

“£100 REWARD!”

Sensational Complete Story of
Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's—inside.

THE GEM

2d

EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



MEET THE POPULAR CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S—

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD

One hundred pounds—in crisp, rustling “fivers”! What a windfall! And what a packet of trouble it brings for Arthur Augustus D’Arcy!

CHAPTER 1. Gussy’s Find!

“YOU can stay outside, Gussy!”

“Weally, Blake—”

“We shan’t be more than a couple of minutes, anyway, and if you come in you’re bound to make eyes at the girl assistants,” said Blake. “So you’d better wait outside, old chap.”

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy crimsoned with indignation. “You uttah wottah!” he said, his noble eye gleaming behind his glimmering eyeglass. “If you dare to suggest, Blake, that I should make eyes at the young lady assistants in—”

“Oh, come on!” said Blake briskly.

And he and Herries and Digby marched into the shop, leaving their aristocratic chum outside.

For a moment Gussy hesitated, wondering whether or not he should charge in and settle accounts with Blake on the spot. But with a supreme effort of will he decided that such a course would be unfair to the shopkeeper. He would wait outside, and deal with Blake in the open.

Jack Blake & Co., the chums of the Fourth at St. Jim’s, were in Wayland. It was evening, and getting dusky. Ranged alongside the pavement were the Fourth-Formers’ bicycles. If they got off smartly, they would be able to get back to St. Jim’s before lighting-up time.

Arthur Augustus calmed down somewhat as he paced the pavement in front of the shop. Perhaps it was unwise to take too much notice of Jack Blake’s pleasantries. It might be a good idea to leave the whole matter in abeyance until they got back to St. Jim’s. Upon reflection, Arthur Augustus realised that Blake was quite capable of violence in the public street. He was not even above jamming Gussy’s shiny top over his eyes.

“I am vewy much afraid that Blake is lackin’ in considération for a fellow’s clobber,” mused Arthur Augustus.

He turned to his bicycle, and, as he did so, he happened to notice a gleam of something in the gutter, just near the rear wheel. He adjusted his monocle, and stared down wonderingly.

“Bai Jove!”

Arthur Augustus caught a gleam of silvery brightness, and a shimmering glow of green.

“Bai Jove!” he repeated.

He bent down and picked up the little object in the gutter. It had been half concealed by a crumpled cigarette packet, and for this reason, probably, it had escaped previous attention. Even Arthur Augustus would not have seen it but for the fact that he was looking down at his bicycle.

“Well, I nevah!” he said.

The thing was a pendant, and the clasp at the end of the chain was broken. Arthur Augustus was not much of a judge of jewellery, but it seemed obvious to him that this thing was made of a cheap imitation silver and lumps of green glass. They were altogether too big to be precious stones.

“Pwobably ffrom Woodworth’s,” he decided, as he turned the trinket over in his hand. “Oh perhaps it only came ffrom a penny pwize-packet.”

The thing must have been dropped by a child, Gussy thought.

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told himself, and gazed up and down the High Street, wondering if the child was anywhere in sight. This tawdry little bauble was no doubt valued by its late owner.

But there were no children of any kind within sight.

“Oh, well, I don’t suppose it weally mattahs,” thought the swell of Fourth. “I dare say the youngstah has been given a penny to buy anothah.”

At that moment his chums came out of the shop, and Blake grinned as he beheld Arthur Augustus standing pensively on the edge of the pavement.

“Good old Gussy!” he said, with an approving nod. “Nothing like being obedient.”

“Weally, Blake—”

“You’ve been a good little boy, Gussy, and now we’ll let you strap these parcels on the back of your jigger,” said Blake generously.

“I uttahly wefuse to have your wotten parcels stwapped on to my jiggah,” replied Arthur Augustus. “You can stwap them on your own jiggah.”

“Now, do be reasonable, Gussy,” said Blake. “I’ve already got some parcels on my carrier, and Dig has got some on his, too. Herries’ carrier is no good—”

“Oh, isn’t it?” interrupted Herries. “What’s the matter with it?”

“Hewwies’ cawwiah is quite good enough for your parcels,” said Arthur Augustus. “I wefuse to cawwy them on my bike.”

“Oh, give them to me!” said Herries impatiently. “What’s all the fuss about? We shan’t be back before lighting-up time unless we buck up.”

“We shall have to move fast if we’re to do it,” said Digby.

“Just a minute, deah boys,” said Arthur Augustus. “While you were in that shop I found somethin’—”

“Not a five-pound note by any chance?” asked Blake.

“You uttah ass! Of course not.”

“A pound note, then?”

“Weally, Blake, I wish you wouldn’t keep intewwuptin’,” protested Arthur Augustus. “I didn’t find a note of any kind.”

“Then why bother us?” asked Blake. “We’re in a hurry.”

“I found somethin’ twivial—”

“Then if it’s trivial, you can keep it to yourself,” said Blake briskly. “Life’s too short for us to be bothered with trivialities.”

“If you will only listen to me—”

“Sorry, old chap; we’ve got something better to do,” said Blake. “Listening to you is like listening to the brook. You—and it—go on for ever.”

“Wats! I have found—”

“He’s at it again!” groaned Herries. “I’ll bet he’s found a necktie in that shop next door. We’d better rush him away—”

“I have not found a necktie, Hewwies. you ass!” shrieked Arthur Augustus.

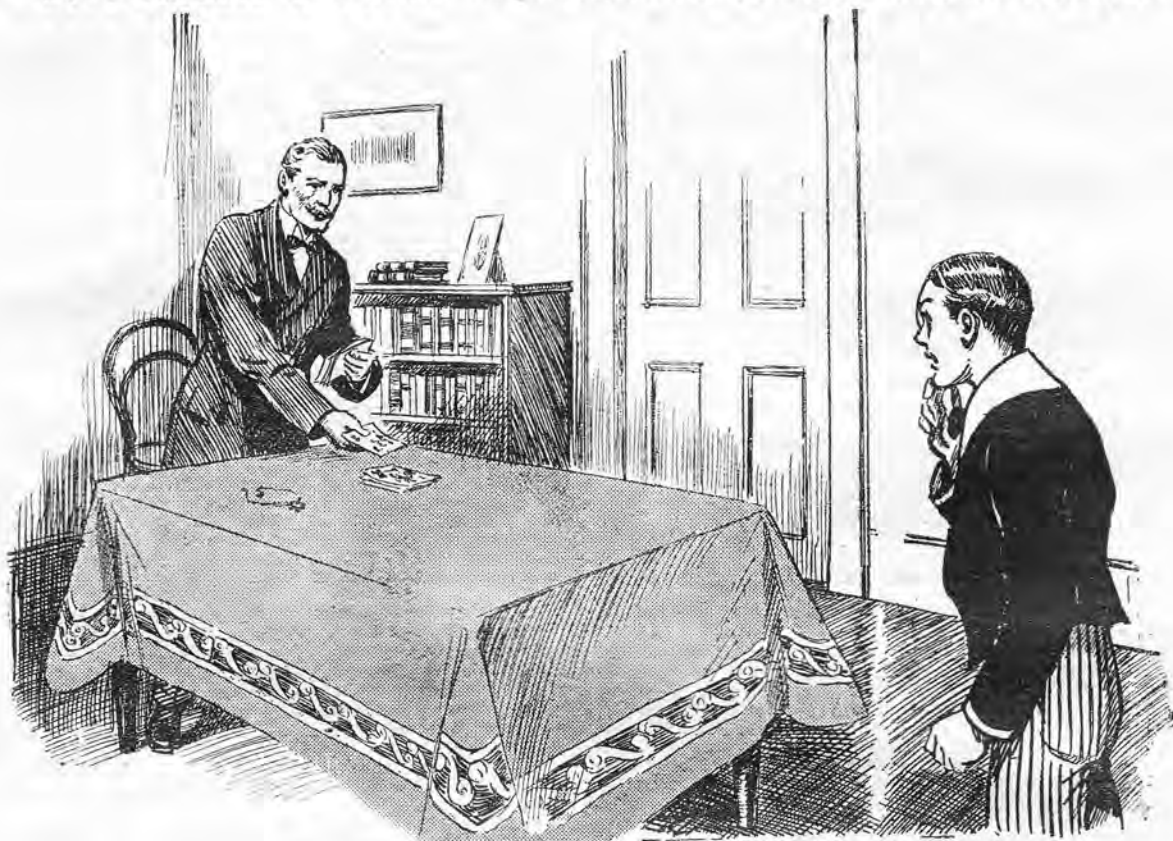
“Then you must have found a new fancy waistcoat.”

“You burblin’ duffah! I haven’t even seen a fancy waistcoat!” gasped Gussy.

“Then we’re lucky,” said Blake. “Come on, you chaps! We shall just be able to do it before lighting-up time.”

He threw his leg over his bicycle, and prepared to depart.

—TOM MERRY & CO. IN THE RIPPING SCHOOL STORY BELOW!



Arthur Augustus fairly quivered with wrath and indignation. It was not the first time that he had had cause to criticise the attitude of his chums. They never paid him the attention which was his due. It was a habit of theirs to shut him up before he could get fairly started.

"I strongly object to this cavalier treatment," he said coldly.

"He thinks he's a cavalier now," sighed Digby.

"More like a roundhead," grinned Blake. "Good old Gussy! We've always said that your head is like a bladder of lard."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! You insultin' wottah—"

"Cheese it, Gussy!" said Herries. "We've got to be going."

"I wefuse to go until Blake has apologised."

"Then you can stay here," said Blake. "We're going, anyway."

"We've wasted enough time already," remarked Dig.

"I uttably wefuse to go until Blake has apologised," said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "I wefuse to be chawactewised as a bladdah of lard."

"Only your head, Gussy," said Blake.

"My head is not a bladdah of lard!" shrieked Gussy.

"Call it a turnip, if you like. What's the difference?"

"You frightful wuffian!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Weally, Blake, I'm surprised at you!"

"Bow-wow!"

"While you were in that shop I found a twinket—"

"A which-it?"

"A twinket."

"Oh, my hat! He's found a twinket!" said Herries, in alarm, as he glanced round at the shops. "He must have been looking in this jeweller's window."

"You uttah ass, Hewwies—"

"He's seen some present he can give to Cousin Ethel, or one of those other girls of Spalding Hall," said Herries. "My only hat! We'd better rush him away from here as quickly as possible!"

"Quicker than that!" agreed Blake grimly.

Arthur Augustus was crimson.

"I haven't been lookin' in the jewellah's window!" he shouted. "I haven't even thought of the gals at Spaldin' Hall. This twinket—"

"Oh, shove him on his jigger!" said Blake wearily.

"I wefuse— Bai Jove! Welcase me, Hewwies, you wuffian! Dig, you wottah—"

Despite his objections, however, Arthur Augustus was bundled willy-nilly on to his bicycle.

"We're late already," said Herries wrathfully. "Do you think we're going to mess about here, wasting time while you gas?"

They pushed off, and Arthur Augustus, finding that his audience had gone, was compelled to push off, too. He recovered some of his composure as he pedalled along in the wake of his chums, and a cold light came into his noble eye.

After the outskirts of the town had been left behind, and when Blake & Co. were well on their way towards Rylcombe, the chums of the Fourth slowed down somewhat, so that their noble chum caught up with them.

"Now then, Gussy," said Blake, "you can tell us about that twinket."

But Arthur Augustus was now in a different frame of mind.

"Twinket?" he repeated. "What twinket?"

"Didn't you tell us that you found a twinket while we were in that shop?"

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah," said Arthur Augustus coldly.

"So you're on the high horse, are you?" asked Blake. "Don't you realise that you were wasting time? We can talk now, though. We're riding along, and—"

"I uttably wefuse to talk."

"Leave him alone, Blake," said Herries. "Didn't you hear what he said? He refuses to talk. We don't often get a bit of luck like this!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"As for the twinket he spotted in the jeweller's window, it's a good thing we got him away," continued Herries. "You know what Gussy is when he starts buying presents for the girls."

"You uttah ass! I wasn't even thinkin' of the gals."

"That's a change for you, Gussy," grinned Digby.

"And as for the twinket, I shall tell you nothin' whatever about it," continued Arthur Augustus coldly. "I wegard you as a set of wuffians."

Blake sighed.

"And this is how he goes on after telling us that he's not going to talk," he said. "Thank goodness he came to that decision! If he's like this when he's not talking, what's he like when he is talking?"

Arthur Augustus opened his mouth to say something else, but he thought better of it. He froze up. Why should he tell his chums anything about that child's trinket? They would probably only laugh at him. The thing was a trifle—of no importance whatever.

So Arthur Augustus dismissed the matter from his mind, and Blake and Herries and Digby, who had never thought that it was anything of importance, forgot it on the spot.

When they arrived back at St. Jim's they had plenty of things to occupy their attention.

It wasn't until later in the evening that Arthur Augustus thought of the pendant again. Prep was over, and Blake and Herries and Digby had gone along to the Common-room to talk football with the Terrible Three of the Shell. Tom Merry was thinking about making a few alterations in the eleven, and there was a good deal of heated discussion on the subject.

Arthur Augustus had been left behind in Study No. 6. He had been rather slow over his prep, and his chums had finished before him.

More by chance than design, Arthur Augustus found the trinket in his pocket. He took it out, with a frown, remembering the unnecessary argument in Wayland.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

The thing seemed to be positively alive!

It shimmered and glinted and sparkled. Arthur Augustus looked at it fascinatedly.

"I wonder if it is weally only glass?" he murmured. "Gweat Scott!"

The thought occurred to him that he had found something really valuable; but he dismissed the idea a moment later. These green lumps of glass were altogether too big. Precious stones of that size would have been worth many thousands. And people didn't drop such jewels in the gutter.

Yet a doubt had crept into Gussy's noble mind. He stared at the trinket with increased interest. It was like a mass of green fire in his palm.

In Wayland he hadn't thought much of the pendant. Certainly, even in the dusky street, its sparkle had caught his eyes; but for all that he was amazed at the difference in its appearance now. A good deal of the dust had been cleared from it in Gussy's pocket, and in the bright light of the study, too, the reflection from those many facets was astounding.

"It's weally marvellous how they get these things up nowadays," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wonder if I had better show this twinket to the chaps in the Common-room?"

Then his lips thightened. Again he remembered how Blake and Herries and Digby had chipped him. He wasn't going to have a repetition of that business.

So he dropped the trinket back into his pocket, gave a final adjustment to his necktie, and sallied forth.

And again the pendant was forgotten.

But it wasn't long before Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had cause to remember it again.

CHAPTER 2.

One Hundred Pounds Reward!

"LOOK out!"
"Oh, my hat!"
"Bai Jove!"
Crash!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat on the floor, just inside the door of the School House, dazed and bewildered.

It was the following morning, and the swell of the Fourth had just come downstairs with the intention of taking a walk in the bright, sunny quad before breakfast.

A moment earlier he had been his usual spotless self, but now his topper had gone in one direction and his monocle in another. He dimly saw a smother of dust, and he heard a scampering of feet. He had a dim recollection of seeing Wilkins and Gunn dashing up the School House steps, with George Alfred Grundy in full pursuit. Apparently the chums of Study No. 3 were not on the best of terms this morning. They vanished up the stairs at breakneck speed.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "When I see Gwunday again I will give him a fearful thwashin'! He deliberately pushed me ovah! Weally, Gwunday is a most frightful wuffian!"

He was about to get to his feet when he noticed a crumpled newspaper lying on the floor close beside him. Evidently it

had been dropped by Wilkins or Gunn, or perhaps by Grundy. It was a local newspaper—a Wayland journal. And it was that morning's issue.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus uttered the ejaculation in a startled voice. He groped for his monocle, jammed it into his noble eye, and clutched at the newspaper. He had seen something startling apparently. It was merely one line of type, but it was enough.

"Valuable Emerald Necklet lost. One Hundred Pounds Reward."

Arthur Augustus was not a particularly brainy youth, but neither, for that matter, was he dull. And his mind instantly went to the "glass" trinket which still reposed in his pocket.

He had had his doubts the previous evening, and before going to sleep he had thought of the matter again. Even this morning he had taken a peep at the trinket, and he had finally decided that it was glass.

Without rising from his undignified position he clutched at the newspaper, and ran his eye down the report.

"Lady Brampton, who is at present staying in Wayland with her husband, Sir William Brampton, Bart., reports the loss of a valuable emerald and platinum necklet," the report ran. "It is a most valuable piece of jewellery, the emeralds being some of the finest in the world. Lady Brampton was shopping in the town yesterday, and it is presumed that the clasp became unfastened. When Lady Brampton arrived back at her hotel she discovered her loss, and the Wayland police, of course, have been informed. It is believed that—"

Arthur Augustus read no more; he had seen enough.

"Bai Jove!" he breathed faintly.

The thing was obvious. The trinket he had found was no child's bauble, but Lady Brampton's emerald necklet! Perhaps it had dropped from her neck as she was getting into her car, or as she was walking across the road. Perhaps she had only dropped it a few minutes before Arthur Augustus had spotted it.

"Gweat Scott!" murmured the swell of the School House.

There were footsteps on the stairs, and he heard the sound of chuckles.

"Good old Gussy!" came the voice of Monty Lowther of the Shell. "You never know what he's going to do next."

The Terrible Three came downstairs. Tom Merry and Manners were grinning as widely as Lowther. It wasn't customary to find Arthur Augustus sitting in the middle of the floor, reading a newspaper.

"We all have our little idiosyncrasies," murmured Tom Merry. "I suppose this is one of Gussy's."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you don't think that I—"

"The only thing is, Gussy, you're in a pretty dangerous position," said Lowther. "Why not get farther back, near the wall? You're right in the fairway here, you know."

"I'm not sittin' heah delibewately, Lowthah, you ass!"

"No?" said Lowther. "Did you fall, or were you pushed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was pushed," said Arthur Augustus, rising to his feet with dignity. "That frightful wuffian, Gwunday, came bargin' in—"

"Ah, Grundy!" interrupted Monty Lowther. "Grundy's another chap like you, Gussy. You never know what he's going to do next."

"The silly ass knocked me ovah!" said Arthur Augustus, his mind filled with the news of that emerald pendant. "Pway stand aside, Lowthah! I am in a huwwy!"

"You don't look yourself, Gussy," said Tom Merry,

eyeing him closely. "Your face is flushed, and there's an excited gleam in your eye. Any special news in the paper?"

"Yaas, wathah! I—I mean—"

"I don't believe it," said Lowther, shaking his head. "There's never any news in that Wayland rag. Let's have a look."

"I wefuse to let you have a look, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus. "I wequiah this papah for myself. It is very important. I may find it necessary to communicate with the police."

"My only hat!" said Manners. "What the merry dickens do you want to communicate with the police for?"

"I wegwet, Mannahs, that I cannot explain," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

WEMBLEY CUP-FINAL TICKETS

For "Gem" Readers!

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"Let's have a look at that paper," said Lowther.

But Arthur Augustus, for once, dodged with great agility. He disappeared up the stairs, taking them three at a time; and the Terrible Three looked after him in astonishment.

