, that is. What's the matter with the study, anyway? What bee have you got in your silly bonnet now, Gussy?"

"I haven't got a bee in my bonnet at all, you sillay ass! I was pointing out—"

"If you don't like this study, then change out of it," suggested Herries.

"We're not good enough, I suppose," said Digby. "This study a disgrace—eh?"

"Cheek!"

"Hullo! Trouble in the family?"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, looked in at the doorway of Study No. 6.

"It's Gussy again," said Blake. "He's telling us the study's a disgrace. Nice, ain't it?"

"You are delibahwately misundahstandin' me, Blake!" shouted Arthur Augustus heatedly. "You are perfectly awah that I was simplay statin' that this studay is a disgwace—"

"There he goes again," said Digby. "Can't help running the study down, I suppose."

"I am not wunnin' the studay down!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, nearly dancing in his excitement. "I was meahly pointin' out that the woom is in a disgwaceful condish. The ceilin' is gwimey, and the papah torn and covahed with ink, while the furniture is shabbay and damaged. I was goin' to suggest that we have the whole woom wedecowated and wefurnished."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then why the thump didn't you say so, Gussy?"

"I did say so, Jack Blake," spluttered Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I have pointed it out more than once lately. I am ashamed of the place when visitors come—especially when Cousin Ethel and the gals ffrom Spaldin' Hall visit us."

"Well, so you have," admitted Blake, with a chuckle. "In fact, I fully agree with you there, old chap," he added, glancing round the study. "The old shop does want doing up a bit. Still, it's no good pointing these things out to the beaks—"

"There is no need whatevah to point out these things to the beaks, Blake."

"But we can't afford to pay decorators, ass!"

"I am quite awah of that, Blake. But there is no reason why we should not wedecowate the studay ourselves. I meself will undahtake the job if you do not wish to help. The wallpaper and paint and other necessawies can be got at Blobsb's in the village befoah tea. You can leave the whole mattah to me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I have thought the mattah ovah, and have decided it
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must be done," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "For the sake of our self-respect we must wedecowate and wefurnish. Leave it to me."

"But the furniture! Where the thump are we to get money from for new furniture?" yelled Herries.

"It is vewy simple, Hewwies. The furniture can be purchased on the hiah-purchase system," said Gussy calmly. "It is now wogared as quite the pwopah thing to do when short of cash. Evewybody's doin' it. I have been studayin' advertisements, y'know. You can buy a hundwed pounds' worth of furniture, and pay for it by instalments of ten shillings a week."

"Oh, great pip!" said Blake faintly. "And you think shopkeepers will sell stuff to kids like us on the instalment plan?"

"I see no weason why not," said Gussy. "Howevah, the first thing is to wedecowate the studay. I was hopin' to discuss that mattah with you fellows. But as you seem determined to wiculate the whole mattah—"

"But it was your own fault, you know," chuckled Blake. "It was not my fault. You delibahwately misundah-

stood me," said Gussy heatedly. "You knew—"

"My dear old fathead—"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead—"

"But, listen, old man! Here, hold on!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus refused to "hold on." He went out, shutting the door behind him with a slam that rang

along the Fourth passage. Evidently Arthur Augustus was unusually huffy.

Blake grinned.

"Well, did you ever?" he chuckled. "I wondered what new wheeze he had in his giddy napper. He's been moaning about for days over something. This must be it. Fancy redecorating and refurnishing the old study! I admit it needs it, but—well, we'll do as he suggests, and leave it to him."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

And Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three went into afternoon classes chuckling explosively at Gussy's latest. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in earnest this time, had they only known it.

Blake, Herries, and Digby smiled every time they glanced at Arthur Augustus during lessons that afternoon.

The wrath had left their noble chum's brow, but instead he wore a wrapt and deeply thoughtful expression. It was obvious that his lofty mind was bent upon his new scheme—upon paints and brushes, distempers, and wallpaper, carpets, and furniture.

When Arthur Augustus got an idea into his noble mind it was a fixture there.

Mr. Lathom noticed very soon that his attention was not being given to lessons. By means of linings, and even a caning, he attempted to bring Gussy into a more dutiful state of mind.

But it was of little avail. More important matters than Roman history and Latin verbs were occupying the brain of Arthur Augustus. Colour schemes in regard to waistcoats and neckties and other sartorial adornments very often did occupy Gussy's mind to the exclusion of lessons. Now it was colour schemes in regard to study decorations.

Still, though he smiled, Blake could not help feeling that Arthur Augustus had got hold of a useful idea at last. Study No. 6 certainly did need brightening up. The wallpaper was old, torn, and time-stained. The ceiling was smudged where footballs had landed and left their mark. The furniture was shabby and considerably damaged.

GUSSY!

Tables, bookshelves, and other odds-and-ends would get in the way when fellows wanted to scrap or play footer, and they suffered accordingly.

Certainly, there was little hope of getting the study refurnished. But it would be possible to redecorate it, at all events.

Blake resolved to think it over when he had more time. Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus was thinking it over now, and was resolved to make time.

Luckily, he was in funds, and all seemed to be plain sailing.

Immediately classes ended Arthur Augustus hurried out and got his hat. He was making tracks for the quadrangle when he met Mr. Railton in the hall. He stopped the Housemaster.

"Excuse me, sir," he began gracefully. "But have you any objections to our wedecowatin' Studay No. 6, Mr. Wailton?"

The Housemaster jumped.

"What—what?" he ejaculated.

"Our studay is vewy shabbay indeed, sir," explained Gussy. "We are wathah ashamed when visitors come to tea, you know. We wish to wepapah and paint it, if you have no objections, Mr. Wailton. We will, of course, keep in mind the wegulations and wules of the school."

Mr. Railton stared at him blankly.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, his mouth twitching slightly. "It is rather an extraordinary request, D'Arcy. However, if you are really serious—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Then—then I see no reason why you should not do so," said the Housemaster, after a pause. "Providing, of course, that you make no more mess than is necessary, and do not break any rules. I like boys to learn to make themselves useful. Yes, you may do as you wish, D'Arcy."



"Thank you vewy much, sir!"

Mr. Railton walked on, smiling. Arthur Augustus hurried on his way in a state of great satisfaction. The only possible objection to his scheme was now removed, and he could go ahead with the good work with a light heart and a clear conscience.

Arrived at the village, Arthur Augustus made his way to Messrs. Blobs, the local builders and decorators, who had a shop in the High Street.

The window was filled with firebricks, tins of paints, brushes, rolls of wallpaper, and other uninteresting articles. But they were unusually interesting to Arthur Augustus just then. He looked over the stock in the window with a critical eye, and then he marched into the shop.

He was inside ten minutes, and when he came out again he was staggering under a load of rolls of wallpaper and tins of paint and enamel, besides half a dozen brushes of various sizes. His pocket, however, was lighter by a sum of three pounds ten shillings.

In the street he nearly bumped into Bernard Glyn, who dismounted from his bicycle and eyed the vision in amazement.

"My only aunt!" he gasped. "What the dickens have you got there, Gussy?"

"Wallpapa, paint, enamel, and brushes, deah boy!"

"But what on earth do you want 'em for?" yelled Glyn.

"I am goin' to wedecowate the studay, y'know!" said Gussy, a trifle loftily. "Mr. Blobs wanted to send all the stuff to-morrow, but I decided not to wisk any delay. It is a half-holiday to-morrow, and I am vewy anxious to make the most of the time."

"Oh, great pip! But you've got enough stuff there to paint and paper St. Jim's, Gussy!" chuckled Glyn.

"Wats! I onlay bought twenty wolls of papah, and—"

"Oh crumbs! Are you going to give the giddy study four coats of wallpaper, then?"

"Wathah not! Do not be wedic! But—but do you weally think I have bought too much papah, deah boy?"

"Certain of it, old chap! Your giddy study will take five rolls at the most, Gussy!" grinned the schoolboy inventor, highly entertained. "But, I say," he added eagerly, "have you bought the paste yet—for the paper?"

"Bai Jove! I was forgettin' all about paste, deah boy! However, I will get some flour from the House dame—"

"Don't!" said Glyn, with mischief in his eyes. "I'll supply you with the giddy paste, old chap—my own invention! Guaranteed to stick like glue. Splendid stuff! I'm thinking of putting it on the market some day! Special stuff; only needs water with it—cold water!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "That is vewy kind of you, Glyn, deah boy!"

"Don't mench!" said Glyn affably. "Well, I'll see to it to-morrow—a couple of gallons will be enough, I should think! I'll send it along to your study after classes, Gussy!"

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy! But—"

"Not at all, old fellow—only too glad to oblige in such a good cause! Well, cheerio, Gussy!"

And Bernard Glyn mounted his bike and rode along to the chemist's shop higher up the High Street—still chuckling! Apparently the idea of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as a paperhanger struck him as funny—or else the thought of his own patent paste amused him!

Arthur Augustus resumed his journey, staggering under his load of paint, wallpaper, and brushes.

He soon began to regret that he had not allowed Mr. Blobs to send the stuff to St. Jim's. The wallpaper was wrapped up in sheets of the same material, but one of the bundles had come untied, and Gussy had to perform all sorts of contortions and acrobatics to prevent the rolls from falling out of the bundle. He carried one bundle under each arm and two cans of paint and enamel in either hand, and the brushes were sticking from his various pockets.

From the loose bundle rolls of wallpaper stuck out at all angles in a perilous manner.

But for the fact that he was attracting a great deal of unwelcome attention in the High Street, Gussy would have called a halt to adjust matters and tie up the loose bundle again. He was already scarlet in the face under the numerous grinning glances, however, and he was anxious to get out of the village at the earliest possible moment.

It proved to be a case of more haste, less speed.

In an attempt to circumnavigate an old lady too speedily, Arthur Augustus dropped one of the rolls.

As he stooped to pick it up another dropped. Thus further loosened, the whole bundle came apart and scattered its contents to right and left.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Quite flustered now, Arthur Augustus put down one of the cans of paint and enamel, and started to pick up the scattered rolls.

But as fast as he picked one up another fell down and rolled into the muddy gutter. Finally, getting more and more flustered, Arthur Augustus, forgetful of the tin on

the pavement, stumbled backwards over it, and sat down with a heavy bump.

Unfortunately, the lid on the tin of enamel was loose, and it flew off instantly, and a stream of glimmering white enamel flooded round Arthur Augustus like an incoming tide.

Arthur Augustus, the rolls of paper, the brushes, and the tin of paint, fairly wallowed in white enamel and mud.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

A little crowd of villagers gathered around him at once.

Scarlet in the face, and with white enamel streaming from his trousers, Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet, and began to pick up his scattered property.

Luckily Bernard Glyn came along again just then, and, after roaring at the scene for a moment, he good-naturedly lent a hand.

It was not a nice job at all. The enamel seemed to have got over everything as well as Gussy's clothes and his topper—which latter had tumbled off and rolled into it. But the loose rolls, smothered in mud and enamel, were assembled again, and tied up into a bundle at last.

"Hard lines, Gussy!" chuckled Bernard Glyn. "Never mind those cackling asses, old man! I say, I'll take one of the bundles, if you like—the clean one, if you don't mind! I'll take one of the tins of paint, too!"

"Oh deah! Thank you vewy much, deah boy!" gasped the crimson Arthur Augustus. "Put them in my studay; deah boy! Oh cwikey!"

Bernard Glyn slung the tin of paint over his lamp-bracket and gathered the other bundle of wallpaper under one arm. Then he mounted his bike and rode away, still laughing.

Arthur Augustus kicked the empty tin into the gutter. With less to carry now, he proceeded on his way, followed by laughter and cat-calls from the populace of Rylcombe.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "What a weally dweadful experience! And my clobbah and hat are nearly wuined!"

He had already removed some of the enamel and mud from his attire with scraps of wallpaper and his handkerchief, but when well out of the village he called a halt to finish the messy job.

His once natty shoes were in a fearful state, while his silk hat and clothes bore a strangely piebald effect. With more wallpaper Arthur Augustus did all he could to make himself more presentable, and then he continued on his way.

He had not gone many yards, however, when he came face to face with three grinning juniors at a bend in the lane.

They wore Grammar School caps, and he pulled up with a startled gasp as he recognised the cheery trio.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he groaned. "Gordon Gay!"

CHAPTER 2.

To the Rescue!

"O H deah!"

It was Gordon Gay, the cheery leader of the Grammarians, and his chums Carboy and Frank Monk.

For several moments they gazed at the muddy and piebald Arthur Augustus, and then they doubled up and yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus eyed them very apprehensively.

"Bai Jove! I see no weason for this hilawty, you wibald wottahs!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Kindly allow me to pass, Gordon Gay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Jevver see such a sight? Is it really old Gussy, the one and only—the walking fashion-plate from St. Jim's—or do my ancient eyes deceive me?"

"It's old Gussy, right enough!" said Carboy. "But he's hiding behind paint and mud, the crafty bounder!"

"He's turned painter and decorator!" gasped Frank Monk. "Well, did you ever? What's happened, Gussy? Has the noble House of D'Arcy fallen on evil days, and have the family had to turn paperhangers and house-painters?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you cacklin' wottahs—"

"Where are the giddy ladders and paste-pot?" inquired Gay, with interest. "Oh, I see, you're using your topper as a bucket, what? That's an idea!"

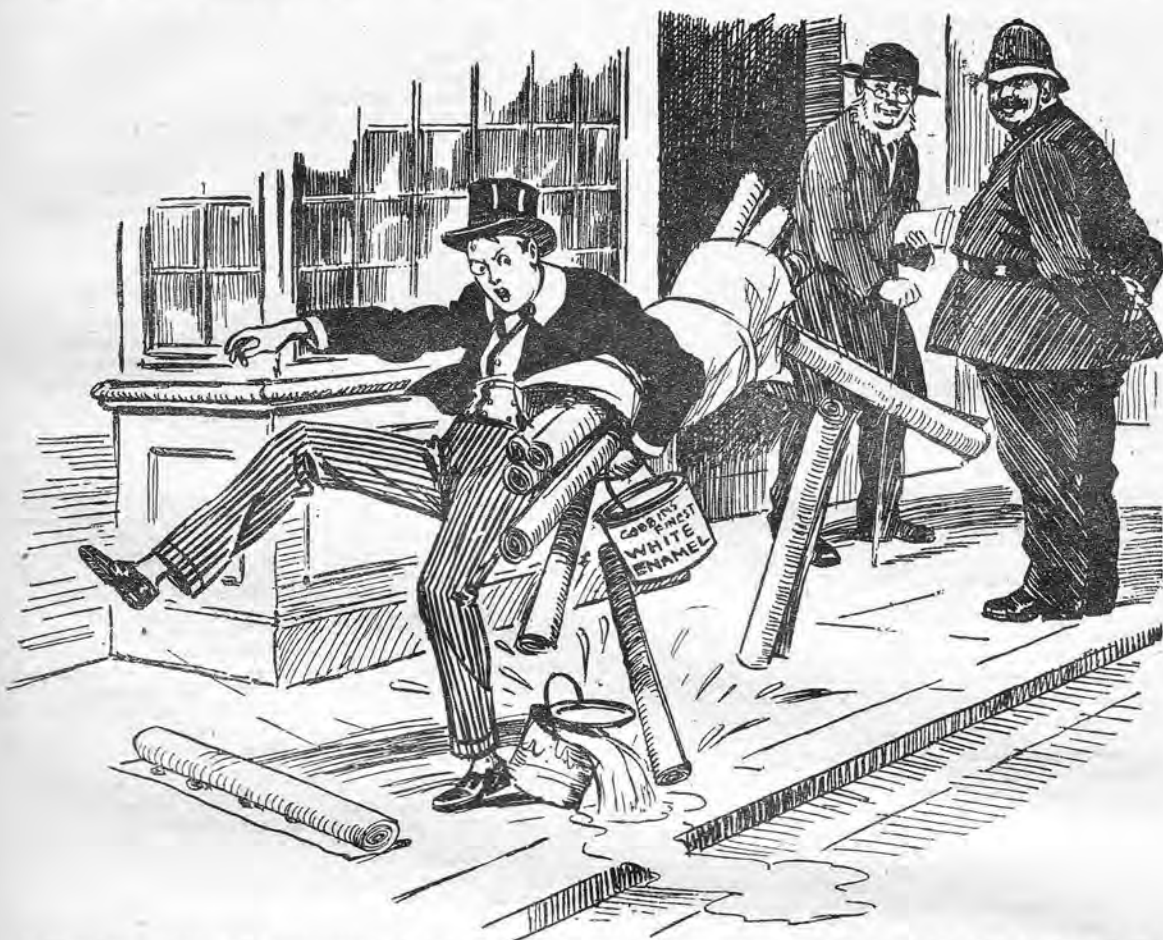
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus became more and more apprehensive as the Grammarians surrounded him. He remembered with some dismay that it was only two days since he had helped his chums to duck Gay's head in a ditch. It was scarcely likely Gordon Gay would have forgotten that.

Nor had he!

"What a stroke of luck!" he remarked, with a deep



In gathering up the rolls of wallpaper, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stumbled backwards over the tin of paint. Unfortunately, the lid flew off, and a stream of white enamel flooded round Gussy like an incoming tide. (See Chapter 1.)

chuckle. "Dear old Gussy was most eager and anxious to decorate me with weeds and mud the other day. Now I can return the compliment with interest!"

"Oh cwumbs! Gay, deah boy—"

Realising that there was no hope of turning away wrath by a soft answer, Arthur Augustus made a sudden dash to escape.

But the Grammarians were not to be caught napping. They were on him in a flash, and Arthur Augustus sat down hard, with his paint-tins, brushes, and paper flying to right and left.

Whilst Gay sat on his chest, Carboy and Frank Monk gathered up the tin of paint and a brush. Their intentions were only too obvious, and Arthur Augustus yelled in alarm.

"Help! Gay, you feahful wuffian! Carboy, you wottah! Monk, you boundah, if you dare— Oh, owikey! Wescue! Wescue, St. Jim's! Help!"

Gussy's frantic yells for aid rang far and wide.

He struggled desperately to escape.

But just as Carboy was dipping in the brush, having removed the lid of the paint-tin, a shout was heard—an answering shout.

It came from somewhere near by, and the next moment four or five figures came running out from the gateway of a cottage a few yards along the lane.

They were in Scouting uniform, and Arthur Augustus thrilled with joy as he recognised Grimes, Pilcher, and several other village Scouts. Besides being the leader of the Rylcombe Scouts, Grimes was a great friend of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He proved a friend in need now.

"Hallo! What's going on here?" he called out. "Why, blow me if it ain't Master D'Arcy!"

"Wescue, Gwimes!" shrieked Gussy wildly, as Carboy hurriedly dipped in the brush again. "Wescue—quick, deah boy!"

"What-ho!" answered Grimes, willingly enough. "At 'em, you chaps!"

Carboy made a frantic jab at Gussy's heated features,

but he was a second too late. In that instant Grimes leaped upon him from behind, and brought him crashing down with a yell. The brush flew from his hand, scattering paint far and wide. The brush itself described a circle and snatched full into Gordon Gay's startled face.

"Yarroooogh!"

Arthur Augustus rolled away out of reach, and staggered to his feet. Gordon Gay, before he even had time to clear away the blue paint from his mouth and face, found himself lying flat on his back, with two hefty Scouts grinning down at him.

"Lemme gerrup!" he spluttered frantically. "Groooogh! Oh, great pip! Why, you cheeky young rotters! Groogh! Grimes, you bounder—"

"Sorry, Master Gay!" grinned Grimes cheerfully. "But we can't allow you to play tricks on Master D'Arcy! You're a funny bloke, you are, and now we're going to make you look funnier still! Hand me that there paint and brush, Percy! It ain't all upset, is it?"

