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THE **GEM** 2^d

EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



**"UNDER
PETTICOAT
RULE!"**

TOM MERRY & CO. GET THE SHOCK OF THEIR LIVES—

Under Petticoat Rule!

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

A Bouquet for Somebody!

"I INSIST!"

"But—"

"'Buts' are utterly irrelevant, Tom Mewwy! I have made up my mind that—"

"Bother your mind!"

"That the pwopah thing for us to do is to pwesent Mr. Linton's niece with a bouquet—"

"Cut it short, Gus!" begged Monty Lowther. "We've heard you say that ten times already!"

"An' whatevah you sillay asses say to the contwawy, I shall make the suggested pwesentation! I insist!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth at St. Jim's, left the crowd of St. Jim's juniors whom he had been addressing and started to cross the Wayland High Street, making in the direction of a florist's shop on the opposite side of the road.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, frowned after the retreating figure of the swell of the Fourth. Blake and Digby and Herries, the noble Gussy's study-mates, glared.

"Frabjous ass!" remarked Blake.

"Priceless idiot!" said Tom Merry, with a sad shake of his head.

"Never satisfied unless he's running into trouble!" growled Digby.

"Who else but Gus," asked Manners reflectively, "would be potty enough even to think of presenting a bouquet to Linton's blessed niece?"

"Nobody!"

"We've never met her; probably shan't meet her while she's at St. Jim's; and don't want to meet her, anyway. Yet Gus proposes welcoming her at the station with flowers!"

"What would Linton think?" grinned Lowther.

"Only one thing, of course—that his leg was being pulled."

"Naturally. Therefore, it's got to be nipped in the bud!" growled Jack Blake. "Not quite the thing, perhaps, to fall out with the fellow so soon after he has stood us tea, but—"

"But not so bad as falling out with him before tea!" finished Monty Lowther. "Exactly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's up to us," said Blake. "Gus being incapable of looking after his own interests, it's up to his pals to help him out!"

"Oh, rather!"

"So we'll chip in before the harm's done! March!"

And the St. Jim's juniors marched. They reached the florist's just as Arthur Augustus issued

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,163.



forth again. The swell of the Fourth had got what he wanted—a handsome bouquet of roses now rested on his arm. It was a large bouquet—so large, in fact, that it almost concealed the upper part of D'Arcy's noble person—and Arthur Augustus looked very pleased with it.

Six determined juniors surrounded that bouquet and its immaculate supporter.

"Halt!" commanded Blake.

"Bai Jove! You fellows again!"

"Little us!" grinned Tom Merry. "Now, Gus, be sensible! This can't go on, you know!"

"Simply can't!" said Manners. "Chuck that flower-garden away, old chap!"

"Or if you don't want to waste it," grinned Lowther, "give it to the girl at the bunshop. You used to be rather

sweet on her at one time, didn't you, Gus?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's face turned almost as pink as some of the blossoms he was carrying.

"I considah, Lowthah, that that wemark was hardly in good taste!" he said stiffly. "As I am weluctantly bein' forced to the conclusion, howevah, that ill-bwed wemarks are wathah natuwal to you. I will ovahlook the mattah for once. Pway let me pass, deah boys!"

"No hurry!" said Blake. "I beg to diffah, Blake; Miss Linton awwives in five minutes!"

"That's exactly why there's no hurry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his celebrated monocle and bestowed on his grinning chums a withering look.

"Weally, deah boys, your levity is quite shockin'!" he remarked. "Let me briefly weitewate my views on this important mattah."

Schoolmistress Takes Charge of the Fighting Shell!

—WHILE THEY'RE UNDER THE RULE OF A SCHOOL MA'AM!

"Please don't!" groaned Digby.

"Be merciful, Gus!" urged Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lady visitahs to St. Jim's are few an' fah between," said Arthur Augustus, loftily ignoring Lowther's humorous plea. "Lady visitahs welated to St. Jim's mastahs are even more ware. The visit of Mr. Linton's niece, therefore, is in the natuah of a vewy special event."

"Can it, Gus!"

"Give it a rest, old chap!"

"Mr. Linton, the mastah of the Shell, is a gweatly respected membah of the staff," said Arthur Augustus, unheeding. "Miss Janet Linton, his niece—"

"My hat! How did you find out her name?" asked Digby.

"Mr. Linton happened to mention it, deah boy, when I appwoached him with the suggestion of an official welcome for her."

"Oh, my hat! You actually went to Linton about it?" yelled Blake. "What did he say?"

"Stwangely enough, deah boy, he didn't seem wemarkably keen on the suggestion—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked D'Arcy's chums.

"Oh dear! And you still want to carry on?" asked Tom Morry.

"Undoubtedly, deah boy. Mr. Linton didn't seem quite to appreciate the point, but that's no weason why we shouldn't cawwy on, all the same. It weally docs seem to me that it's up to someone to do somethin'. Miss Janet is somethin' wathah unusual. She has just passed out of Girtan with all sorts of degrees and honahs to her name, an' St. Jim's ought to be pwoud to welcome her."