"Off his rocker!" said Manners.

"There's never any telling with Gussy," remarked Lowther. "I'll bet he's seen an advert about some new neckties."

"That's about it," grinned Tom Merry. "Come on, let's go out into the sunshine."

And they sallied forth, forgetting all about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

In Study No. 6 Gussy was re-reading that newspaper report. Blake and Herries and Digby were out of doors, and he had the study to himself. Arthur Augustus was glad of that, for he badly wanted to be alone.

"Bai Jove!" he breathed. "A hundred pounds seaward!"

He felt bewildered. It was rather too much to realise all at once. He took the trinket out of his pocket and gazed at it more fascinatedly than ever before. Now that he knew that it was genuine he could not understand his former valuation. It was as clear as daylight that the stones were genuine emeralds, and that the supposed imitation silver was platinum.

"Good gracious!" said Gussy in an awed voice. "This is really remarkable!"

He had a look at the newspaper again. Sir William and Lady Brampton, it seemed, were staying in Wayland's biggest hotel. And it was stated quite plainly in the newspaper that in the event of the necklet being found the finder was at liberty either to communicate with Sir William at the hotel or with the nearest police station.

Arthur Augustus was wondering what course he should adopt, when he heard a tramp of heavy feet in the passage. The next moment the door of Study No. 6 burst open, and George Alfred Grundy glared in. Grundy was not a fellow of gentle habits.

"So it was you, was it?" he snorted. "That's my newspaper!"

"I am glad you have come, Gwunday," replied Arthur Augustus sternly. "You knocked me over five minutes ago, and—"

"And you boned my paper!" interrupted Grundy. "Like your cheek!"

"You fidgetful ass! You uttably wuined my twousahs!" "Never mind your silly trousers!" said George Alfred "Give me my newspaper!"

He took it without further parley, charged out of the study, and slammed the door.

Arthur Augustus didn't mind. He was glad to be rid of Grundy so quickly. And the newspaper was of no further use now.

Gussy's first impulse was to hurry to his chums and to tell them everything. But once again he hesitated. Probably they would only laugh, or else they would chip him unmercifully for not having taken the pendant to the police station the previous evening. It was certain, anyhow, that they would find some way to "chivvy" him.

And why should he give them that pleasure? "Gweat Scott!" he ejaculated suddenly. "An ideah! Bai Jove! A stunnah!"

Despite his objections, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was bundled on to his bicycle!



Why shouldn't he give his chums the surprise of their lives? Here was a glorious opportunity! For some days he had been rather hard up. Study No. 6, in fact, had been in such a stony condition that tea-time had been an anxious period throughout the week. Yesterday Blake had received a remittance, and the financial stress had been somewhat mitigated. Hence the purchases in Wayland. But Arthur Augustus was still in a condition of financial embarrassment.

Yet here, within his grasp, was the sum of one hundred pounds!

He couldn't very well go over to Wayland now, there wasn't sufficient time; but he could, at least, telephone to Sir William Brampton. That would relieve Lady Brampton of her anxiety. Later the money would be forthcoming.

One hundred pounds!

Arthur Augustus gazed dreamily across Study No. 6. What couldn't he do with one hundred pounds? It was a fairly commonplace thing for the swell of the Fourth to possess a fiver or two, but to own a sum like one hundred pounds was tremendous. The thought nearly turned Gussy's brain.

"I'd better phone straight away," he murmured, with a start.

There was a phone in the prefects' room, and, with luck, he might be able to use it without anybody knowing. The prefects' room was generally deserted at that early hour of the morning.

He left the study, and found Baggy Trimble prowling about outside. The fat junior eyed him eagerly.

"I say, Gussy, old chap—"

"Pway get out of my way, Twimble!"

"But I want to speak to you, Gussy—"

"I wegwet, Twimble, that I cannot reciprocate your feelin's," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I am in a huiwvy, and—"

"The fact is, Gussy—"

"If you do not get out of my way, Twimble, I shall stwike you!"

"Oh, I say! Look here, old chap—"

Just then, to Baggy's disgust, Blake and Herries and Digby appeared.

"Hallo! Here he is!" said Blake. "We've been looking everywhere for you, Gussy."

"I am sowwy, but I cannot stop," said Arthur Augustus. "I have some important business to attend to."

"My only hat!" said Herries, staring. "What's the matter with him?"

"There is nothin' the mattah with me, Hewwies."

"But there must be," said Herries. "Didn't Grundy bowl you over in the doorway not long ago?"

"Gwunday did!"

"Then there must be something the matter with you, Gussy."

"There is somethin' the mattah with Gwunday," replied Arthur Augustus. "Gwunday is a fwrightful—"

"Never mind about Grundy!" interrupted Blake. "We want to know what's the matter with you. Grundy knocked you over about ten minutes ago, and you haven't even brushed yourself down!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked down at his dusty clothing with a start.

"Which proves that there's something wrong," continued Blake. "What is it, old chap? You're looking flushed and heated. I believe you're in for a touch of fever!"

"Wubbish!"

"There's an unhealthy flush on your face."

"Wats!"

"You're excited about something," said Blake. "Out with it, old chap! Tell your uncle!"

"I wefuse to tell my uncle— I mean I wefuse to tell you, Blake, you ass!" said Arthur Augustus. "The mattah is pwivate. It is a swict secwet."

And he pushed his way past, and vanished in the direction of the Sixth Form passage.

"Blessed if I know what's the matter with him!" said Blake, scratching his head.

"He wouldn't even stop to speak to me," complained Trimble, from the background.

"Then he can't be as dotty as we thought," said Blake. "Anybody who stops to talk to you, Trimble, is undoubtedly insane."

Arthur Augustus, reaching the prefects' room, was relieved and delighted to find it empty. He closed the door, hurried across to the telephone, and lifted the receiver.

He gave the number of the Wayland hotel, and waited in a fever of impatience. He desired no interruption now.

A voice came over the wires, and Arthur Augustus soon found that he was talking to the hotel clerk.

"I want to speak to Sir William Bwampton, please," he said eagerly. "It is vewy important."

"Who are you?" asked the voice.

"I am D'Arcy, of St. Jim's," replied Arthur Augustus. "I have found Lady Bwampton's emerald necklet—"

"The deuce you have!" ejaculated the clerk in a startled voice. "Who do you say you are? Somebody belonging to St. Jim's?"

"Yaas. But I weally think you had better put me through to—"

"All right—hang on," came the voice. "I'll bring Sir William to the phone."

Arthur Augustus waited for a few moments, and then another voice sounded.

"Hallo! Hallo! Do I understand that you have found Lady Brampton's necklet?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" replied Gussy. "I've got it heah! I thought I had better phone you up at once. I didn't realise the value of it until I saw the pawgawph in the Wayland papah. I found the necklet yestahday—"

"Good gracious! Yesterday?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Where did you find it?"

"In the High Stweet, in the guttah!"

"Why did you not take it at once to the police station?"

"I've already told you, sir, that I didn't realise its value," explained Arthur Augustus. "I thought it was only made of green glass."

"I see!" came Sir William's voice. "And what do you say your name is?"

"D'Arcy."

"I don't quite catch that—spell it."

Arthur Augustus did so.

"I'm in the Fourth Form, sir—School House," he added.

"I quite understand, young man," said Sir William. "D'Arcy of the Fourth Form—School House. Well, D'Arcy, I cannot tell you how relieved I am to hear this piece of good news. Lady Brampton, I am sure, will be overjoyed."

"That's vewy gwatifyin', sir."

"I'll come right over at once," continued Sir William.

"My car is ready, so I shall be at St. Jim's within ten or fifteen minutes. Rylcombe isn't far from Wayland, is it?"

"Only a mile or two, sir."

"Then expect me very shortly!" said Sir William briskly. "And thank you again, D'Arcy, for your promptitude in ringing up."

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"Pway don't mention it, sir!" beamed Arthur Augustus.

He hung up the receiver, and there was a gleam in his noble eye. His chums had refused to listen to him when he wanted to tell them about that trinket. Now he would give them the surprise of their young lives!

CHAPTER 3.

Private Business!

BAGGY TRIMBLE happened to be alone in the quad when an open sports car drove in through the gateway.

It's sole occupant was tall and soldierly. He was evidently a stranger, for he stopped the car and looked from the School House to the New House with an expression of inquiry.

Baggy had an extraordinarily keen scent for a tip. He rolled up eagerly.

"Looking for somebody, sir?" he asked.

"Is your name D'Arcy?" inquired the stranger.

"No, sir, not exactly," replied Trimble, with a fat smirk. "I'm not surprised you should mistake me for D'Arcy, though. He, he, he! D'Arcy and I are two of the best-looking chaps in the Fourth!"

The stranger got out of the car.

"I wish to see young D'Arcy on important business!" he said shortly.

"I'll take you to D'Arcy's study, sir, if you like," said Baggy. "He's bound to be there now, I should think."

"Very well—lead the way."

"Anything very special, sir?" asked Baggy inquisitively, as they walked towards the School House.

"My business with D'Arcy is private."

"Oh, well, you can speak openly to me, sir!" said Trimble confidentially. "I'm one of D'Arcy's best pals, you know. Gussy and I are almost like brothers."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, rather, sir!" went on Baggy. "Gussy hasn't got any secrets from me, and I haven't got any from him. If you tell me what you've come to see him about, I might be able to give you some advice."

"That's very generous of you, but I don't need any advice."

"Gussy will be quite offended if you don't let me in on the secret, sir," said Trimble. "He never does anything without consulting me first."

They walked on, and the soldierly stranger made no comment. They were well in the School House now, and nearing the Fourth Form passage. Baggy was fairly quivering with curiosity.

"I think you'd better tell me why you've come to see my pal Gussy, sir," he said. "I shall know sooner or later, so you might as well tell me now. Gussy wouldn't dream of seeing you without having me present."

"No!" said the other. "That, of course, is D'Arcy's own affair. If he chooses to transact this private business with you in the room, I shall certainly not interfere."

"If you'd tell me now, sir—"

"Young man, I asked you to show me to D'Arcy's room—not to waste time in chattering," said the stranger, with an ominous note in his voice.

"Beast!" breathed Baggy.

"What did you say?"

"Nun-nothing, sir!" gasped Trimble. "I—I only coughed."

He gave it up as a bad job, and led the way to Study No. 6. He rapped on the door, and flung it open.

Rather to his consternation, the study was fully occupied. Blake and Herries and Digby were there, in addition to Arthur Augustus.

"Gentleman to see you, Gussy!" said Baggy importantly. "Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus turned red at sight of his distinguished-looking visitor. He had hardly expected Sir William Brampton so soon; he must have driven over from Wayland in record time. And for the past five minutes Gussy had been trying his hardest to get rid of his study-mates.

"You've been fwrightfully quick," he said, hurrying forward. "Pway step in."

"You are D'Arcy?" asked Sir William.

"Yaas, wathah!" replied Arthur Augustus. "Blake, deah boy, pway be good enough to leave us. Hewwies—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Blake, looking at the stranger inquiringly. "You haven't introduced us, Gussy."

"I don't think introductions matter," said Sir William, who was impatient and anxious. "D'Arcy is the boy I wish to see."

"A pwivate mattah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon his wond'ring chums. "You don't mind wetahin', I twust?"

"This is our study," said Blake obstinately. "I don't see why we should retire!"

"Weally, Blake, haven't I told you that this is a pwivate mattah?"

"I'd forgotten that!" growled Blake. "Sorry! We'd better clear out, you chaps. Gussy wants to be pwivate."

They tramped out with a bad grace. They saw no reason why they should be excluded like this. What business could Arthur Augustus have that was too pwivate for them to participate in?

"That's better," said Sir William. "Now we can talk."

"Pway wait a moment, sir," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "Baggay, cleah off!"

"Eh?" said Trimble. "But—but—"

"This is a pwivate mattah, Twimble."

"That's all right, Gussy," said Baggy hastily. "Don't mind me."

"Bai Jove! But I do mind you—vevly much!" said Gussy. "Unless you cleah out of this stunday at once, I'll thvow you out!"



"Taggles, deah boy, pway accept this tip." Arthur Augustus D'Arcy produced a ten-shilling note, and handed it to the gaping porter.

"Ahem!" coughed Sir William, with a twinkle in his eye. "It's all right, sir," gasped Baggy. "He's—he's not quite himself this morning. But as I'm his best pal, I'll stick to him—"

"I twust you will take no notice of this twightful young wottah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "He is no fwien'd of mine!"

"Oh, I say, Gussy—"

"Will you go, Twimble, or must I give you a feahful thwashin'?" demanded Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"This way, young man!" said Sir William, in a grim voice.

"But, look here, sir—"

"Another time!"

"The fact is—"

"Exactly!" said Sir William.

He seized Baggy by the scruff of the neck, and forcibly ejected him from the study, closing the door after him.

"Beast!" gasped Trimble.

"There seems to have been a litt'e misunderstanding, D'Arcy," said Sir William dryly. "That boy represented himself as being your best friend."

"Twimble is a spyin' young wascal, sir!" said Arthur Augustus heatedly.

He went to the door, and, sure enough, Baggy was hovering near by.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth, losing all patience.

He took a running kick at Trimble, and the fat Fourth-Former bolted, roaring.

"Weally, sir, I twust you will ovahlook this slight intew-ruption," said Arthur Augustus, closing the door. "I take it that you are Sir William Brampton?"

"Quite right!" nodded the soldierly stranger. "You see, I've lost no time in coming over. Now to business. You have the necklet with you?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Let me have it," said Sir William. "I am hoping that there has been no mistake."

A flash of relief came into his eyes as Arthur Augustus produced the superb emeralds. Sir William took the pendant and held it in the palm of his hand.

"This is it!" he said contentedly. "Upon my soul! I am immensely relieved, my boy."

"I don't wondah at it, sir," smiled Arthur Augustus. "I imagine that Lady Bwampton must have been fwightfully cut up ovah her loss."

"More so than I can tell you, D'Arcy," replied the baronet. "Her joy will be unbounded when I take this to her."

His expression changed.

"She'll have to be more careful in future," he added grimly. "How on earth she could have dropped the pendant I cannot imagine. Gross carelessness. Nothing else."

Arthur Augustus was silent.

"And now, my boy, I want to compliment you upon your astuteness," continued Sir William, smiling upon the elegant junior. "It was very smart of you to find the pendant and to preserve it so carefully."

Gussy shook his head.

"I weally don't deserve any pwaise, sir," he said. "I thought it was a cheap glass twinket at first. But when I saw the weport in the newspapah—"

"Then, of course, you knew the real value of the necklet, eh?" nodded Sir William. "Thank goodness you stuck to it, my boy! From the expressions on the faces of your young friends, a short while ago, I take it that they knew nothing about my intended visit, or that you had the necklet in your possession?"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"I am wathah keen on spwingin' a surpwise on them, sir," he confided. "They don't even know that I found the pendant."

"Splendid!" said the other. "You certainly will surprise them, too. You're thinking of the reward, eh?"

"As a mattah of fact, I don't think I ought to accept it, sir," said Arthur Augustus, looking troubled. "Isn't it wathah widiculous to give me a hundred pounds? I've weally done nothin' to deserve it, sir."

Sir William laughed.

"This necklet is worth many thousands," he replied. "I am glad enough to pay you the reward of one hundred pounds—and you shall certainly have it."

As he spoke, he took out his pocket-book, and withdrew a crisp, crinkly bundle of banknotes.

"You don't object to fivers?" he asked dryly.

"Bai Jove, no, sir. Fivahs will be wippin'."

"Here you are, then, I'll count them," said Sir William, who was brimming over with relief and good-natured exuberance. "Five—ten—fifteen—twenty—"

He counted out twenty of them, and laid them on the table. Arthur Augustus eyed them with awe. He had handled fivers frequently enough, but never had he handled so many at once.

"There's your reward, young man, and once again I thank you most heartily for your service," said Sir William, extending his hand. "I shall go straight back to Wayland, and after relieving Lady Brampton's anxiety by showing her the necklet, I shall inform the police that the hunt is over, and you may look forward to seeing your name printed in the local newspaper."

"Good gwacious! I twust you will keep my name out of it, sir!" said Arthur Augustus anxiously. "It would be uttally twightful to have such notoriety."

"Just as you like," chuckled Sir William. "A modest young man, eh? Well, well! That's all the better. Good-bye, D'Arcy—and thank you again. Thank you most heartily."

A moment later Sir William took his departure and drove off in his car. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a hundred pounds in fivers tucked in his pocket-book, felt that he was ready to spring his little bombshell.

CHAPTER 4. On His Rocker!

"HERE he is!"

"Grab him!"

"Bai Jove! Weally—"

Blake and Herries and Digby descended upon the startled Arthur Augustus, and Baggy Trimble was hovering about in the background. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther and quite a number of other Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were on the spot, too.

"What's all the mystery, Gussy?" asked Kit Wildrake.

"There is no mystery, Wildwake."

"Who was your distinguished visitor, then?"

"I would wathah not say, if you don't mind," replied Gussy stiffly. "A purely pwivate call, deah boy."

"Rats!" said Blake. "You can't spoof us like that, Gussy. What's happened? You're looking jolly pleased with yourself, aren't you?"

"I have ewery weason to be pleased with myself," replied Arthur Augustus. "But I see no weason, Blake, why I should satisfy your cwiosity."

"You utter ass! I—"

"It won't help you to become abusive, Blake," said Gussy frigidly.

"Won't it?" retorted Jack Blake. "Perhaps it'll help me if I become violent? What have you been up to? Either you tell us the truth, or we'll scrag you!"

"I should wufuse to be sawaged," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I am vewy sowwy, Blake, but I have nothin' more to say. A pwivate mattah is a pwivate mattah, and I am surprised at you for seekin' to pry into my affahs!"

And the swell of the Fourth walked off with his nose in the air, and with his noble eye gleaming behind his monocle.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Blake, scratching his head.

"Looks bad to me," remarked Monty Lowther. "When Gussy keeps mum about anything like this, it generally means that he's been doing something fishy."

"Rats!" growled Blake. "Gussy couldn't do anything fishy if he tried."

"He doesn't know it's fishy, of course," explained Lowther. "But isn't it like our Gussy to act in all innocence, and to let himself in for a nice little packet?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Better leave him alone," he said. "You can't very well press him when he keeps saying that the matter is private. But if you'll pretend to be indifferent, he'll soon let the cat out of the bag."

"Something in that," admitted Herries.

During morning classes, Arthur Augustus continued to be amiably happy. He sat at his desk with such an air of

serenity that the other Fourth-Formers were more puzzled than ever. Mr. Lathom was obliged to call Arthur Augustus to order more than once; for Gussy, in addition to being happy, was absent-minded.

When, during the History lesson, Mr. Lathom wanted to know how many wives King Henry the Eighth had had, he was startled when Gussy informed him that the number was a hundred.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom, as the Form tittered. "Are you attempting to be funny, D'Arcy?"

"Wathah not, sir!"

"Then what do you mean by telling me that King Henry the Eighth had a hundred wives?"