"Plenty more left, Henry!" grinned Percy Pilcher. "Sides a tin of enamel or something. Go it!"

Henry Grimes obeyed with a will. Despite Gay's frantic struggles, he painted a circle and various other geometrical designs on his victim's flushed features in blue paint. Then, their blood-curdling threats passing unheeded, Carboy and Monk came in for a liberal application from Grimes' brush.

All three looked weird objects when Grimes had finished.

"Now you can let 'em go!" chuckled Grimes.

The three Grammarians were released, and, with a final glare at Gussy and his rescuers, they took to their heels up the lane.

"I suppose them three jokers made you in this mess, Master D'Arcy?" said Grimes, hiding a grin as he looked at the usually spotless swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! Not at all, deah boy! I had wathah an unpleasant accident in the village, Gwimey!" said Arthur Augustus breathlessly. "Howevah, I must thank you vewy much for comin' to my wescue—"

"Don't you bother about that, Master D'Arcy!" grinned Grimes. "I weren't going to see you handled by that lot! All this 'ere stuff belong to you?" he added, in some astonishment as Arthur Augustus started to pick up his property.

"Yaas, wathah! I am goin' to wedecowate our studey at St. Jim's, you know."

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated the surprised Grimes. "Well, you ain't half in a mess, Master D'Arcy. You'd better come along to the cottage and we'll try to clean you up a bit."

"That is vewy kind of you, Gwimes! But whose cottage is it, deah boy?" asked Gussy, glancing over the hedge.

"You do not live—"

"It belonged to my grandmother—leastways, she rented it," explained Grimes, a shadow coming over his ruddy, good-natured face. "But she died a week ago—you'll remember me tellin' you about it, Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! But, weally—"

"We're just cleaning it out—these pals of mine are helping me, see!" said Grimes. "My father's going to sell the furniture, what belongs to him now—by auction, I expect. He'd like, of course, to have kept it, as a lot of it's good stuff, like. But bein' as he's out of work, he's got to sell it quick, you see."

Arthur Augustus nodded sympathetically, and followed Grimes as that worthy led the way to the cottage.

Grimes got cloths and turpentine, and made a start cleaning Gussy's clothes in his usual good-natured way, while Pilcher set to work to do what he could to the silk hat.

It was while glancing round the living-room of the cottage that the great idea came to Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured breathlessly. "Some of this furniture looks wathah nice, Gwimey. That buweau is vewy handsome indeed! I have a weally wippin' bwain-wave, deah boy! Do you think your patah would sell any of these things pwivately to me?"

Grimes stared at him.

"To—to you, Master D'Arcy?" he stuttered. "But what for—what good would they be to you?"

"For our studey, deah boy! We are goin' to wedecowate and wefurnish, you know!"

"Oh! Oh crikey!"

"I would pay a good pwice for ewerythin', of course!" Gussy hastened to explain. "That buweau would look vewy nice in the studey, and I should find it vewy useful indeed. And those chairs—"

"Well, my eye!" gasped Grimes, who seemed quite overcome. "If—if you really means it, Master D'Arcy—"

"Most certainly, deah boy! I should be most pleased if your patah would sell me the things! In fact, I could buy quite a lot of this stuff, you know!"

Henry Grimes gasped, and his eyes lit up.

"If—if you could only help us that way it would save a lot of expense and trouble, Master D'Arcy," he said quietly. "My father would be more'n pleased, I can tell you. We're rather hard up just at present. And you know what these here dealers are—some of 'em works hand in hand at sales, and the furniture goes for next to nothing more often than not. In fact, father only said last night as he wished he could sell it privately."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"Then that settles the mattah, deah boy!" he said gracefully. "If you will come wound the house with me now I will select the things I wish to buy."

"But—but what about the price, Master D'Arcy?"

"I will leave that mattah to your patah, Gwimes," said Gussy carelessly. "Pway do not wowy about that point. In fact, I am anxious to pay as much as I can, deah boy," added Arthur Augustus innocently. "I will pay whatever your patah charges for the things, Gwimes."

"My eye!" gasped Grimes; while his chum Pilcher echoed the ejaculation. A fellow who would buy things without knowing the price first was something out of the ordinary to the two villagers. "Oh, all right, Master D'Arcy."

"I will have that buweau to begin with," said Arthur Augustus, not a little surprised to find such a handsome piece of furniture in a humble cottage. "And the small oak desk in the corner; and I think I will also have the corner cupboard, deah boy—it should look vewy well in our studey. I will also buy a lot of things which I hope to sell at St. Jim's, you know."

"Very good, Master D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus took out a notebook and pencil, and Grimes, looking somewhat dubious, escorted him round the cottage on a business inspection. By the time this was finished Arthur Augustus had a list that took up several pages in his notebook, and Grimes was looking more dazed than ever.

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Not only had the noble Gussy purchased the bureau, the desk, and the corner cupboard, but he had purchased nearly everything else in the cottage—including bedsteads and domestic utensils!

"I think that is about all, deah boy," remarked D'Arcy, putting his pocket-book away. "I am particularly pleased with the buweau. As I have remarked, it will look wathah well in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's."

"It's good, solid stuff—not like they makes nowadays," admitted Grimes. "And, what's more, there's one of them secret drawers in it somewhere, though I ain't never seen it."

"Bai Jove! How intewestin'!"

"I don't know jest where it is, but father does," said Grimes, opening the bureau top. "If you like we can 'unt for it now—"

"Not at the moment, deah boy—I weally must be off!" said Gussy, consulting his watch hastily. "I shall certainly have a good look for it when I have time, howevah, as I am vewy intwigued with the ideah of a secret dwawah. But I shall be vewy busy indeed this evenin'. You have the list of things I want, Gwimey?"

"Yes, I've got it here," said Grimes, putting the list on the top of the bureau. "Which I hope it'll be all right—for your father, I mean, of course!"

"Quite all wight, deah boy!" said Gussy confidently. "You undahstand, Gwimey? The things I have marked—the things I weiqah for the studey, you can send to-morrow evenin', as I expect to have finished the wedecowatin' by then. You can keep back the west until you heah fwom me."

"Very good; I understand, sir! I'll get father to show me where that secret drawer is," said Grimes confidentially. "We got a rare disappointment over that. We always thought as my grandmother had a little bit of money put away somewhere, as she'd promised to leave dad some money as well as all this furniture. But we couldn't find nothin' in the house, and then suddenly father thought of this 'ere secret drawer. But it weren't no go; when he opened the drawer there was nothin' in it at all! It's a fair mystery."

"Bai Jove! How vewy disappointin', Gwimes! How-evah, I weally must wush off like anythin' now, deah boy! Where are my things? I must not forget them!"

The paint and the rest of the decorating materials were in the kitchen, and Grimes showed his gratitude in a practical manner by insisting upon helping Gussy to carry them to St. Jim's.

The two strangely-assorted friends started off, Grimes carrying a big bundle of wallpaper and the tin of enamel.

And as they vanished out of the dark little living-room a face appeared at the open window. It was followed instantly by two more faces, and all three were most weirdly decorated with blue paint.

Yet all three faces wore grins, making them look quite ghastly.

"Well, my only hat!" murmured Gordon Gay, grinning round at the two behind him at the lattice window. "Did you ever? So dear old Gussy's bought up the whole show, more or less! What a boy he is! Well, well! Here, I fancy, is where we get a little bit of our own back, my wapa-painted braves!"

"Come on, you awful ass!" gasped Frank Monk eagerly. "Let's get after Gussy and Grimes before they get too far. The three of us can handle 'em!"

"Yes, come on, you ass!" urged Carboy frantically. "My dearly beloved pals, don't be in such a hurry!" chuckled Gay. "I've something better on than mere vengeance just now. Lemme see! Those giddy Scouts are in the garden beating carpets, aren't they? I can hear—"

"Yes; but—"

"Then keep cave for a sec!"

Without waiting for an answer, Gordon Gay hopped over the low window-sill into the room and crossed to the open bureau. For several seconds he worked away desperately, opening the little drawers at the back and testing pigeon-holes. The bureau was cleared of things, and the work was easy. At last, just when he was giving up hope and his chums were getting restive, there sounded a soft click.

"Got it!"

Gordon Gay had found what he was searching for. At the back of one of the spaces where a drawer had been, a small length of panelling had slid back, revealing the secret drawer.

He fumbled inside.

As Grimes had stated, it was quite empty. But it was not empty for long. On the round table in the centre of the room was a pile of old, dog-eared books. Tearing the flyleaf from one—a brown, time-stained strip of old paper—Gay began to scribble on it in faint letters.

He finished very quickly, and carefully shoved the slip of folded paper far to the back of the secret compartment. Then he rejoined his astonished and puzzled chums outside the window.

"All serene!" he grinned. "We'll give Gussy and his pals a bit of a treasure-hunt to be going on with. Gussy's bound to look for that secret drawer when he gets the bureau to-morrow afternoon, and he's bound to remember what Grimey told him about the disappointment of the giddy supposed hidden hoard. Now d'you see the wheeze?"

"You—you've shoved a spoof clue to the giddy hoard in there?"

"Just that, old bean! What a brain you have, Franky! And now for another little wheeze! What's Timson's telephone number, I wonder?"

"Timson's? You mean the furniture remover's?" gasped Carboy.

"Yes, old chap!"

"But what the thump d'you want—"

"I don't want it now," said Gay airily. "When we get to the village will do, so don't get excited, old bean! I want Timson's to deliver some furniture to old Gussy at St. Jim's to-morrow. See the idea?"

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Monk, a glimmer of understanding in his eyes. "But how—"

"I shall instruct Timson to call at the cottage here for the stuff and deliver it to Gussy at St. Jim's to-morrow!" grinned Gay. "And I shall ring up Grimey at his shop in the morning. I happen to know he minds the shop while his boss, old Sands, goes out for orders. I shall pretend to be Gussy, of course, and tell him I want all the stuff delivered that day without fail at St. Jim's, and that I've instructed the removal men to call at the cottage for it. How's that?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Gordon Gay's chums spluttered with mirth.

"Rather a good thing I insisted upon coming back here to see what was going on, what?" asked Gay.

And as they followed him stealthily back into the lane again, Carboy and Monk, by the splutters of mirth that came from them, showed that they agreed with Gay there.

CHAPTER 3.

Making a Start!

GRIMES parted from Arthur Augustus at the gates of St. Jim's, and returned to the cottage, looking very cheery indeed now. On numerous occasions Arthur Augustus had given a helping hand to the Rylcombe grocer's boy, who almost worshipped the good-hearted swell of the Fourth. In Grimes' humble opinion, nothing was impossible to Arthur Augustus. Grimes' father also knew Gussy very well, and Grimes himself had no doubt whatever that the old fellow would jump at D'Arcy's kind offer.

Grimes walked back to the cottage as if he were walking on air.

Arthur Augustus was also very pleased with himself. The matter of the redecorating of the study was settled now—or nearly settled. All that remained to be done was to redecorate—a mere nothing to Arthur Augustus. Permission had been granted by the authorities, the stuff had been bought with which to do the job, and the rest was easy.

And the furniture was bought! There would be no need to fall back on the hire-purchase system—a proceeding which Arthur Augustus himself had been somewhat doubtful about. The swell of the Fourth was already debating where to put the bureau, the desk, and the corner cupboard. Certainly they would look very nice in Study No. 6.

Most of the fellows were at tea when he entered the School House—a fact Gussy was thankful for. The few he did meet stared blankly at Gussy and his load.

But he ignored grins and curious questions.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were just finishing tea as he marched in, and they also stared blankly at Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, ye gods!" gurgled Blake. "Is it really Gussy, or do my eyes deceive me? What a giddy picture! Is that more wallpaper, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy!" assented Gussy, who had quite forgotten their recent differences by this time. "It is all sewene, you fellows! I have had quite a successful journey!"

"Well, you don't look as if you have!" mentioned Blake, glancing over Gussy's clothes, with a chuckle. "I thought you were buying paint and stuff for the study, old chap?"

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, deah boy!"

"Then why waste it on decorating yourself, old chap?" demanded Blake. "Talk about selfishness! Talk about waste!"

"Shocking!" commented Herries. "But Glyn tells us—"

"I have had wathah an accident in the village, deah boys, and—"

"We know that!" chuckled Blake. "All right, Gussy; only pulling your leg, old man! Glyn told us about it

when he brought the other paper and stuff here. But you've bought enough paper to cover a dozen studies, Gussy!"

"All St. Jim's, in fact!" chuckled Digby. "Still, we can pass on what's left to someone else. It's rather a decent pattern; we like it no end, Gussy!"

"It'll keep unwanted visitors away!" explained Blake.

"And wanted visitors, too, I'm afraid! We shall have to wear blue-tinted glasses in this study when it's up, I expect."

"Wats! I considah it is a vewy nice papah!" said Gussy, with some warmth. "The blue flowahs on the cweam background will go well with the blue window-frames, skirtin's, and the door, you know. The white paint is for the mantelpiece. I considah the colour scheme almost perfect!"

"Oh, my hat! In a bright blue?"

"No; wathah not! It is a pale blue—a vewy delicate pale blue, and vewy tasteful indeed, deah boys! I am suah the gals fwom Spaldin' Hall will like the wesult vewy much. Howevah, I will just snatch a cup of tea and get to work. I twust you fellows will twy to keep out of my way!"

"Oh crumbs! You mean to make a start to-night?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas; why not, Blake? The man said the edges of the papah on one side must be cut off, you know! When that is done I will make a start on the paintin'—the first coat!"

"Oh, my hat! But what about prep, you ass?"

"Work must come before pwep, Blake! I shall explain mattahs to Lathom in the mornin', of course!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"What about the paste?" asked Herries. "Have you bought some stuff for paste, Gussy?"

"That is all wight, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Glyn is supplyin' me with some paste of his own invention—wippin' stuff, I undahstand!"

"Oh, is he?" said Blake, a trifle suspiciously. "Let's hope it will be all right, anyway!"

Apparently Blake had some misgivings in regard to Glyn's generosity over the paste!

"Glyn says it will be weady to-morrow!" said Gussy. "I think you fellows will be vewy pleased indeed when you see the studay finished."

"We shall—no end glad!" said Blake grimly.

"I mean, with the wesult!" smiled Gussy. "And I have a surprise for you fellows. I have not yet told you what it is. I flattah myself that I have done a vewy good stwoke of business this aftahnoon. This studay will soon be a weal tweat!"

"Eh? What is the surprise, Gussy?"

"You shall know soon aftah the studay is decowated, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, smiling as he thought of that handsome bureau and the desk, and the other articles of furniture destined for Study No. 6. "And now I must dwink a cup of tea and get busy."

And after hurriedly drinking a cup of tea, Arthur Augustus took off his jacket and rolled back his sleeves.

"My hat! So you do mean business!" grinned Blake.

"But hold on! What about getting permission to redecorate? A little snag—what?"

"Not at all, deah boy! I have already obtained permission fwom Mr. Waitton! There is nothin' to be done now but to get on with the biznai. If you fellows will kindly cleah the table—"

"Lend a hand, chaps!" said Digby, with a chuckle.

"Things are going to hum now! You're sure Railton said we could do the job, Gussy?"

"Quite suah, Digbay! I asked him befoah I went out!"

Blake gave a laugh, and jumped up quite eagerly.

"Good old Gussy! Then we'll make a giddy start, right away!" he exclaimed.

"Right-ho!"

As a matter of fact, Blake, Herries, and Digby, despite their scoffing, were quite anxious to get going on the job. The thought of redecorating was rather exciting. Moreover, now they saw Arthur Augustus meant business, they were anxious to do as much of the work as they could, so as to leave Arthur Augustus as little as possible to do! They had grave doubts of Gussy's abilities as a paper-hanger and painter!

The four chums soon had the tea-things removed. Arthur Augustus untied the bundle of wallpaper, and obtained a big pair of scissors. Then he set to work trimming the paper, while his chums made themselves useful by preparing the study for the paper-hanging next day.

Whether the redecorating was going to be a success or not, Blake, Herries, and Digby were quite certain that it was going to be exciting—if they left it to Arthur Augustus!

CHAPTER 4.

Not Wanted!

"NOW for some work!" said Blake cheerily.

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was the next day. Dinner was over in the School House, and the chums were making their way to Study No. 6. The amateur decorators had been very busy until bed-time the previous night. The cutting of the rolls of paper had taken all the spare time they had between prep and bed, so that there had been no time to tackle the painting of the study. That was a treat in store for Study No. 6.

Blake & Co. were quite looking forward to the work before them, and the Terrible Three, together with a great many more in the Fourth and Shell, were quite looking forward to seeing them do the work!

"You fellows care to come and lend a hand?" asked Blake.

"Thanks, no!" said Tom Merry, smiling. "Awfully good of you to ask me, but—"

"We're not taking up circus entertaining yet!" explained Lowther gravely.

"Too many cooks would spoil the broth!" chuckled Tom.

"If only Gussy would go for a long walk this afternoon," said Manners, "we might think about the kind offer, you fellows!"

"Weally, Mannahs—" began Gussy indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's made a good start already!" sighed Blake. "Last night he nearly cut the study tablecloth to ribbons and all but set the study on fire by dropping a match on the paper shavings. How it will all end—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo! What's this?" interrupted Tom Merry, with a gasp—a gasp of amazement echoed by his chums and Blake & Co.

"What the thump—"

"What the merry dickens—"

"Bai Jove!"

It was something going on in the quadrangle below that had attracted Tom Merry's attention. Tom stopped at the landing window and blinked out in great amazement.

What he saw was rather a strange sight to behold in the stately quadrangle of St. Jim's.

On the gravel drive, just by the School House steps, was a lorry, piled high with furniture. The juniors caught glimpses of bedding, bedsteads, tables, and chairs poking out from the jumbled pile.

"Well, my only Sunday tile!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, gweat Scott!" articulated Gussy faintly.

Through the open landing window came the sound of angry voices, mingled with laughter. The voices came from Taggles, the school porter, and a red-faced individual in a grubby apron, who stood by the antiquated motor-lorry.

The laughter came from a crowd of seniors and juniors standing round.

"Come on!" chuckled Blake. "We must have a squint at this! What on earth can it mean? Who the thump can that stuff belong to?"

"Weally, Blake—"

Blake was already scudding away. Arthur Augustus brought up in the rear as the rest followed Blake with a rush to the quad.

Gussy was looking very uneasy indeed. He had already recognised quite a number of articles on that motor-lorry—including a bureau, a desk, a sewing-machine, and various other articles which he had purchased from Grimes!

But obviously there was a mistake somewhere—a horrid blunder!

Arthur Augustus shuddered. But he was not the fellow to hang back, even in such unfortunate circumstances as this.

He found Taggles spluttering in outraged wrath.

"I tells you as 'ow there's a bloomin' mistake!" he was bawling into the ear of the man by the lorry, who seemed to be deaf. "This 'ere stuff can't be for nobody 'ere! Just you be off with it—sharp! If I 'adn't been 'avin' my dinner, I'd 'ave soon stopped you comin' through that there gate!"

"Date!" snorted the aproned gentleman. "We ain't brought it on the wrong date at all, I tell you! No good shoutin' at me—I'm not deaf, only a bit 'ard of 'earing! Here's Bill Snooks—you talk to him about it bein' the wrong date!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd were highly entertained by the argument. At that moment Taggles' eyes nearly started from his head as he sighted two men who came from the School House just then, also wearing white aprons. Both were

breathing hard and wiping perspiration from their foreheads.