"Well, that's all right," admitted Jack Blake. "I've got nothing to say against Linton's niece. Three cheers for her, if you like! But I'm dashed if I'm going to meet her on the station with an armful of roses—"

"My deah Blake—"

"And I'm dashed if I'm going to allow you to make a silly ass of yourself by doing it, either! Drop the whole idea, Gus! Consider it washed out!"

"I uttahly wefuse to considah anythin' of the kind!"

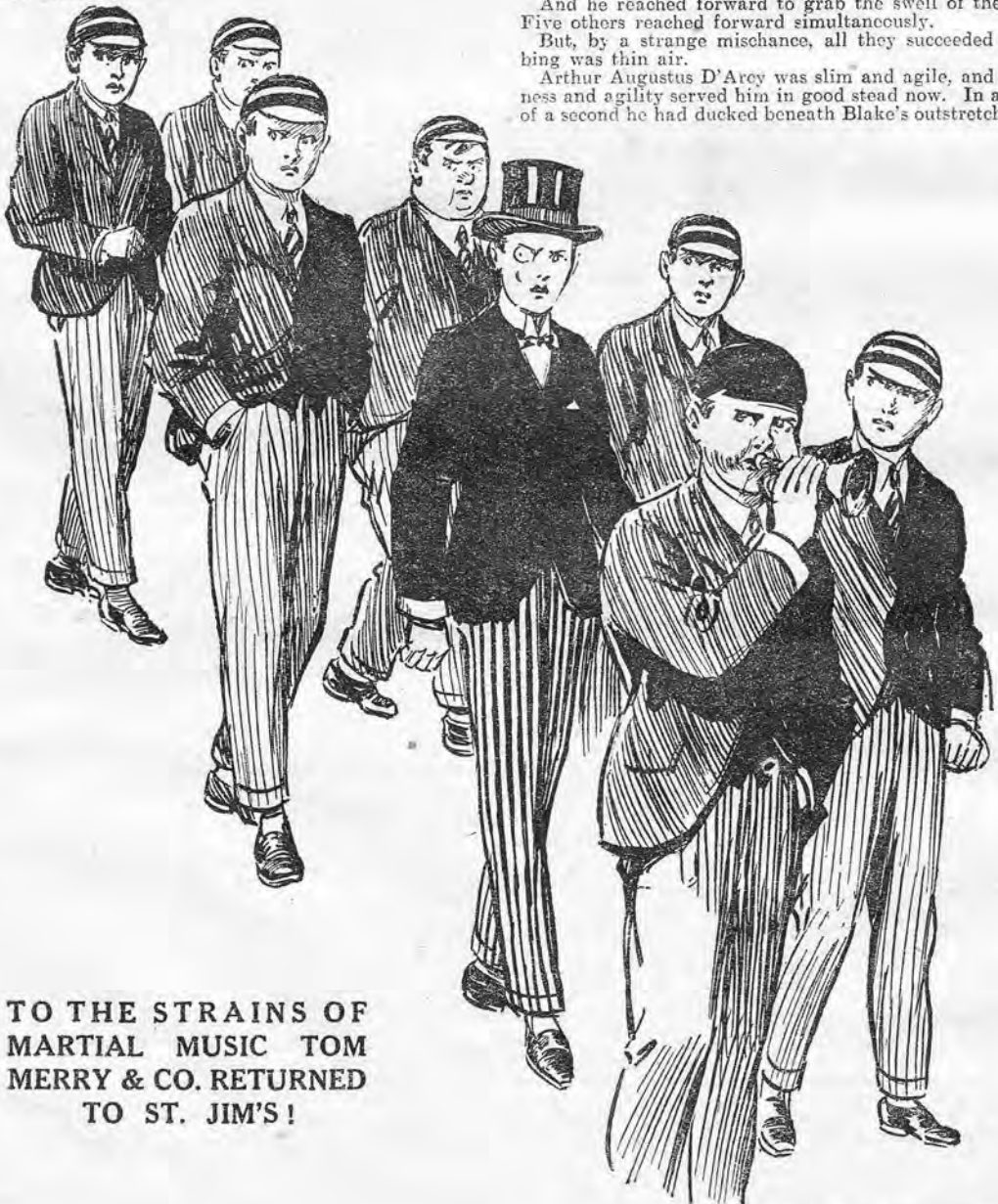
"Then you can jolly well consider yourself washed out instead!" grunted Blake. "If reason doesn't appeal to you, perhaps force will! Grab him, chaps!"

"Anything to oblige!" grinned Lowther.

And he reached forward to grab the swell of the Fourth. Five others reached forward simultaneously.

But, by a strange mischance, all they succeeded in grabbing was thin air.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was slim and agile, and his slinness and agility served him in good stead now. In a fraction of a second he had ducked beneath Blake's outstretched arms.



TO THE STRAINS OF
MARTIAL MUSIC TOM
MERRY & CO. RETURNED
TO ST. JIM'S!