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Did I say that, sir?"

"Yes, D'Arcy, you did!"

"Oh deah! I'm twightfully sowwy, sir!"

"You are not attending to your work, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom severely.

The little Form master kept his eye on Arthur Augustus after that, and when he noticed, during geography lesson, that Gussy was as absent-minded as ever, he suddenly jumped on him.

"D'Arcy!" he rapped out. "You are not attending!"

"Eh? Bai Jove! I—"

"Stand up, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus stood up.

"How long is the Amazon river, D'Arcy, from its source to its mouth?"

"A hundred miles, sir," replied Gussy promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What—what!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "How dare you, D'Arcy?"

"Oh deah! I—I mean, sir—"

"You have been scribbling, D'Arcy!" snapped Mr. Lathom. "Bring that piece of paper out to me!"

"Weally, sir—"

"At once!"

Arthur Augustus, as red as a beetroot, left his place, and took a half-sheet of exercise paper to the Form master's desk. Mr. Lathom adjusted his glasses, and inspected it.

"What does this mean?" he asked sternly. "This piece of paper is filled with figures. This is the geography lesson, D'Arcy, not arithmetic."

"Yaas, sir, I know," confessed Gussy. "I'm afwaid I've been wathah inattentive."

"One hundred—one hundred—one hundred," said Mr. Lathom. "Why, the paper is filled with nothing else but hundreds! Have you taken leave of your senses, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir."

"What is the meaning of all these figures?"

"I'm afwaid I can't explain, sir."

"Since you appear to be so fond of arithmetic, I will set you a few sums, and you will do them as an imposition," said Mr. Lathom tartly. "And if you are inattentive again, D'Arcy, I shall be compelled to add to your punishment."

Arthur Augustus went back to his place in a very chastened spirit, and for the remainder of lessons he took great care to keep his mind from wandering.

"You got off lightly, Gussy," said Blake, after the Fourth were released. "What the merry dickens did you mean by telling old Lathom that Henry the Eighth had a hundred wives?"

"And why did you say the Amazon is a hundred miles long, when you know jolly well that it's thousands of miles long?" added Herries.

"Out with it, Gussy!" said Digby.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed them with cold disdain.

"I wufuse to be bwowbeaten in this way!" he said stiffly. "Pway let me pass, Blake!"

"I think we'd better bump him," said Blake thoughtfully.

"Bai Jove! I uttally wufuse to be lumped!" said Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "I have some important business to attend to—pwivate business."

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Blake. "More private business!"

"Howevah, it will not be pwivate for long," continued Gussy. "If you are vewy good, deah boys, I may invite you to the spread."

"Spread? What spread?"

"Wait and see, deah boys!"

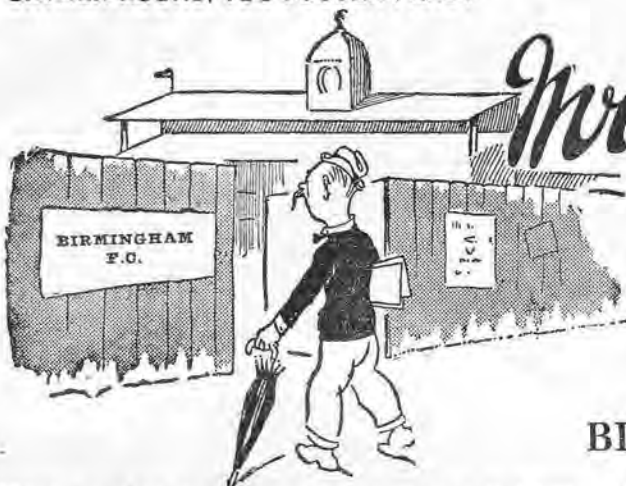
"You can't invite us to any spread, Gussy," said Herries. "You're stony broke."

"Pewwaps I am not so stony as you imagine," said Arthur Augustus serenely.

"But you must be," said Digby. "There wasn't any letter for you this morning."

"Monay does not always come in lettahs, Dig," replied Arthur Augustus enigmatically.

(Continued on page 10.)



Mr. Parker POPS IN TO SEE BIRMINGHAM.

What you want to know about famous footballers, their history, their struggles to fame and fortune—and their Club's inside history, is reported here by that very original member of the GEM staff, Mr. "Nosey" Parker.

The Club that Changed its Name!

THE suggestion was put forward recently that the Arsenal Football Club should change their name to London City, London Town, or, at any rate, to some title which had the word London in it. There would be nothing unique, of course, in a club carrying the name of the city to which it belongs, nor would there be anything strange in a club changing its name.

I was reminded of this when I called in at a ground which is called St. Andrews, and which belongs to the Birmingham Football Club. They weren't always called Birmingham. In the olden days they went under the name of Small Heath, but that clearly wasn't a big enough sounding title, and Birmingham is ever so much more impressive, isn't it?

Strange that I should have been thinking about Arsenal changing their name also on my way to Birmingham, because the first man I encountered at the St. Andrews ground was Mr. Leslie Knighton, and you may remember that for some years he held the reins of management with the Arsenal club.

I have known Mr. Knighton for many years—even when he was with Manchester City before he went to the Arsenal—and one thing I must say about him, and that is he is ever ready to talk. Knowing that I should get something worth while, I tackled him in a way different from my usual style. "Is there anything you want at Birmingham?" I said. The reply came quickly, and it was precise.

"Yes," he said, "we want more money—a lot more. We also want some more points, because these two things would mean less worries, and less worries would mean the cultivation of curly hair instead of a tendency to go bald."

Neither Cup nor Championship Flag!

PERHAPS in one respect the Birmingham club has suffered continuously. It has always had to play a sort of poor relation to the more famous Aston Villa club. You see, Birmingham haven't won the honours like the Villa have done. The Cup has never been taken to St. Andrews, the championship flag has never flown over the ground. Indeed, one man with whom I chatted, and who is connected with the Birmingham team, declared that they had never won anything except honour. Yet, on second thoughts, is there anything greater to be won?

The Birmingham team to-day may not be a tremendous force in football, but it is a force which is respected. I am told that

the St. Andrews arena was fashioned out of a sort of pit, and I was even told how many thousand tons of soil were piled up to make their Spion Kop at one end.

After talking to a lot of the players the thought came to me that if the ground had not been made so many years ago the players on the staff might now have made it themselves, because there are several men who know quite a lot about digging, who have experience of working in the pit.

Fine Sportsmen—All!

JOHN RANDLE, for one—a fine half-back incidentally—still refuses to listen to the pleadings of that familiar song: "Don't go down the mine, daddy." He carries on his job in the pit during the week, and many of the other Birmingham players do things to keep their minds occupied. Indeed, it seems to be a definite part of the club's policy to encourage their men to have something with which to occupy their minds when they are not playing or training.

Joe Bradford, that English International centre-forward, for instance, is as keen as mustard on rearing cattle and poultry at his home near Leicester. He can talk "fat stock" most learnedly. Perhaps you don't know it, but it is my honest conviction that if a vote were taken among all the professional footballers who play in the First Division as to the most popular among them, Joe Bradford would come out on top.

Listen to this story—told me, not by Joe, but by one of his colleagues. It illustrates the inherent sportsmanship in the fellow. During a recent match Joe got the ball near the centre of the field, and off he dashed to score one of those solo goals which are so typical of his play. When he turned round he was surprised to see the referee signalling for an offside kick to be taken. Joe hadn't heard the whistle go, and the watchers hadn't heard it go either. They kicked up a fuss, and said things to the referee when he disallowed the goal.

But Joe didn't protest, as many players would have done, against the decision. He went up to the referee and apologised for having run on and scored after the whistle had gone. "I am sorry I got you into trouble," he said to the referee.

"Only Six Goals to Win!"

THEY believe in having good goal-keepers at Birmingham, and have two on the staff now who have each played for England. Dan Tremelling believes in getting catching practice during the

summer as well as during the winter, because he keeps wicket for a good class cricket side. Harry Hibbs, the other goalkeeper, has jumped right into the limelight during the past year or so. He has "kept" for England this season, and I fully expect to see him given the honour in the coming big International match against Scotland.

One of the strange points about football—and yet perhaps not strange in a way—is the manner in which certain footballers follow certain managers. When Mr. Leslie Knighton was with Manchester City, Billy Blyth played for that club. Later, when Mr. Knighton managed Arsenal, Blyth was an Arsenal

player, and now Blyth has followed the Birmingham manager to his new place.

Billy is the prize optimist of the football world: never downhearted. He played in a match once in which his side was five goals to the bad with only a quarter of an hour to go. As the men lined up after the fifth goal had been scored Billy said to his pals: "Come on, boys, we only want six to win!"

Blyth still lives in London, and there is a certain golf course in a northern suburb where he is "cock of the walk."

The Canny Scots!

WHILE I was talking "goff" to this versatile half-back, however, another half-back in Jimmy Cringan came up. "Golf's no sort of game," he said. "Let me tell you about a real sport—quoits." Now, I don't know much about golf, and I know less about quoits, but Cringan showed me a medal of which he is very proud: he gained it as a member of Scotland's champion quoits team.

There are other Scots knocking around the St. Andrews ground, too. John Crossbie is one of them. Now, John is a forward, but he is the shyest fellow I ever came across so far as goal-scoring is concerned. He always lets somebody else put on the finishing touch. But though John doesn't get goals as a rule—two a season is about his average—the Birmingham fans love him, and if he should chance to get a goal they go mad about his success.

"I mind the day," said John, "when I played for a football team with the nicest sounding name I have ever heard—Glenbuck Cherry Pickers." I had to ask him if the players got the name because, when they weren't playing, they spent their spare time picking cherries out of other folks' gardens, but John wouldn't pursue that line of argument.

From Schoolboy to Pro!

ANOTHER player who came out of the mines is Eddie Barkas, who arrived at Birmingham via Huddersfield, and is a fine defender—always willing. The classical touch to the team is lent by George Liddell who spends the weekdays teaching lads grammar, history, and other things which you have to learn when at school. One of his bosom friends in the Birmingham side is Ernest Curtis—still looking a boy—who did great things in Wales. He has an English Cup medal—gained with Cardiff City, a Welsh Cup medal, a Charity Shield medal, and also played for Wales in schoolboy and amateur Internationals.

"NOSEY."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,147.

£100 REWARD!

(Continued from page 8.)

He walked on, and strolled out into the quad. As it happened, Taggles, the porter, was looking for him. Taggles came up with a parcel in his hand.

"Which there's a parcel for you, Master D'Arcy," he said. "Come by the carriers this morning," he said.

"Bai Jove! My suit from the cleanahs," said Arthur Augustus. "You wemembah, Blake, you wottah, how you splashed ink all ovah my suit last week?"

"Rats! You did it yourself, Gussy," said Blake. "Weally, Blake, you know perfectly well that you threw the inkpot at me."

"And it was your own fault," said Blake. "You refused to do as you were told. I'm thinking of throwing another inkpot at you," he added grimly.

"I wewot to say, Blake, that you have a wuffianly mind," retorted Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Taggles, deah boy, pway accept this tip."

Gussy produced a ten-shilling note, and wafted it into the gaping Taggles' hand.

"Hy heya!" gasped the porter. "Ten bob! For me, Master D'Arcy!"

"All for you, Taggles," beamed Arthur Augustus. "Which you're a gent, Master D'Arcy—as I've always said," ejaculated Taggles.

He went off like a man in a dream, and the Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers collected round Arthur Augustus in an indignant mob.

"He's absolutely off his rocker!" said Manners. "Fancy tipping Taggles ten bob for bringing him a giddy parcel!"

"And Study No. 6 on the rocks, too!" groaned Blake. "Gussy—Gussy, why did you do it?"

"You are quite w'ong, Blake, when you say that the studay is short of tin," smiled Arthur Augustus. "It is ovahflowin' with plenty. The lean years are ovah, deah boy."

Gussy had already changed two of his fivers at the tuck-shop, and he had a plentiful supply of silver and pound notes and ten-shilling notes.

"I say, Gussy, old chap—"

Baggy Trimble pushed his way forward.

"I am sowwy, Twimble—"

"The fact is, Gussy, I want you to lend me some cash," said Baggy boldly. "I'm expecting a remittance from Trimble Hall—"

"Clear out, Trimble!" growled Blake. "If you want a thick ear—"

"Oh, really!" protested Baggy. "Gussy's my pal. He doesn't forget that I brought that gentleman to see him this morning."

"You uttah ass, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus. "The gentleman would have seen me without your intahference."

"Fathead!" said Trimble. "I say, old chap—"

"Don't bothah me, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus. "I have an important announcement to make, and I cannot be bothahed with your chattah."

"Beast!" said Trimble. "I—I say, old fellow, I—I wanted to ask your advice."

"Weally?" asked Gussy. "In that case, Twimble, I am always weady and at your service. I am wathah good at givin' advice. Pway pwoceed!"

"Well, it's like this," said Trimble. "The fact is—"

He hesitated.

"Yaas?" encouraged Gussy. "Go ahead, Twimble. What is this mattah upon which you wequiah my advice?"

"Well, you see, it's like this— I mean the fact is—"

Baggy Trimble paused. Whatever the fact was, he did not seem in a great hurry to let it out.

"I'm waitin'," said Gussy patiently.

"The—the fact is—"

Another pause.

"Are we going to stand this?" demanded Blake wrathfully. "Are we going to wait here while this fat idiot asks Gussy for advice? Gussy can't give advice, anyhow, and Baggy only wants to stick him for some money. He keeps hesitating because he doesn't know how to ask for it."

"Yes, I do!" yelled Trimble. "I want Gussy to lend me a fiver. I know he's got it, because I spotted him in the tuckshop, and he's got a pocket-book full of fivers."

"Bai Jove! You spyin' young wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I—I didn't mean to look," said Trimble, in alarm. "It

was quite an accident, Gussy. I—I happened to be in the doorway—"

"And if the door had been shut, you would have happened to be near the keyhole," said Tom Merry. "Gussy, if you lend this fat porpoise any money, you'll be off your rocker."

Arthur Augustus stiffened.

"I would like you to wemembah, Tom Mewwy, that I can do as I like with my own money," he said coldly.

"Come heah, Twimble!"

Arthur Augustus had made up his mind. He would show these chaps! He took out his pocket-book with a flourish, and opened it. The juniors stared fascinatedly as they caught sight of a whole sheaf of fivers. Arthur Augustus took one out, and handed it to Trimble.

"A fivah, deah boy?" he said, beaming. "With pleasuah! I think you said a fivah?"

Baggy's eyes nearly came out of his head.

"You—you mean it?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No—no rotting, Gussy?" babbled Trimble. "You—you mean that you're going to lend me a fiver?"

"It's yours, Twimble," nodded Gussy amiably.

Trimble took it like a fellow in a dream.

"Stop him!" gasped Blake. "Gussy's as mad as a hatter! Lending fivers to Trimble!"

"Only one fivah, Blake," said Arthur Augustus.

Trimble scuttled away like a fat rabbit, fearful lest Gussy's chums should stop him and forcibly relieve him of that crisp banknote. But they were so startled that they could only stand round, staring at Arthur Augustus in a kind of awe.

"He's mad!" said Herries hoarsely.

"Mad as a March hare!" agreed Blake. "I think we'd better grab him, and—"

"Wats!" interrupted Arthur Augustus. "It would be fwightfully bad form, Blake, for you to gwab your host."

"Our—our host?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I want all you fellows to come to a big spwead this evenin'. The biggest spwead of the term, deah boys. It's all awwanged. I have already given some ordahs ovah the telephone, and I am expectin' some people ovah from Wayland."

"People?" ejaculated Blake. "What sort of people?"

"Weally, Blake, you are fwightfully inquisitive," said Arthur Augustus. "I don't mind tellin' you, howevah, that they are comin' to pweapare the spwead. Ewewyboddy is welcome. I am pwovidin' for the entiah Shell and Fourth. Somethin' special in the way of spweads, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus took stock of the stupefied faces around him with great enjoyment. He had already caused a minor sensation by lending Trimble a fiver; and now he was surprising the natives in real earnest.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy's Fortune!

"LOOK out!"

"New House cads!"

George Figgins, the long-legged leader of the New House juniors, came pushing his way into the crowd, accompanied by Kerr and Fatty Wynn. Redfern and Lawrence and a few other stalwarts were there, too.

"Pax!" said Figgins good-naturedly. "We want to know what all the excitement's about."

"You New House chaps can buzz off," said Blake, frowning. "Gussy's gone dotty, and it's our affair."

"Before a chap can do dotty, he's got to be sane," said Figgins. "I never knew that Gussy was sane."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins, you fwightful wottah, I have a good mind not to invite you to the spwead," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Spread?" said Figgins, pricking up his ears. "Do you mean a feed?"

"Yaas, I am invitin'—"

"I apologise, Gussy," said Figgins solemnly. "If you're going to provide a spread, and if you're going to invite me, you can't be dotty."

"Am I invited, too?" asked Fatty Wynn eagerly.

"Ewewyboddy is invited," replied Gussy, beaming.

"Figgay, I accept your apology. As one gentleman to another—"

"That's all right, Gussy," said Figgins. "But is this absolutely above-board? You'll need a pretty pile of money you know, if you're inviting the whole of the Shell and the whole of the Fourth."

"I have plenty of monay, deah boy," replied Arthur Augustus. "I would like to add that this spwead will be somethin' diffewent—somethin' startlin'! I have awwanged with Waitton that we shall have the use of the Lecture Hall."

"I—I didn't mean to look," said Trimble, in alarm. "It

was quite an accident, Gussy. I—I happened to be in the doorway—"

"And if the door had been shut, you would have happened to be near the keyhole," said Tom Merry. "Gussy, if you lend this fat porpoise any money, you'll be off your rocker."

Arthur Augustus stiffened.

"I would like you to wemembah, Tom Mewwy, that I can do as I like with my own money," he said coldly.

"Come heah, Twimble!"

Arthur Augustus had made up his mind. He would show these chaps! He took out his pocket-book with a flourish, and opened it. The juniors stared fascinatedly as they caught sight of a whole sheaf of fivers. Arthur Augustus took one out, and handed it to Trimble.

"A fivah, deah boy?" he said, beaming. "With pleasuah! I think you said a fivah?"

Baggy's eyes nearly came out of his head.

"You—you mean it?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No—no rotting, Gussy?" babbled Trimble. "You—you mean that you're going to lend me a fiver?"

"It's yours, Twimble," nodded Gussy amiably.

Trimble took it like a fellow in a dream.

"Stop him!" gasped Blake. "Gussy's as mad as a hatter! Lending fivers to Trimble!"

"Only one fivah, Blake," said Arthur Augustus.

Trimble scuttled away like a fat rabbit, fearful lest Gussy's chums should stop him and forcibly relieve him of that crisp banknote. But they were so startled that they could only stand round, staring at Arthur Augustus in a kind of awe.

"He's mad!" said Herries hoarsely.

"Mad as a March hare!" agreed Blake. "I think we'd better grab him, and—"

"Wats!" interrupted Arthur Augustus. "It would be fwightfully bad form, Blake, for you to gwab your host."