Taggles snorted. He appeared to look upon the proceedings as something in the nature of a conspiracy.

"Ere you!" he bawled, transferring his attentions to the first of the removal men, evidently the driver. "What's this mean? Who told you to bring them things 'ere, Bill Snooks?"

"Boss' horders!" said the furniture man crisply, shifting his pipe from one side of his mouth to the other. "We was told to bring the stuff afore one o'clock, and 'ere we are."

"But—but 'oo are the things for?" hooted Taggles.

"Bloke of the name of D'Arcy," said Bill Snooks, taking a scrap of paper from his pocket and consulting it. "That's it—Mister D'Arcy, School 'Ouse, Sin Jim's!"

"Oh, great pip!"

"Gussy!"

"D'Arcy of the Fourth!"

"Well, my only hat!"

Taggles nearly fell down.

"Oh cwumbs!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

He went scarlet as all eyes turned upon him.

"Wha-what's this mean?" ejaculated Blake, quite startled. "Gussy, you fearful idiot, what's it all mean? Can this load of stuff be for you? What—what—"

"Yaas, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus dismally. "I bought the stuff fwom Gwimes, you know!"

"You bought it?" yelled Blake. "You—you bought all that stuff—those bedsteads, that bedding, that sewing-machine, that towel-rail, that clothes-horse, and—and all the rest of it?"

"Yaas!" mumbled Gussy unhappily. "But—but there has been some mistake. I bought the buwau and some of these things for your study, you know. The west of the things I hoped to sell to the fellows heah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl.

"Weally, you fellows, there is no occasion for hilawity!" protested Gussy indignantly. "I cannot undahstand Gwimes sendin' all the things now, for I distinctly told him to keep most of them there until he heard again fwom me wegardin' them. You see—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" gurgled Blake, wiping his eyes. "Old Gussy will be the death of me yet! Did you ever?"

"You feahful idiots!" shouted Arthur Augustus, crimson and flustered. "Stop that wotten cacklin'! This is the surpwise I told you about last night. They ought not to have sent the things yet. It is vewy awkward indeed! Have you taken any of the things up yet, my good fellow?"

"Which we've taken up some bedsteads and chairs, 'sides some fireirons, and the desk and the beddin'!" said Bill Snooks, eyeing Gussy a trifle anxiously now. "A youngster showed us the way upstairs—a cheeky kid he were, too. I hopes as he ain't gone and showed us the wrong room. He was laughin' fit to bust about summut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That sounds like young Wally—I spotted him sneaking out of the dining-hall early. You'd better tell these chaps to bring the stuff down again, Gussy."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Look 'ere—" Bill Snooks was beginning warmly, when there came the rustle of a gown and Mr. Railton came up. His face registered blank amazement.

"Boys—boys, what ever does this commotion mean?" he stuttered. "Taggles, what is this load of furniture doing here?"

"Which as 'ow it belongs to Master D'Arcy, seemingly!" said Taggles stolidly. "Though it beats me what—"

"D'Arcy!" ejaculated the Housemaster, turning an astounded look on that blushing youth. "Impossible! D'Arcy—boy—"

"Oh cwumbs! There—there has been a most unfortunate mistake, sir!" stammered Gussy. "The things are mine, certainly, but they should not have been sent heah at all—at least, most of them should not. I distinctly told Gwimes to keep them until—"

"D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Railton. "What ever do you mean, boy? Am I to understand that—that this furniture belongs to you?"

"Yaas, sir. Oh deah! You—you see, sir—"

"I do not see, D'Arcy! Explain yourself at once!" snapped the Housemaster, as Arthur Augustus paused, covered in confusion.

The swell of the Fourth explained as well as he could. Everybody listened, and a roar of laughter went up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Railton, though his own mouth was twitching. "Bless my soul! D'Arcy, you foolish boy! It is impossible for you to undertake responsi—"

bility for these things! You must send them back at once!"

"Look here——" began Bill Snooks heatedly.

But again Arthur Augustus interrupted him. Despite his utter dismay, Gussy had no intention of backing out of the transaction; that was not Gussy's way.

"One moment, Mr. Wailton!" he replied firmly. "I am afraid it is quite impossible for me to back out of the transaction now, sir. I am in honah bound to keep my word with Gwimes. The things I want for my own use can remain heah, suahly—with your appwoval, sir? The west can be sent back to the cottage until I can make othah awwangements. I am quite suah that my patah will support me financially when he knows the facts, sir."



"D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Railton. "Does this—this load of furniture belong to you?" "Yaas, sir," mumbled Gussy, covered with confusion. "You—you see——" "I do not see!" snapped the Housemaster. "Explain yourself at once!" (See Chapter 4.)

"It is quite possible that he will, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "But he will be very much annoyed, I am afraid, for all that. You should not have undertaken such a responsibility, my boy, though I cannot help admiring your generosity."

"Weally, sir——"

"Some of these pieces of furniture appear to be of value," said Mr. Railton, glancing over the lorry-load. "However, if your father, Lord Eastwood, approves of what you have done, I do not see how I can interfere. You had better select the things you require for your study, D'Arcy, and send the remainder back until you hear from your father."

"Vewy well, sir. That is just what I had awwanged, but somethin' appears to have gone w'ong. Thank you vewy much, sir!" said Gussy gratefully.

The Housemaster spoke to Taggles, and then, still looking somewhat doubtful, he strode away towards the Head's house.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, wiping the perspiration from his heated brow. "How beastly awkward!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus ignored the laughing and the chaffing now. Mr. Railton obviously strongly disapproved of the whole transaction. But he was raising no objections, and that was all that mattered at the moment.

Arthur Augustus turned and explained matters to the grumbling Bill Snooks and his mates, with his usual tact. Possibly the tact had little effect, but the five shillings he slipped into Bill's horny palm undoubtedly had a great deal!

Bill Snooks' face changed wonderfully, and after Gussy had explained what he wanted done, he grinned and nodded.

Leaving the removal men to take the selected things from the lorry, Arthur Augustus accompanied the still laughing Blake & Co. to Study No. 6. They found that celebrated apartment crowded out with bedding, bedsteads, and other household effects.

"Never mind!" chuckled Blake. "All's well that ends well, Gussy! It was jolly decent of you to back up poor old Grimey!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Tom Merry. "And that burean's jolly nice, I must say. I wish we had it in our study!"

"Good man, Gussy!" said Herries heartily, as pleased as Blake at acquiring such handsome furniture for the study. "I say, why not tip these movie merchants to shift some of our stuff into the box-room for us, too? They'll handle the things better than we shall."

"Phew! Good wheeze!" said Blake. "Then we can get to work on the papering right away. Would you care to go for a walk with Tom Merry, Gussy?"

"I uttably wefuse to go for a walk with Tom Mewwy, Blake!" said Gussy heatedly. "I have already told you that I am goin' to do that papah-hangin'! I wefuse to twust you youngstahs with the job, easy as it is! Hallo! Heah are the wemoval men!"

Bill Snooks and his mates tramped into the study just then and saved further argument. They carried a couple of wheel-backed chairs that would have gladdened the heart of an antique dealer. The programme was explained to Bill, and soon the chairs and the rest of the furniture in Study No. 6 were being carted along to the box-room.

Before long Study No. 6 was as bare as Mother Hubbard's famous cupboard.

Then Bill Snooks & Co., having been amply tipped by Blake, disappeared, and the rumble of their motor-lorry on the drive died away, amid ironical cheers and laughter from the crowd of sightseers in the quadrangle.

"Now we can get to work in real earnest," said Blake, rolling back his sleeves in a businesslike manner. "You Shell-fish can cut off now—you'll only be in the way! My hat! What about that paste, Gussy?"

"Oh, gweat Scott! I'll wun along to Glyn now."

"No need!" said a cheerful voice in the doorway. "Here we are!"

Bernard Glyn came into the bare apartment, staggering under the weight of two fire-buckets—evidently purloined from the rack in the passage. In each bucket was a slimy-looking mess of white stuff.

He planked the buckets down on the bare floor, and went to the door again rather hastily.

"There you are, Gussy!" he said, speaking through his handkerchief. "There's the paste, old man—splendid stuff! Good luck with it! No payment expected, but perhaps you'll recommend it to your friends! Cheerio!"

And Bernard Glyn departed.

But he left something behind him in addition to the paste itself!

CHAPTER 5.

Not So Easy!

BLAKE noticed it first. He raised his head from the rolls of wallpaper and sniffed.

Sniff, sniff!

"What the dickens is that awful niff?" he demanded.

"Yaas, wathah! How howwid! It appeahs to come fwom those buckets, deah boys—must be the paste, you know! Oh cwums!"

"It is the paste!" yelled Tom Merry, after a hurried inspection of the two buckets. "Oh, my stars! I'm off! Come on, chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three departed, roaring with laughter. They did not intend to go far, however; they were anxious to return later on to see how things were progressing. They had an idea that the sight of Blake & Co. hanging wallpaper would be entertaining.

As they vanished Herries and Digby came staggering in, Herries carrying a couple of trestles, and Digby two planks.

"Hallo!" gasped Herries, lowering the planks to the floor and hurriedly putting his handkerchief to his nose. "What the dickens is that horrid smell, you fellows?"

"Phew! It nearly knocked me sideways!" panted Digby.

"Only the paste!" gasped Blake, wondering how they were going to stand that awful smell all the afternoon.

"It's horrid, isn't it? But all paste smells more or less, though. I suppose that ass Glyn's put some awful chemical in it. We'll have to stand the beastly stuff, I suppose!"

"Oh dear!"

"Yaas, wathah! We'll get used to it in time!" gasped Gussy rather uneasily. "Oh deah! Isn't it too frightful?"

It certainly was. But it could not be helped. In any case, it seemed ungrateful to grumble about it when they were getting the paste for nothing.

"I—I think you had better put the paste on, aftah all, Blake," said Gussy, eyeing the messy concoction with disfavour.

"Not at all, old man!" said Blake hastily. "I wouldn't rob you of the honour for worlds, old chap! I've changed my mind about wanting to put the giddy paste on. Carry on! You'll do it much better than I shall."

"Much better!" said Herries and Digby both together.

"Leave it to Gussy!"

"We don't want to make a muck of things!" said Digby.

"It needs a fellow with brains and judgment!" said Herries.

"Oh deah! Vewy well, deah boys! Let us have that twistle-table put up."

"Right-ho!"

Arthur Augustus grabbed one of the planks and swung it round. Unfortunately, he put too much beef into the swing. One end demolished the gas mantle and glass, and the other end caught Blake a most fearful crack on the head.

There was a crash of falling glass and a terrific howl from Blake.

"You—you raving maniac! Yarooogh!"

"Weally, Blake— Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back as Blake scrambled to his feet, an almost homicidal look on his heated features. His alarmed jump took him near the window, and there was an appalling crash of breaking glass as the end of the plank went through one of the panes.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"You—you raving madman!" shrieked Blake. "Look what you've done now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Digby; despite the shattered window, they simply could not help it.

But Blake did not laugh. He rubbed his head frantically, and it obviously took all his self-control to restrain him from rushing at the unlucky Arthur Augustus and smiting him hip and thigh.

But Gussy was holding the plank before him as a weapon now, and possibly this helped to restrain Blake.

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur Augustus indignantly, "it was an accident, and you have no need to get angry!"

"Angry!" shrieked Blake, still rubbing his head furiously. "Wouldn't you be angry if some born idiot shoved a hefty plank against your napper, you raving lunatic?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We shan't get this job done by midnight at this rate!" said Digby. "Accidents will happen, Blake, old chap—"

especially when we leave it to Gussy. Don't start scrapping, anyway!"

"We're starting well!" sighed Herries. "That's a new window-pane, a new gas mantle, and a new glass we'll want! At this rate we'd have found it cheaper to get the giddy decorators in!"

"Dwy up, and don't gwouse, Hewwies!" snorted Arthur Augustus, keeping a wary eye on the infuriated Blake. "I knew that if you youngstahs insisted upon helpin' me things would go w'ong!"

And, not even noticing the looks on his chums' faces, Arthur Augustus picked up the paste-brush and approached the paste-bucket with a shudder.

Breathing hard, Blake began to brush down the walls, while Herries and Digby also got busy on various jobs. It had been decided not to bother about peeling off the old paper from the walls—which was just as well, perhaps.

Soon the good work was going ahead briskly. The wallpaper—which really was of quite a nice design, despite Blake's scoffing—was cut into lengths, and placed ready to hand for Gussy, the amateur paper-hanger.

Slap, slap, slap!

Gussy was getting busy with the paste-brush.

He slapped it on in huge chunks, heedless of where the splashes landed so long as some got on the sheet of paper. It was only when the sheet was completely covered in paste that Gussy discovered he had pasted it on the wrong side!

"Nevah mind!" said the absent-minded Arthur Augustus. "We are bound to make a few mistakes to begin with, you know. Anothah sheet, deah boys!"

Slap, slap, slap!

Soon another sheet was swimming in paste. This Arthur Augustus quite spoiled by treading on it as he started to carry it towards the steps which Blake had placed into position.

"It's just as well Gussy did buy five times as much paper as was wanted!" said Blake, with weary sarcasm. "At this rate we'll have to send for another twenty rolls or so!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus was getting irritable already. He was a sight by this time, having splashed the smelly stuff all over his face and clothes.

But he finished pasting the third sheet at last.

"I watched a chap hanging paper once," said Digby. "I think he folded it over before picking up the sheet, Gussy."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus. "I see no reason why he should do such a sillay, time-wastin' thing, Digby!"

But Gussy soon did see!

With the length of wallpaper, dripping with slimy paste, stretched at arm's length above his head, Arthur Augustus approached the steps and started to mount them.

His chums ceased their labours and watched him with interest.

It was extraordinary how that sheet of wallpaper seemed to desire a closer contact with Arthur Augustus!

As he mounted the rickety steps it curled and wound about his legs, his elegant body, and finally his face and hair.

"Oh, bai Jove!" came in a smothered gurgle from beneath the paper. "Help, deah boys! The beastly stuff—"

"Here, let me hold the bottom!" said Blake, with a chuckle.

"No, wathah not!" gurgled Gussy frantically. "Just— Oh, good! I knew I'd get it wight!"

Arthur Augustus managed, by a desperate effort, to get the sheet clear, and then he leaned forward and made a jab with it against the wall.

"Hold on, you awful ass!" yelled Blake, suddenly noticing something. "Can't you see you've got the dashed thing wrong side up? Don't stick it on yet, you— Oh, my hat! Look out!"

It happened quite suddenly and unexpectedly.

Possibly it was Blake's sudden yell that upset Gussy's balance at the critical moment; possibly it was the blob of paste that fell into his eye. At all events something caused the flustered Arthur Augustus to lose his balance.

The next second the steps shot sideways.

Not having any visible means of support, Arthur Augustus obeyed the laws of gravitation and dropped.

Crash!

"Yawooooogh!"

D'Arcy fell with a most fearful howl and a crash; the howl being somewhat muffled by the fact that the sheet of sticky wallpaper had again wrapped itself round his head.

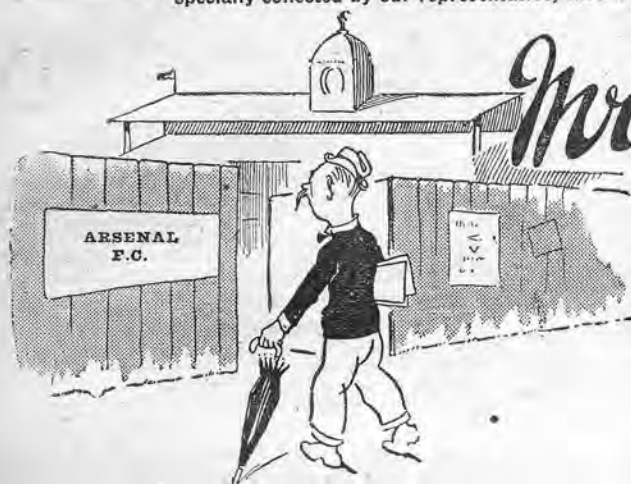
The next moment he was rolling about the pasty floor, wrapped up in wallpaper like a parcel.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake.

The door opened just then, and Lowther's grinning face appeared. Behind Lowther were Tom Merry, Manners, and quite a number of fellows. It was clear that they had been

(Continued on page 12.)

First-hand information concerning the history and players of another famous football team, specially collected by our representative, Mr. "Nosey" Parker!



Mr. Parker POPS IN

TO SEE
ARSENAL!

Boys! Let me introduce you to Mr. Parker, our special football representative. You will find him entertaining and interesting, and certainly, from the way he gathers footer information, original!

Football Kings!

THIS week it is the Arsenal club into which we are going to poke our noses. I said "we" advisedly, because I am certainly not going alone. It is going to be a collective business; you are going to hold my hand, metaphorically, and I am going to push you in first if there is likely to be anything behind any door which would scare me.

It isn't the fact that we are poking into a club called Arsenal which frightens me. Guns going off don't frighten me, and in any case there aren't any guns anywhere near the Arsenal ground. But we've got to tread warily, because we are going into the Park Lane mansion of football; into the House of Lords, if you like that phrase better, or into Buckingham Palace if you prefer that description. And on the whole I like the Buckingham Palace idea best, because we are going to see the kings of football, those who sit in high places.

So now for it. Come with me. Wait a minute, though, what about that speck of dust on one of your boots? That must be removed, or you might leave it on the six-inch thick Turkey carpet in the board-room—if we ever get so far, which I doubt.

Keeping His Fellows Fit!

THEY tell me that the favourite song at Highbury is a very old one. The first line is: "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls." The only trouble is that these Arsenal players don't just dream that they dwell in marble halls. It is a fact. Look into that bathroom! Isn't it wonderful? It cost at least one-tenth as much as one of the Arsenal players. And here is Tom Whittaker, the trainer. He will show us the gymnasium, because if there is a proud trainer anywhere it is Tom. He has a right to be proud, for never has a trainer had so many up to date facilities for keeping his fellows fit.

In the board-room there is enough old oak to sink two ships. But you can never tell what is going on there. Nobody knows except the directors and the manager, and they won't tell. If you did happen to get into the board-room you would probably spot a couple of live lords, the same number of knights or baronets, and, if it was your lucky day, at least one Cabinet minister.

They have to have a sound-proof board-room connected with the Arsenal club, because hidden in one corner is a sort of Aladdin's cave. If they want a player they just dip into this cave for a few thousands—or is it hundreds of thousands?—of pounds, and—hey presto!—the player appears. But what tales the old grand-

father clock which ticks away in the corner could tell.

The Big Noise!

THERE is another man connected with the Arsenal who could tell a lot of tales, if you got him into the right mood. This is the manager, Mr. Herbert Chapman. But as we go to see him together you will find that we can't interview him; can't ask him any questions. He will talk and talk and talk to us; entertain us wonderfully. And then he will say, quickly: "Good morning. Mind the step as you go out." And when you find yourselves outside those marble halls once more, you will also remember that Manager Chapman has told you exactly nothing.

But he does tell those players of his something, believe me. And what he tells them goes. Arsenal, as befits a club with a name which suggests guns, are the big noise. It will probably cost us a lot of money to speak to the players, but we'll risk it. You can put that autograph album away, however. These Arsenal players don't sign their names for nothing. Of course not. Their names are worth thousands.

A £10,000 Deal!

HERE is David Jack, practising a new trick on the special training ground connected with the club. Why he should practise any new tricks beats me, of course, because he seems to know several too many already. David went from Bolton to London, so I am told, as the ultimate outcome of a joke. One day Manager Herbert Chapman said to a Bolton director: "How much for David Jack?" The director laughed. "Ten thousand pounds!" he said, naming what he thought was a ridiculous figure. "It's a deal," said Manager Chapman. It wasn't a deal so quickly as that, but such is the way the biggest transfer of all time started.