In another fraction he had slithered sideways from Tom Merry and eluded Herries by a hair's-breadth. And before the juniors had time to realise exactly what had happened, Arthur Augustus had somehow twisted his way out of the circle altogether.

"Well, of all the slippery eels—" gasped Blake.

"The boulder's off!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Towards the station, too! After him!"

The juniors broke into a run. Arthur Augustus was already racing down the old High Street at top speed, his magnificent bouquet held out before him. The bouquet, as a matter of fact, rather impeded the view, but pedestrians gave him a wide berth, and the swell of the Fourth escaped collision in the High Street itself.

"Stop him!" roared Blake, as he ran.

"Hold the dummy!" hooted Herries.

But the citizens of Wayland did not seem anxious to avail themselves of the invitations. Instead of holding the dummy, they scattered respectfully out of the dummy's way. Arthur Augustus pursued a triumphal route through the town.

He soon reached Wayland Station, and the sight of a cloud of steam going up from behind the station buildings showed D'Arcy that he was none too soon. The main line train had just arrived.

Arthur Augustus put on a spurt. Tom Merry and the rest, behind him, also put on a spurt. One excited St. Jim's junior in front and six behind spurred wildly down the High Street and into the station yard.

Through the waiting-room leading to the platform whizzed D'Arcy, his roses held triumphantly before him. A ticket-collector jumped forward to ask about his ticket, then changed his mind and jumped back at ten times the speed of his first movement. Six whizzing figures flashed by within two seconds of D'Arcy's passing.

Down the platform flew Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Before him he suddenly saw the familiar figure of Mr. Linton greeting a young lady who had just alighted from the train. Behind him he heard the thudding feet of his pursuers.

It was a question of reaching Mr. Linton before Tom Merry & Co. could stop him. D'Arcy put every ounce of energy he possessed into one tremendous rush.

His intention was to pull up gracefully from that rush at a distance of exactly two yards from Mr. Linton.

Unfortunately, the intention was more easily thought out than carried out. D'Arcy was travelling at quite a dizzy speed, and he didn't find it possible to pull up at exactly the spot he had chosen. Instead, he hurtled forward on to Mr. Linton himself.

The swell of the Fourth uttered a yell.

Too late!

One flying schoolboy, preceded by a bouquet of roses, and one stationary and entirely unoffending schoolmaster collided with a fearful concussion.

Crash!

CHAPTER 2.

A Shock for the Shell!

"WHOO!"

It was a wild howl from Mr. Linton.

The master of the Shell was a mild and inoffensive gentleman, and it was highly probable that he had never before experienced the exhilarating thrills of the k.o. But if he had never done so before, he experienced them now with a vengeance.

Wayland Station seemed to fly round him for a moment in a giddy circle. Then the platform seemed to rise and meet him, and Mr. Linton rolled over and over, roaring with pain and shock.

Arthur Augustus was comparatively lucky. He bounded off Mr. Linton at a tangent and landed with a bump on a pile of luggage which effectively broke his fall and prevented any serious damage to his illustrious person.

Tom Merry and the others were on the scene almost immediately. They fairly jumped at the sight of the fallen Form master, who had eventually finished up on his back, and was lying on the platform some yards distant from D'Arcy, gasping for breath.

"Oh crikey!"

"Just what you might have expected from Gussy!" groaned Blake. "Help Linton up, somebody; he might be hurt."

Tom Merry, and Manners and Digby rushed forward to render first aid to Mr. Linton. The Form master's yells had ceased now, but there was an expression of pain on his face, and he uttered a slight cry as Tom Merry made to raise him up.

"One moment, Merry, if you please—"

At this stage of the proceedings the young lady to whom Mr. Linton had been talking intervened.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,163.

"Uncle, you are hurt!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Mr. Linton smiled wryly.

"It is nothing of consequence, Janet, my dear girl. Just a little pain round the right ankle."

"Shall I call a doctor, sir?" asked Tom Merry. "If you've broken your ankle or something—"

"There is no fracture, Merry, I feel sure. A slight sprain, perhaps. I shall be all right later on, no doubt. In the meantime, Janet, we had better go straight on to St. Jim's by taxicab."

"You are quite sure that you don't want a medical examination now?" asked Miss Janet Linton, a little anxiously. "Perhaps, after all, we had better call a doctor."

"I beg of you not to do so, my dear girl. The matter, I assure you, can quite safely be left over until we arrive at the school. By the way," finished up Mr. Linton, as an afterthought, "how did this most unfortunate accident happen?"

Miss Janet Linton looked round to the spot where Arthur Augustus had fallen. As she did so the swell of the Fourth staggered to his feet again and adjusted his monocle.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed.

Miss Janet Linton was a pretty blonde with dark, expressive eyes; she now proceeded to turn those same dark, expressive eyes on Arthur Augustus in a manner that made Arthur Augustus wish that the earth would open and swallow him up.