"Our—our host?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I want all you fellows to come to a big spwead this evenin'. The biggest spwead of the term, deah boys. It's all awwanged. I have already given some ordahs ovah the telephone, and I am expectin' some people ovah from Wayland."

"People?" ejaculated Blake. "What sort of people?"

"Weally, Blake, you are fwightfully inquisitive," said Arthur Augustus. "I don't mind tellin' you, howevah, that they are comin' to pweapare the spwead. Ewewyboddy is welcome. I am pwovidin' for the entiah Shell and Fourth. Somethin' special in the way of spweads, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus took stock of the stupefied faces around him with great enjoyment. He had already caused a minor sensation by lending Trimble a fiver; and now he was surprising the natives in real earnest.

"Great Scott!"

"He's fixed it up with Railton!"

"And we didn't know anything about it!"

"My only hat!"

The juniors pressed round more eagerly than ever. And at that moment a car drove in through the gateway, followed almost at once by a man on a motor-cycle. Then came another car.

"Pway excuse me, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think these gentlemen have come to see me."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Help!"

The crowd was bigger than ever, and Arthur Augustus sauntered through it and approached the man who had just got out of the first car.

"Are you fivom the catewah's?"

"No, I'm connected with the Wayland Syncopated Orchestra," replied the other, who was quite a young man.

"Are you Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, I'm D'Arcy," replied Arthur Augustus. "I'm vewy pleased to meet you, Mr.—"

"Mason," said the young man.

"I take it that you are the leadah of the band?"

"Not exactly," said Mr. Mason, grinning. "I'm only the booking agent. I understand that you require the Wayland Syncopated Orchestra to attend a banquet at St. Jim's this evening?"

"Oh, my hat! A banquet!"

"With an orchestra in attendance!"

"Great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus took no notice of the excited comments. "If you will mention the figuah, Mr. Mason, I shall be pleased to whack out the necessawy cash," he said coolly.

"I shall requiah the services of the orchestwa for two hours."

He produced his pocket-book, Mr. Mason mentioned a sum, and Gussy, to the startled amazement of all the on-lookers, handed over a fiver to settle it. Mr. Mason tucked it away, wrote out a receipt, and climbed back into his motor-car.

Then came the caterer.

More fivers changed hands—quite a sheaf of them this time. Everybody was beaming with good nature—except the onlooking juniors, who were agast with stupefaction.

Other people received money—people who had come on bicycles and on foot. By this time Gussy's pocket-book was beginning to lose its bulkiness. But he didn't care. He had made up his mind to spend the whole of that hundred pounds on this special feed for the Shell and the Fourth. Gussy was a generous junior, and he considered, in his own mind, that he had not earned the money. He wouldn't have felt comfortable in spending it on himself. So he was sharing his good fortune with his schoolfellows.

"Well, that's settled," he said, with relief. "Wemembah, deah boys, that the banquet will be held in the Lecture Hall at tea-time."

"Good old Gussy!"

"Hold on!" said Blake grimly. "Where did you get all that money from, Gussy? And how much more have you got?"

Arthur Augustus eyed Blake through his eyeglass. "I am sowwy, Blake, but I decline to answah those questions," he said.

"Have you been robbing a bank?"

"Pway don't be s' wedic."

"You—you dummy!" roared Blake. "Why can't you tell us where you got that money from? It must have cost you something like thirty or forty quid to arrange this feed!"

"More than that, deah boy!"

"More than forty quid!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here, Gussy, you'd better tell us—"

"I refuse to tell you," interrupted Arthur Augustus coldly. "Bai Jove! Isn't it enough that I should invite you to the spwead, Blake? I wegard you as an ungwateful wottah!"

"I'm not ungrateful, Gussy, but I'm worried about you," said Blake. "I don't like all this secrecy. Where did you get that money from? And what the dickens do you mean by squandering it on a banquet?"

"Squandering it, be blowed," said Figgins. "Gussy's doing the right thing! Gussy is a sportsman!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"You dry up, Blake!"

"We're all pleased to accept Gussy's invitation," said Tom Merry. "But Blake is right. I think Gussy ought to tell us where this money came from, and why he's throwing it about like this. We know our Gussy—and we know that he needs looking after."

"He ought to have a coupie of keepers in constant attendance," said Herries bluntly.

"Weally, Hewwies, I regard that wemark as an insult!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I have a good mind to scwatch your name off the list of guests."

He turned to the excited Blake.

"I think there is a House match on this aftahnoon?" he asked.

"Blow the House match!"

"I wegwet, Blake, that I shall be unable to play," said Gussy. "Tom Mewwy, as skippah, I appeal to you to dwop me out of the team."

Tom Merry grinned.

"You weren't in the team, Gussy," he said gently.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I thought of giving someone else a trial," said Tom.

"Oh, I see! It is just as well," said Arthur Augustus.

"I shall be vewy busy supewintendin' the awwagements in in the Lecture Hall. There will be a gweat deal to be done."

And Gussy, who was enjoying himself immensely, strolled away. He left behind him a crowd of excited and puzzled juniors.

Blake and Herries and Digby were worried.

It irritated them to think that Arthur Augustus should have done all this without seeking their advice. They had known nothing until that morning—and it was obvious that the tall, soldierly stranger was closely connected with Gussy's sudden rise to fortune.

"That's the worst of Gussy!" growled Blake. "He gets these ideas into his head, and he won't take us into his confidence. Goodness only knows what it all means."

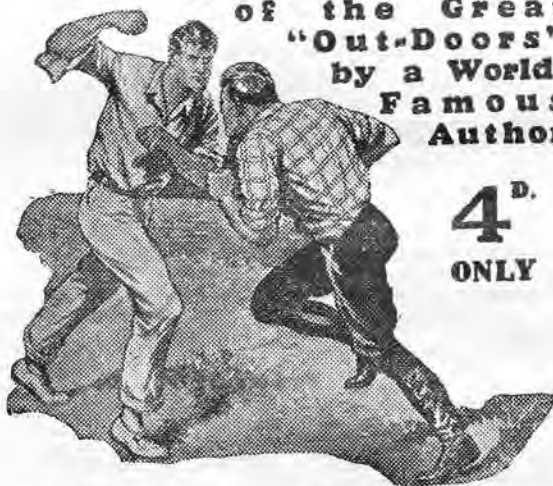
"Why worry?" asked Digby. "He's spending his money sensibly, anyhow."

"There's that about it," admitted Herries. "Giving a feed to the Shell and the Fourth is a stunning wheeze."

"Gussy's too generous," growled Blake. "He ought to

(Continued on next page.)

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think twice before using his money up like this. Goodness knows, I'm not a mean chap—"

"Fifty quid or so is nothing to Gussy," interrupted Mellish, with a grin. "Gussy's rolling in money."

"How do you know?"

"Trimble told me so."

"Trimble!" snorted Blake. "You don't believe that fathead, do you?"

"Well, Trimble knows for once," replied Mellish. "Besides, haven't we got eyes of our own? Haven't we got senses? We can all see that Gussy is full of money. He wouldn't spend all this on a feed unless he had tons more."

"But where has he got it from?" asked Blake helplessly.

Baggy Trimble came rolling up. He looked even fatter than usual; his face was sticky and shiny, and there was a glassy look in his eyes. He had just come from the tuck-shop, where he had eaten enough for about a dozen fellows.

"Gussy's all right," he said, seeming to breathe with difficulty. "Gussy's fairly rolling in tin."

"I suppose Gussy took you into his confidence?" asked Blake, with a sniff.

"Yes, rather," said Baggy. "I'm Gussy's pal—"

"What!"

"I—I mean, he didn't exactly take me into his confidence, but I'm not a fool," said Trimble.

"No?" said Blake. "You surprise me. But then, you're not a good judge."

"Gussy's got so much money that he doesn't know what to do with it," continued Baggy Trimble. "That man who came to see him this morning was a lawyer."

"Oh, a lawyer? Who told you so?"

"Isn't it plain?" asked Trimble. "That man comes to see Gussy, and immediately afterwards Gussy's sprouting money. He's come into a fortune, and he's giving this feed to celebrate the occasion."

"Well, it does look a bit like it," said Herries. "I only hope that everything is all right."

But there was a doubt in his voice, and this doubt was shared by Blake and Digby. Knowing Arthur Augustus as they did, they could not help feeling that things were not quite as rosy as they appeared on the surface.

CHAPTER 6.

The Bombshell!

"WIPPIN'! In fact, pviceless!" Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He was standing on the platform of the Lecture Hall, surveying the scene. And it was certainly a scene worth surveying.

The body of the hall was filled with tables, and each table was snowy white with immaculate linen. Silverware and glassware glistened and gleamed. The tables were groaning, too, under their weight of good things.

On the platform, just behind Arthur Augustus, the Wayland Syncoated Orchestra was already preparing for the opening selection. It was Gussy's idea to have the orchestra playing when his guests came filing in.

Men were just adding the finishing touches to the decorations. There were gaily-coloured festoons, Chinese lanterns, fairy lights, and so forth. For the greater part of the afternoon the Lecture Hall had been a hive of industry. Never before had such a feed as this been given at the expense of one Fourth-Former.

Arthur Augustus, as the donor of the feast, was naturally feeling in the highest good humour. He wasn't averse to basking in the limelight.

It amused him, too, to hear the rumours that were going about. At the banquet he had decided that he would tell the fellows exactly where he had obtained the money, and why he had spent it all on a feed. It would provide an excellent opportunity for a speech—and Gussy loved making speeches.

"Well, I think ewewythin' is weady?" he asked, looking round.

"All ready for you to give the word, Master D'Arcy," said the caterer, who was in attendance.

"Vewy well; I will admit the guests," said Arthur Augustus.

Outside, in the passage, there was a growing crowd. Everybody was talking at once, and pandemonium reigned. Nobody had been able to get into the Lecture Hall because the doors were locked.

"Personally, I don't believe it," said Redfern, of the New House. "I think it's a spoof of these School House chaps."

"If it is," said Figgins darkly, "we'll wreck the whole place before going back to our own House."

"Aren't you a bit premature, old chap?" asked Blake. "Give Gussy a chance!"

The House match that afternoon had been much below

form. None of the players had been wholeheartedly interested in the game. Arthur Augustus had given them something else to think of.

"Not so much noise you New House fatheads!" sang out Blake. "You'll have Railton down on us, and he'll probably stop the whole feed."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "You School House asses are making more noise than we are!"

"Rats!"

"Why doesn't Gussy let us in?"

At that moment the double doors of the Lecture Hall were suddenly flung open, and Arthur Augustus stood there. But only for a moment.

He had intended making an impressive little speech before admitting the crowd. But the crush was so great that Gussy had no chance. He stood there for about a second, looking scrupulously immaculate. Then the pressure proved too much, and the foremost juniors went hurtling forward with a rush.

"Out of the way, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

Bump!

"Yawooooooop!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or the ball, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop!" gasped Arthur Augustus, struggling to his feet. "Ow! Talbot, you frightful ass, you're tweadin' on my foot!"

"Sorry, Gussy!" grinned Talbot. "It's not my fault—"

"Yow, yawoooooh!" hooted Arthur Augustus, as he was given another violent shove.

Crash!

He went down again, and the guests continued to stream in.

There was no longer any doubt. All the juniors in the passage had caught a glimpse of the snowy-white tables, and the silver and glassware, and the good things to eat. They had seen the decorations, and, too, there was the dreamy music from the orchestra.

At last Arthur Augustus was able to get clear of the crush, and he felt indignant and hot. He was dishevelled and dusty. His collar was crumpled, his tie had been dragged under his left ear, and altogether he was very much of a wreck.

"Good gracious!" he panted feebly. "I wegard you as a cwovd of wuffians! You have tweated your host in a wotten mannah."

"It was your own fault, Gussy, old chap," said Kit Wildrake. "You shouldn't have got in the way."

"Weally, Wildwake, I had no opportunity of gettin' out of the way," protested Arthur Augustus.

"Well, it doesn't matter—we're in," chuckled Wildrake.

"It mattahs a gweat deal," replied Gussy. "I'm in a frightful condition."

Some of the juniors dusted him down and put him straight. After that he was somewhat mollified.

Blake and Herries and Digby were still outside in the passage, dusting themselves down, too. Tom Merry and Lowther were also there, similarly engaged.

Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three, in fact, had suffered very much as Gussy had suffered. They had been flung aside in the general rush, and not only had they been squashed against the wall but nearly trampled underfoot. The rush was over now, so they were able to sort themselves out.

"The silly asses!" growled Blake wrathfully. "They're worse than a crowd at a football match!"

"It was Gussy's silly fault—for opening the doors so suddenly," said Manners.

"Well, never mind—there are worse troubles at sea," said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "We haven't come to much harm. Let's go in."

"We shall find all the best places bagged," grumbled Blake.

They were the last now, and they stood in the doorway surveying the scene in such astonishment that they forgot their minor troubles. It was indeed an impressive scene.

There were glowing lights everywhere, and the decorations were gay, artistic, and tasteful. The Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were seating themselves at the tables, chattering noisily. The orchestra was playing a lively melody now, and the whole scene was one of jollity and light-heartedness. Without question, this banquet of Gussy's was something very much out of the common.

"If any of the seniors come along and see this they'll be jealous," grinned Monty Lowther.

They were just about to enter when they heard some excited voices behind them. They turned and beheld two or three men hurrying towards the Lecture Hall. One of them was Mr. Mason, the agent for the orchestra, another was the proprietor of the catering establishment, and a third was the man who had undertaken the decorations. They looked so excited and so full of consternation that

Tom Merry immediately scented that something was wrong.

Defly, he closed the doors of the Lecture Hall and placed his back to them.

"Open those doors!" shouted the caterer, running up. "Open those doors, I say!"

"Hold on!" said Tom. "What's the matter?"

"Matter enough!" shouted the excited man. "Has the banquet started?"

"Not yet."

"Then I may be in time to save my goods!" gasped the other. "Thank Heaven! Open those doors, boy! There shall be a reckoning for this! The police shall be informed, and—"

"The police!" ejaculated Blake, staring.

"Yes, young fellow, the police!"

"But what the merry dickens for?"

"I want to have a word with your young friend—with Master D'Arcy!" said the caterer, his voice trembling with fury. "These other gentlemen want a word with him, too."

"Quite a few words!" said Mr. Mason ominously.

"With Gussy!" yelled Blake. "But Gussy's as harmless as a kitten. He couldn't do anything wrong if he tried. What are you getting at?"

"Couldn't do anything wrong, couldn't he?" panted the caterer. "Perhaps you don't know that he gave me forged banknotes in payment for this supply of food?"

"Forged banknotes!" gasped the juniors in one voice.

"Yes, forged banknotes," put in Mr. Mason. "He gave one to me, too—he paid all of us with forged notes!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Great Scott!"

"I know there was something fishy about it!" groaned Blake, looking at Herries and Digby. "Whenever Gussy does anything on his own—"

"You young scamp!" shouted one of the men. "If you knew that there was something fishy about this, why didn't you warn us?"

"Keep your hair on!" said Blake. "We didn't know that the notes were spurious, did we?"

"You have just said—"

"I can't help what I've just said!" grunted Blake. "I know jolly well that Gussy didn't try to swindle you!"

"Oh, didn't he!" said Mr. Mason. "Don't you call it swindling to pay us with worthless money?"

"Gussy didn't know it was worthless, or he wouldn't have given it to you," said Tom Merry. "If you were spoofed when you were paid, so was Gussy spoofed when he got hold of that supposed cash. There must be some mistake here."

"There is no mistake about the worthlessness of this money!" retorted the caterer. "How dare you detain me here like this? My food is being eaten. I am going to seize everything before it is too late. Open those doors at once, boy!"

Tom Merry was thinking quickly.

"Just a minute—don't be so excited!" he urged. "This is a serious matter, and we don't want to spring it on Gussy too suddenly. I tell you he's as innocent as we are. He must have ordered all these things in good faith—and thought he was paying you with good money."

"Nonsense! The boy deliberately tricked us!"

"Look here," said Blake, "we know Gussy—and we know that everything will be all right. He's the son of

(Continued on the next page.)

ASK THE ORACLE!



I happened to be mentioning the fact to one of my subs. the other day that gas soothes pain, when our whiskery old wisecracker barged in and politely informed me that the constant gas of the office-boy gives him a sore head.

"cracked corn." The small mill through which rubber is passed in its early stages is also called a cracker.

Q.—Why is a crane called a derrick?

A.—That shows you what morbid imaginations some people have. Bert Barnett, of Brixton. There was a hangman at Tyburn in the early seventeenth century whose name was Derrick. He was a famous fellow in his own line—which wasn't a pleasant one—and his gallows reminded somebody of a crane. So cranes became known as derricks. Cranes, of course, were used thousands of years ago, and were named after the neck of the bird.

Q.—Can kippers be cooked in casserole?

A.—Why not, "Prefect's Fag"? But *en casserole* does not mean in cubes, as you seem to think, but in a casserole, which is a heatproof earthenware bowl. Of course, although it is about a hundred years since I went to school, I can quite understand your prefect's annoyance with the similarity of the study supper, and your laudable desire to please him by a "novel and surprise dish of the succulent fish." He says he is tired of kippers cooked everlastingly flat or folded; he wants a change, kippers cooked in a different way to tickle the tired palate. I have consulted our lady typist, who feeds at a fashionable fish shop each day, and she says you might like to try the following recipe for *kippers à la fricassee*. "Take two large full-grown male kippers and bite off the heads and tails. Remove fins, spines, wishbones, and any portions of last night's evening edition that may be adhering to the cuticle or outer skin. Place remains in sausage machine (or mangle), and revolve handle until well minced. Add parsley and half a packet of threaded wheat. Place in casserole, to which add three well-beaten eggs of this year's vintage, and half a glassful of raspberry vinegar. Mix in a pinch of pepper, a teaspoonful of salt, a dozen oysters and a bag of sun-dried raisins. Steam slowly for five hours on an electric grill, and serve with custard to taste. If that doesn't strike your prefect as novel, chum, nothing will!"

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Q.—Who was the Delphic Oracle?

A.—William and Bert, of Lower Sydenham, have been talking about me. Well, they could do worse, but the conversation got them into an argument about Oracles in general. You were quite right, William, in sticking out that an Oracle was not always a whiskery old fossil. In the days of ancient Greece, as a matter of fact, the Oracle was usually a young woman. She was called the Pythia, or Pythoness. People went to her to ask questions. She would chew leaves of the sacred laurel and drink water from the prophetic stream called Kassotis, which flowed underground. Mystic vapours would rise from fissures in the ground, the lady would go into a trance, and mumble something. The "holy ones" sitting round would already have had the questions submitted to them in writing, and when the Oracle spoke they would translate her utterances into flowing phrases, having thought out the answers beforehand. There were Oracles in many parts of Greece, but the oldest was at Delphi, and became the most widely known.

Q.—What is the meaning of the "Blue Riband of the Turf"?