Of course we mustn't look at all these Arsenal fellows together, or we shall lose our eyesight. There's Alec James. He didn't cost quite so much as David Jack, but what's a thousand or two? Alec spends his mid-week spare time showing his football tricks to people who call at a certain London store.

When Joe Files Down the Wing!

WHAT I can't understand is why Arsenal, of all clubs, should have fellows with Christian names as surnames. I have already introduced you to Jack and James. Now we come to John, whose Christian name is Bob.

He is one of the many who goes golfing every week; compulsory golf is on the Arsenal's training regulations. I asked Bob John (it sounds funny, but you've got to put his name that way) what was his golf handicap. "A ball which will move when it should be stationary, and every club in the bag," was his reply.

But Bob goes round the golf links with Charlie Jones, and they say what they think about their shots in Welsh, so the caddies are no worse—and no wiser.

"Look out, hang on to your caps!" That's all right now, Joe Hulme's gone past. Joe was doing one of his training sprints, and on match days, if there are forty thousand people at Highbury, they all have to hold their caps when Joe flies down the wing. One of his pals said Joe imagines himself a Schneider Cup winner.

These Arsenal fellows are great all-round sports; they will discuss any game from polo to push-ha'penny. Joe Hulme played for Middlesex at cricket during last summer, and, hard as nails, little Alf. Baker, the never-tired half-back, can also hit centuries as easy as he can stop opposing wing men.

Then the minute we go over to Joseph Joshua Williams, who has only just arrived, he will talk boxing with us. His father was a bantam-weight boxer, and J. J. can do a bit in the same line. I hope he never aims a straight left at Roberts, the centre-half, because this fellow stops everything. Ask any centre-forward who has over played against him.

If any of these lads have troubles over their Income Tax, they always trot off with them to David Jack. He knows all there is to know about this delicate business and is ready at all times to lend a hand, as well as his head, to deal with the figures. David is indeed a Jack of many trades—and a master of football.

My Exit!

TOM PARKER is the captain who is never absent from the side; never has been since he first joined the club from Southampton. He heads the ball as often as he kicks it, and is getting quite thin on top in consequence. Full-back partner Hapgood is well-named—always happy and always good. Goal-keeper Preedy has just arrived from Wigan, so we will go over and ask him a question or two.

"How's the pier looking?" That's enough, we had better get out in a hurry, and mind the step. Actually we have only learnt just a little bit about the wonders of the Arsenal, but one day, disguised as a pendulum, I shall get into the grandfather clock in the board-room, and then—well, I shall tell you so many secrets that your ears will come right off.



"NOSEY."

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"LEAVING IT TO GUSSY!"

(Continued from page 10.)

expecting to hear queer sounds from Study No. 6 that afternoon.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "We thought we heard Gussy's voice just now. Where is he?"

"Under that wallpaper!" said Blake wearily. "Another sheet wasted! I suppose it's his way of paperhanging, though! If it is, I think it's a jolly wasteful way!"

"Gug-gug-gwooooh!" came from the heaving mass of wallpaper. "Oh, gweat Scott! Help me, you fellows! Gwooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind!" said Herries. "After all, it was upside down and would have had to come off again if it had gone on!"

"I suppose it's Gussy's way of doing things!" said Lowther, with an air of curiosity. "Does he roll himself in the paper first, and then roll himself along the wall to paper it? That's rather a good wheeze!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy's face, flushed and smothered in paste, appeared in sight again as Blake and Digby dragged at the torn paper. He had a very patchy appearance indeed as he staggered to his feet, his hair especially looking a curious sight.

"When father papered the parlour, you couldn't see pa for paste!" sang Lowther.

"Did you ever see such a family so stuck up before?" chanted Manners, joining in the famous ditty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go on, get on with the job, Gussy!" called Cardew. "Don't slack, old bean!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Arthur Augustus' reply was ferocious.

"It was all your fault, Blake!" he choked. "If you had not shouted and flustered me—you know I hate bein' woored at!"

"But you had the paper upside down!" shrieked Blake.

"I—I thought it might look nice that way!" said Gussy stubbornly. "Howeveh, enough time has been wasted! Blake, kindly shut that door on those cacklin' wottahs!"

CHAPTER 6.

Rather Awkward!

"HERE, leave that dashed door open, you mean rotters!" called Wilkins, from the passage.

"We've given up a whole half to seeing this show, and we're not going to be done down, or we'll demand our money back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake slammed the door in the face of the heartless crowd. It flew open again the next moment, but Arthur Augustus was too busy again to notice. He was at work on another sheet already, slamming the paste on in thick chunks. In all he did Arthur Augustus was a generous youth.

Slap, slap, slap!

"This beastly paste is too thick!" said Arthur Augustus. "Wun and get some watah, Blake!"

"Run and get it yourself!" said Blake, who was taking nails out of the wall. "I'm a giddy journeyman myself—not your mate!"

"You, Digby—"

"Rats!"

"I'll get it," said Lowther, from the doorway. "You chaps carry on with the good work! What shall I get it in, Gussy?"

"Anythin' you like, deah boy, only be quick!"

"Sure anything will do, old man?" insisted Lowther.

"Ynas, anythin', you ass!" said Gussy impatiently, quite engrossed in his task of laying on the paste. "Don't bothah so much; wash off and get it if you're goin' to, Lowthah!"

"Right-ho, old sport! Shan't be a sec!"

Lowther rushed off to get some water.

He was not long away, and when he came back he was carrying a silk hat brimful of water.

There was a yell.

Arthur Augustus heard it, and glanced round at the doorway. He nearly fell down as he caught sight of the topper.

"Here you are, Gussy!" said Lowther cheerfully. "You said I could bring it in anything, so as there wasn't a bucket handy I've brought it in this. I hope it won't damage it."

"B-bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, staring at the hat with goggling eyes. "Oh, gweat Scott! Who—whose hat is that, Lowthah, you feahful wuffian?"

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"Yours, old man!"

Gussy. "You've filled my best toppah with watah!" shrieked

"Yes, old chap!" said Lowther, laying the hat on the table and eyeing Gussy in some surprise. "You said I could bring it in anything, and bring it quickly. You left the hat in our study, you know, so it wouldn't get spattered with paste. But the water won't hurt it!"

"You—you—you— Oh, you—you—" Arthur Augustus choked.

"Empty it and I'll fetch some more!" said the humorous Monty, while the crowd shrieked with merriment.

Arthur Augustus complied!

He glowered speechlessly for a full half-minute at the japer of the Shell, and then he grabbed the silk hat full of water and emptied it over Lowther's head.

Swoooosh!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a strangled gurgling from the practical joker, and a howl of laughter from the doorway.

But Lowther had no opportunity to fetch more water. Carrying on the offensive, Arthur Augustus grabbed the paste-brush again and began to lay it about Lowther with ferocious vim.

Biff, biff, biff!

Monty Lowther yelled, and dodged and ducked in vain. For once Arthur Augustus was really annoyed—and little wonder! Lowther's little joke was the last straw. The swell of the Fourth chased the hapless japer round the room, thumping away with the dripping paste-brush.

But even a worm will turn, and Lowther turned at bay at last, and grappled desperately with the incensed Gussy.

The next moment, locked in a deadly embrace, they were rolling over and over on the floor, scrapping for all they were worth.

The onlookers shrieked.

At that moment Study No. 6 was far from being a suitable place for a rough-and-tumble. The floor was nearly covered with paste and discarded sheets and scraps of wallpaper.

Among all this Monty Lowther and Arthur Augustus wallowed and fought.

And as they rolled and wallowed their sticky clothes picked up paper and paste, until in a few whirling seconds they were almost hidden from view.

They both looked ghastly sights.

The commotion was at its height when there came a sudden stir at the doorway, and the hysterical crowd staggered back. Then a sweet girlish voice sounded.

"May we come in?"

Lowther and Gussy ceased to scrap—like magic! They had heard that voice, and they had recognised it in agonised horror. Blake and the rest were too petrified with sudden dismay to answer the mild request. And so the newcomers came in uninvited.

They were Cousin Ethel, Doris Levison, and Lady Peggy Brooke, the juniors' three girl chums from Spalding Hall School!

They gave little shrieks as they sighted the weird figures among the ruins.

Arthur Augustus and Monty Lowther sat up in a sea of paste and paper, and gasped and panted as if for a wager. Only their wildly dishevelled faces and their arms were visible—wallpaper covered the rest.

"G-gug-good gracious!" gasped Cousin Ethel faintly.

There was a dreadful silence.

It was broken by a queer gurgle from Arthur Augustus. He slowly staggered to his feet. Even in that horrible moment his Chesterfieldian politeness did not forsake him.

"Ethel, deah gal!" he said feebly. "I am so—gwooooh!—sowwy you have—gwooooh!—awwived at such an unfortunate—gwooooh!—moment! We—we happen to be papahwin' the study, you know!"

"Oh!" gasped Cousin Ethel, with an hysterical giggle. "Papering the study, Arthur? You look as if you had been papering yourselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" gurgled Arthur Augustus, glaring round at the doorway. "Pwavy kick those feahful wottahs away from that door, Blake! Oh deah! Ethel, deah gal, you should have let us know you were comin', and we—"

"But you invited us yourself, Arthur!" protested Cousin Ethel, striving hard to keep her laughter back. "You asked us all three to tea to-day—don't you remember?—when you called at our school on Friday."

Arthur Augustus started.

"Oh, ewikey!" he mumbled. "I—I wemembah now! I had forgotten all about it, you know! How vewy unfortunate! Oh deah! And now—"

He halted, and blinked dismally round the study. It was quite impossible to give Cousin Ethel and her friends tea in Study No. 6; nothing was clearer than that! Blake, Herries, and Digby, gave their forgetful chum most eloquent glares. It was just like Gussy!

But Cousin Ethel was a most tactful young lady. Sensing the electric atmosphere, she gave a kindly smile.

"Please do not worry about us—it is quite all right, Arthur!" she exclaimed, smothering a desire to giggle again. "We will come again at a more convenient time—when you've finished redecorating. Come along, girls!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Hold on!" laughed Tom Merry, coming to the rescue then. "No need to go back home, Miss Ethel! Why not join us at Study No. 10 for tea, and these fellows can come along later!"

"That's a good idea, Tom Merry!" said Blake eagerly, giving Tom a grateful glance. "Please do, Miss Ethel—and we're awfully sorry about this. We—we shan't be long now. If—if you don't mind going with Tom Merry now—"

"Not at all! It is very kind indeed of Tom Merry!" said Cousin Ethel, smiling sweetly at the flustered and agitated Gussy. "We'll expect you and your friends shortly, Arthur!"

With delicate tact, the girls departed, picking their way carefully out of the paste and paper-strewn room.

"Well!" choked Blake, as he closed the door after them. "Well, of all the born idiots, Gussy takes the bun. Oh, the—the—"

Words failed him, and it looked for a moment as if he were about to relieve his feelings by committing assault and battery upon his aristocratic and blundering chum.

"Fancy those girls seeing us in this awful state!" groaned Digby. "Oh, my hat!"

"They'll laugh for years about this!" said Herries. "Let's kick this awful ass out and get on with the job, for goodness' sake!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Shut up!" roared Blake. "You've caused enough trouble as it is, you gibbering jabberwock. Another word from you—"

Arthur Augustus did not say another word—like Monty Lowther, he was subdued and dispirited. Both of them tottered out, followed by yells of laughter from the spectators of the tragic scene. Then Blake slammed the door again, and locked it.

Left alone, Blake & Co. set to work, anxious to get the job done at the earliest possible moment now, so as not to delay tea in Study No. 10.

"Perhaps it's just as well it has happened," said Blake, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "We'll be able to make a decent job of it now. Let's make the most of the time while that burler's away and get busy!"

"Yes, rather!"

And Blake, Herries, and Digby got busy in earnest. It was a tremendous relief to get Arthur Augustus out of the way, and they carried on quite cheerfully. They were getting inured to the smell of the paste.

After that the good work went on apace.

Though a good number of lengths of wallpaper had been spoiled and wasted, they learned lessons as they went on, and Blake adopted Digby's suggestion in regard to folding the paper before hanging. Soon they began to get quite deft at the job.

Fellows came and banged at the door, begging to be let in, but the busy workers were not having any. Glyn called out to ask how the paste was going, but Blake told him to go and eat coke and chop chips. Glyn had been one of the hilarious crowd round the door from the start of operations.

Moreover, Blake could not help feeling that Glyn had put that smelly chemical into the paste on purpose. He knew what a notorious practical joker Glyn was.

"In any case," said Blake, as he vigorously wielded the paste-brush, "this dashed paste isn't much good, so we don't owe the ass much. I wish we'd make some flour paste ourselves. It doesn't seem to be sticking at all well!"

"Rotten stuff!" agreed Herries. "Looks to me as if we'll have to go round with the brush again, sticking back the loose bits."

"Well, we can do that!" growled Blake.

They finished the last length, in due course, but, to their annoyance, it was as they had feared. Almost every length showed grave signs of peeling away again—especially at the corners.

"Haven't put enough of the beastly paste on!" sniffed Blake, frowning. "Blow it!"

He went round with the paste-brush, jamming the dripping brush behind the loose edges, and slapping them against the wall again. Quite a lot of paste, naturally enough, ran down the walls in streams, but the amateur hoped it would not show when dry. The job was finished at last, however; and, leaving the clearing up and painting to be done later, Blake & Co., looking and feeling as if they had been engaged on the task of decorating

St. Jim's from top to bottom, hurried off to change and wash before proceeding to tea in Study No. 10.

The job of paper-hanging was done—and they felt deeply thankful that it was.

CHAPTER 7.

Hardly a Success!

"WELL, we really must be going now, Arthur!"

Cousin Ethel smiled round at Tom Merry & Co., and nodded to her chums as she spoke.

Tea was over in Study No. 10. It had been quite a jolly tea, after all. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was feeling his usual cheerful self again. Certainly he still looked rather weird, as did Lowther, with his patchy face and his hair sticking out in white tufts. The amateur paper-hangers had entered the study, blushing and self-conscious. But Cousin Ethel and her chums had recovered themselves by this time, and they were sweetly sympathetic. Very soon the recent unfortunate happenings were forgotten, and Blake & Co. and Lowther found their spirits reviving, and joined in the merry chatter and laughter.

Tactfully, Cousin Ethel refrained from mentioning the re-decorating—until tea was ended. Now she smiled as she rose from the table.

"Yes, we really must be going!" she remarked. "Thank you very much, Tom Merry! But we simply must see the decorations now they are finished, Blake!"

"Oh, we really must!" smiled Lady Peggy.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Oh, dear!"

Blake & Co. did not seem very keen.

(Continued on next page.)



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"Oh—oh, of course!" gasped Blake, who was haunted by a dread that those last few brushfuls of paste slapped over the wallpaper might have dried white. "Oh, of course! You—you simply must, Miss Ethel!"

"Simply must!" mumbled Herries.

"We've not cleared up yet, of course!" explained Blake. "And the place is in a most awful mess! We're going to clear up and do the painting this evening, you know!"

"Yaas, wathah! Come along, deah gals!"

Apparently the girls were very keen indeed to see the finished job of paper-hanging! Tom Merry felt certain he caught a lurking smile on Lady Peggy's face.

There was no help for it, however. In any case, Blake, Herries, and Digby were really proud of their handiwork. The finished job had looked quite decent on the whole. Some of the sheets were not hung true to line, perhaps, and many were sadly rumpled and bulgy. Air-pockets had been formed, despite all efforts to keep them out. And in trying to stroke them flat Blake had torn the paper in several places.

Still, for amateurs, it did not look so bad.

So Blake & Co. were feeling rather pleased, after all, that Cousin Ethel had expressed a desire to see the finished job. They had stoked the fire up before leaving the study, so that the paper would dry quickly, and they expected it would look better still by this time.

In a cheery group they strolled along the Fourth Form passage.

Blake unlocked the door of Study No. 6, and flung it open. Cousin Ethel entered first.

Blake & Co. eyed her rather anxiously, expecting and hoping for some signs of appreciation and pleasure. Instead, to their surprise, came a little gasp of amazement.

"Looks all right, what?" began Blake, following her into the room. "I fancy— Why, what the— Oh, gug-good gracious! Good heavens!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What the thump—"

Blake, Herries, and Digby almost fainted at what they saw in Study No. 6.

Blake staggered and nearly fell.

For the walls were absolutely bare, save for blobs of dried paste and a single sheet of wallpaper that hung forlornly from one wall!

All the rest—the lengths Blake and his helpers had so painstakingly and wearily pasted into position—were lying in crumpled, desolate heaps on the study floor.

"Oh—oh crumbs!" gasped Lowther involuntarily. "They—they've all fallen off again!"

"Oh dear!" gurgled Blake. "Oh, my hat!"

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes. Only one length was still hanging, and even that stood only because Blake had jammed it over a nail which served to hold it up!

Even as they stared, the single sheet broke away from the nail and descended full upon Cousin Ethel, almost enveloping her.

Cousin Ethel gave a little shriek of alarm.

Fortunately, the paper was dry. The big fire Blake & Co. had built up had done its work—only too well. As the paper had dried it had fallen off the walls!

Tom Merry hurriedly disentangled the paper from Cousin Ethel and tossed it away. He had to set his teeth hard to prevent himself from breaking out into a roar of laughter.

But with Blake & Co. it was just the reverse! It was all they could do to keep their tempers in check, as they thought of the afternoon's work—all wasted!

"Oh!" gasped Blake. "Oh dear! That—that paste must have been doctored! I was doubtful about it all the time! Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

A grinning face looked in at the doorway—Glyn's face. But it vanished abruptly as Glyn sighted the girls.

The faces of Blake & Co. were so miserable that even Lowther felt sympathetic.

"It's that awful ass Glyn, of course!" he gasped. "You ought to have guessed he would be up to larks! You know what a funny joker he is!"

"I wouldn't have trusted him myself!" said Tom Merry, blowing his nose to hide his emotion. "Hard lines, Blake, old man—jolly hard lines!"

"Too bad!" said Cousin Ethel, smiling sympathetically at the dismal quartet. "I'm so sorry, Blake! I'm sure it would have looked splendid!"

But it was small comfort to Blake & Co. They felt glad—for once—when Cousin Ethel and her chums had gone. They felt glad chiefly because they were burning with an overpowering desire to see a certain schoolboy inventor named Bernard Glyn!

They saw him soon enough.

Scarcely had Cousin Ethel and her friends departed when

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the door opened cautiously again, and Glyn's mischievous face looked in. Behind Glyn were at least a dozen grinning Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers. The redecoration in Study No. 6 had excited a great deal of interest in the School House.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Glyn cheerfully. "How's the job going, you fellows? I hope my paste is a success! I feared I had forgotten to shove in the stuff that makes it stick. But I hope I— Why, what the dickens—"

Glyn seemed to become aware suddenly of the state of the walls. His astonishment was so obviously insincere that Blake & Co. did not wait to ask questions and put their suspicions into words. The yell of laughter that came from the passage was enough for them!

With one accord they rushed at Bernard Glyn.

Glyn had expected trouble, undoubtedly, for instantly he turned tail and bolted, roaring with laughter. But he left his retreat just a trifle too late.

Before he could seek the sanctuary of his own study the raging paper-hangers had caught him.