"The accident, uncle," she said deliberately, still eyeing Arthur Augustus, "was caused by the utter carelessness of an apparently very ill-mannered boy!"

"Dear me! So it was you, D'Arcy?"

"Oh ewikey!" gasped the unhappy swell. "My deah Miss Linton, I assuah you, with vewy deep respect, that it was an entiah accident. As a mattah of fact—"

"Please do not trouble to explain. It seems, then, that you are a St. Jim's boy?"

"Pwecisely, deah gal—I mean, Miss Linton," corrected D'Arcy hastily. "But I weally insist on explainin'. You see, it was like this—"

"Perhaps, D'Arcy, we had better postpone the explanation until a more convenient time," interrupted Mr. Linton. "Meanwhile, if some of you boys will help me to the street while another summons a taxicab, my niece and I will leave."

"Certainly, sir."

Tom Merry and his chums helped Mr. Linton to his feet, and assisted him down the platform and through the barrier, Herries meanwhile going ahead to find a taxi.

Miss Janet Linton brought up the rear. Beside her walked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his classic face the picture of dismay.

As he walked he attempted to explain the unfortunate little accident in terms calculated to give the pretty blonde from Girton the impression that he was entirely blameless in the matter. But Miss Janet Linton was apparently not in the mood for accepting explanations. Her brief replies to D'Arcy's efforts at explanation were, from the point of view of the swell of the Fourth, the reverse of satisfactory.

"You see, Miss Linton—" began Arthur Augustus.

"I would rather you did not address me," said Miss Linton icily.

"It was a sheer accident—"

"I don't agree."

"I did my vewy best to pull up—"

"You mean, to rush forward."

"Bai Jove! I assuah you, deah gal—madam—Miss Linton, I mean—that I am extremely sowwy—"

"It is easy to be sorry after the event!"

"You see, my deah Miss Linton," almost wept Arthur Augustus, "what I was doin' was bein' done out of respect for you—"

"I would rather you expressed your respect in a different fashion!"

By this time they had reached the waiting taxi, and so far it could not be said that D'Arcy had made very considerable progress with his explanations. If anything, in fact, he had progressed backwards. The swell of the Fourth began to feel quite desperate.

"I wondah—" he said.

"Please allow me to get into the taxi!"

"Bai—bai Jove! Certainly!" stuttered Arthur Augustus, crimsoning at the thought that Mr. Linton's fair niece could possibly be thinking him guilty of impoliteness. "But I was just goin' to suggest—"

"I will see you later on, D'Arcy," called out Mr. Linton. "Yaas; but I was just wondewin'—"

"Close the door now, D'Arcy. We are ready to start."

"Pwecisely, my deah sir. But I was just wondewin' whether you wouldn't considah it wathah a brilliant ideah for me to come with you, an' wendah my explanation en woute!" concluded Arthur Augustus, with a sudden rush.

"D'Arcy!"

"You approve? Then in that case, sir, I will twot in——"
 "D'Arcy, how dare you!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "If it were not that I know you to be a very foolish boy, I should think that you were being impertinent!"

"Impertinent?" gasped D'Arcy, astonished.
 "I certainly do not approve of your riding with me to St. Jim's for the purpose of explaining why you knocked me down. Kindly step down from the footboard at once and allow the driver to start."

"Oh! But——"
 "At once, D'Arcy!"
 "Come on, Gussy!" urged Jack Blake, tugging his noble study-mate by the sleeve.

"Pway welease me, Blake! I am merely goin' to explain to Mr. Linton——"

"Come down, you ass!"
 "I uttably wefuse to come down befoah I have explained to Mr. Linton——"