A.—The Blue Riband, or Ribbon, Harry Mark, of Margate, is a term applied to any very big prize. The expression was adopted from the Blue Ribbon worn by Knights of the Garter, which is the senior British Order. In this case, Harry, it refers to the Derby, the winning of which is the biggest achievement in horse-racing.

Q.—Is there a Marmalade Tree?

A.—Ha, ha! Excuse my mirth, but

George Cox, of Caterham, has certainly put one over on his pal Arthur this time. I'm afraid you've lost, Arthur, and will have to buy both copies of the *Gen* this week. (But it's worth it, isn't it?) True enough, marmalade is made from Seville oranges, and years ago it was made from quinces. But there is a tree in Jamaica called the bully-tree or "marmalade tree." It bears a fruit whose thick pulp resembles marmalade and is called natural marmalade. So your chum was right when he said that marmalade does grow on trees.

Q.—How many River Derwents are there in England?

A.—Harry Blake, of Hammersmith, went to Cumberland last summer and found a River Derwent, and a pal of his who went to Derbyshire found another. It's very confusing, Harry, I'll admit, and if you go to Yorkshire next summer you'll find another. There are four Derwents in England altogether. The fourth Derwent on the list rises in the Pennines and flows to the Tyne, three miles above Newcastle. The name comes from a Celtic word meaning "clear water."

Q.—What is a cracker?

A.—When I read this postcard from Dick Barton, of Catford, I really thought there was a catch in it, but Guy Fawkes' Day was all over, and I expect you know all about those sort of crackers, Dick. In America, a biscuit is usually called a cracker, and in the Southern States of America "cracker" is a term of contempt for the "poor" or "mean" whites in Florida and Georgia. The term dates back to the Revolution, when the poor people lived mainly on what is called

Lord Eastwood, and Lord Eastwood will square things if—"

"There is no guarantee that this boy's father will accept responsibility for these debts," broke in the caterer impatiently. "Our only safe way is to seize our goods at once. And we shall do so! The whole thing is an outrageous fraud! This wretched boy deserves to go to a reformatory!"

"Gussy in Borstal!" murmured Monty Lowther. "What a prospect!"

Gussy's chums and the Terrible Three were bewildered by this sudden bombshell. It had taken them completely by surprise. They were convinced, however, that Arthur Augustus had acted in all innocence. He could not have known that those fivers were forged and worthless.

Where he had got them from still remained a mystery—and it was a mystery which Blake, at least, intended to probe without delay.

"Hold on a minute, gentlemen!" he said quickly. "Give us just five minutes."

"We shall give you nothing of the sort!" said the caterer. "Unless you admit us into this hall at once we shall go to your headmaster."

"Oh, I say, go easy—"

"We intended to come straight to Master D'Arcy and get an explanation from him—without informing your headmaster," continued the caterer. "But if you compel us to—"

"That was jolly sporting of you," interrupted Tom Merry. "It'll go pretty badly with Gussy if the Head gets to know anything about this. We know him better than you do, gentlemen. Gussy's all right—Gussy's as straight as a die. I tell you there's been a misunderstanding."

"We must see D'Arcy at once!" said the caterer grimly. "If there has been a misunderstanding, he is the only one who can explain. Open those doors."

The doors, as it happened, were to be opened in a surprising way.

Baggy Trimble was out in the quad just then. He was hurrying across to the School House, fearful lest he should be late for the feed.

Baggy, let it be confessed, had been "going the pace" that afternoon. Having a plentiful supply of money, he had boasted of it to Crooke and Scrope, and the black sheep of St. Jim's had promptly seized upon this opportunity.

They had induced Baggy to go over into the New House, and to join them in a little card game. Baggy hadn't been able to get away—until all his money was gone. And now he was mortally afraid that he would miss the banquet.

"Just a minute, young man!"

The voice came from the gloom, and Baggy jumped about a foot in the air when he beheld a uniformed police inspector.

"Wha-what's the matter?" he gasped faintly.

"I'm from Wayland, and I want to have a word with a young man named D'Arcy," said the inspector in an ominous voice.

"D'Arcy!" babbled Trimble.

"Yes—D'Arcy."

"What—what's he done?"

"Never mind what he's done," said the inspector. "I want to see him—and at once!"

"Oh dear!"

"Don't stand there staring at me, boy!" said the officer.

"Where can I find this D'Arcy?"

Baggy's cunning mind worked quickly.

"You'll find him in there!" he gasped, pointing to the New House doorway.

And Baggy scuttled into the School House at lightning speed, leaving the police inspector to go off on a fool's errand.

It cannot be supposed that Trimble had any idea of saving Arthur Augustus from trouble; it was far more likely that he had some vague idea of getting a fat tip from Arthur Augustus for bringing him the warning.

He dashed to the Lecture Hall, but he slowed down at the angle of the corridor as he heard excited voices—men's voices.

"You can't keep us out here any longer," one man was saying. "D'Arcy has paid us with forged money, and we're going to seize our goods before it is too late. Open those doors at once!"

"Look here, sir, if you'll only leave this to us—"

Baggy Trimble did not hear Blake's words. His mind was buzzing round like a top. Forged notes! So that was why the police inspector wanted to see Arthur Augustus!

Baggy was so excited that he took a bold step. He bolted like a rabbit round the corner, charged for the door of the Lecture Hall, and reached it before Tom Merry or

Blake or the others could stop him. He wrenched it open and dashed inside.

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake. "Who was that?"

"Trimble!" snapped Tom Merry. "Stop him, for goodness' sake!"

But Trimble was inside, rushing up the gangway between the crowded tables.

"Stop!" he shouted shrilly. "Gussy, the police are after you!"

Arthur Augustus, who was sitting in the place of honour at the main table, and wondering vaguely why his chums hadn't turned up, started to his feet.



"Weally, Twimble, I do not wegard this as in vewy good taste—"

"I can't help that!" yelled Trimble. "I've just seen a police inspector in the quad, and he's asking for you! He's going to arrest you, Gussy!"

"Arrest me?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather—for forgery!"

CHAPTER 7.

Poor Old Gussy!

"WHAT!"

"Forgery!"

"Rats!"

"Kick this fat idiot out, somebody!"

"It's true!" gasped Baggy Trimble. "I've come to give you a warning, Gussy! There might be time for you to escape—"

"Twimble, I wegard you as an uttah duffah!" said

Arthur Augustus coldly. "I have no weason to wun away from the police. Good gwacious! There must be some wudicrous blundah!"

"There isn't!" shouted Baggy. "I put the inspector off—I sent him into the New House."

"Oh, did you?" said Figgins, glaring.

"Yes! I wanted to give Gussy a chance to escape."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The police are after Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is no laughin' mattah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, looking troubled. "As I said before, there must be some fwihtful blundah. It is uttably widic for the police to come here. What do I know about forgewy? Are you sure, Twimble, that you are not playin' a sillay joke?"

Just then the doors opened, and Tom Merry and Blake slipped in. They closed the doors after them, and Blake turned the key in the lock. All eyes were turned upon the fresh arrivals.

At last Tom Merry and Blake had succeeded in getting the excited Wayland men to wait. Manners and Lowther and Herries and Digby had remained outside to keep them soothed. But Tom knew that it would have to be quick work. Those men would not wait for long.

Just for a moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in the doorway of the Lecture Hall—then the juniors hurtled forward. "Out of the way, Gussy!" Bump! "Yawoop!"



"Has the feed started?" asked Tom, as he marched towards the centre of the hall.

"Not yet," said Kangaroo. "Gussy wouldn't start until you fellows arrived."

"Good!" said Blake. "Then we're in time."

"In time?" asked Redfern. "In time for what?"

"The feed's off," said Tom Merry.

"What!"

"Distinctly off," repeated Tom. "The caterer has come here to seize his stuff."

Pandemonium broke out.

"Cheese it, Tom Merry!"

"Don't be an ass!"

"We're not going to be diddled out of our feed like that!"

"Pway be quiet, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I am gettin all flustahed! All this is uttably wedic! Tom Mewwy, be good enough to explain yourself."

"First of all, Gussy, you'd better explain your own end of this business," said Blake grimly. "Out with it! We want the truth!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"There's no time to waste—those men are impatient."

"And there's a police inspector waiting to arrest you, too," put in Baggy.

"Oh deah!" said Arthur Augustus feebly. "All this is vewy disturbin'."

"It's no good standing there and saying that," said Tom Merry. "We're going to help you if we can. Gussy, and it's up to you to trot out the yarn. We don't think you've done anything wrong—not deliberately, anyhow. But it's pretty clear that you've been fooled."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus hotly. "I pwotest, Tom Mewwy—"

"Protest as much as you like—but where did you get that forged money from?" demanded Tom.

Arthur Augustus goggled at him.

"Forged money?" he asked in a faint, strained voice.

He reeled as he stood, and clutched at the table.

"Yes, forged money!" said Baggy Trimble. "Didn't I tell you when I first came in? The police are after you, Gussy—for forgery!"

"You'd better pull yourself together, Gussy," said Blake, going up to him and shaking him by the shoulder. "Somebody's been having a game with you. All those fivers that you were flashing about this afternoon are forgeries."

"Bai Jove!"

"They're not worth the paper they're printed on!"

"Oh deah!"

"And these men outside think that you've swindled them."

"But that is an uttah fib!" protested Arthur Augustus. "The fivahs were given to me by Sir William Bwampton."

"Eh?"

"Given to you by whom?"

"Sir William Bwampton," said Gussy faintly.

"And who's he, when he's at home?" asked Blake.

"I—I weally don't know," confessed Arthur Augustus. "He came to see me this mornin', and he gave me a hundwed quid—"

"Sir William Brampton gave you a hundred quid?" asked Blake incredulously. "What for?"

"A hundwed quid was the weward."

"Reward!" shouted everybody.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Reward for what?" asked Tom Merry.

"For findin' the emewald necklet."

"Oh, help!" groaned Blake. "We're getting deeper and deeper! What's all this about a reward and an emerald necklet? Why the dickens can't you be lucid, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus tried to pull himself together.

"There must be some howwid mistake," he said in distress. "I am all in a fluttah!"

"Then get out of your flutter and tell us the truth."

"You may wemembah, Blake, that I mentioned a twinket last night when we were in Wayland."

"A twinket?" repeated Blake, staring. "Oh, you mean a trinket!"

"I said a twinket."

"Well, what about it?" asked Blake.

"I found it in the guttah, while I was waitin' for you other fellows to come out of the shop," explained Gussy. "I thought it was only made of imitation silver and green glass. It didn't look much. When I spoke to you fellows about it, you wufused to listen to me."

"Oh, so that's what you were jawing about, was it?" said Blake. "You found this trinket in the gutter?"

"Yaas, and I thought it was worth about a penny," continued Arthur Augustus. "Then, this mornin', I saw the weport in the newspapah."

"What report?"

"About the loss of Lady Bwampton's emerald necklet."

"Oh!"

"And I wealised, then, that the twinket was worth a lot of money," went on Gussy. "I wang up Sir William, and told him."

"How did you know where to find him?"

"The telephone numbah of Sir William's hotel was mentioned in the newspapah."

"Oh, you frabjous dummy!" groaned Blake. "Why didn't you tell your uncle all about this? Why didn't you take us into your confidence, Gussy? Look at all the trouble you've got into because of your obstinacy! This wouldn't have happened if we had been told."

"I fail to see, Blake, how you could have made any difference," replied Arthur Augustus stiffly. "How was I to know that Sir William Bwampton would pay me with wotten forgewies? I wegard him as an uttah scoundwel!"

"Just a minute, Gussy," said Tom Merry keenly. "Let's hear more about this. You say you rang up the hotel?"

"Yaas."

"And you spoke to Sir William Brampton?"

"Of course."

"And Sir William came over here with the money?" asked Tom. "He gave you the money, and you gave him the necklet?"

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally didn't think that I had earned such a big weaward as a hundwed quid, so I decided to spend most of it on a banquet for ewevybody in geneval."

"Good old Gussy!" said Figgins, with a grin.

Tom Merry looked grave.

"Well, it's pretty easy to understand what happened," he said slowly. "You were spoofed, Gussy."

"But how was I to know, Tom Merry, that Sir William Bwampton would be such an uttah wottah—"

"You only had the man's word for it that he was really Sir William Bwampton," said Tom quietly.

"Eh? Bai Jove! You—you don't mean—"

"Looks very much like it, Gussy," said Tom, nodding. "I imagine that some crook must have answered the telephone when you rang up—and that Sir William never got your message at all."

"Oh ewambs!"

"It was this crook who came over to St. Jim's, and it was he who took the pendant—and paid you with dud money," continued Tom. "You can be quite certain that Sir William Bwampton himself wouldn't play such a dirty trick, or such a criminal trick. That's the worst of you, Gussy—you're so trusting. I don't suppose you even asked for any proofs that the man who came was Sir William Bwampton?"

"Pwoofs?" asked Gussy feebly. "He said that he was Sir William Bwampton, and I—"

"Exactly," growled Blake. "You took him at his face value. You ass! You walking dummy! You burbling lunatic!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You've caused all this commotion here, you've got yourself in trouble with the police, and Lady Bwampton's necklet has been pinched by a crook," continued Blake accusingly. "What do you think of yourself, Gussy? You've made a nice mess of things, haven't you?"

Arthur Augustus groaned, and everybody else in the Lecture Hall listened with bated breath.

"And if you had told Herries and Dig and me about it this wouldn't have happened," continued Blake bitterly. "We should have interviewed the supposed Sir William in Study No. 6, and we should have twigged his game."

"I weally don't see, Blake, that you would have twigged it any more than I—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "We're not so simple as you are, Gussy."

"Well, something's got to be done—and done quickly," said Tom Merry. "The caterer and these other men are impatient—and pretty angry, too. And there's that police-inspector as well—he'll be along within a minute or two, I expect."

"Oh deah! What evah shall I do?" asked Arthur Augustus, in a panic.

Blake drew Tom Merry aside, and Figgins and Kerr and one or two others joined them.

"I think we can wangle things all right," murmured Blake, with a wink at the others. "We've only got to see the inspector and tell him the whole truth, and there'll be no real trouble. As far as I can see, there's no need even for the Head to know about it."

"It all depends," said Tom dubiously. "Those men outside are as angry as the dickens."

"We'll deal with them," said Blake confidently. "But I'm thinking about Gussy. He deserves a lesson for being so jolly secretive!"

"Don't you think he's had a lesson?"

"It's not enough," replied Blake firmly. "We want to put the wind up him properly. The silly ass! Why couldn't he have told us about that trinket yesterday? Why couldn't he have brought us that newspaper report as soon as he saw it? Then we should have been ready. Besides, he ought to have telephoned the police station, not the hotel."

"Of course!" agreed Tom Merry. "That was the only sensible thing to do."

"And instead of that, he goes and gets in touch with a crook, and the crook comes and spoofs him," said Blake, in deep exasperation. "Well, I say that Gussy ought to be taught a lesson—and a sharp one!"

"Have you got anything to suggest?" asked Figgins.

"Yes!" replied Blake promptly. "We'll advise him to bolt; we'll tell him that the police are well after him, and that he'd better bunk from the school. I've got some other ideas, too; and I shall want you chaps to help."

"We're in!" said Figgins promptly.

"You can see the inspector, Tom, and those men, too," continued Blake, turning to Tom Merry. "Are you game? Leave Gussy to us, and you can straighten things out

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between the police and the men who supplied this banquet, Hoy's that?"

"I'll do my best," said Tom Merry.

"We'd better smuggle Gussy out through the door at the back of the platform," suggested Figgins. "We can get him upstairs like that. And how about a disguise?"

"Of course, he'll have to be disguised," said Blake. "We might as well do the thing thoroughly."

Tom Merry lost no time.

He hurried out of the Lecture Hall and once again faced the angry men in the corridor.

CHAPTER 8.

Pulling Gussy's Leg!

"IT'S all right, gentlemen—"

Tom Merry paused, for almost before he could start speaking the uniformed figure of the police-inspector came round the angle of the corridor.

"Hold on, inspector!" said Tom quickly. "You want a fellow named D'Arcy, don't you?"

"I do!" said the inspector grimly. "Some young rascal had the impertinence to—"

"Sorry, sir, but you can't see him for the minute," said Tom. "But I think that I can explain everything for you."

"I don't need anything explaining, thank you!" said the inspector. "I want to see D'Arcy himself!"

"Good heavens!" said the caterer. "You haven't come to arrest the boy, have you?"

"Arrest him?" said the inspector. "What on earth for?"

"I wouldn't like the boy to get into such trouble as that," continued the caterer, in alarm. "I merely wanted to recover my goods. I am ready to believe that he did not know that the notes were forged—"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said the inspector, staring.

"Then—then you haven't come to ask D'Arcy about the forged notes?"

"Certainly not!" said the inspector. "I've come officially to hand D'Arcy a reward of one hundred pounds which was offered by Sir William Bwampton for the recovery of Lady Bwampton's emerald necklet. I have the money here, and—"

"Come to our arms, inspector!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Before you go any further, gentlemen, I think I'd better do a bit of explaining," said Tom Merry briskly. "It's like this, inspector. D'Arcy found the necklet yesterday in the gutter of the Wayland High Street. He thought it was only a child's trinket, and put it in his pocket. Then he saw the report this morning in the newspaper, and he knew that the thing was of great value."

"So I understand already," nodded the inspector.

"He rang up Sir William's hotel, and somebody came over here and took the necklet and handed D'Arcy a hundred pounds—in forged notes."

"So that's how he got hold of the necklet, is it?" said the inspector, with a grunt. "The rascal mentioned nothing about forged notes. He gave me to understand that the money was genuine. That'll be another little charge against him."

"Against him?" said Tom, staring. "Against whom?"

"We have already captured this man who impersonated Sir William."

"You have?" exclaimed Tom. "Oh, good egg! We reckoned that Gussy must have been spoofed; we told him that the man who came here wasn't Sir William Bwampton. I think it's up to you, inspector, to do a bit of explaining."

"There's not much to explain," replied the inspector. "As you may know, there has been a race meeting held in Wayland during the past two days, and there have been some undesirable characters in the town. A man named Grayson was recognised by a constable as he was entering the railway station. Grayson had been wanted for some weeks in connection with an ugly affair at the Doncaster Racecourse. Grayson is the leader of a big race gang."

"Oh!" said Tom. "It's getting clearer."

"He was arrested and taken to the police station," continued the inspector. "Not until we had got him there did we know that we had really made a big capture. For Grayson, on being searched, was found in possession of the lost emerald necklet."

"You thought he'd stolen it?" asked Manners.

"Of course," said the inspector. "And, strictly speaking, the man had stolen it. He was sensible enough to come out with the full story; and he told us how he had been in the hotel lobby when the telephone-bell had rung. The clerk was out for a moment, and Grayson had answered the call."

"And Gussy, of course, immediately let out that he was in possession of the emerald necklet," said Lowther. "Just like Gussy!"