There was a yell from the crowd round the doorway of Study No. 6 as Augustus D'Arcy looked at it with goggling eyes. "B-bai Jove!" (See C)

Yelling frantic explanations, he was dragged into his own study, and dumped down with a thud that shook the room, and brought a fiendish howl from him.

"Now, my giddy practical joker!" panted Blake. "We'll give you paste, my pippin!"

"Yooooooop!" wailed Glyn. "Lemme go, you rotters! I tell you it's all a mistake! I forgot—that is, I didn't put in the right stuff to make it—yooooop!—stick! I missed a chemical out—that's why it wouldn't—yow-ow!—stick! Look here— Yarrooooh!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Again and again the practical joker was rolled and bumped. He yelled and roared for mercy. But there was no mercy in the hearts of Blake & Co. They knew Bernard Glyn only too well. The fact that he had been hovering round the doorway all the afternoon with the hilarious crowd of onlookers was proof enough of his guilt to Blake & Co.

He had had his little joke, and now his victims were determined to make him pay the price.

It was a heavy price.

They had rolled him round the room as if he had been

a garden-roller, and then they bumped him again and slung him across a chair. He yelled to Dane and Noble for aid, but he yelled in vain.

Then Blake started in with a fives-bat.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Glyn was tired of that battling long before Blake was. But even Blake tired at last. Then, feeling a trifle better, Blake & Co. streamed from the study and left Glyn to groan and nurse his hurts.

"That ought to teach the japing rotter a lasting lesson!"



Monty Lowther entered carrying a silk hat, brimful of water. Arthur gasped. "Who-whose hat is that, Lowthah?" "Yours, old man!"

panted Blake, as they reached Study No. 6 again. "And now let's get cleared up, for goodness' sake! Oh, my hat! This is awful!"

"Too awful for words!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, why did we ever listen to that frightful lunatic, Gussy?" groaned Blake, as he gazed round the desolate apartment. "What on earth are we to do now? Gussy, you born idiot—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gussy, you blithering jabberwock—"

"Weally, Hewvies—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Blake, dispirited beyond words. "Not a word more from you, Gussy, or—or we'll paper you! All this afternoon's work wasted! Oh dear!"

"Not exactly wasted!" said Tom Merry, trying to cheer them up. "After all, you've learned a lot—about paper-hanging! It's been—ha, ha, ha!—practice, you know!"

"Oh, don't you start cackling!" snorted Blake. "Still, there's something in what you say, Tom Merry," he added, setting his jaw squarely. "And what's more, we're not done yet, my lads! I'm not giving in, anyway!"

"Wathah not, deah boys! If you will let me cawwy on now—"

"Dry up!" hooted Blake. "You're dead and buried in this act, you blitherer! You've let us in for this awful mess! Still, now we're in it we're going to make the best of it—not the worst of it by letting you carry on with the dashed job!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dry up!"

Blake's tone was so ferocious that Arthur Augustus relapsed into an indignant silence.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "You really mean to go on with it, Blake?"

"Yes, at once!" snapped Blake. "Dig, cut off down to the matron for a big bag of flour—if you can't get it there try the tuckshop! We'll make the paste ourselves this time! Gussy, if you want to make your silly self useful, go and change your clobber and lend a hand. But you're doing no paperhanging, mind!"

"Vewy well, Blake!"

Evidently Arthur Augustus had had enough of paper-hanging!

"Papah-hangin' and all that is wathah more difficult than I had imagined, deah boys!" admitted Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I weally twust that you youngstahs will not make a mess of things, howevah."

And with that hope Arthur Augustus rushed off to do Blake's bidding.

Tom Merry glanced at Lowther and Manners, and chuckled.

"If you like, we'll lend a hand," he said generously. "You fellows game? We may want help with our study later on."

"I'm game!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Especially now that niffy paste's all gone. All hands to the pump!"

"And I'm game!" assented Manners. "Being an artistic chap—"

"Then don't stop to gas. Get going on the job!" said Blake crisply. "This stuff all wants clearing away, and then you can be cutting out the paper while the paste's being made. Jolly good thing Gussy did get a good supply of paper, after all!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

And once more all was bustle in Study No. 6. But this time they set to work with the knowledge they had derived from bitter experience, and, more important still, Arthur Augustus was not allowed to vent his will upon wallpaper or paste. Soon, behind the locked door, the chums of the School House got down to the job in earnest. While Tom Merry papered one wall Blake papered another, and the others lent a hand in various ways. So the good work went ahead smoothly, quickly, and without a serious hitch.

And this time the paper stuck, and stayed on!

CHAPTER 8.

The Secret of the Bureau!

SNIFF!

Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, sniffed loudly, and in some disgust.

It was just after tea the next day. Baggy was looking into Study No. 6, which were a smart and clean appearance, though bare of carpets and furniture.

The night before had been a very busy night for Blake and his fellow decorators. Ignoring prep as a matter light as air in comparison with the redecorating of the study, Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. had laboured hard and long. When they had retired to bed at last they were dog-tired, but feeling quite satisfied with the results of their labours.

Arthur Augustus, even, had approved of the work of Tom Merry and Jack Blake as paperhangers and painters, and had assured them that he could not have done it much better himself.

Which had made his chums smile.

The paper-hanging was finished, and, really, it looked quite professional. The painting was also a success. Altogether Tom Merry & Co. felt that they were entitled to pat themselves on the back. Still, all agreed that it was a good thing Gussy had bought five times as much paper as was needed, and ten times as much paint.

But, apparently, Baggy Trimble did not think much of the redecoration. He sniffed as he blinked into the study now. The place was ready for the furniture, and everything was dry. Blake had tipped one of the maids to scrub the floor that day, and the whole room smelled of paint, turpentine, and soap.

Baggy had quite forgotten that the study was temporarily unoccupied. He had come along in the hope that tea was not over yet in that celebrated apartment, and that

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there might be a bit of cake left, or something to eat, at all events.

Possibly that was why he sniffed now, really! He was disappointed to find no tea going in Study No. 6.

"Silly asses!" he grunted. "Fancy going to all that trouble! I suppose the rotters are having tea in Tom Merry's study! I think I'll run along and see if I can—Phew! I never thought of that!"

A brilliant idea occurred to Baggy just then.

It was an idea he wondered he had not thought of before. Of course! The food cupboard belonging to Blake's study was still with the rest of the furniture in the box-room, at the end of the passage. And it was more than likely that it still contained something in the way of grub.

The fat Fourth-Former reproached himself for not having thought of it before.

"Well, my hat!" he muttered, his eyes glimmering. "And the blessed cupboard's been in the box-room since yesterday afternoon! Never mind! Good job I've thought of it now!"

And Trimble hurried away stealthily to the box-room at the end of the passage. The key was in the lock, and Trimble opened the door and slipped inside, closing it softly after him.

Trimble was hungry—very hungry. He soon saw the store-cupboard among the furniture that was piled high in the room. Baggy chuckled as he opened the cupboard door and blinked inside.

As he expected, it was by no means empty. Being honoured guests of Tom Merry, Blake & Co. had not dreamed of taking any food along with them. In the cupboard was quite a decent assortment of foodstuffs, including half a currant cake. Baggy started work on this with gusto.

He travelled through it at a great rate, and was just finishing the last few crumbs when footsteps and voices sounded outside. He straightened up, and his heart palpitated as the footsteps reached the door—and there halted!

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Baggy, as he remembered that he had not locked the door.

Hurriedly shutting the cupboard door, Baggy jumped for the couch and dropped behind it.

As he did so, the door flew open and Blake tramped into the room, followed by his own chums and the Terrible Three.

"Here we are!" said Blake cheerfully. "Now for some hefty work, my pippins! You Shell chaps can lend a hand, if you like!"

"Thanks no end!" grinned Tom Merry. "Paper-hangers and painters yesterday, furniture removers to-day! What a life!"

Behind the couch, Baggy Trimble stifled a groan.

Obviously, Blake & Co. had come to move the things back to their study. All were looking themselves again, save for the sundry patches of paint that lingered on their skin, and sundry sticky tufts in their hair. All their washing and scrubbing had failed to remove the final traces of the previous day's work. But they looked very cheery, and ready for the hefty task before them.

They would come eventually to the couch, and then—

Discovery faced Baggy Trimble, for a certainty! What was to be done? His only chance was to wait for an opportunity to slip out unseen. He waited tremblingly.

"We'll take the table first," said Blake, glancing over the pile of things thoughtfully. "Then the couch and the bureau, and—Hullo, what's biting you, Gussy?"

"I have just thought of something, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, who had just given an excited exclamation. "I have just remembered somethin' wathah intewestin' about that buweau."

And Arthur Augustus pointed to it.

Everybody looked at it. All the fellows who had seen Gussy's new purchase had admired it. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther envied the chums of the Fourth their possession, and wished it was going into their study instead. Blake, Herries, and Digby had congratulated Gussy more than once over acquiring that bureau—though they had expressed grave doubts as to who was going to pay for it. In their view, Lord Eastwood, generous as he always was, might raise serious objections for what he had neither ordered nor seen.

"Well, what about it, Gussy?" demanded Blake, with some misgiving. "Is it the wrong one, or is it from the wrong house?"

"Neithah, deah boys. The fact is," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile, "I have just remembered somethin' Gwimes told me about that buweau. It has a secwet dwawah in it!"

"A—a whatter?"

"Secwet dwawah, deah boys! I had forgotten all about that. Isn't that wathah excitin', you fellows?"

"My hat!" said Blake, staring at the bureau. "Is that a fact, Gussy?"

"Yaas, deah boy. Gwimey said so."

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"Good egg!" said Blake, with interest. "That sounds exciting, anyway! I say, let's have a hunt for it, you men!"

"What-ho!"

All were anxious to hunt for the secret drawer. It certainly sounded jolly interesting. By general consent the furniture removing was postponed while a hunt was made.

It did not take very long. With seven juniors pushing, and tapping, and pulling at the various parts of the bureau something was bound to happen. Tom Merry was the one to find it, and he gave a yell as there came a sudden click.

"Got it!"

"Oh, good!"

"Ripping!"

The juniors stared expectantly at the secret drawer.

"Empty!" said Blake, in some astonishment. "I was hoping to find a skeleton, or a sack of pieces of eight, at least!"

"Gwimey's patah has already searched it!" remarked Arthur Augustus, feeling about in the secret drawer. "So it is scarcely likely that we—Bai Jove! What is this, deah boys?"

His groping fingers had encountered a scrap of folded paper far back in the secret drawer! There was a buzz of excitement as he drew out the yellowish note that Gordon Gay had secreted there.

"What the dickens—" began Blake.

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy, fairly shaking with excitement. "I wonder what this can be?"

His chums surrounded him in an excited group. Behind the shelter of the couch, Baggy Trimble trembled, and ventured a peep over the top. He was more excited than the other juniors were, in fact.

Gussy unfolded the scrap of paper.

His eyes nearly popped out of his head as they fell on the scrawl written upon it. He read it aloud breathlessly:

"LOOK IN THE KITCHEN CHIMNEY. ON THE LEDGE YOU WILL FIND WHAT YOU SEEK!"

That was the message.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "But what on earth does it mean? Sounds no end exciting—like a giddy treasure hunt!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I can vewy soon explain that, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus, his voice fairly trembling. "Gwimey's patah must have ovahlooked this in his search, you know! He has been lookin' for somethin' wegardin' a tweekure, you know—a weal, secwet hoard."

And Arthur Augustus told of the Grimes' family's expectations and disappointment. Gussy's chums listened open-mouthed.

"It is quite plain!" went on Gussy triumphantly. "Gwimey's gwandmothah had pwomised to leave Gwimey's patah her money as well as the furniture, you know! But they searched the cottage and could find nothin'. Now heah is the secwet. The hoard is hidden in the kitchen chimney of the cottage! Bai Jove! How vewy fortunate I found this papah!"

"Phew!"

"Gwimey's gwandmothah was wathah a queer old lady, I believe!" said Gussy. "I expect she was afraid of burglars, you know!"

"Yes, but why didn't she hide the money—if any—in the secret drawer itself?" asked Tom Merry, frowning.

"Pwobably there was too much to go in, or pwobably she didn't care to twust it there!" said Gussy. "Quite a lot of these old buweaus have secwet dwawahs, you know!"

"If she was afraid to hide the giddy cash there, then why wasn't she afraid to hide this clue there, though?" insisted Tom, still doubtful, as he frowned over the paper.

"It seems rather queer to me!"

"I see nothin' queer about it, Tom Mewwy!" said Gussy, a trifle huffily. "It is all vewy cleah to me! This is weally splendid, you fellows!"

"Well, it does seem exciting, and no mistake!" said Blake, his eyes dancing. "I say, let's rush off and tell Grimey! We'll help him to hunt for the giddy treasure!"

"Good wheeze!" said Herries, looking at his watch. "Plenty of time—"

"Here, hold on!" said Tom Merry, who was still frowning reflectively over the yellow scrap of paper. "Don't be in such a hurry, you fellows!"

He looked again at the writing on the paper: something about it struck him as being rather familiar. It certainly did not look like the handwriting of an old lady, at all events!

The whole thing, in fact, struck Tom Merry as being rather queer!

"Look here," went on Tom grimly. "We don't want to

be in too much of a hurry about this, you fellows! I hope there is something in it, for old Grimey's sake. But—"

He paused, frowning again. "What's the matter with it, you Doubting Thomas?" said Blake, a trifle impatiently. "The thing's clear enough. If the old lady was a bit queer, she might easily do a thing like this! This paper's old, too—another proof that the thing's genuine!"

"The paper's genuine enough, certainly," said Tom, with a smile. "But as for the—"

"Wot!" "Piffle!" grinned Blake. "Now don't start being a giddy wet blanket, Tommy—that's not like you, old bean! I vote we rush off now and see into it!"

"That's the idea!" said Herries eagerly. "That cottage is jolly old, and I expect the fireplace and chimney are old-fashioned ones that a chap can easily climb up. It's just the place where a queer old lady might hide anything if she was afraid of giddy burglars!"

"Yaas, wathah!" "Hear, hear!"

But still Tom was not convinced. "I don't like the look of it, somehow!" he said. "Besides, it doesn't seem to me that an old lady would—Here, don't be an ass, Gussy! Don't dash off—"

"Wats! I'm goin' to—Bai Jove! What was that, deah boys? I heard somethin'! Gweat Scott!"

"Trimble!" yelled Blake. They all had heard a slight scuffle behind the couch. As they whirled round they were just in time to catch a glimpse of Baggy Trimble as he made a leap for the door. "Trimble!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Quick! Stop that fat rotter!"

He made a wild leap for the door, but he was just an instant too late. As he reached it, the door slammed, and then there sounded a click.

Tom wrenched at the door-knob—in vain.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he spluttered. "The fat rotter's locked us in!"

CHAPTER 9.

Unconvinced!

"**B**AI JOVE!" The juniors stared blankly at the locked door. The discovery that Trimble had been in the box-room all the time was startling enough. Now they realised that he had gone, and that he had locked them in.

"Well, the fat worm!" breathed Tom Merry. "What the thump was he doing in here, anyway?"

Lowther laughed. "That's an easy one, Tommy!" he chuckled. "He was after the grub in the cupboard there, of course! See the crumbs on the floor? He's been making hay while the giddy sun shines, the fat burglar! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!" Blake looked inside the cupboard, and soon discovered that currant cake has gone. He breathed hard.

"Well, that fat toad's the limit!" he said. "We ought to have expected this! Good job we came along when we did or he'd have cleared the cupboard out!"

"Blow the grub!" snorted Herries. "What about us—how the dickens are we to get out now?"

He started to bang on the box-room door, but they heard no sound from Baggy Trimble. Obviously he had cleared off without troubling his head about them.

"The fat ass was afraid we should go after him!" grinned Tom Merry. "Anyway, we'll soon get out for that matter—if the key's still in the lock. Hold on a few secs!"

He went to the window and opened it wide. Then, after a cautious glance out, he dropped on to the leads of the outhouse below the window. From the leads he climbed down into the quadrangle, and ran round and entered the School House by the front door.

Running upstairs he soon reached the door of the box-room. Fortunately the key was still in the lock, and Tom Merry turned it, with a chuckle, and flung open the door.

He found his chums waiting with flushed and wrathful faces. "The—the fat burglar!" gasped Blake. "We'll make shavings of him for this!"

"Luckily he didn't take the key with him!" grinned Tom Merry. "Anyway, all's well that ends well. What an ass he is! I'll have something to say to him myself for this, the cheeky young monkey! Now, what about this giddy clue? Tell us again what happened at the cottage, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you are wathah a cwitical chap, you know!" said Gussy, rather loftily. "I am surprised at you doubtin' that message. It is the clue wight enough—the clue to the hidden board."

"Not much doubt about that," said Herries. "Don't be an ass, Tom Merry!"

"I'd like to know more about this business, anyway!" grinned Tom. "Tell us again just what happened at the cottage the other day, Gussy."

"Vewy well, deah boy—though we are wastin' valuable time, you know."

D'Arcy told of his adventures on the way from the village, and Tom Merry smiled as he listened.

"It is plain enough!" said Gussy. "Let us wush off to see Gwimes. I am delighted at the chance to do the deah boy a good turn."

"But hold on a—"

"Wats! Come on, Blake—let us wush off like anythin'!"

"I'm with you, old bean!" grinned Blake. "I'm no end keen to see the end of this! My hat! Fancy a giddy treasure hunt!"

And the chums of the Fourth rushed off to get their caps, ignoring Tom Merry's shout after them.

"The—the silly asses!" said Tom, breathing hard. "Why can't they listen to a chap? The awful idiots! Well, let 'em rip! I'm almost certain there's something fishy about this business!"

"I don't quite see it!" said Lowther, puzzled and somewhat impatient. "Why should you think it fishy?"

"You think it's spoof on Grimey's part?" asked Manners.

"Not at all!" smiled Tom, tapping the paper which Gussy had forgotten apparently. "This paper is genuine enough. But the writing isn't, I'm certain. You'll remember, old son, that you once spoofed Grundy with an old bit of paper like this. Mightn't that easily happen again?"

"Oh!" "It's jolly queer!" said Tom, wrinkling his youthful brows over the writing on the paper once more. "This writing seems familiar, but I'm blessed if I can quite place whose it is!"

"Then—then you think—"

"I don't only think—I fancy I know!" said Tom, his eyes suddenly beginning to glimmer. "I've just remembered whose fist this resembles, my beloved hearers! I knew I'd seen it before. It's Gordon Gay's!"

Lowther and Manners jumped.

"Gordon Gay's?" almost yelled Lowther.

"Yes, old chap," said Tom coolly. "I was certain I knew the giddy twirls in the letters!"

"But—but how—" babbled Manners.

"Easily enough, I fancy!" chuckled Tom Merry. "At least, it's possible. Gussy told us how Gay & Co. collared him, and how dear old Grimey rescued him. He didn't say what happened afterwards to Gay and his pals. But if I know old Gay he wouldn't go off with his tail between his legs, even after having his chivvy painted!"

"You mean—"

"I mean that Gay would still be hanging round, hoping to get his own back!" chuckled Tom. "Gay would guess Gussy would be returning to St. Jim's, of course. He'd

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hang round hoping to nab him. Probably he'd also be curious to know what Grimes and his pals were up to in that unoccupied cottage, not knowing to whom it had belonged!"

"H'm!"

Manners and Lowther were still not much impressed.

"I'm only suggesting a possibility, of course!" said Tom reflectively. "I may be quite off the map, and Gussy may be right in trotting off with the glad tidings. But—but I'm wondering, especially now I've spotted this fist. Supposing dear old Gay overheard Grimey gassing to Gussy about this bureau?"

"Well, there's something in that!" admitted Manners.