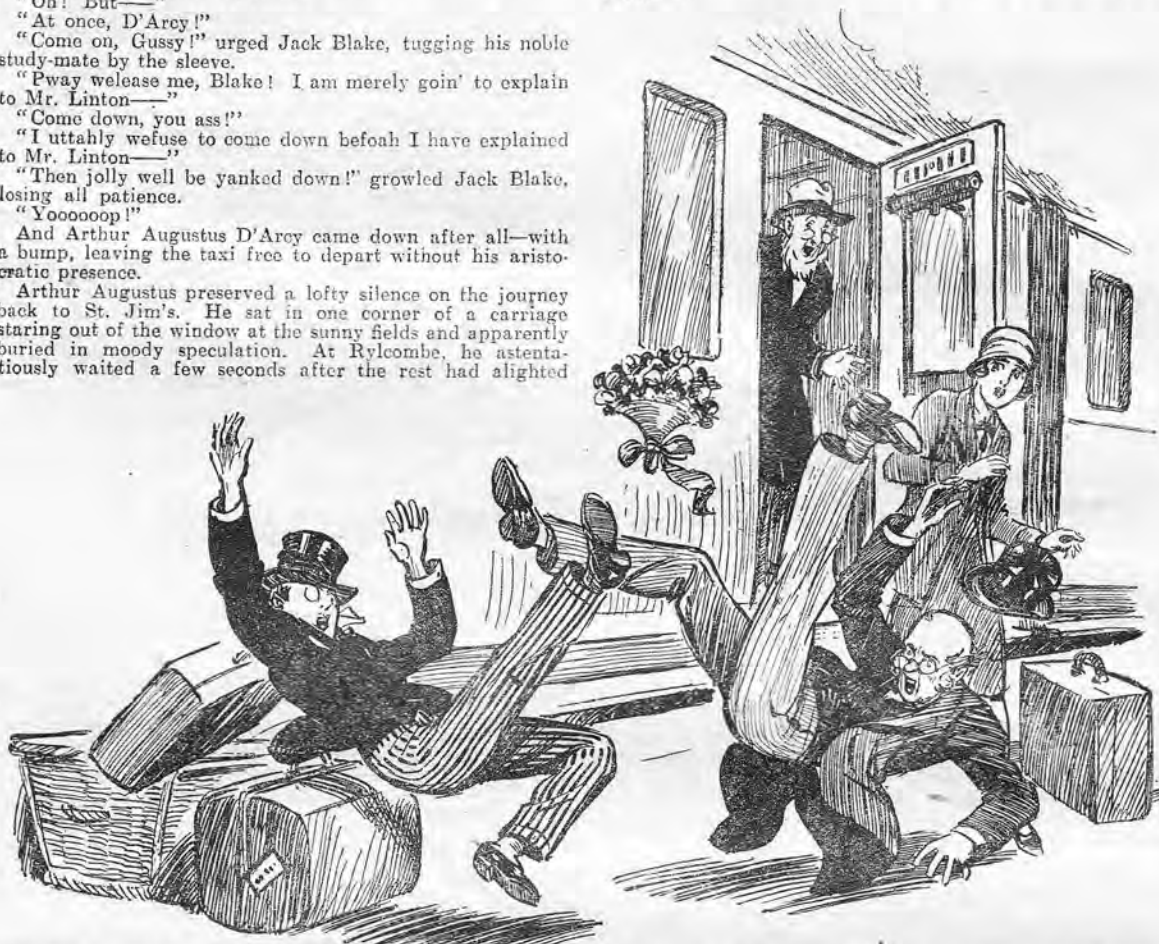
"Then jolly well be yanked down!" growled Jack Blake, losing all patience.

"Yoooooop!"
 And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came down after all—with a bump, leaving the taxi free to depart without his aristocratic presence.

Arthur Augustus preserved a lofty silence on the journey back to St. Jim's. He sat in one corner of a carriage staring out of the window at the sunny fields and apparently buried in moody speculation. At Rylcombe, he astentatiously waited a few seconds after the rest had alighted

Linton since his arrival back at the school and finds that the right ankle is sprained. As a result, Mr. Linton will be confined to his bed for a week.

"Oh!"
 "Deah me! That is weally vewy unforch, sir!"
 "It is very unfortunate indeed, D'Arcy. I understand that you were the cause of the occurrence."
 "Not at all, sir; the cires, as a matter of fact, are these——"



One flying schoolboy, preceded by a bouquet of roses, and one stationary and entirely unoffending schoolmaster collided with a fearful concussion!

before getting out himself, and strolled up the lane leading to the school in solitary state.

At the gates of St. Jim's, however, he was brought into contact with the offending ones again.

Taggles, the porter, was waiting for them outside his lodge, and he jerked his thumb significantly in the direction of the School House as they drew near.

"Which the 'Ead' wants Master Merry and Master D'Arcy!" he announced.

"Oh!"
 "Oh ewikey!"

"Hat once, too. An' if you've been up to any of them monkey-tricks of yourn, all I 'ope is that 'e'll lay it on 'eavy!"

With which charitable hope, Taggles retired to the interior of his lodge.

Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus, reunited in whatever misfortune was forthcoming, went up to the Head's study together.

As it transpired, the misfortune was intended only for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Tom Merry had been summoned for a different reason.

"You were both present at Wayland Station this afternoon when Mr. Linton was knocked down, boys?" was the Head's first question.

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, wathah; an' if I might say so, sir——"

"Silence, D'Arcy! You will, of course, both be interested in the doctor's report. The doctor has examined Mr.

"Did you, or did you not collide with Mr. Linton on the platform of Wayland Station this afternoon?"

"Yaas, sir; I did. But whst I wanted to say was——"

"What you wanted to say was apparently irrelevant, D'Arcy. I have observed the phenomenon in you before!"

"Bai Jove! But, my deah sir——"

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy!"

Tom Merry thought that the time had arrived for him to intervene.

"If you please, sir——" he began.

"Well, Merry?"

"It wasn't altogether D'Arcy's fault. You see, we—a crowd of us—were chasing him, and—and——"

"I am already fully aware of the circumstances, Merry, and I know the names of all the boys who share the responsibility. As the matter was obviously an accident, I do not intend to punish you or them."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Tom.