"I imagine that D'Arcy must have given the man this information," said the inspector. "At all events, Grayson

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came over to St. Jim's and took possession of the emeralds. He did not tell us that he paid for them in forged money. I believed that he had paid up honestly—if such a transaction can be called honest."

"I suppose you told Sir William Brampton at once?" asked Tom Merry.

"Without any delay," replied the police-officer. "Naturally, he was immensely relieved, and he promptly handed over the one hundred pounds reward. He requested me to bring it to St. Jim's, and to find the boy named D'Arcy. Sir William holds that D'Arcy deserves the reward; for it was no fault of his that the necklet was claimed by the wrong person. D'Arcy acted honourably and promptly in ringing up the hotel. He made a mistake there; for he should, of course, have rung up the police station."

"Well, it was really the fault of the newspaper report," said Tom. "It should have been more explicit. Not that it really matters now. Everything's come out all right, thank goodness!"

"I hope so," said the inspector, looking at the other men. "I rather fancy that I had better have a talk with you, gentlemen. It is most important that all those forged notes should be handed to me. It's a good thing I came over, I think."

"Yes, rather—a jolly good thing!" said Tom Merry. "I suggest that you change those dud notes for good ones. I fancy that Dame Taggles, in the tuckshop, has got one or two of them, too. You'd better see her, inspector. It won't take you long to round up all those duds."

"And we shall get good money in place of them, eh?" asked the caterer eagerly.

"Of course," said the inspector. "There's no need for

you to worry, gentlemen; everything will be made all right."

"And the feed stands?" inquired Herries eagerly.

"Naturally, we shall not interfere with anything now," said the caterer, smiling. "D'Arcy gave his orders in perfect good faith—as we now know—and as far as we are concerned the matter is over. The inspector will put everything right."

"Will you want to see D'Arcy?" asked Tom Merry.

"I certainly shall!" said the inspector.

"Well, don't be in too much of a hurry," said Tom, with a twinkle in his eye. "We're going to teach him a bit of a lesson."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom. "He was an ass to ring up the hotel instead of the police station—and to do everything in secret. We chaps think that he ought to be given a bit of a scare; so if you see anything funny going on, don't take any notice. It'll only be our jape."

The inspector grinned.

"I understand," he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

And, meanwhile, the unfortunate Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was up in the Fourth Form dormitory, with Blake and Figgins and a number of other juniors crowding round him. Arthur Augustus scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

In the middle of it all, Tom Merry came hurrying in, and it only took him a moment or two to whisper—unknown to Gussy—that everything was all serene. The emerald necklet

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was saved, the feed was saved, too, and the way was now perfectly clear to spoof Gussy up to the neck.

So the juniors entered into the spirit of the thing with much enthusiasm.

"Forgery is a pretty serious case, Gussy," said Blake solemnly. "We don't want you to get nabbed, old man."

"But I didn't forge those wotten notes, Blake," said Gussy feebly.

"That doesn't make any difference," said Blake. "You passed them, didn't you? You paid them over to the caterer and the other people."

"But I didn't know they were forged!"

"That doesn't make any difference, either!" retorted Blake. "Anybody who passes dud money is liable to arrest. It's all your fault for being such a chump. You really deserve to go to Borstal, but we can't bear to think of you being there, Gussy, so we're going to help you."

"Gweat Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus huskily. "Borstal! How uttably howwid!"

"Yes, I've heard it's a horrid sort of place," nodded Blake. "Well, we're going to see that you don't get there, Gussy. Your only course is to escape."

"Oh deah!"

"You've got to let us put this disguise on you, and then we'll help you to bolt," said Tom Merry kindly. "If we hurry, we'll be able to get you on the evening train. Perhaps you'd better make for the nearest seaport, so that you can—"

"I uttably wefuse to make for the neawest seaport!" broke in Arthur Augustus, with some spirit. "In fact, I wefuse to submit to this wotten disguise!"

"Now, Gussy, be sensible—"

"There has been a frightful blundah, and I'm goin' straight to the headmastah to tell him the whole stowey," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sure that Dr. Holmes will believe me, and that he will appreciate—"

"My poor, deluded ass!" said Blake. "You don't think that you'll ever get to the Head's study, do you? Haven't we told you that the inspector is dodging about?"

"I am not afraid of the inspectah!"

"Afraid of him or not, there's always the chance that he might nab you," said Blake. "Now, Gussy, be reasonable. It'll mean a strong effort, but you can manage it if you try."

"You uttah ass!"

"Think of your people—and the scandal," said Monty Lowther, who had joined the spoofers. "Imagine the headlines in the newspapers—'Schoolboy Son of Lord Eastwood in Dock!'—'St. Jim's Junior Charged With Forgery!'"

"But I haven't committed any forgery!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"You've passed forged notes, so what's the difference?" replied Lowther. "Here's another headline—'Brainless Schoolboy Brings Disgrace Upon Noble Family.'"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You've got to bolt, Gussy!" said Blake. "For the honour of your family—the honour of St. Jim's—the only thing for you to do is to scoot. If you've got to be arrested, for goodness' sake be arrested somewhere else—and not here!"

"But how can they awwest me when I've done nothin' w'ong?"

"Nothing wrong?" said Blake sternly. "Why, you've still got some of those forged banknotes on you!"

"Good gwacious! So I have!"

"You'd better give them to me," said Tom Merry, thinking of the inspector.

"Yes, hand them over, Gussy," said Blake. "We'll take charge of them. And you can thank your lucky stars that

we smuggled you up here before the inspector could get at you. Now, come on—on with this disguise!"

Poor Gussy was bewildered. They were all on at him, and he was so thoroughly mixed up that he had no opportunity of any clear thinking.

He was grasped by Blake and a number of others, and forced to don a shabby old suit of clothes, several sizes too large for him, which had been bagged from the "props" of the Junior Dramatic Society.

It was as much as the juniors could do to keep themselves from roaring with laughter. Arthur Augustus cut a comic figure. The bottoms of his trousers were festooned round his boots, and his boots were about four sizes too large for him. The sleeves of his jacket came well over his hands, and his collar was so big that he could tuck his chin right into it.

To add to the general effect, a false beard of fiery auburn hue was fastened on to his chin, with a moustache to match. The moustache was a long one, with curled ends.

"Wonderful!" said Blake, standing back, and surveying him with open admiration. "By Jove! You're unrecognisable, Gussy!"

"His own mother wouldn't know him!" said Lowther.

"I wefuse to go out like this!" protested Arthur Augustus, in a feeble voice. "Gweat Scott. I look an absolute fright!"

"Not more so than usual, Gussy," said Lowther kindly.

"Ahem!" coughed Blake. "It's up to you, Gussy. Would you rather stay here and face arrest, or would you rather bolt while the bolting is good?"

"I don't believe I should be awwested, Blake," said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "My ideah is to see Dr. Holmes, and explain ewerythin' to him. I am quite sure that the Head will be weasonable."

"You can't always rely upon the Head to be reasonable, old man," said Blake, shaking his head. "And nothing can alter the fact that you've been paying people with dud money—and that's a very serious offence. No; your only safe course is to scoot. We'll escort you down to the station, and put you on the train."

"I weally don't like it—"

"Of course you don't—and we don't like it, either," said Tom Merry. "At the same time, Gussy, we've got to think of what's best for your own good. You don't know how we shall hate losing you."

"St. Jim's won't be the same," sighed Blake.

They seized Arthur Augustus before he could make any further objections, and they bundled him downstairs. With a battered old hat on his head, to give a kind of finish to his disguise, he looked an extraordinary figure.

As it happened, the inspector was standing in the doorway, talking to the caterer and the other gentlemen. They all stood and stared at Arthur Augustus. They would have yelled with laughter, only Tom Merry saved the situation.

"This way, sir—this way!" he said loudly, addressing Arthur Augustus. "If you will come with us outside, sir, we'll walk with you to the station."

They went solemnly downstairs, and the inspector made a curious, gurgling sound with his throat. He had taken the tip. Tom Merry had warned him to take no notice if he saw anything "funny" going on. And this was certainly funny!

CHAPTER 9.

Under Arrest!

"JUST a minute, young man!"

The inspector caught Tom Merry's arm after Blake & Co. had hustled Arthur Augustus out into the quad.

FOR NEXT WEEK!

Are you a footer fan? What a question! Do you ride a bike? Of course you do! Well, gather round and listen to the grand news. In next week's bumper number of the good old GEM (and it licks all records, take it from me) you'll learn all about a ripping new competition. The prizes offered, and here's the most interesting part, are

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What do you say to that? Great, isn't it! And remember that this competition, which is quite a simple affair, will keep you interested all the time, besides offering you the chance of a prize that is well worth having.

Now just a few words about our tip-top budget of stories and articles. First on the list is a grand long story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's called

"RIVALS OF THE RIVER!"

—a really first-class effort from Martin Clifford's pen. It introduces almost all your favourite characters—the girls of Spalding Hall, Gordon Gay and his merry men, not forgetting the great George Alfred Grundy—and there are enough thrilling incidents and surprises to keep you absorbed from first to last. Miss it, and you'll miss a treat!

Our sprightly old wiseacre, THE ORACLE, weighs in with another batch of bright and breezy answers to knotty problems, and Mr. "NOSEY" PARKER steps lightly towards the ground of Barnsley F.C., ears wagging ready to pick up any scrap of information about this famous club that will interest his big public. That he is successful in this you will find when you read his report next week.

Our heroes in that topping serial, "THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!" are certainly going through fire and water in their gallant endeavours to reach the valley where lies such a vast fortune. Their enemy, Dom Lopez, is just as determined that they will not, and between the two you can expect plenty of thrilling adventures.

Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

"Yes, sir?" said Tom.
 "I shall have to speak to your Housemaster about this, you know," said the inspector. "Mr. Railton, isn't it? I cannot leave the school without—"
 "That's all right, inspector," said Tom, grinning. "We shan't be long with Gussy."

The inspector's eyes twinkled.
 "Don't be too hard on him," he said dryly.
 Tom Merry caught up the others as they were going out of gates. It was very gloomy in the lane, and the juniors were feeling relieved. There was not much chance of a master or prefect stopping them now and making awkward inquiries.

"Good egg!" said Blake. "We've got you out, Gussy!"
 "Yaas, watah! But I didn't want to come out!" protested Arthur Augustus. "I weally think it would be bettah, deah boys, if I went to the Head."

"Blow the Head!" said Blake.
 "Your only chance, Gussy, is to fly."
 "I wefuse to fly! I mean—"

"You don't know how fortunate you are, Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "When we saw the police-inspector our hearts stopped beating. Didn't you notice the silence? But we brought you right past the representative of the law, and he didn't notice anything!"

One or two of the juniors nearly exploded.

"You've got to understand, Gussy, that you're in a position of great danger," said Blake solemnly. "There was the inspector standing there—for what reason? Why would he stand there? Isn't it pretty obvious that he was waiting for you?"

"Bai Jove!"
 "Waiting to arrest you, Gussy," said Lowther.

"Oh ewumbs!"
 "And we walked you right out, in front of him," said Blake, with satisfaction. "All we've got to do now is to get you safely to the station."

"I don't know how we shall fare if the inspector ever finds it out," said Lowther, with much solemnity. "What's the sentence, you chaps, for assisting a felon to escape justice?"

"You uttah ass, Lowther! I wefuse to be called a felon!"
 "Well, you know, Gussy, a forgery is a felony."

"I haven't committed forgery!" shrieked Gussy. "How many times must I tell you, you fwabjous ass? I am absolutely innocent! I didn't know that those wotten notes were forged! I wefuse to move another step—Yow! What are you doin', Blake?"

"Butting you in the back with my knee," replied Blake promptly.

"I object to be butted—"

"Cheese it, Gussy—and get a move on!" said Blake. "We shall miss the evening train unless we're careful! We've got to see you safely on board and well on your way to the nearest seaport. After that, I suppose, you'll have to depend upon your own brains."

"Poor Gussy!" sighed Lowther. "It's rough luck for a chap to be dependent upon nothing."

"I expect you'll soon get a ship," continued Blake hopefully. "You'll have to watch your chance, Gussy, and get aboard as a stowaway."

"Oh deah! This is weally fwightfully distwessin'!"
 "Lots of chaps get away on ships as stowaways," said Blake. "But you'd better be careful, Gussy—you don't want to get on a ship that's only going round the coast

somewhere. You'll have to watch your chance, and go aboard a vessel that's making for China, or Peru, or some place like that."

"The farther he goes the better," said Herries.

Arthur Augustus groaned.

"Isn't there some other way, deah boys?" he asked plaintively. "I haven't the faintest inclination to go to China, or Peru. I am suah I shall hate China like anythin'. And as for Peru—"

"Well, perhaps you can get a boat that's going to the cannibal islands," suggested Monty Lowther. "It doesn't make much difference where you go, Gussy, as long as you get out of England. You can leave it to us to explain matters to your pater. We'll see Cousin Ethel, too, and—"

"Oh deah! I am certain that you chaps are makin' a

"No need to have these handcuffs on now," said the pseudo constable. "You'll be safe enough in this cell, my lad!"



mistake!" said Arthur Augustus. "There isn't any dangah of my bein' awwested, as you think."

"It's all your own fault, Gussy, for being so obstinate," said Blake sternly. "If you had told us about that trinket in the first place, everything would have been all right."

"I twied to tell you, you wottah, but you wouldn't listen!"

"Where there's a will there's a way," replied Blake. "If you had wanted to tell us, you would have told us. And what about this morning? What about when you saw that report in the Wayland newspaper? Did you come to us?"

"No!" chorused all the others.

"Did you ask our advice?"

"No!"

"Did you—"

"Pway give ovah!" broke in Arthur Augustus unhappily. "Pewwaps it was unwiso of me to keep the mattah to myself, but you had tweeked me so cavalierly that I wanted to give you a lesson."

"And you've got yourself into this mess," said Blake grimly. "Well, Gussy, I can only say that—Hist!"

"Bai Jove! Is that all you can say, Blake?"

"There's somebody ahead!" hissed Blake. "Looks like a policeman!"

"Wats!" said Gussy. "I'm not afwaid of a policeman! I'm beginnin' to think that you fellows have made a mountain out of a molehill. I don't believe I'm in any dangah at all!"

The policeman appeared out of the gloom. Blake had been right. He had recognised the uniform and the helmet. Suddenly a light flashed on the group.

"Now then—now then!" said a gruff voice. "What's all this?"

"We're only escorting somebody to the station," said Tom Merry.

"Escorting somebody to the station, eh?" said the policeman. "I shall have to look into this, my lads! I might as well tell you that I'm watching for a youngster named D'Arcy."

"Oh cwumps!" came from behind Gussy's false whiskers. "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy," continued the policeman, flashing his lamp from one to the other. "Not here, by the look of it. I'm not a policeman from these parts, but I can tell that D'Arcy isn't here. I've been told that he's a foppish-looking boy, with a face that looks like a sheep's!"

"That's him!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—I—I mean—"

"A regular young duffer," continued the constable. "But it goes without saying, of course, that he would be a duffer, seeing that he belongs to the School House."

"Eh?" said Tom Merry & Co., in one voice.

"I've always understood that all the boys in the School House are more or less half-witted," continued the constable blandly.

"Why, you—you—" hissed Blake.

"And that D'Arcy is the most half-witted of them all," said the constable. "What you might call quarter-witted, in fact."

It was rather a wonder that Tom Merry & Co. did not fall upon the constable on the spot, and beat him hip and thigh. But Kerr, of the New House—who, of course, was the constable—was taking advantage of the situation. Kerr could always be relied upon to seize every opportunity.

"If any of you boys know where D'Arcy is, you'd better tell me," continued the "constable" darkly. "Forgery is one of the most serious criminal charges—even when the guilty party has only handled the forged notes in innocence. He's liable to a long stretch."

"Bai Jove! I should wefuse to serve a long stretch!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "That is to say—I mean—"

"Aha!" shouted Kerr dramatically. "What's this? You don't speak in a particularly grown-up voice! Let's have a closer look at you."

He went quite near and thrust his light into Gussy's startled face.

"Aha!" shouted Kerr dramatically. "What's this? Disguised, by thunder!"

He gave one tug at that auburn beard, and it came away in his hand.

Arthur Augustus stood revealed.

In another movement, the "constable" swept Gussy's hat and wig off.

"So you'd try to escape, would you?" said Kerr thunderously. "And all you boys were helping?"

"He's our pal. We couldn't do anything else but help," pleaded Blake. "Oh, police-officer, please don't be hard on us!"

"Well, perhaps I'll overlook it," said Kerr gruffly. "But as for this—this young scallawag—"

"I wefuse to be chawctewised as a scallawag!" interrupted Arthur Augustus. "You are makin' a fweightful mistake, officah!"

"A mistake, eh?" rapped out Kerr. "Why, my lad, I've caught you red-handed! Your guilt is as clear as daylight! You've tried to escape, wearing disguise! No further evidence is necessary!"

"It was Blake's ideah to make me weah this disguise!" protested Gussy. "I was afwaid—"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, I arrest you on a charge of forgery and fraud!" said Kerr solemnly. "Come along! I shall have to take you down to the lock-up!"

Clink!

A pair of handcuffs appeared, and Gussy started like a frightened stag.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "You're not—not going to handcuff me!"

"Desperate prisoners always have to be handcuffed," replied the constable, as he snapped the bracelets on.

"Oh deah!"

"You boys had better get back to your school while you're still safe!" continued Kerr. "Particularly you School House fatheads. It's all your fault that your friend is now under arrest."

"Why, you—you—"

Blake paused. He didn't want to give the game away yet. And a second later his wrath vanished. Kerr's light was full upon Arthur Augustus, and the sight was too funny for words.

Gussy had looked comic enough with his beard and moustache on, but he looked far more comic now. His weird and wonderful clothing hung about him like a blanket on a scarecrow, and the handcuffs came right over the sleeves of his jacket.

"This way!" said Kerr grimly.

He took hold of Gussy by the scruff of the neck, and marched him down the lane towards Rylocombe.

"Poor Gussy!" sobbed Blake. "Gussy, Gussy! We don't like to lose you like this!"

"Don't take him away, officer!" pleaded Monty Lowther. "How can we live without our Gussy? How can we exist for the rest of the term? What shall we do without Gussy's eye-glass shimmering up and down the passages?"

"What will life be without Gussy's donkey-laugh ringing throughout the school?" continued Lowther, with a choking sob in his voice. "Alas! We shall have to buy a donkey, you chaps, and when he brays we shall be reminded of our lost Gussy!"

They all stood there, waving their hands, while Arthur Augustus was marched away by Kerr. And Gussy was so bewildered, so mixed up, that he hadn't twigged the game yet.

"Well, that's that!" grinned Blake, a minute later. "Now we'll go back and enjoy the feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They all laughed softly at first, but by the time they got back into the quad they were fairly yelling. There was no danger of Gussy hearing now, for Gussy was being taken to the village lock-up.

.....AMAZING STORY OF THE FOREIGN LEGION.....

For the Glory of France!

by Geo. E. Rochester



THE STORY OF THE YEAR

Tramp, tramp, tramp . . .