"Supposing he did," resumed Tom, "and supposing Gordon Gay squinted through the window and saw the giddy bureau, too! Isn't this just the sort of practical joke that would appeal to him? You know what a reckless, thoughtless ass he is!"

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

"Gay wouldn't think twice about doing it!" chuckled Tom. "No more than we should. He wouldn't think twice at breaking into the cottage to shove that paper in the bureau, either. You know what he is!"

"Jove! I believe you're right, old man!" grinned Manners. "What a lark! That paper's all spoof, I bet!"

"If Gay did write it, I'll soon get proof, anyway," said Tom. "To begin with, I can't see an old lady writing this stuff or climbing into a giddy chimney to hide her hoard, and then leaving this clue in that secret drawer. It's rot on the face of it! Why should she?"

"Ask me another!" grinned Lowther.

"Wait here a second," said Tom briefly.

He hurried out, and when he came back a few moments later he had a note in his hand. It proved to be a note from Gordon Gay in regard to the fixing up of a footer match.

With a chuckle, Tom Merry laid the two pieces of paper side by side.

"Look at 'em!" he grinned. "Now what do you say?"

Manners and Lowther gasped.

"Gay's fist for a pension!" breathed Lowther. "He's tried to disguise it in that clue; but the letters are formed just the same—look at the 's' and the 'r,' for instance!"

"Well, my hat!"

"And those merchants have rushed off after the giddy hoard!" gurgled Lowther. "What a lark! I wonder what Gay has in store for them?"

"He needn't have arranged anything himself," smiled Tom. "There will be enough fun when those owls start rooting up that cottage chimney. If they're so keen on the scent they won't mind soot or anything. They'll fairly wallow in soot to find that hidden hoard, you mark my words! I bet a chimney like that hasn't been cleaned for ages!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, we can't allow Gay to put it across our chaps like this!" said Tom briskly. "Blake deserves it for not listening to a chap with brains and common sense. Come on—we've got to hoof it hard!"

"Yes, rather!"

And, getting their caps, the Terrible Three set off after Blake & Co. at top speed.

Ignoring the lane and the footpath across the fields, Tom and his chums raced across the meadows, making a bee-line for the old cottage.

The early evening dusk was beginning to settle over the meadows, but there was enough light for Tom to make out three figures hurrying along the distant lane towards the cottage.

"Gay and his pals!" exclaimed Tom exultantly. "They're making for the cottage, too. I wonder why—Hullo, they've stopped!"

Gay, Frank Monk, and Carboy had halted. The St. Jim's fellows were surprised to see them slip into a hedge, scramble through, and wait there as if watching the lane.

There was something curiously stealthy about their attitudes, too!

"I think I can guess what their game is!" said Tom, after a moment's puzzled silence. "They're waiting, hoping to see Gussy and the rest go to the cottage after the spoof hoard."

"Looks like it, anyway!" said Manners, nodding. "But what awful asses they must be—unless they've got wind that Gussy means to search, now."

"There they are, anyway," said Tom. "But we're going to collar them. Let's scout up to them, and not a sound, mind."

"Good egg!"

To trained Scouts the task was an easy one. They crept cautiously towards the Grammarians at the far end

of the meadow. Without making a sound, they reached to within a few yards of their quarry, and then Tom Merry gave the signal to halt.

They could hear Gordon Gay & Co. talking now. There seemed to be a heated argument in progress.

"I tell you it's a silly mug's game!" Frank Monk was grumbling. "They may be at the rotten cottage now for all we know—remember we got out late!"

"Well, it would take those St. Jim's kids longer to get here than us!" snapped Gordon Gay. "So stop grouching, for goodness' sake! I tell you they're bound to find that spoof message sooner or later, and come to investigate it. Then we'll see some fun!"

"But we may have to hang about here for hours!" snorted Monk, witheringly. "I think the whole thing's a silly mug's game! It's we who're being spoofed, not they! Made to hang about here in the cold like idiots! I'm fed up with it!"

"Same here!" grumbled Frank Monk.

Tom Merry's eyes were dancing gleefully now. He exchanged a triumphant look with his chums. That they were eavesdropping did not trouble them—all was fair in love and war, and both sides always took advantage of situations like this.

Gordon Gay was waxing sarcastic now.

"Just like you footling, funky grouchers!" he growled in disgust. "Don't know a good wheeze when you see one! I tell you we shall have the laugh of them for ages over this—when we see them rooting up that chimney—we can watch 'em through the window! Then we'll let 'em know the facts, and do a moonlight—after they've saved the sweep cleaning the giddy chimney out!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Nice sort of pals you are," said Gay wearily. "What about yesterday—didn't I score off them then? Didn't it come off a treat? I saw that furniture going off to St. Jim's myself, and I bet there was a nice row there! We'll rub it in no end when we see them. I bet they don't dream even yet that we worked it! When Grimey denies any knowledge of it they're not likely to guess it was I who phoned to Grimey and the giddy furniture removers in old Gussy's name!"

"So—so that was it!" breathed Tom Merry, exchanging another startled glance with his chums. "Oh, the awful spoofers!"

Tom got to his feet; he had heard all he wanted to hear. Moreover, he was afraid they would not be in time to stop Blake & Co.'s investigations of the chimney unless they acted quickly.

"Come on!" he whispered. "Take 'em on the hop, and not a sound until we're on 'em!"

"What-ho!"

The Terrible Three scudded along the hedge, keeping well down in the dry ditch. They came upon Gordon Gay & Co. quite suddenly; only when it was too late did the Grammarians hear them. Gay leaped to his feet in startled alarm, but that was all he had time for.

The next moment Saints and Grammarians were at grips, and Tom Merry's yell was ringing across the dusky fields.

"Rescue, St. Jim's! This way, Blake! Quick!"

CHAPTER 10.

Only Soot!

"MUM-MY hat! What a go!" Baggy Trimble was simply trembling with excitement as he crept away from the box-room after locking the door upon the chums of the School House.

What Baggy had overheard had filled him with amazement and greed!

He could scarcely, even now, credit his ears—and they were exceptionally sharp ears! But what he had heard was undoubtedly real enough. Besides, hadn't he seen the secret drawer with his own eyes, and hadn't he glimpsed the yellowish scrap of paper bearing the clue?

A clue to a hidden hoard!

Baggy's eyes gleamed with greed. All thoughts of the food in the cupboard had gone long ago. He did not feel the pangs of hunger now. His podgy brain was full of what he had overheard in the box-room.

The hidden hoard had to be found, and Baggy was resolved to find it. That it belonged to Grimes did not even occur to Baggy Trimble; or if it did he conveniently refused to consider such a claim. The fellow who found the hoard was entitled to it, of course. That was only right! It was lucky that it wasn't hidden in the bureau, though, or Gussy might have claimed it, reflected Baggy. As it was, it lay hidden in the chimney of an unoccupied cottage, and the fellow who was clever enough to find it had the first claim upon it.

That was already quite clear in Trimble's fat mind.

And he was the fellow who was going to find it. With the only other fellows who knew of the hoard locked up safely in the box-room, it seemed a foregone conclusion.

Baggy could have leaped for joy. But he did not stop to do so. He rushed for his cap, and then tore downstairs, out into the quad, and across to the gates. What the fellows he had locked in the box-room would do to him he had not stopped to consider; Baggy Trimble was a fellow who never looked ahead, and who never met trouble halfway. Besides, what was a licking in comparison with a secret hoard of money?

Baggy's imagination was full of pictures of a heap of gold, of all sizes and shapes, as he scudded across the dusky fields. Gold for the taking! And it would all belong to him—the lucky finder!

He reached the cottage at last.

He had hoped to find the windows wide open; Baggy remembered having noticed them open the previous day. But to his disgust they were shut now. Still, the house was obviously unoccupied; Baggy had feared that Grimes might possibly be there!

A hurried scout round soon proved that he was not, however. Moreover, Baggy soon discovered that the kitchen window was not fastened.

Baggy soon had it wide open, and, after a quick glance round, he clambered over the low sill into the kitchen. Then he halted, his heart thumping against his fat ribs.

Now he was here, Baggy began to realise that he had no right in the kitchen—empty or not. It was not burglary, of course—how could it be when the house was unoccupied? Trimble asked himself reassuringly. Still, it might be awkward for him if Grimes senior happened to turn up. Moreover, it was rather dark in the kitchen, and the cottage was very quiet and still.

"Oh dear!" mumbled the fat youth. "I—I wish it wasn't so dark! Blow it!"

He hesitated a moment, and then he made for the wide fireplace that ran the full length of one end of the kitchen. It was a very wide chimney, and he could see the sky faintly through the top as he stepped underneath and looked upwards. And he could see soot—plenty of soot!

"Grooogh!" gasped Baggy.

The chimney looked far from inviting. Still, it had to be negotiated if the treasure was to be secured. Baggy set his teeth, and then, with an uneasy glance about him, he climbed up on to the grate. His movements caused a fall of soot at once. Baggy ducked and gasped as he got most of it over his head and shoulders.

"Grooogh!" he gurgled. "Oh, my hat! Here goes, anyway! I'll soon wash the thumping soot off afterwards; and with the money I'll be able to buy heaps of clobber."

Trimble braced himself and started to climb the chimney. It was not an easy job—far from it. And it was not a nice job. The soot came down upon him in showers, and he was soon looking like a sweep. Soot got into his eyes, his mouth, and up his nose. He sneezed and coughed, and each time fresh soot came showering down upon him.

But he stuck it doggedly. What was a little soot, anyway, when a fortune was at stake! Baggy had already decided he was on the track of a fortune!

He was half inside the chimney now, clinging on desperately with fingers, elbows, knees, and feet. Soot was coming down faster than ever, and Trimble gasped and gurgled, perspiration streaming down his sooty features. He got a good foothold at last, and then he started to feel about with his hands for the ledge—the ledge mentioned in the clue,



"Yarooooh!" Inside the chimney Baggy Trimble shrieked as he felt himself falling, and he clawed frantically at the brickwork. But in vain. Enveloped in clouds of soot, he landed in the wide grate and rolled on the floor. (See Chapter 10.)

He did not find it. But he found plenty more soot—it swept down upon him in showers. He was still fumbling about, almost choking for breath, when suddenly faint sounds of voices reached him.

"Grooogh!" choked Baggy. "Oh, my hat! This is awful! Oh dear!"

He realised with a thrill of alarm that his legs would still be visible to anyone entering the kitchen. With a desperate effort he tried to scramble higher, his feet scraping madly on the old brickwork.

He managed to climb another foot or two, and then he halted, panting and exhausted, feeling he was high enough to be safe now.

But he was not safe—far from it! The brickwork was rotten with age, and Baggy's weight was considerable. Quite suddenly one of the bricks that supported him broke away under his foot and fell down into the fireplace.

Next second Baggy followed it—with a rush.

"Yaroooogh!"

Baggy shrieked as he felt himself falling, and clawed frantically at the brickwork. But in vain. He came down the chimney with a rush, and with him came the soot of ages—heaps of soot!

He landed in the wide grate, and then he rolled on the floor with a heavy bump, while the soot followed him with a curious swishing sound.

Swoosh!

"Well, heah we are, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Won't mother be pleased!" murmured Digby.

Like Tom Merry, Digby seemed to have his doubts about the whole strange affair.

Digby was a practical youth, and the business seemed just a trifle too romantic for his liking. Still, he had accompanied his chums, and he grinned as they arrived at the gate of the cottage.

As they passed through, footsteps sounded behind them and four hefty Scouts hove into view in the duck of the lane. They proved to be Grimes, Pilcher, and two more of the village Scouts.

"Oh, good!" grinned Blake. "Cheerio, Grimey!" They had feared the cottage might be empty, and that they would have to find Grimes at the village. But here he was, grinning all over his good-natured face.

He seemed a little surprised to see them there, however. "Bai Jove! I am vevy glad to see you, Gwimey!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have gweat news for you, deah boy—weally wippin' news!"

"Well, it may be ripping news, at least!" amended Digby. Grimes stared at them.

"What's the matter, Master D'Arcy?" he asked, a trifle apprehensively. "I hope as how—"

"You made wathah a mess of things by sendin' those goods up against my expwess wishes, Gwimey!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You put me in wathah an awkward posish, you know. Howevah—"

"But I don't understand you, Master D'Arcy!" protested Grimes. "You told me to send the things—all of them—on the telephone at the shop!"

"I did?" gasped Gussy.

"Yes, sir! You rang me up when old Sands was out gettin' horders," said Grimes, his face blank. "I thought it was queer you wanting all them things sent up like that. And father thought it was—not as he minded sending 'em," he added hastily. "He knows you and knew it would be all right—"

"But it isn't all wight, Gwimey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I did not phone you at all!"

"Well, somebody did, and he spoke jest as you speak, Master D'Arcy! O' course I had to do as you telled me—"

"But I didn't tell you!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You must be pottay, deah boy! Or somebody must have been spoofin' you, Gwimey!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Grimes, looking alarmed. "I thought as it wasn't like you to send the things back like that! After telling me to send 'em on like you did—I mean like you didn't do—that is—"

"You're getting tied up, Grimey!" grinned Blake. "But never mind that giddy furniture now, old scout! You'll have old Gussy going into a fit if you keep on telling him he did what he didn't, or didn't what he did! Gussy's pater will see him through, never fear! I only wish I had a pater as easy to vangle—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Cut the cackle and get to the hosses!" said Herries. "We can't stay here all night listening to Grimey and Gussy wagging their chins! What about the hidden hoard, old beans?"

"Oh, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Gussy hastily, his face brightening again. "It may take us a long while to search that chimney, you know!"

"Chimney—what chimney!" said Grimes, staring.

"It's like this, deah boy!" said Gussy, beaming at Grimes. "You wemembah tellin' me about a secwet dwawah in that buweau?"

"Yes, of course, sir!"

"Well, just look what we have found in it!"

And Arthur Augustus began to fumble in his pockets, going red in the face under the grinning glances of his chums. He gave it up, at last.

"Bai Jove! I must have left the papah behind, you fellows!" said Gussy. "That is wathah a pity! Howevah, I will tell you the good news, Gwimey!"

And he told the good news—or what he fondly believed was good news!

Grimes and his chums eyed him in growing wonder. Then Grimes shook his head slowly.

"I'm afraid as you're making a mistake, Master D'Arcy!" he faltered, at last. "My father searched that there drawer thoroughly—I know he did! It ain't possible—"

Grimes was interrupted. From the cottage came a sudden howl—a muffled, though none the less terrific howl. It was followed by the sound of a heavy bump.

"Yarroooooogh!"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Blake blankly. "That sounds like—"

"Trimble!" yelled Herries.

And they rushed towards the cottage.

CHAPTER 11.

Sauce for the Goose—

GRIMES fumbled in his pocket for the key, and shoved it in the lock of the back door. His chums and Blake & Co. crowded round him as he flung the door open, and followed him in as he rushed into the kitchen of the cottage.

For a moment they stared at the sight that met their gaze. Then they burst into a roar of helpless laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"It is Trimble!" choked Blake, gazing at the awful-looking figure on the floor of the kitchen. "Oh, great pip! Look at him!"

"Gug-gug-groooooh!" came from Trimble.

He was worth looking at. The floor of the kitchen was covered in soot, in many places inches deep. But where Trimble sat it was like a little mountain, with Trimble underneath it! He could scarcely be seen for soot. He was swamped in it—half-buried in it! He sat there and gasped and gurgled as if for a wager.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at him!" roared Blake. "So this was why he locked us in the box-room. He overheard what we were talking about, and he's come after the giddy hidden hoard! Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Grimes joined in the howl of merriment.

"Gug-gug-groooooh!" gurgled Trimble. "I—I say, you—Groooooh!—fellows! I—I only came—groooooh!—to get the treasure for old—gug-gug-groooooh!—Grimey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "We know why you came, you fat ass! Well, you've got the soot if you haven't got the hoard! Thanks no end for sweeping the chimney for us!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "It's wathah plain that he hasn't found anything yet—except soot!"

"Groooooh! I say, you fellows, I haven't—"

Trimble got no farther, for just then Tom Merry's yell rang across the silent fields.

"Rescue, St. Jim's! This way, Blake! Rescue!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"What the thump—"

"Phew! That's Tom Merry's voice!" said Blake, with a startled gasp. "Come on—quick!"

"Bai Jove! But the hoard—"

"Blow the hoard—come on, that can wait!" gasped Blake.

"Something's wrong out there!"

And Blake dashed out of the cottage, followed next instant by his chums and the Scouts in a wondering, troubled crowd. Arthur Augustus frowned, and after another glance at Baggy Trimble, he followed.

Tom Merry's yells, with Lowther's and Manners' added, soon guided them to the spot. The Terrible Three were having a terrific tussle with Gordon Gay & Co., but the arrival of the astonished Blake & Co. soon put paid to the account of the Grammarians. And when the Scouts also pounded up, with Gussy behind them, Gordon Gay gave in with a groan of disgust.

"Dished and done!" he panted. "Oh crumbs! Look here," he went on, putting on a bold front, "what's this game, Merry, you bounder?"

"A giddy treasure-hunt game!" grinned Tom Merry. "And you're going to find it a most soot-able game for jokers like you!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Gordon Gay. It was obvious that the game was up. "How have you bowled us out, you rotters? You seem to know all about it—"

"We do—we does!" smiled Tom Merry cheerily. "I'm afraid Gussy and Grimey are booked for a sad disappointment. But it can't be helped!"

"Bai Jove! Pway what evah does this extwaordinawy business mean, Tom Mewwy?"

"Only what I suspected from the first!" said Tom grimly. "It means that the clue in that secret drawer is all spoof!"

"Wha-what?"

"It was written by our dear friend and foeman, Gordon Gay!" chuckled Tom, grinning at Gay's dismayed face. "I was sure I'd seen that fist somewhere, and when you chaps had buzzed off I compared it with a note I had a few days ago from Gay. The writing in the clue had been disguised somewhat, but it was plain that it had been written by the same fist. Ask dear old Gordon! I remembered what you had told me about Gay being on the spot at the time. They must have overheard you gassing about the secret drawer, and it gave Gay the idea for the wheeze!"

"Oh deah! Oh, gweat Scott!" gasped Gussy, in utter dismay. "Gay, you feahful spoofah, is that the truth?"

Gordon Gay nodded, and could not help chuckling.

"Yes, old bean!" he grinned. "Who could resist pulling your leg, Gussy? No good denying it with a giddy detective like Thomas on the trail. I overheard you gassing with Grimey from the window there. After you'd bunked, I climbed into the room and did the deed! And it jolly nearly came off—you can't deny that!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"But that isn't all!" smiled Tom Merry. "It was Gay who had the furniture sent to St. Jim's on Wednesday!"

"What!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Gay, you feahful wuffian—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Yes, I did it, Gussy!" he added defiantly. "What price that for a

wheeze? What happened? I'm dying to know! Rather neat, wasn't it?"

"You uttah wascal!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "You have caused me a great deal of annoyance, and I was goin' to climb into that chimney—"

"But luckily Trimble climbed in instead! Trimble got the board—the board of soot!" roared Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

He told what had happened, and how they had found Trimble. Tom Merry and the rest howled—even Arthur Augustus forgot his rage and laughed.

"What a pity Gussy didn't do it, though!" said Gay regretfully. "Now he's found nothing except a mare's nest! If only Trimble and these fellows hadn't turned up! I wish now that I had decided on the rain-water butt! I wasn't sure whether to send you hunting the board in the water-butt or in the chimney. The water-tub hasn't been emptied for years by the smell of it. Still—"

"You seem to be taking things quite cheerfully, Gay!" said Tom Merry pleasantly. "But I'm so glad you mentioned that rain-water tub! I hope you'll enjoy exploring it, old chap!"