"I am punishing you, D'Arcy, in particular, because, while the rest were apparently careful enough to dodge innocent bystanders in this freakish running-match, you did not exercise that care. Hold out your hand!"

And D'Arcy, after vainly commencing several more explanations, eventually held out his hand to receive something which the Head, unconsciously fulfilling Taggles' pious hope, laid on "'eavy!"

The swell of the Fourth then departed, squeezing his

hands under his arms and gasping a little, while Dr. Holmes turned to Tom Merry.

"I have sent for you, Merry, to acquaint you with the arrangement that has been made for the period of Mr. Linton's incapacity."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, a little surprised to find that a temporary arrangement had been arrived at so soon after the event.

"You are aware that Mr. Linton was at Wayland for the purpose of meeting his niece, a Miss Linton?"

"Yes, sir. We met Miss Linton," answered Tom, wondering what made the Head mention Mr. Linton's pretty relative.

"Miss Linton has just concluded her University studies," said Dr. Holmes. "She has achieved several academic distinctions of importance, and is, I am pleased to note, a brilliant classical scholar."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry again, wondering what on earth the Head was driving at.

"Miss Linton was to have been Mr. Linton's guest at St. Jim's for a few days. Now that he is incapacitated, she has made a suggestion which I was at first inclined to turn down. On reconsideration, however, I have agreed to it. The suggestion in question is that Miss Linton takes the place of her uncle as master—or rather, mistress—of the Shell."

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

That was all he could say, for the moment. He gazed at the Head, almost thunderstruck.

"Miss Linton is intended for the teaching profession, and welcomes the opportunity of taking a Public School Form for a few days. For my part, now that I have overcome my first instinctive opposition to the idea, I am relieved at the prospect of finding a deputy for Mr. Linton so easily. Of course," said the Head, with a keen glance at the flustered junior captain of St. Jim's, "the appointment is a little unusual—"

"Unusual! Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom Merry under his breath.

"But Mr. Linton will not be absent from his duties longer than a few days, and I see no reason why Miss Linton, in the meantime, should not make an excellent substitute. Please, therefore, acquaint your Form-fellows with the circumstances, Merry, and tell them that they will act under the jurisdiction of Miss Linton forthwith."

"Oh, ye-es, sir!"

"That is all, Merry. Now you may go!"

Tom went.

He walked limply out of the Head's study, almost staggered down the passage, and fairly collapsed into the arms of his waiting chums.

Within five minutes of that time the amazing news had spread to every corner of the school.

The Shell—the fighting Shell that had always prided itself on being composed of about 99.9 per cent he-men!—was to be ruled over by a slip of a girl!

St. Jim's seemed almost to rock to its foundations at the sensation!

CHAPTER 3.

Enter Miss Janet!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

"But it's true!"

"Rats!"

"Tom Merry told me!"

"Rubbish!"

"Look here—"

And so, more or less, ad infinitum. Everywhere, the same kind of talk was going on. In the quad, in the Junior Common-room, in the passages of both Houses, little knots of fellows were gathered, their voices raised in heated argument. Down at the nets cricket practice had given place to loud and acrimonious debate.

The Shell heard the story at first with derision. Then they became a little worried, then rather alarmed. Finally, when they learned authoritatively that the rumour was true, after all, all other emotions gave way to blank and utter dismay.

Had anybody ever heard anything like it before?

Nobody had.

It was an event altogether without parallel. Never before in all history had a St. Jim's Form been ruled by a young woman!

Deep, deep gloom settled over the Shell as the news became confirmed without any shadow of doubt.

For a whole week—possibly for more than a week, they were to be "bossed" by a girl not much older than themselves!

It was awful!

Not everybody, of course, regarded the matter in quite the same way.

so tragic a light as the Shell. After the first shock, in fact, the other Forms seemed to find quite a lot of amusement in the situation.

Grins began to appear on the faces of Fifth-Formers when Shell men passed by. The Sixth condescended to smile unusually sweet smiles. The Fourth actually laughed now and again. The Third and Second, unhampered by the conventions which checked the higher grades of society, fairly howled in unrestrained mirth.

It dawned on the Shell that the matter was by no means a tragedy to the rest of the school. They began to realise, in fact, that all Forms outside the Shell were enjoying it as if it were a first-class joke. And the Shell grew grimmer and grimmer.

None was more grim than George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy had a considerable contempt for the fair sex. As a matter of fact, Grundy had a considerable contempt for a good many members of his own sex, too. It would not be exaggerating very greatly to say that Grundy had a considerable contempt for everybody on the face of the earth, with the solitary exception of himself!

Grundy fairly raged when the news reached his somewhat large ears.

He raged in his study at his faithful henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn, till Wilkins and Gunn grew quite alarmed. He rushed downstairs and raged in the Common-room, then in the Hall, and after that in the quad.

Finally, he decided to rage to Tom Merry in Study No. 10, and, with that amiable intention, he rushed upstairs again, still raging, and hurried along to Tom Merry's study.