Across the arid wastes of the desert moves a winding column of mixed humanity—adventurers of the Foreign Legion. Some have secrets to hide, others sorrows to forget, and under the burning, pitiless African sun they weave their destiny. Their stirring deeds of daring and bravery seldom reach the ears of the outer world. And it is around such adventurous cosmopolitans that this brilliant new serial story has been written. Here will be found all the glamour, pathos, bravery, and hardship of the famous Foreign Legion. Such a heart-throbbing narrative must not be missed. Read the opening instalment in—

THIS WEEK'S "MAGNET"!



Ha, ha, ha!" Rear upon rear of laughter went round the Lecture Hall as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy burst in. "Our host has arrived! Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 10. All Serene!

"IN you go!" said Kerr, in a stern voice. The constable and his prisoner had reached the village lock-up, and Kerr roughly thrust Arthur Augustus into the cold, unfriendly cell.

It was a very modest place, this lock-up. The spoofers had already arranged with the village constable. They had tipped him five shillings, and he had been willing enough to let them use the lock-up for a brief spell. For once the fat and slow-witted P.-c. Crump had entered into the spirit of the joke.

"Just a minute," said Kerr.

He produced a key and unlocked Gussy's handcuffs.

"No need for you to have these on now," continued Kerr. "You'll be safe enough in this cell, my lad! Well, you won't see me again. This is Crump's beat. I only hope that Crump will treat you as well as I've treated you."

"Crump is a stupid boundah!" said Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "Bai Jove! If Cwump finds me heah he'll tweek me with dweadful diswewpect, I'm afwaid!"

"Boys who go about buying things with forged banknotes can't expect any respect," said Kerr sternly. "Well, young 'un, I'll say good-bye."

Clang!

The cell door closed, and the key appeared to turn in the lock.

The next moment the light was out, and Kerr had vanished. He streaked back towards St. Jim's at the double, for he, too, had a keen desire to join in the great spread.

Not that these juniors were making things too hard for the unfortunate Arthur Augustus. They had arranged that P.-c. Crump—who was now on his beat—should look in at the lock-up after about ten minutes. It would be Crump's duty gently to point out to Gussy that he had been spoofed, and that he was perfectly free to go where he willed.

However, Crump was not called upon to perform this service. George Francis Kerr, for once, had been careless. He thought he had turned the key in the lock, but he hadn't. It was a bit rusty and stiff.

Arthur Augustus, his mind still in a whirl, groped about the little cell, cold and miserable and just a bit scared.

Arrested!

Arrested for forgery!

What would his people say? What would Cousin Ethel say?

He leaned against the cell door, feeling feeble and weak—and the cell door opened, and Arthur Augustus fell through and landed on the stone floor in the little passage outside with a thud.

"Yawwooooooh!" he gasped, more startled than hurt.

He picked himself up, his heart beating rapidly.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "That twightful bobby forgot to lock the door! I'm fwee!"

He groped his way out, and a minute later he was in the open air—free!

His first impulse was to run anywhere, just so long as it was away from this lock-up.

Then Gussy recovered himself. It wasn't like him to run, especially if there was any music to be faced.

"I shall go stwaight to Dr. Holmes!" he told himself firmly. "The Head is a just man, and he'll give me a heavin'. I will tell Dr. Holmes ewewythin', and I shall throw myself upon his mercy."

Having come to this decision, D'Arcy hurried through Rylcombe, taking care that nobody saw him.

He made for St. Jim's at top speed.

As he ran he turned the whole situation over in his mind. He considered that he was not guilty of anything wrong; he had not been allowed a fair hearing. But Dr. Holmes would certainly listen to him, and would deal with him in a just way.

As he approached St. Jim's his heart was heavy. At the very best, he would be sent away from the school. Even if he escaped arrest, he would undoubtedly be expelled.

But what was expulsion compared to arrest, with a charge of forgery hanging over his head?

Blake & Co. had so thoroughly put these ideas into Gussy's mind that they had taken firm root.

However, Gussy was determined to do the right thing; and, in his mind, seeing Dr. Holmes was the right thing.

The headmaster was the one man to go to—the one man who could guide him.

Arthur Augustus reached the quad, and then he paused. He stood there, in the gloom, welling with indignation and anger. For from the big Lecture Hall he heard the sounds of loud and continuous laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It seemed to Arthur Augustus that the whole school was collected there, and that the whole school was yelling its head off. He stood rooted to the spot. They were laughing—laughing at him! And they believed that he was in the village lock-up!

This was altogether too much.

"The uthah wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus sulphurously. "Bai Jove! The unfeelin' boundahs!"

He forgot all his plans. Instead of going to the Head, he rushed straight for the Lecture Hall, and burst in like a whirlwind.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A gust of laughter fairly bit him in the face. It nearly knocked him over.

He stood there, gazing at the scene with wrathful eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Our host has arrived!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"New style of evening dress!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy certainly did look a sight. In that old suit, which was several sizes too large for him, and with his hair ruffled, he was a perfect scream. And the expression on his face, too, was equally funny.

Arthur Augustus could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes.

Here were the guests—the entire Shell and Fourth—piling into the good things as though everything was normal. The band had been playing, and the juniors appeared to be enjoying themselves immensely.

"Bai Jove!" gurgled Gussy.

He strode forward, and further gusts of laughter went up.

"Stop!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "You unfeelin' wottahs!"

"Oh, Gussy!" said Blake. "Don't speak so hardly of us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you callous wascals!" continued Arthur Augustus, his voice full of indignation. "Appawently, you care nothin' whatevah for me! You knew that I was in the lock-up, and yet you cawwy on as though ewevythin' was all wight!"

"But everything is all right, Gussy," said Blake. "What's wrong? This feed of yours is tip-top, and we're enjoying ourselves immensely."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Thanks awfully, Gussy. Best feed we've had for terms!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for Gussy!"

"Hurrah!"

"He's one of the best!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"Stop!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "I wufuse to listen to these false cheeahs!"

"Great Scott!" grinned Tom Merry. "He doesn't know the truth yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought old Crump had told him, but he doesn't seem to know yet," whispered Blake. "And now I come to think of it, he's here too soon."

"How did you get out of the lock-up, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"That frightful constable failed to lock the doah p'p'ly," replied Arthur Augustus. "I was on my way to the Head to explain mattahs to him, when I heard your waucous laughtah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll hear a bit more now," grinned Monty Lowther. "Come on, you chaps—more raucous laughter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, old man, I don't blame you for thinking that we're unfeeling and callous," said Blake, jumping to his feet and going to Gussy's side. "But things aren't as bad as you think."

"They could not possibly be worse," said Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "I have discoverah you at your true worth, Blake. You and all these othahs. In my hour of twial you make mewwy."

"That's just where you're wrong, Gussy," said Blake gently. "This isn't your hour of trial at all. And it's a jolly good thing you didn't go to the Head. My only hat! The fat would have been in the fire then! If he had seen you in that get-up he would have had ten fits."

"This mattah is so sewious that I had no time to bothah

with my appeawance, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am awah that I am a perfect sight—"

"Good old Gussy!" said Lowther. "He's admitted it at last!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on, Gussy!" said Blake. "There's no need for you to go to the Head. You weren't really locked up!"

"No, bai Jove! I escaped!"

"That was Kerr's carelessness, I expect," said Tom Merry, grinning. "He hasn't got out of his disguise yet, so we can't ask him. But it's clear enough that he forgot to lock the door on you."

"Kerr?" asked Arthur Augustus, blinking.

"Kerr of the New House," chuckled Blake.

"But weally, Blake! I fail to see where Kerr comes in."

"Kerr was the constable who arrested you!" yelled Blake. "You've been spoofed, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus reeled.

"Spoofed?" he gurgled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spoofed up to the eyes, my son," said Blake. "You're never been in any danger of arrest. We were only doing all this so that you should be taught a lesson."

"Wha-a-a-at!" gasped Gussy.

"That's all," said Blake cheerfully. "That crook who visited you this morning was arrested, and the emerald necklet was recovered. The inspector only came over to St. Jim's to hand you the real hundred quid, and to collect the other money, which wasn't really yours. But as it was dud money—"

"Then—then I haven't been in any dangah?" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"No danger at all," grinned Tom Merry. "It was Blake's idea to spoof you, Gussy. We put things right with the inspector in about five minutes. He paid the caterer and the other people, and the feed's going on as per small handbills."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy felt weak at the knees.

"Bai Jove! This is a most frightful welief!" he said, his eyes glowing. "So there is weally nothin' the mattah!"

"No fear! Everything's all serene," grinned Blake.

Arthur Augustus recovered himself with surprising alacrity. And his expression changed. It hardened. He clenched his fists, and he glared at Blake with such ferocity that the leader of Study No. 6 backed away.

"You—you spoofin' wottah!" said Arthur Augustus thickly. "Blake, put up your hands!"

"Steady, old chap—"

"I'm goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I'm goin' to give all of you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, do be sensible, Gussy," said Blake. "Have a look round. We haven't started the feed yet—"

"Nevah mind the feed!" shrieked Gussy. "You wottahs have spoofed me, and—"

"My dear ass, we arranged with old Crump to let you out after ten minutes," said Blake hastily. "The feed's intact; nothing has been touched. We weren't going to start until you came along. And if you buzz upstairs and change quickly, we'll wait for you. You're the host, don't forget."

"Bai Jove! So I am!"

"And hosts don't usually threaten to fight their guests," continued Blake sternly. "Whatever has happened to your sense of propriety, Gussy? Buck up and get changed!"

"I wufuse to get changed until I have given you a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "At least—Howevah, as host, I suppose I must ovahlook your wepwehensible conduct."

"Good old Gussy!" said Blake, patting him on the shoulder. "Now you're yourself."

He was escorted upstairs by a crowd of yelling juniors, and it wasn't long before he was dressed with all his immaculate care. And then he came down, and he was cheered to the echo in the Lecture Hall.

Those cheers heartened him, and he was soon his old serene self.

He acted as host, and soon began to look upon the events of the past hour as a sort of nightmare.

"And the next time you find anything in the street, Gussy, you'd better tell us about it," said Blake, during a lull in the banquet. "We're not so easily fooled as you are."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus happily. "Who wants some more of this veal-and-ham pie?"

THE END.

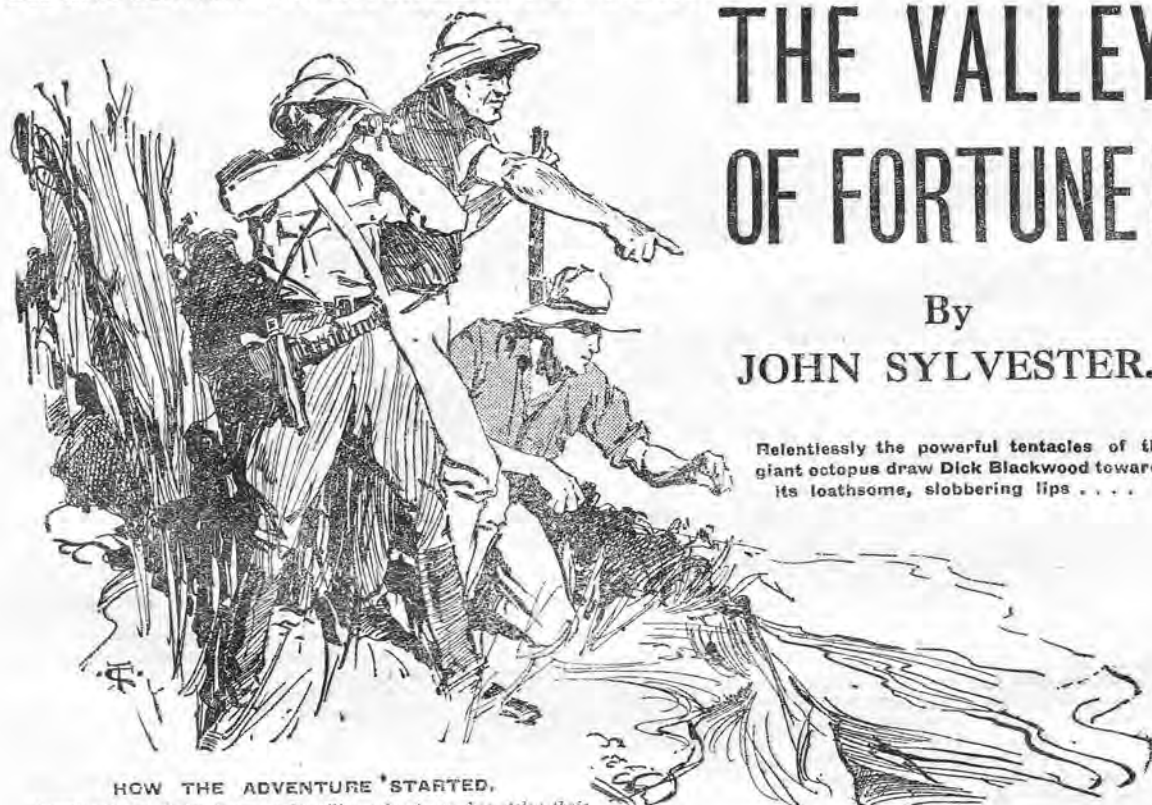
(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's ripping story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "RIVALS OF THE RIVER!" It's full of thrills, and startling situations.)

DARING BRITISH ADVENTURERS IN NEW MEXICO!

THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!

By
JOHN SYLVESTER.

Relentlessly the powerful tentacles of the giant octopus draw Dick Blackwood towards its loathsome, slobbering lips . . .



HOW THE ADVENTURE *STARTED.

Convinced that Pedro Lopez, a Brazilian adventurer, had stolen their map which discloses the whereabouts of a fortune in rubies, Robert West, a scientist, and his companion, John Trent, together with a plucky youngster named Dick Blackwood, determine to follow the arch-villain to Brazil. Reaching a desolate plateau in the Andes, the three explorers, accompanied by a party of Indians with pack mules, find their advance blocked by a large lake bounded on either side by unscalable mountains. Leaving his companions to make a raft, West rows across the lake in a collapsible boat to explore some distant caves. That same night, however, the Indians, having been bribed by Lopez, mutiny, severely wound Trent, and then bolt with everything they can lay their hands on. In an attempt to cut off the Indians Dick is captured by Lopez, who pacifies the Indians by offering the youngster as a peace offering to Ayachacha, the God of the Shrieking Pit. With hands and feet bound, Dick is thrown into a whirlpool, to be caught in the loathsome embrace of a white, shapeless, jelly-like body with a mass of writhing, worm-like tentacles.

(Now Read On.)

At Grips with the Octopus!

HIGH overhead the awestruck natives stared down at the scene. The legendary monster, whose name was spoken with bated breath around camp fires, was below them, churning up the water, lighting up the gloom of that chasm with an infernal halo. No longer could the white men scoff with superior knowledge. Their god lived, shrieked for its victims, devoured them.

None of the startled onlookers, not even Lopez, expected to see Dick come to the surface again. Still less did they expect what happened next. There was a rustling movement, then a yell.

Spellbound eyes were lifted from the water. Lopez himself was the first to turn. He saw a bronzed, half-naked figure rushing towards him, knife upraised.

It was Chica, the one-eyed native who had tried to help Dick. The man's face was livid with hatred, and Lopez knew only too well the reason. If he stepped back he would go over the brink. He tried to reach his revolver, but he was too late. It was only half out of the holster when the knife came sweeping towards his heart.

He made a wild grab at the descending arm. The impetus of the rush sent them both, locked in a life-and-death grip, to the edge of the cliff. They were swaying on the edge, every muscle taut. For once Lopez was conscious of a sickening fear. His amazing bloodless courage threatened to desert him. He had never been afraid of death in itself, but he recoiled at the thought of that hideous, squid-like monster, beating the water in hungry anticipation.

Only his tremendous strength saved him from being instantly precipitated into space, with the infuriated Chica still clinging to him. He was not heavy, but his muscles

were like steel. That momentary terror gave him a super-human strength.

"Sacramento!" he hissed, gripping the wrist so that the knife was forced back, and raising his arm until it was like an iron bar pressed against the Indian's throat. They rocked together, and then became motionless, their feet firmly planted, their strength so even that they attained a perilous equilibrium. It was just a question of which would yield first.

Had he continued to rely on his own efforts, Lopez would probably have lost. Even fear was no match for such blazing hatred. But seeing his danger, the other Indians started out of the spell that seemed to have fallen upon them. They rushed forward and a shower of hands descended on the straining shoulders of Chica. One man gripped him by the hair, forcing his head back, and Lopez drew a breath of relief as he felt himself freed.

Relief, however, quickly turned to rage. This man had tried to murder him. An example must be set lest at any time the others should seek to remedy their grievances the same way.

"Dog!" he cried, stepping forward menacingly. "But you shall pay for that. I could shoot you easily, but that would be too quick."

He made a gesture with his hand.

"Throw him into the Shrieking Pit!"

No decision could have been more popular. The Indians had had their blood lust aroused. They wanted another victim, and Lopez had provided one. Chica was forced to the edge, and abruptly he ceased to struggle. He cast a malevolent, oddly exultant glance at Lopez, who stood back, smiling grimly, his arms folded. Then he was raised up, just as Dick had been, and flung outward.

Dick knew nothing of all this. The moment that scaly tentacle had fastened around his waist, he gave himself up for lost. He was sucked under the surface. He struggled for breath—although actually he would rather have been drowned. Then he was pulled sharply upward.

He gasped as the water cleared from his eyes. The sight that met his gaze was altogether horrible. Immediately in front of him was a huge, sponge-like head, with a soft, yet enormous mouth, opening and closing with the spasmodic movement of a sea anemone. There was a twisting mass of tentacles, gleaming with deathly whiteness. He was being drawn towards that mouth, from which a stench arose of nauseating decay and corruption.

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If only his hands had not been bound he might have made some show of resistance. That would not have been so terrible as being drawn helplessly towards those loathsome, slobbering lips.

The other tentacles were moving slowly with a crab-like motion. One of them fastened around his ankle. It grew tighter—but all at once an amazing thing happened. His hands, which had been fastened with rope behind his back, became free. He fancied, although it seemed utterly incredible, he felt the sharp edge of a knife graze the skin.

He was astounded, but there was no time to think how the miracle had happened. Instinctively he gripped the snaky arm twisting round his body and tried to make it relax. But he soon realised that with his hands alone he could do very little. He was not only powerless to move the tentacle, but as he struggled, the pressure increased, so that he had a new difficulty in breathing. If it grew much tighter he would either be suffocated or his ribs would crack.

If only he had a weapon! Even a clasp-knife! For if he could break this choking embrace, now his hands were free, he would be able to swim. There was a thousandth chance, but that was better than no chance at all.

This had no sooner occurred to him—in fact, barely two seconds had elapsed since his discovery that his bonds had burst—when that faint flicker of hope was transformed into a blaze. Straight in front of him, as he ran his eye along the tentacle, he saw a brown hand, holding a long knife.