Gordon Gay gave a start. He had forgotten for the moment that he was a prisoner in the enemy's hands.

"Look here, don't you dare—" he yelled.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!" smiled Tom Merry. "You were going to send Gussy or Grimey exploring that beastly chimney, and I intended to send you exploring it—tit for tat, you know! But now Trimble's cleaned it, I think I'll let you explore that smelly rain-tub instead, old chap! If you don't find treasure there perhaps you'll find a lasting cure for practical joking, old chap. Bring them along!"

"That's the idea!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—" shrieked Gay, while Monk and Carboy echoed his alarm. But their yells and struggles availed them little. It was not Gordon Gay & Co.'s lucky day. They had had their little joke—or part of it—and now they had to pay for all of it!

And they did!

Tom Merry was unyielding, and Blake & Co. were still more so! Grimes was grinning, and did not seem very disappointed about the "hidden board." Possibly he had been very sceptical about it, however. At all events, he and his fellow Scouts helped cheerfully to frog's-march Gay & Co. to the execution block—otherwise the water-butt!

It was an ancient tub, and an evil-smelling one!

"Look here—" shrieked Gordon Gay, as he came up

(Continued on next page.)



An Aberdonian chum asks the Oracle if he knows of anyone in England willing to give a second-hand, two-valve wireless set and a stamp album in exchange for six roots of Scottish heather (white and purple).

The Oracle states that he does not, and advises his chum to write direct to Colney Hatch.

that a big motor liner had gone to the bottom, but later it became known that the casualty was some small collier that bore the same name. Numbers, perhaps, are more used in the Navy for ships than elsewhere—but just imagine the famous Mauretania of the Cunard Line trading as number 23 for instance! Let's keep some of the old sentiment of the sea!

Q. What is a catspaw?

A. Applied to knots, G. C. M., it is a hitch of the sort shown in the accompanying picture and used to fix a rope securely on a hook. Glad to hear your pet



This is a catspaw—a knot that is used to fix a rope to a hook.

mouse was found again when aunt was turning out the wardrobe!

Q. What is the meaning of "il est bas perce"?

A. Not what you told your Form-master when he asked you the question, "Good at Riddles." I am not surprised he made "beastly choking noises" when you suggested "Percy is a low fellow" as the interpretation! This phrase is French—not Greek—and means "He is in low water" or low in funds. The office-boy thanks you for this generous offer of the cigarette card to add to his collection, but says he has the one of the Albert Memorial. He is short, however, of No. 57 in the Plants and Flowers series, "Chickweed in Bloom."

Q. How much thread is there in a man's cotton shirt?

A. About three miles of it, Solly Morgan. If you don't believe me, get hold of an old 'un, pull it into threads and measure for yourself.

Q. What is Orion's Belt?

A. A group of stars which may often be seen on a clear night, P. P. H.

Q. To what game does the term "stalemate" apply?

A. To chess. It is a position wherein neither player can win and so it counts for a draw.

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Q. Where is Whaley?

A. In Portsmouth Harbour, Meakins, of Manchester. It is the popular Navy nickname for Whale Island, where the Naval Gunnery Establishment known as "H.M.S. Excellent" is situated. This originally was a mere humpy mud flat, but was built up with soil during the construction of the great docks and basins of the famous dockyard. It was once regarded as the very hot-bed of naval discipline, but Whaley has changed somewhat in character in recent years. For instance, there are now piggeries and chicken runs there, and in these and similar departments time-expired ratings are taught poultry farming and other pursuits to fit them for civilian life.

Q. What semi-precious stone has recently come into favour?

A. The clear, pale-blue gem known as the aquamarine, valued at about £1 per carat. A carat is a little over three grains. A grain is the smallest unit of weight—1.5760 of a lb. Is that clear?

Q. What is a buckboard?

A. A light, four-wheeled vehicle with a long board for its body, C. F. A. It is much used in some parts of the West and called a buck wagon.



The wagon depicted in the picture above does not seem very substantial—but really it is a very useful one, and is called a buckboard.

Q. Who has the world's easiest job?

A. A smart reader, George Peters, of Reading, suggests that it might be the fellow who stamps the crosses on hot-X buns. But what about the other chap who sells Coronation programmes, George, or the fellow who puts the spots on the double-blank in a domino factory? As a matter of fact, though, I know a man who is regularly in work and is much envied by our office-boy who hopes one day to find a vacancy in the same profession. He is a tester of mattresses.

Q. Is it necessary for a ship to have a name?

A. Two school fellows, Teddy Waites and Arthur Wagnall, who live in Warwickshire, have been having an argument on this subject. Teddy insists that every ship launched in the British Isles must have a name, and he has got the backing of an uncle who keeps a fish shop for his opinion. On the other hand Arthur holds that a ship is only named by its owners for convenience, and there is no obligation about the matter at all. Now cut the cackle a minute, chums, while I explain the real facts. The matter is governed by the Board of Trade regulations which stipulate that no British ship must put to sea without a name—or a number, which ever is preferred. And this name

or number must be approved officially. This is plain enough, isn't it? The only thing I wonder in this connection is why there are so many ships sailing the seas with the same names, for this is an important matter that should be arranged between the nations. Only last year there was a great scare in Britain when it was rumoured

against the tub with a bump. "Stop! Let us go, you awful bounders! If you dare to— Yooooop! Leggo! If you don't jolly well drop me I'll jolly well— Yaroooooh! Oh, my hat! What—"

Splash! Gay's further remarks ended in a dismal gurgle as his head was ducked well into the smelly rainwater. Again and again it went in, while Gay gulped, gurgled, and spluttered frantically. He was streaming with water when they lowered him at last, and almost in a state of hysterics.

Then Frank Monk and Carboy came in for their turn. They liked it no more than their leader did. "Gug-gug-groooooh!" gurgled Gay, shaking himself frantically. "Oh, you—gurgle, gurgle!—rotters! Why, I'll—I'll— Oh crumbs! Yaroooooh!"

The next moment he was bolting for his life with the business ends of several Scouts' staves to give him a start. Frank Monk and Carboy followed him the next second. Gay had looked like stopping to argue the matter with his fists, but the staves persuaded him to take a safer course in flight.

The Grammarians vanished then, going great guns for the distant horizon. A howl of laughter followed them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And now what about Trimble?" chuckled Tom Merry, when they had recovered somewhat. "Is he in the kitchen still?"

But Trimble was not. Possibly he had seen what had happened to Gordon Gay & Co. and had decided not to wait to find out Blake & Co.'s feelings towards him. When they entered the kitchen they found plenty of soot but no Trimble.

Trimble had gone while the going was good.

CHAPTER 12.

Another Accident!

"WOTTEN!" And in the view of Arthur Augustus it was rotten!

Tom Merry and the rest were feeling rather cheery and bucked at the score over the Grammarians.

But Arthur Augustus was only thinking of his friend Grimes and the disappointment he had had—a disappointment that the good-hearted Gussy believed was worse than it really was.

Grimes' cheery face had worn a broad grin when they had parted from him outside the cottage. But Arthur Augustus felt that he was only putting a brave face on things!

Certainly the fiasco of the board was very annoying and disappointing to all concerned. Tom Merry & Co. were all more or less disappointed on that score.

"Wotten!" said Gussy dismally. "I feel vewy sowwy for old Gwimes, you know! If only you had made the mattah plain, Tom Mewwy—"

"You never gave me the chance, you silly chump!" said Tom Merry.

"Gwimes would nevah have had this disappointment—"

"Well, let this be a lesson to you all!" said Tom severely. "Always listen to your Uncle Thomas! Still, if Grimes was expecting a find I'm dashed sorry, of course! But I believe he thought it was spoof, for all that. So don't worry your little head, Gussy! What you have to worry about is how to persuade your pater to cough up the quids for all that furniture you've bought!"

"Must have been absolutely potty!" said Manners, with a wondering glance at Gussy. "I know my pater—"

"Oh, that will be quite all right!" said Arthur Augustus confidently. "I shall write to the patah for a cheque the moment I get the pwice fwom Mr. Gwimes, you know. In fact, I think the best thing to do is to send the account stwaight to the patah and leave it to him. I hate to be bothahed with business mattahs!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am wathah wowwied as to how to dispose of some of the things, howevah," said Gussy, shaking his head. "I may be able to sell the sewin'-machine to the House dame or to Dame Taggles, also the clothes-horse and the pots and pans, you know. But the bedsteads and beddin' are wathah a pwoblem—they are wathah wusty and old-fashioned. Do you think the Head might buy them as a pwesent for Mrs. Holmes, Blake?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"There is always the wagman to fall back upon, of course," resumed Gussy thoughtfully. "Howevah, here we are at St. Jim's! We had bettah get busy wight away movin' the furniture in, deah boys."

"Yes, let's get it over before prep!" sighed Blake. "What a life! Gussy will have me in my grave at this rate!"

"Pway don't wot, Blake!"

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They hurried indoors, and made a start on the things in the box-room without delay. Arthur Augustus was inclined to jib at the heavy things, but his chums were having no slacking.

"No, you don't!" snorted Blake. "Take that window-pane out of your optic and get hold of that couch. Heave-ho, my hearties!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Get a move on, and don't waste time gassing!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus decided not to argue the point. After a big struggle the heavy couch was moved back to Study No. 6, with a crowd of grinning and critical juniors looking on.

One by one the pieces of study furniture followed the couch to Study No. 6, and it looked as if Gussy's redecorating and refurbishing scheme was going to come to an end very quickly.

And then came the hitch—the unexpected snag!

The bureau was a long and wide one, and very heavy and cumbersome. It refused to go through the doorway of the study, the passage being too narrow for them to turn it.

Baggy Trimble turned up while the amateur removal men were struggling with it. He had washed and changed, though traces of soot were still visible about his ears and neck. But his glum face broke into a grin as he saw the predicament of Blake & Co.

"He, he, he!" he giggled. "Now you're stumped, you fellows! You'll have to break it up for firewood, or leave it there for ever. He, he, he!"

"Shurrup, you fat clam!" hissed Blake. "Oh crumbs! This is a fine mess, you fellows! It's fairly jammed—we can't shift it!"

It certainly was awkward. The bureau completely filled the passage, and was stuck there.

"No go!" panted Tom Merry, after they had struggled with it for a few more minutes. "It's nothing to laugh about, you cackling idiots! But we can't block the passage up all the evening like this! What's to be done, Blake?"

"Better try it tipped on end, like we did the couch," suggested Blake; "perhaps it will go through then."

"No other way!" panted Herries. "Back up! If only these cackling asses would clear—"

"Or lend a hand!" sighed Lowther. "It's jolly heavy!"

But help was at hand.

"Many hands make light work," and Clive, Talbot, and one or two others came to the rescue. Unfortunately, and according to another proverb, "too many cooks spoil the broth." And it proved to be so in this case.

The cooks were just one too many, to be exact. And that one happened to be George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy always did manage to do the wrong thing. In this case he did it by coming along to lend a hand at lifting the bureau on end.

He arrived just at the critical moment when the bureau was being upended, and was hovering in the balance, so to speak.

"All right, you fellows!" he called out briskly. "Leave this to me! Blessed if you aren't a crowd of old washer-women!"

And grasping hold of the bureau where he could, George Alfred gave a terrific heave, just to show everybody what he could do.

That terrific heave did it!

There was a sudden yell from Tom Merry.

"What the— Oh, my hat! Look out! Grundy, you—"

Instead of sailing nicely through the open doorway into the study, the heavy bureau gave a sudden lurch, and then—

Just in time the fellow on the far side leaped out of the way.

Crash!

It was a terrific crash—a crash that rang along the passage. It was a splintering crash that sounded horrid—especially to the owner of the bureau.

"You—you feahful ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Gwunday, you—you—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus.

With one accord Blake, Tom Merry, and the other members of the removal party collared the over-enthusiastic Grundy and whirled him away from the spot. Examination of the bureau showed that only the back was damaged, being split across. Blake jammed a loose board into place, and then they lifted it again.

This time Grundy did not lend a hand, and the bureau, on its end again, was worked carefully through the doorway, amid much grunting and panting.

"Done at last, bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus, as the bureau was finally lowered to rest against the wall by the window. "Thank goodness! What a feahful business,

deah boys! However, it is all wight now! We'll soon have the west in!"

"And the sooner the better!" gasped Blake, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "Come on; only the small things now!"

The furniture removers streamed out of Study No. 6 again to fetch the remainder of the things from the box-room. Baggy Trimble was standing in the passage when they emerged, but nobody looked at Trimble. Had they done so they would have noticed a strange, excited expression on his fat face.

Trimble watched them go without moving from where he stood; and then, after a quick glance about him, he moved his foot and picked up something from the floor swiftly—something that his foot had been hiding.

It was a small coin, and it glinted redly in the gaslight.

Trimble blinked at it with gleaming eyes for a brief second, and then he shoved it into his pocket, hurried away, and vanished into his own study.

CHAPTER 13.

Trimble's Find!

"MUM-MY hat!"

Wildrake and Mellish were out, and Trimble closed and locked the door with trembling fingers. Then he began to examine the coin which he took from his pocket.

Trimble had not seen many sovereigns, but he knew one when he did see one. And this was a sovereign, without a doubt. It was dated the year 1900, and one side bore a replica of the head of Queen Victoria.

Trimble stared at it with glimmering eyes.

He knew where it had come from, of course. When the bureau had crashed over he had heard it fall and seen it roll along the linoleum. It had rolled towards Trimble, and with unusual smartness he had planked his foot on it—and had kept it there!

What it was Trimble had not realised at the moment. But he knew it was a coin—and coins meant tuck to Trimble. He had not moved while the bureau was being lifted again and carted into the study, and only when the coast was clear had the fat youth ceased to resist the almost overpowering temptation to have a look at it.

Now he knew what it was—a golden sovereign. And where it had come from, more likely than not, there were lots more!

Trimble thrilled at the thought.

So the story of the hidden hoard was not spoof, after all! It was genuine, undoubtable fact. The bureau was Gussy's, but that little circumstance did not worry Baggy. Findings were keepings, and whoever found the hoard was entitled to it—in the fatuous Trimble's view!

"Mum-my hat!" breathed Baggy Trimble, his eyes glimmering. "What a ripping stroke of luck! But—Oh dear! Supposing those rotters start examining the damage and find anything! I shall be dished and done then. I—I'd better go and keep an eye on 'em, I think!"

Trembling with anxiety now, Baggy Trimble unlocked the door and hurried along to Study No. 6. He could hear voices inside and the moving of furniture; evidently Blake & Co. were busy putting the study into order. But it was clear from that fact that they had found nothing yet.

For ten minutes or more the fat youth hung about the passage, straining his ears anxiously for any unusual sound from Study No. 6. Fellows came along and stared at him; while Grundy even kicked him, on suspicion of being up to



"Up with the fat rotter!" shouted Blake wrathfully. "Up-end him, and we'll jolly soon see what's in his dashed pockets!" "Yaroooh!" howled Baggy Trimble, as he was stood on his head. Olink, clink, clink! The juniors stood petrified with amazement as streams of golden sovereigns poured from Baggy's pockets! (See Chapter 13.)

something. But Trimble did not seem to mind even the kick—indeed, he scarcely heeded it. And at last his vigil was rewarded.

Laughing and talking cheerily, Blake & Co. came out of the study with the Terrible Three, and, with scarcely a glance at Baggy, they went off towards the Shell passage, evidently bound for Study No. 10.

"Oh, good!" breathed Baggy Trimble.

He waited until they had disappeared, and then he slipped into Study No. 6, closed the door, and locked it.

A second later he was at the bureau. Feverishly he dragged it away from the wall where the chums had placed it.

He had scarcely done this, when a footstep sounded in the passage, and the door-knob rattled. Then followed an exclamation in Blake's voice.

"What the thump! Why, the door's locked!"

"Bai Jove!"

Trimble gasped. Then he grabbed up the study poker, and the next moment he was at work on the back of the bureau. He managed to get the end of the poker in the splintered back, and then he began to prise the loose board open.

It was an easy matter. In a moment, unheeding the banging and thumping on the door, Baggy had dropped the poker and was feeling inside behind the loose board.

His hand encountered a ledge, and he fumbled along it, his trembling fingers encountering nothing but thick dust for a time. Then his heart leaped as his groping fingers touched something—cloth, it seemed.

It proved to be a canvas bag, and as he got a grip on it Trimble heard a faint chink of metal.

"Oh!" he gasped. "My—my hat!"

Baggy fairly snatched out the bag in his trembling eagerness, not noticing that it was untied. The result was that as he pulled it out a stream of coins fell from it and rained on the floor and carpet.

Chink, chink, chink, chink!

The noise made by the falling, rolling coins was heard plainly out in the passage, and Blake gave a yell.

"What the dickens! Who's in there? Open this door, you cheeky rotter, whoever you are! D'you hear?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Trimble heard, and he stared apprehensively at the locked door. It had just dawned in upon his fat mind that he was

STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR NEW SCHOOL SERIAL! Start reading it to-day!

THE WORST FORM AT CODRINGTON!

There are more ways than one of killing a cat than by choking it with cream, and, as the Fourth Form at Codrington realise, more ways of getting their own back on their Form-master than by japing him in class. With grim determination to rid the school of their mutual foe, the Woolly Lambe, Ferguson & Co. set about the problem in real earnest.

Taffy Is Suspicious!

A TENSE silence prevailed. Mr. Lambe, continuing to stare at the assembly, took his own eyeglass from his eye and began to polish it slowly and pensively with his silk handkerchief—a constant trick of his. As if worked by automatic machinery, the whole Remove took hold of their eyeglasses, wiped them with their handkerchiefs, and replaced them.

The strain became intense, though everybody was quivering in the effort to hang on to the eyeglasses. The wretched Walsh suddenly emitted a wild snort of laughter, sounding as if he had burst, and dropped his monocle. He flushed crimson as Mr. Lambe turned a slow, steady gaze on him before turning his attention to the class again. Walsh, with trembling fingers, fumbled in a vain attempt to screw the glass back into its place.

Only the Codrington Remove could have produced such a scene. And only the Woolly Lambe could have dealt with it. The new master turned, walked to his desk, and mounted on the dais. A slight spot of colour was glowing on each of his cheeks.

"There seems to be an epidemic of myopia, or short sight, among the Form this morning," he said dreamily; and then he paused. "Dereker, come here!"

The schemer came, wondering rather uneasily why he was selected, and whether the Lambe knew he was the starter of the jape.

"Do you find this optical apparatus improves your vision, Dereker?"

"Er—yes, sir," said Dereker, who was trying hard to persuade himself that he saw better with the eyeglass. As a matter of fact, it blurred the view rather badly.

"Ah, I feared for a moment you were wearing it merely in order to look fashionable!" returned the Woolly Lambe in his sleepy voice. "And you are used to it? You feel quite comfortable with it?"

"Yes, sir," said Dereker, beginning to feel apprehensive. As the master's eye pinned him he somehow felt it would be much more disastrous now to drop the monocle than to keep it fixed up.

"Oblige me by getting on that form," said the master.

Dereker obeyed.

"Now oblige me by jumping down. No; leave your eyeglass where it is."

The schemer jumped down, and, greatly to his own gratification, the eyeglass did not budge. It withstood the shock, and was gripped between his eyebrow and cheek. He was very sure it would be a bad thing for him if it did fall. As a matter of fact, Dereker had had a sample eyeglass for four days past, and had been amusing himself by wearing



it at odd times, thus he had acquired a mastery over it. Some eyes do not hold monocles well, but Dereker's did.