Arrived there, Grundy demanded that Tom Merry should call a meeting of the entire Shell in their Form-room, to decide what should be done about things.

The meeting duly took place, since nothing else would satisfy Grundy, and there were times when it was less trouble to satisfy Grundy than to refuse him.

Before long the meeting was in an uproar. Tom Merry & Co. couldn't see that anything could be done, and said so; but Grundy and Gore both had schemes for ridding the Shell of Miss Linton, and naturally they felt indignant that their wonderful schemes did not receive support.

Just when the noise was at its height the door of the Form-room opened and Miss Linton entered the room.

"Please be quiet, boys! Apparently there is some misunderstanding as to my position in the school. You are all in the Shell?"

"Right on the wicket, miss!"

Miss Janet Linton looked surprised.

"What ever do you mean? Surely a wicket can have nothing to do with the Form you belong to?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That means 'yes,' explained Bernard Glyn. "A cricketer's term, you see, miss!"

Miss Linton smiled. The Shell had to admit privately, afterwards, that it was a very charming smile. But it didn't have the effect of softening their hearts at this particular time. The Shell objected to petticoat government on principle, and, as Clifton Dane said, they would have objected all the same if the newcomer had been a winged angel.

"Then you are all Shell juniors?" said Miss Linton. "That being so, in case any of you may be wondering who I am, I must introduce myself at once. I am Miss Linton, your Form master's niece."

"How's your uncle?" yelled out Crooke, from the back of the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Linton flushed.

"Some of you, it seems, are being deliberately impertinent. I must tell you at once that I do not intend to put up with such impertinence."

"D-d-don't hurt us, miss, will you?" stuttered Gore, pretending to be terrified.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I recognise that I am occupying a somewhat unusual position, boys," said Miss Linton quietly. "But I am fully qualified for the post, and Dr. Holmes has given me full authority during the period of my appointment. That authority I intend to exercise."

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are behaving ridiculously. That, perhaps, is excusable up to a point, as the situation is so novel to you. But you must stop it. In fact, I am going to see that you do stop it."

"Oh, you are, are you?" asked Grundy, recovering his powers of speech, which had temporarily departed on the arrival of the new mistress of the Shell.

"I am. And if I have the time to achieve such results,

I shall also endeavour to put a stop to the rough horseplay that seems to be prevalent among you, an example of which led to Mr. Linton's accident this afternoon. Furthermore, I shall absolutely forbid fighting."

"M-m-my hat! Forbid fighting?" yelled Grundy.
"That is what I said. Fighting is barbarous. I do not approve of it. I sternly discontinue it, in fact, and if I find any Shell boys fighting, I shall punish the offenders severely."

"Oh, ye gods!"
"Forbid fighting!" repeated Grundy, almost dazedly.
"This is what things have come to now, chaps! She's going to forbid fighting."

"Oh, jiminy!"
"Some job!" remarked Talbot, with a smile. "The Shell, Miss Linton, has the reputation of being the fighting Form of St. Jim's."

The temporary Form mistress chin set with determination.
"That circumstance makes me all the more anxious to stop it."

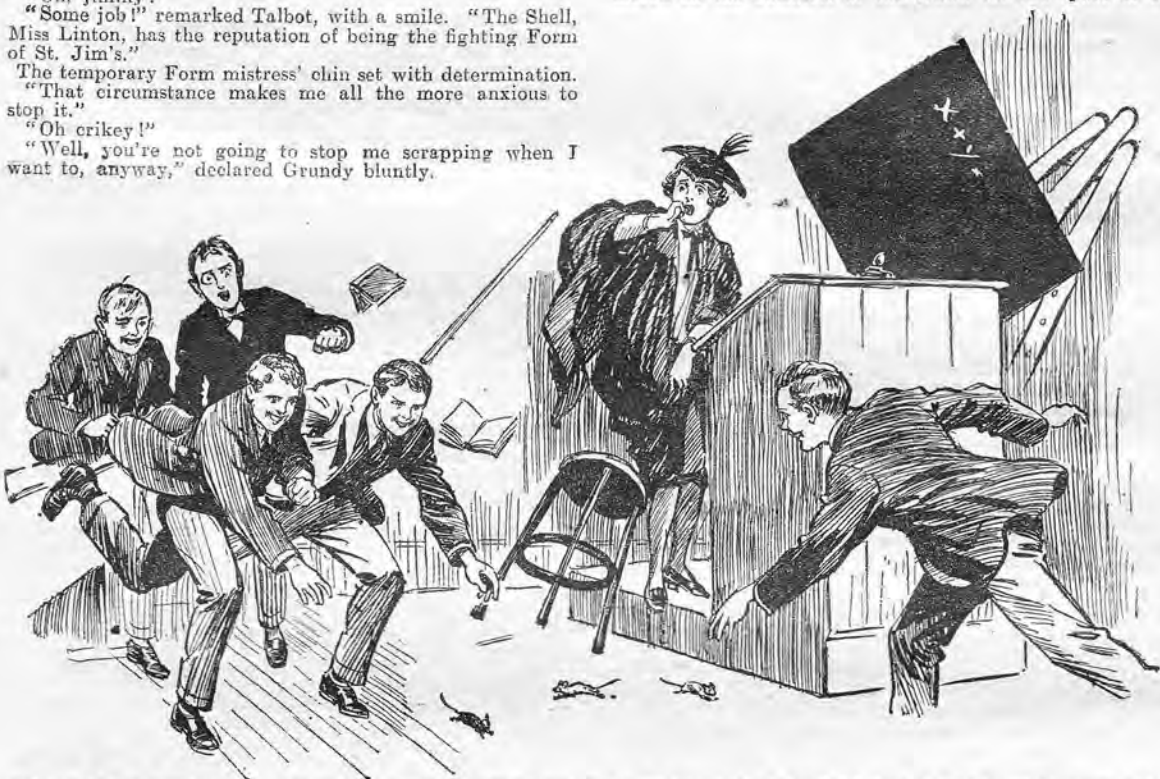
"Oh crikey!"
"Well, you're not going to stop me scrapping when I want to, anyway," declared Grundy bluntly.