What did it mean? Who was this other intended victim, more fortunate than himself, yet willing to help him? Could it have been this man who had cut his hands free? A moment later he had no doubt about it. He caught a glimpse of a copper face, with only one eye. It was Chica!

The struggle began in real earnest. A succession of blows were rained down on the tentacle, which was as hard as leather, although it finally became gashed and nearly severed.

Dick's waist and ribs were now released from the intolerable pressure, but his ankle was held and he could see the other tentacles whirling like a windmill. Despite his frantic struggles, Chica was in their grip. He hacked with his knife, but he was drawn towards that gaping mouth. To save himself seemed impossible. He was doing terrible damage, but there could be no question any longer as to how it would end. He gave a wild scream, as he was hugged in a welter of blood-stained foam, against that phosphorescent

body, the mouth already closing with tremendous power of suction on his arm.

Dick never saw what happened next. His foot was jerked as though caught in a noose, and he was suddenly drawn under water. At the same time he was conscious of a roar like thunder. He felt himself spinning like a cork in a maelstrom. Vaguely he knew that his leg was no longer gripped. But he seemed to be in a whirlpool, and then something struck his head. That was all he remembered.

A Pleasant Surprise!

IT was pitch dark when he recovered consciousness. A sharp pain went through his head. He had a feeling as though every limb had been battered. But he was alive—that was the most unbelievable part. Not only alive, but he was out of the water.

He tried to sit up, but he felt a hand touch his shoulder restrainingly. A low voice spoke:

"You have nothing to fear, senior. But you must rest."

"Chica!" he gasped. "But—"

"I will tell you. We have very much time now, and we can talk. You are wondering how you came to be saved from Ayachacha. The others were like children. They thought it was a god whom no man could destroy. But I, Chica, knew that was only a tale told by an old man to frighten fools. The gods died long ago," he added slowly. "Now, even Ayachacha is dead. He is floating all in pieces along the river."

Dick felt as though new life were pouring in his veins. The danger was past. He was not even alone. This native, who had offered him food when he had been nearly starving, had now saved his life. But how had it been done? He was thirsting with curiosity—it almost rivalled his gratitude—to know how they had both escaped from what had seemed an almost hopeless plight.

In the same low voice Chica described how he had tried to kill Lopez, and how he had been thrown to the octopus.

"But I should have begun earlier, senior. I had not relied on my knife to kill that father of all evil. I had planned to destroy him utterly, together with the traitors who followed him. I stole some dynamite. I had learnt to use it when I worked in the mines. I laid the fuse carefully. The explosion should have come before you were thrown into the water. It might have killed us all, yet, if not, in the confusion and darkness you and I might have escaped. I did not care much whether I lived or died so long as I had my revenge on Lopez. But the fuse burnt too slowly. I thought it had gone out altogether, and that as I had failed, my only chance was to attack Lopez while the others were watching you. He was stronger than I had thought."

Chica paused meditatively.

"Yet even so I would have killed him had we been alone. But I was overpowered. I was thrown into the pit. They took my knife, but in their excitement they did not notice I had another in my belt. I used it to cut your bonds. Otherwise it was of no avail. I feared we should both die, my little master. I had given up all hope of the dynamite exploding. Nevertheless, it did, and that is how we were saved."

Dick listened in amazement.

"But I don't quite see how we were saved. How did it help us if we were in the river?"

"There was so much," said Chica, with a grim laugh. "I do not do things by halves. But if you ask me what damage it did I cannot tell you, because all I know is that the lights went out. There was one flash, like a sheet of lightning across the sky. It seemed to me that the roof of the cave broke in two. A piece of rock three times bigger than I am missed me by inches. It fell on Ayachacha—whom they believed to be a god!" He chuckled with the tremendous superiority of a native who has lost his old superstitions. "It was like crushing a slug with your foot. I cannot tell you what happened then. Many more stones and rocks were falling. I plunged under water and caught you as you were sinking. I swam with you to the shore. That is where we are now, on a narrow ledge, and there is a wall on one side and water on the other."

"But what can have happened to Lopez and the other Indians? Surely some of them escaped?"

"They are strangely silent."

"I suppose they were nearer the actual scene of the explosion," murmured Dick thoughtfully.

"In any case, the fall of rock will have cut off their retreat, and if it has not destroyed all their boats they will not be able to reach them. You will remember that they left the boats behind in order to reach the altar of the Incas. So even if some are alive, they can only go forward, and they cannot go forward very far without lights. They will fall into the river or down one of the crevices. Or

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they will starve, and perhaps eat one another, until the last of them perishes, too. It is nothing to me—so long as Lopez has not escaped."

"Why do you hate him so much?" asked Dick curiously.

"It is a long story, senior. Some day I will tell it all to you. Meanwhile, you will understand better if I say that Lopez killed my father. He was a guide. No man knew these mountains so well. But he refused to go with Lopez, and so he was shot—as you would shoot a cur. I saw it, and from then on I lived only for revenge. I followed Lopez, and but for an unlucky chance I should have shot him. 'I was taken prisoner.'"

He was no longer speaking quietly. His voice vibrated with passion.

"If I hadn't shared my father's knowledge of the mountains, without doubt he would have served me the same way. But he thought I should be useful to him, and that he could tame me into submission. I was bound hand and foot, and he came up to me. 'You must learn your lesson,' he said, and then he smiled. I shall never forget that smile. He was still smiling—the dog—as he stood there and tortured me, until I, Chica, who had never cried out before, screamed in agony."

"How did he torture you?" cried Dick; for diabolical as the Brazilian could be, he hadn't thought he would descend to sheer torture.

"He laughed!" said Chica hoarsely. "He laughed as he held the burning end of his cigar against my eye. But I have been able to see enough with the eye that remained to destroy him. My revenge has been complete."

Dick felt a shudder go over him. But he became aware at the same time of an alarming possibility.

"Look here, Chica, old sport, you may have gone a bit too far. I've no objection to you blowing up Lopez and all his villainous crew. But what about ourselves? If they can't get out—assuming some have survived—how can we?"

"We have no light," muttered Chica. "That is the difficulty."

"I'm not so sure about that. I've been through something since I started, but I did have an electric torch in my pocket. And, by Jove, it's still here in a waterproof case!" he exclaimed, feeling in his pocket. "Let's see if it works!"

It did. Luck was on their side. He turned and shone it on the wall behind.

"Think we could climb up?"

"It's easy!" declared Chica.

"I'm not so sure that it's a cakewalk. Suppose you lead the way?"

"You keep the torch, senior," said Chica, springing to his feet. "I can do this blindfold."

It was no empty boast. Dick watched Chica in admiration as he hoisted himself up, and then proceeded to move from ledge to ledge. How difficult it was became more apparent when Dick started to follow.

The torch got in the way, and he gripped it between his teeth. Cautiously he felt for a fresh foothold, then for a jutting piece of rock to seize with his hands. The wall was plentifully indented, but the tiny pockets barely gave room to secure a proper balance. It was only by moving quickly from one to another that he prevented himself from falling. But the torch suddenly dropped as he jerked himself upward. In one sense the darkness helped him, for had it been light the perilous nature of the task would probably have made him over careful when sheer recklessness was demanded.

How much farther would they have to go? His foot slipped. He grabbed wildly, held on, and, by the merest chance, found another footing. By this time he realised that he was fairly high up, and that a false move meant he would be dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

"We are near the top!" Chica called down. "I can feel the wind!"

"So can I!" muttered Dick—a pleasantry which the Indian failed to understand.

"Can I help you?"

"By gosh, yes, you can!"

For Dick had spoken too soon. He suddenly missed his hold and slithered. He would have shot to the bottom if he hadn't hung with both hands, torn and bleeding though they were, to a narrow ledge. His feet, however, were

dangling in space. To release his hands in the hope of securing a fresh foothold would have been an almost crazy gamble. Yet he couldn't hang on like this for more than a few minutes.

"Coming, senior!" called Chica instantly.

"Hurry, for the love of Mike! My feet are getting colder every second. I've nothing to stand on."

Chica replied, or, rather, swore to himself, in his own language. He found it more difficult to descend than to go up. He lowered himself with the agility and the sort of sixth sense of a born mountaineer; nevertheless, he quickly realised that it was impossible, whatever risks he took, to reach his companion.

No matter what he did, there remained a yard between them.

"I can't hold out much longer!" Dick cried desperately.

"See if you can reach this!"

Chica had risen to the occasion. He had whipped off his belt, and by a marvellous piece of acrobatic daring, looped



"You keep the torch, senior," said Chica. "I can do this blindfold." The native sprang to his feet, and hoisted himself up from one rocky ledge to another.

It swung and flicked Dick's face. Not realising where it came from, Dick seized it, and was now swinging against the side of the cliff. The strain all but dislodged Chica, but somehow he managed to remain firm. And a few moments of anxious experiment found Dick safe on the ledge above.

"Good man!" he ejaculated. "Is there much farther to go?"

"The worst bit is over. But keep cool, senior. There is no need to hurry now."

The oblique angle of the wall had terminated, and it now sloped inward. Dick was somewhat breathless by the time he reached the top. But there was no question any longer about their direction. They had to crawl through a tunnel, and they were uncomfortably aware that it might come to an abrupt end any minute. It was a queer sensation to be moving, flat on your stomach, in total darkness, in the middle of a mountain.

It was horribly like being buried alive. The explosion accounted for this tunnel, and the blocking of the ordinary exit. Still, it was no use meeting trouble half-way.

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The roar of the water around them grew louder and louder, and the light stronger. "We're coming out!" exclaimed Trent eagerly.

The tunnel grew narrower. But they bored their way through, now wriggling and now crawling on their hands and knees.

At last it was big enough to adopt a crouching attitude. Chica emerged first. He blinked in amazement as he saw a reddish light. The meaning of it no sooner dawned upon him than a ton weight seemed to descend on his back. He gave a cry of dismay, and tried to reach his knife; but the man on top of him was as powerful as a gorilla.

"Got number one!" shouted a voice that Dick, to his bewilderment, recognised. "There's another coming through! Better shoot—"

But he got no farther. Dick was shaking with excitement. It was almost too good to be true.

"Trent!" he gasped. "Holy smoke, it's Trent!"

The Waterfall!

CHICA was released, and West came hurrying up with a lantern. The astonished Indian saw the gigantic man who had nearly broken his back wring Dick by the hand.

"By heavens, it's good to see you again, sonny! I'd pretty well given up hope. When you two came out of that hole I thought you belonged to the other gang. Who is this Man Friday?"

"It was Chica who saved my life," responded Dick. "He's on our side. Were you about when the explosion took place?"

"Explosion! But I thought it was an earthquake!"

"No, that was Chica's little firework show!" Dick grinned. "He got hold of some dynamite. I don't know how much damage it's done, but we haven't seen or heard anything of Lopez since. Even if he escaped, I believe he's cut off from the boats."

"This begins to be interesting!" Trent murmured. He turned to West. "Are the odds going up, professor?"

"If Lopez can't reach the boats, and we can, he's beaten!" West declared. "On the other hand, if he's dead we shall never find what we are after."

"You mean the map will go with him? But now we've come so far we can't turn back. After all, we may be able to pick up some clues as we go."

"That's very vague!" muttered West, his clear, precise mind unable to derive any satisfaction from the attitude of trusting to luck which characterised Trent.

Dick was listening with a certain amount of impatience.

"What I want to know," he said, "is how you chaps got here? Where did you spring from? What's been happening to you?"

"When you left me," replied Trent, "I own I was feeling sorrier for myself than I had felt for a long time. I had a beast of a wound in the chest. It would have been very awkward if West hadn't turned up. He stitched me together, and we waited for you to come back. We only had a revolver between us, so we couldn't do much fighting. However, we saw Lopez the next day, when you all rode down to the lake. We were tucked behind some rocks and we watched him shoot the mules, which seemed to suggest he believed we were still alive. It was maddening to crouch there and not be able to interfere. But after you had all gone into the cave, we followed, crossing the water by a small raft we hastily rigged up. As things turned out it was lucky we did."

"Confoundedly lucky," said Dick warmly. "But why was it that West disappeared?"

The scientist himself replied.

"As you know," he said, "I went to do a bit of exploring with one of the natives, but the beggar tried to knife me. I shot him—believe you heard the shot? Then I could hear there was trouble in the camp. I had lost our boat, however, in the struggle. The stream took it right into the caves again. All I could do was to swim. The fighting was all over by the time I reached the shore, so I started to look for you people. I found Trent—as he has told you."

"So everything's cleared up!" nodded Dick. "Although I've got some more excitement to tell you when I've had a bite of food. Have you got anything in that line?"

"Not unless those boats you were talking about are intact! Lopez stole our stores, you know."

"What are our chances of finding them, Chica?" asked Dick, turning to the Indian.

"Come with me, seniors," was all he said.

There was still a possibility of running against some of Lopez's men. It was necessary to keep a very sharp look out. But if they had been observed by any invisible watchers, they were not interfered with. By an unerring instinct Chica led them straight to the river, and they walked about three hundred yards along the edge. All at once they stopped at the sight of two rafts moored to the bank.

"Here's something!" Trent exclaimed jubilantly. "But where are the other boats?"

As they ran forward—West holding up the lantern—they saw the explanation. The explosion had caused a fall of rock which blocked the river. There were other boats on the other side—or probably they had been sunk—but there was no means of getting over this barrier.

"That's awkward all the same," Trent added. "If doesn't look as though we shall be able to get on much farther."

"There won't be any difficulty if we can manipulate the rafts," replied West. "They are clumsy things in a powerful current. But I believe there are at least three ways through the mountains. It's honeycombed with streams, all of which are fairly navigable. We won't need to go back very far to reach another branch of the river."

"You don't mean to set off at once?" asked Dick, a trifle anxiously.

"Goodness, no! We want some grub first and a good sleep. Then to-morrow we can start afresh."

"I'm glad you mentioned the grub," said Dick, in tones of relief.

An examination of the contents of the rafts soon showed that they had everything they needed for the continuation of their journey. There were rifles and ammunition, and a quantity of tinned food and biscuits and also first-aid requirements.

They slept soundly that night, and in the morning they started on their voyage into utterly unknown territory. They decided not to assume that Lopez was dead, but at least he was no longer a source of danger.

The long, tortuous journey by raft through the caves was not marked by any particular incident. It seemed as though they had reached a lull in their adventures. But it was not destined to last.

West was the first to point out that the river was flowing much more quickly. He had a faint notion of the danger that threatened them. Every minute now the torrent increased its speed, and they became aware of a sullen roar, growing louder and louder.

"We are coming out!" Trent exclaimed eagerly. "Look, it's getting lighter!"

West opened his mouth to speak, but the thunder of the water was so great that it was impossible to hear anything else. They could no longer steer the rafts. Chica was in front, and seeing him throw himself flat, they followed his example blindly.

Then it came, a patch of brilliant blue sky that suddenly unrolled like a blazing curtain. In front was a dazzle of spray, and the noise was as deafening as an express train in a tunnel. It all happened so quickly that they were not conscious of the amazing scene that unfolded.

The river emptied itself on the other side of the mountain, in a gigantic waterfall. From a distance it looked like a stream of white smoke, in which tiny insects seemed to be caught. The insects spun downwards and nothing could check their fall towards the boiling water beneath.

Fortunately, there were no rocks. Nevertheless, the fall was terrific. Dick felt himself flung headlong, and he struck West and rebounded. He was still hurtling downwards, and the final impact momentarily stunned him. The terrific weight of the water forced him underneath; but the strength of the current swept him past the dangerous zone.

Dazedly he felt himself rising to the surface. It was impossible to swim. He was swept on with the current. He saw another head bob up on his right, and recognised Trent. Then, looming up ahead, he noticed an island.

If they could reach the island they would be saved. But to his dismay he saw that he was likely to be swirled past it. He made an effort to change his direction, but it was useless.

Dick was level with the island now. He could see some of the trees, broken down by a hurricane, lying across the water, which, sooner or later, would claim them. They were uprooted and swaying like straws.

Could he reach one of those branches, jutting so tantalisingly close? He stretched out his right hand, caught a few twigs, but they snapped before he could touch the actual limb. His direction, however, was slightly altered. There was another tree immediately in front. He grabbed again, knowing that if he failed this time, he would be swung into midstream, and his only hope would vanish.

Luck, however, was with the plucky youngster. He got a firm grip, and swung himself out of the water. Panting for breath, but still realising he was not yet out of danger, he started to walk along the slippery trunk.

There was no time to look around for his companions. Nor could he have helped them in any way if he had seen them. He required all his nerve and concentration to avoid falling again into that raging torrent. But he managed it, and once he stepped on dry land he drew a sigh of relief, not, however, unmixed with anxiety. For where was Trent? And West—

"Ahoy!"

He looked up, startled but eager. Coming towards him, looking sodden and dishevelled, was Trent.

"We were washed around the other side," Trent explained. "West is with Chica. He caught a nasty welt on the head."

"Then every one is saved?"

"Nothing like looking on the bright side old son," replied Trent, with a rueful smile. "We found those stores, only to lose the whole darned lot again, and we've got stranded on an island in the middle of a kind of Niagara, and you seem to want to hold a thanksgiving service. But, as a matter of fact," he added more seriously, "that Indian of yours is a marvel. West owes his life to him. I saw the whole thing. A branch of a tree knocked West out. He would have sunk if Chica hadn't caught him. It was Chica who brought him ashore, though how he did it beats me."

"He saved my life as well," said Dick slowly. "But if ever he meets Lopez—"

By Jove, I'd like to see that meeting!"

"It's a long way off, Dick, my boy. I don't believe, personally, that Lopez is still alive. Miracles can't be happening to all of us. Do you realise that we haven't a gun between all four? And goodness knows how we are going to leave this island!"

"We'll manage somehow," said Dick doggedly.

"I believe we shall. But I haven't discovered how it's to be done yet. However, come and have a squint at West, he's pretty sick."

It was unusual for Trent to take a gloomy view. But as Dick followed him, he realised that their predicament couldn't very well be much worse.

He found West lying on his back, a bloodstained handkerchief around his head.

"This is heartbreaking!" Trent suddenly burst out. "Just as everything seemed to be going all right. To think both those rafts should have sunk. If only we could have foreseen the cursed waterfall!"

"We couldn't have avoided it," Dick pointed out, "except by turning back. Even that would have been difficult."

"I think I'll take a look over the island. Will you come?" asked Dick.

"No; not just yet," said Trent. "I'll just sit here and smoke myself into a better temper. That is, if I can get the beastly baccy to burn."

There was one thing, Dick reflected, as he turned away, that he liked about Trent; he was perfectly honest about his feelings. If he was cheerful, he showed it, and if he was in the blues he didn't pretend not to be. There was a kind of rough simplicity about the big, bluff man that made him incapable of lying.

"Still, it's the very dickens of a mess!" he muttered, as he walked away. "At present we can neither go forward nor back. We might almost as well be on a desert island in the middle of the Pacific as here!"

(Our plucky adventurers are in a proper pickle now, aren't they, chums? But they've got much siffer hurdles to surmount yet. Look out, then, for another ripping instalment of this thrilling adventure story next week!)



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