"Again!" said Mr. Lambe.

Twice more did Dereker mount and jump off the form; but the eyeglass stood the test, much to everybody's surprise.

"Very good!" said the master. "You have saved yourself from much tribulation, Dereker. I am glad to see you so at home with an eyeglass. And the rest of you?" he queried, blinking at the Form. "Do you also find yourselves benefited by wearing these ornaments?"

"Yes, sir!" chorused the Remove eagerly, following Dereker's lead and hoping to escape trouble.

"Your vision is improved, and the road to the brain made clearer by the greater purity of the eyesight?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Excellent! Then we must not dream of removing them; the Latin prose will benefit immensely. You will wear them throughout the lesson, and any boy who allows his glass to drop from its place for one moment will be debited with one hundred lines."

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The words were hardly out of his mouth when two monocles fell with a clatter on the desks. The long strain of keeping them fixed up was too much. Three others soon followed, despite frantic efforts to retain them.

"Madison and Kent-Williams," murmured Mr. Lambe, noting the imposition down in his book, "one hundred lines each. Also, I perceive, Johnson, Minors, and Ferguson—the same. Any boy not replacing his monocle within ten seconds after it falls will receive five hundred lines extra."

A perfect plague of eyeglasses dropping soon affected the Form; for to keep them up for so long was almost impossible. In every case the culprit received one hundred lines, and by the time the lesson was over two or three unlucky wights had earned as much as five hundred apiece.

The Form had expected merely to have the eyeglasses confiscated, and perhaps a caning all round afterwards. But the present state of affairs was refined torture, aching faces and fiercely screwed-up cheeks making wild efforts to keep up to the mark, while lines were distributed freely every quarter of an hour or so. Some of the victims were shaking their fists furtively at Dereker whenever Mr. Lambe appeared not to be looking.

Taffy, Birne, and Dereker had a better grip than anybody else. Birne only failed once, near the end, and earned a single hundred lines. The remaining two escaped scot-free, and the only other boy who did so was Walsh. Several were muttering vengeance against Dereker before the lesson was over; but most of the Form, only one or two hundred lines to the bad, were enjoying the joke thoroughly. There was a decided snap about it. The only drawback was that the Woolly Lambe did not allow it to interfere with the lesson. With infernal ingenuity he kept the Latin prose fully up to the mark. A quarter of an hour before the bell was due to ring he closed his book with a snap.

"You can drop those optic adornments," he said.

The Form did so, with a mighty sigh of relief.

"They have served their turn admirably," said the master. "The Latin prose was distinctly above the mark. But"—his eye wore a dangerous glitter for a moment—"once is enough. The member who enters this room again with an eyeglass in sight will thereby earn five thousand lines as a commencement upon him. Am I understood?"

"Yes, sir!" said several fervent voices, from speakers whose chief wish was never to see an eyeglass again.

Before the Woolly Lambe could continue, a prefect entered the room and delivered a written note, evidently from the Head.

"The Form will, of course, await my return," said Mr. Lambe, rising and departing, "until the bell rings."

No sooner had the door closed behind him and the Remove was alone than Ferguson leaped to his feet.

"Well, you blithering idiot, Dereker, what have you got to say for yourself now?" raved Ferguson, who had suffered severely in "imposts." "Four hundred lines, by gum, that's what I've got! Aren't you proud of yourself?"

"So have I!" cried Minors.

"Shut up, you asses!" Walsh interposed. "It was a rippin' good jape an' well worth a few lines! It drew the Lambe at last. It got home at him!"

There was a chorus of approval from those who had suffered least and had seen the humour of the affair.

"I say it was drivellin' rot, then!" howled Kent-Williams, who was well on the four hundred mark; and he took off his eyeglass and hurled it at the wall, where it smashed to splinters. "The deuce take the thing, an' you, too!"

"You'll jolly well pay for that!" said Dereker. "They cost two bob each, an' they aren't mine! Do you hear, young Kent?"

"I shan't pay, you beast! Go and eat coke!" bellowed Kent-Williams. "You're the biggest cad in—"

Dereker leaped to his feet and rushed at him, and in a moment the Form, feeling like its old self again, was in a pandemonium.

Taffy's great rival, together with Kempe and Kent-Williams, had retired to a favourite retreat of their own.

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in a light and airy cellar beneath the old pavilion at the far end of the playing-fields—a spot unknown to Taffy, and where they had been for some time discussing a dark plot of their own concoction.

"I hope it'll turn out better than the last," Kempe was saying.

"You're a despondin' beast, Kempe," said Ferguson. "How can it turn out anything but well? If it doesn't come off we can just chuck it and go to bed."

"Lambe doesn't know you suspect anything, of course?" asked Kent-Williams.

"Not he."

"I passed his door half an hour ago," said Kempe, "an' I heard him chuckin' to himself like an idiot! I wonder what about? He'd just come back from a walk up the hill above the Dog and Duck, for I'd been watching him."

"He'll chuckle on the other side of his beastly face soon!" said Ferguson. "There's no need for us even to leave the school grounds. My idea is that we slip out at about ten o'clock, hide in the shrubberies, and watch Lambe's window. Then, when this prowlin' ruffian does turn up, we can see what he does, an' how the Woolly Lambe communicates with him."

"Are you certain they do communicate?" asked Kempe. "When did you see the man last, an' what's he like?"

"A big lout in baggy tweeds and a flat bowler-hat. I've noticed him mouchin' round the place several times, as I told you. But last night I spotted him from the dormitory window sneaking into the school grounds. You can't see very well from the dormitory, but he stopped just at the corner below, an' I believe he was throwin' pebbles up at Lambe's window to attract his attention."

"That's queer. Who d'you suppose the man can be, then?"

"It's a dead certainty he's up to no good. By what we know of the Woolly Lambe, I should say this chap was an accomplice of his. Once a gaol-bird always a gaol-bird, you know! The most likely thing is that Lambe passes out plunder to him on the quiet. There's lots of very valuable old plate in the school, you know, an' the Head's got a collection of old gold coins worth any amount of money."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder if that's why Lambe's taken this situation here. There couldn't be a better place for a wrong 'un to do well in. And I know there's no proper safe in the school even to guard the valuables properly," put in Kent-Williams thoughtfully.

"There you are, then. This chap's humbugged the Head, but he can't humbug us!" said Ferguson importantly. "And if we do catch this accomplice of his, the fellow's sure to split on Lambe. They always do."

"Shall we tell the sergeant or anybody, an' get help to nab him?" suggested Kent-Williams.

"Of course not, you ass! Can't you see we've got to do the thing on our own? Surely three of us are enough to tackle one man. We're all pretty hefty," said Ferguson. "As long as he hasn't got a revolver or a life-preserver," said Kent-Williams doubtfully.

"Dash it all, you don't funk it, do you?" said Ferguson angrily.

"No, no!" returned Kent-Williams hastily. "Certainly not!"

"Funk it be hanged!" said Kempe gruffly. "We'll tackle him right enough. As soon as we're actually goin' for him we'd better shout for help, though, an' there'll soon be plenty. Lodgey ain't far off."

"Very good, then; gather at the boot-room, an' we'll all be in the laurels a little before ten," said Ferguson. "Just shove on a pair of shoes, and jacket and trousers over your pyjamas. Better get back now; it's right on tea-time. Keep yourselves to yourselves, an' don't mix with anybody between now and then."

The conspirators departed, and at the same hour Taffy and his companions, together with Jellicoe, were for-gathering in the hall for tea.

Ferguson and his brethren came late, arriving just behind the Woolly Lambe and Mr. Flower. Ferguson and

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

While waiting for a train to convey them to Codrington College for a new term, Talbot Delaval Wynne—better known as "Taffy"—and Richard Dereker, his chum, are amused to see in the newspaper an advertisement for a new master of the Remove. This Form, of which Taffy and Dereker are members, prides itself in being unique in unruliness, for no master has yet been found capable of handling it. A new Form master duly arrives at Codrington—a Mr. Wollaston Lambe, a strange-looking individual whom Taffy & Co. had seen stalking mysteriously round the station with a constable in close proximity.

Suspecting the man to be an escaped criminal, two Removites named Kempe and Ferguson procure a pair of handcuffs and a length of tarred rope, with one end unpicked into loose fluffy oakum, which they place on the Form master's desk. Mr. Lambe proves equal to the occasion, however, for the miscreants are quickly singled out and made to look the laughing-stock of the whole Form. Not to be outdone, however, Dereker, another member of the Form, hires a stack of eyeglasses similar to the one worn by Mr. Lambe himself, and issues one to each member of the Form. Next morning, on entering the Form-room, the new master is stupefied to find the Remove eyeglassed and ribboned to the last member of the Form.

(Now read on.)

the other two had places near the door, and instead of staying for a while, as usual, they departed immediately the meal was over, behind the masters.

"Hallo!" observed Dereker, as he saw them go. "Taffy, it looks as if they were keepin' purposely out of our way. I wonder what the game is? We must watch them."

They presently made their way very leisurely to No. 12; but the evening passed without the Ferguson contingent turning up again, except at prep, and when that was over they kept out of the way once more till call-over, and finally retired to rest, leaving Taffy's forces quite baffled.

"No go!" said Taffy, as he undressed. "Those beggars have got some private affairs on hand, that's clear. Jelly, just you get all the balmy an' refreshin' sleep you can. There's a strenuous day in front of you, my pet."

Taffy, as a rule, was asleep within thirty seconds of getting into bed, but on this occasion the thought of the "pull" which he had over Ferguson, and the pit into which he expected that worthy to fall, so pleased him that he lay awake some time thinking it over. He arranged all the details in his mind, and the result was that he found himself unable to sleep, even when he wanted to. For nearly an hour he lay wide awake.

He was dozing off as the muffled notes of the big staircase clock struck ten, when a distinctly-heard creak outside in the corridor brought his senses to full tension again.

Taffy knew that creak well, and the particular board that made it. He always avoided it himself, if leaving the dormitory after lights out, and he wondered which of the masters were on the prowl.

A few seconds later the creak was repeated; and, after a long pause, he heard it a third time.

"That's no master," he thought; "it's one of the chaps—or rather, three. The plank scarcely creaks at all goin' up the corridor; it's only walkin' towards the stairs that makes it sound like that. Somebody's got a midnight brev-party on in one of the box-rooms; or else it's a Fifth Form beauty goin' to slip out of the school on business of his own."

Something impelled Taffy to slip out of bed and go to the window, for it commanded a view of the path to the shrubberies. He had an idea that Topham, the sad dog of the Fifth, sometimes made nocturnal excursions for reasons of his own, and Taffy was curious to see if it were so.

He was just in time, however, to see a figure he knew still better than that of Topham making two or three rapid strides across the gravel, and vanishing into the shrubberies, followed directly after by two others.

Taffy glanced after them with interest. He saw the last of the three crouch just inside the edge of the laurels, as if intending to stay there; but presently one of the others, reappearing, touched him, and the two went cautiously further round the corner, and there were lost to view.

Taffy, without hesitation, went to Dereker's bed and placed a hand on that sleeping beauty's mouth, from which delicate snores were proceeding.

Ferguson Bites the Dust!

"WHAT'S up?" said Dereker, opening his eyes. "Don't make a row!" whispered Taffy. "Fergy and his lot have gone out. They're hidin' in the laurels, I believe. Don't think they've gone any farther. Look here, shall we slide out, too, an' see what the game is?"

"Well, what d'you think they're up to? If it ain't any business of ours, we don't want to seem to be spyin' on them," said Dereker, raising himself in bed.

"Spyin' be hanged! If they've just gone out on the loose, we can't interfere. We'll let 'em. But the only thing they can be up to, if you ask me, is trappin' the Woolly Lambe. If that's so, we don't want them to get ahead of us."

"No, rather not!"

"It's likely to be something pretty rotten, considerin' the gang they are. Let's go and see fair play. There ought to be some fun, anyhow."

"Right-ho!" said Dereker. "Shove on bags and a jacket, an' wake Birne!"

In a few minutes the three had stolen quietly out of the dormitory, the door-handle and lock of which they always kept well oiled.

"How did those chaps get out?" whispered Birne.

"I don't know; but not by our little route. We'll stick to that," said Taffy. "I've got the key."

The three chums had their own method of getting out after lock-up when they had need to, which was seldom. They had never patronised Ferguson's route, by the kitchen stairs; they had a longer, but better, mode of exit—through a casement that opened from one of the lobbies on to the leads of the old gymnasium, whence it was a short and easy drop to the ground, with a convenient window-sill for climbing back again.

This exit brought them out on the opposite side of the house, and they made their way right round to the back of the shrubberies till they were near where Taffy had seen the Ferguson crew disappear. There they crept on very cautiously, inch by inch.

"I see 'em!" breathed Dereker, pointing through the bushes. "They're all squattin' together near the house."

"Just opposite Lambe's window!" murmured Taffy. "They're watchin' it. The Lambe's at home, anyhow."

There was a light in the Remove-master's room, and the window was half open, though the blind was down. Taffy and his companions were well in the background, and by stooping they could dimly see among the bushes what appeared to be the rival three, nearer the building itself. For some time no one moved.

"Is that another of them?" whispered Dereker, pointing to a figure that presently came into view, moving stealthily along the narrow path through the bushes.

"No; they're all in front," replied Taffy, under his breath, peering at the newcomer. "I wonder if that's Lodgey stalkin' 'em?"

The stranger, silently as a shadow, came creeping along the path, passing within two or three yards of the chums, who were crouching among the thick bushes. It was not the sergeant, as Taffy had thought. They could only see his outline for a few seconds, but it was a man who would have looked tall had he been walking upright; and he was either very stout or else dressed in uncommonly wide and baggy clothes, and wore a flat, low bowler hat.

He passed the boys without seeing them, and halted at the edge of the laurels, well under the shadow. After watching some time, and looking up continually at Mr. Lambe's window, he took a last furtive glance round him, and tiptoed across the gravel till he reached the wall.

A thick, matted growth of old ivy clothed it on that side with stems and branches as big as a man's wrist. It was soon evident what the stranger meant to do. He began cautiously and gently to climb up the ivy, which was not a very difficult task.

"My aunt!" murmured Taffy. "He's makin' for the Lambe's room! Is it a bobby going to nab him, an' making sure of it that way?"

"Or a thief, who's some pal of his?" said Birne excitedly.

"Or the Woolly Lambe himself disguised?" put in Dereker, watching eagerly. "I say, this is a go, you chaps!"

The light went out in Mr. Lambe's study. The man had nearly reached the window when it happened, but now he could not be seen at all, so much in the shadow was the ivy-covered wall. Taffy thought he could make out Mr. Lambe himself appearing at the window, and he certainly heard voices.

Suddenly there was a loud rustle among the shrubbery, and Ferguson and his comrades darted out.

"Thieves! Thieves!" yelled Ferguson at the top of his voice. "Come down out of that, you ruffian! Hi, sergeant! Thieves!"

At the first sound of alarm the man above could be made out clambering down in a great hurry.

"Give yourself up, you thief!" howled Ferguson, as he rushed to the wall. "It's no good tryin' to get away—we've got you! Come on, you chaps, nab him! I—Ow!"

There was a flop, a thump, a tremendous yell from Ferguson, and the man in the baggy clothes, springing out from the wall, let himself drop, intentionally, right on top of the big Remove youth, who was waiting to capture him.

It was a five-foot fall, and Ferguson and the climber went rolling over, with a fearful howl from the former, who was knocked flat by the large and active body that bore him to the earth, just as Kempe and Kent-Williams sprang to the spot. All the wind was knocked out of Ferguson, but the nocturnal visitor, whoever he was, jumped to his feet in an instant, and was off like the wind down the laurel-path.

Taffy, seeing which way he was going, left his chums, made a rapid short cut, and reached the farther bend of the path just before the man got there. Taffy thrust out a foot from among the bushes, and the fugitive went sprawling over it. The next moment Taffy had grappled with him on the ground, and was calling loudly to his chums.

"Let go! Let go, I tell you!" exclaimed the captive, as Birne and Dereker threw themselves into the fray. "You're making fools of yourselves, my lads, as you'll find out!"

Something, he could not tell what, urged Taffy to speak to the man fairly. Perhaps it was a feeling that the captive was right.

"Look here, you tell us honestly what you're up to and what this game is that's being played, and perhaps we will," said Taffy.

"I can't do that," said the prisoner quickly. "Will you let me go?"

"No! Hold him, Derey!"

With a sudden powerful movement of both his arms, and a tremendous wrench, the prisoner, to the astonishment of the boys, shook them all off with ease. Taffy went over backwards, with a stunning drive of the man's elbow in his face, while Dereker fell heavily, and Birne saw a firmament of stars.

Before they had recovered themselves, their late prisoner had darted off down the path, cleared the fence at a bound, and disappeared.

"Why didn't you hang on to him, you ass?" gasped Dereker angrily.

"Why didn't you?" retorted Birne. "The fellow's like a blessed earthquake! There—"

"It's no earthly use trying to follow him now," said Taffy. "Can't chase him across country in the dark. By gum! He's nearly driven my nose through my back hair!"

"I say, here's the whole school turnin' out!" exclaimed Dereker. "What had we better do?"

Codrington was roused with a vengeance, and in surprisingly quick time. Already most of the windows were open, and masters and boys were staring out.

Ferguson's agonised yell had brought the sergeant running out of his lodge, and Mr. Quayle and Mr. Perkes, with two of the Sixth Form prefects, came hurriedly out of the side door.

"My aunt! I know what we'd better do!" said Taffy. "We haven't scored in to-night's game, you chaps, and we don't want to look bigger fools than at present. We'll be lucky if we get back safe. Let's bunk!"

(Have the unruly Remove at Codrington made a hash of things again? It looks remarkably like it, doesn't it, chums? There'll be another ripping instalment of this grand serial in next week's GEM. Miss it, chums, and you'll regret it!)

LEAVING IT TO GUSSY!

(Continued from page 24.)

Eastwood was generous to a fault, and the plight of the Grimes' family made him forgive Arthur Augustus on the spot. He also roared with laughter when he heard of the arrival of Gussy's furniture at St. Jim's. After which Lord Eastwood examined the bureau and the other articles. He said little at the time, but after he had visited the cottage and seen the rest of the furniture, he dropped a bombshell in Study No. 6.

"I am very glad indeed, Arthur," he said quietly, "that you did take upon yourself the responsibility. It was very wrong of you, of course, but it is more than possible that the dealers would have taken advantage of the fact that Mr. Grimes had no knowledge of the real value of many of the articles. But you cannot, of course, retain possession of the bureau and the other things, my boy!"

"But, weally, patah—" gasped Gussy, in utter dismay. "They are genuine antiques!" said Lord Eastwood, smiling. "I have advised Grimes to have them sent to a dealer of my acquaintance in London; from whom I am quite certain he will get very good prices for them all. It appears that Grimes' grandmother had been a servant in the employ of a rich, kindly old lady, who had left her the furniture on her death. However, the money it will bring in, together with the money found in the back of the bureau, should place the family out of the reach of want for some considerable time. And you must admit, my dear boy, that such furniture is quite out of place in a junior study."

And softening this final blow by slipping a fiver into Gussy's hand, Lord Eastwood took his departure. And when he came to think it over Arthur Augustus had to admit that his pater was right, while even Blake, Herries, and Digby had to agree that, after all, good had resulted from leaving it to Gussy!

THE END.

(Look out for a record-breaking story of Tom Merry and Co. in next week's issue of the GEM, entitled: "DETAINED!" It's the kind of yarn you've all been asking for—so see that you order your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)



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