"Boo-hoo!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell Form room resounded with a mixture of agonised weeping and hysterical laughter. Miss Linton, almost on the verge of tears, looked round helplessly. She realised that she had completely lost control of the situation, and it was rather difficult to see how she could regain it.

Then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up.

A lot of juniors belonging to other Forms were putting in an appearance, attracted by the commotion in the Shell Form room. D'Arcy was among them. His monocle glimmered on the outskirts of the crowd for the space of one



The entire Form rose as one man and chased the three unfortunate mice backwards and forwards until some of the juniors felt quite dizzy.

"Nor me—" Gore was just beginning to say, when Lowther, his eyes twinkling with a sudden, humorous light, stepped forward and interrupted him.

"Half a minute, chaps! After all, it's quite right that fighting's barbarous."

"What!"
"Miss Linton's perfectly correct. With—hem!—a woman's intuition, she has seen what we've never been able to see yet."

"What the thump—" Then the crowd saw Monty Lowther close one eye at them, and they realised that it was a "jape."

"Fighting's barbarous—sinful, in fact," said Lowther gravely. "Until Miss Linton pointed it out, I had never realised it; but I can see it quite plainly now."

"Oh, I am very pleased to hear you say that!" said Miss Linton; then she started at the sudden cry that had proceeded from Lowther.

"Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!"

"Dear me! Why, you—you are actually crying!"

"Boo-hoo!" wept Monty Lowther.

"What ever are you crying for, my dear boy?"

"Please, miss, I'm just thinking of all the fights I have had, and how sinful it was of me!" roared the humorist of the Shell. "Now that you've pointed out the sinfulness of scrapping, I'm repenting. Boo-hoo!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Good old Lowther!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared. Then, taking their cue from Lowther, some of them began to cry themselves.

"Boo-hoo!"

"We won't fight any more, miss."

"We'll promise to be perfect little gentlemen now."

second. The next it was glimmering in the forefront. "Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, staring in amazement at the extraordinary spectacle of the weeping Shell fellows.

"Boo-hoo!"

"Bai Jove, these wottahs are waggin' you!" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth, addressing Miss Janet Linton. "Pwaw allow me to intervene, my deah Miss Linton!"

Miss Linton drew herself up stiffly.

"Boy, what ever are you saying?"

"Merely that I wish to punish these wottahs for tweekin' a lady so wuffly an' disrespectfully," answered Arthur Augustus, beginning to take off his jacket. "I shall be obliged, Miss Linton, if you will wetiah an' allow me to give them all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Girton girl thought she saw a chance of regaining control again, through the medium of the swell of the Fourth. She turned on him sharply.

"Boy, how dare you!"

"What!"

"How dare you suggest resorting to fighting in the presence of a Form mistress! You are incorrigible."

"I—I—" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"You have already offended me once to-day by your rough horseplay on the platform at Wayland, now you make matters worse by seeking to make me your reason for fighting. Come here, sir!"

"Wh-a-a-at?"

"Come here, sir, and hold out your hand! I am going to slap you!" said Miss Linton sternly.

A hush fell on the crowd for one moment; then there was a yell.

"Oh, my hat!"

"She's—she's going to slap him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned pink, then red. His monocle fell from his eye and an extraordinary expression came into his classic face.

"M-M-M-Miss Linton!" he gasped.

"Go on, Gussy!" yelled Grundy. "Go and take your gruel! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Like one in a dream D'Arcy approached the new Form mistress.

Miss Janet Linton grabbed one of his hands as he drew near. Then her own hand rose and fell, and the sound of slapping was heard in the Shell Form room.

Slap! Slap! Slap!

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, miss! Don't spare him!" chortled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Linton desisted at last, and, breathing quite hard from her exertions, turned on her heel and marched off.

She left the Shell Form room in an uproar. And the uproar, far from abating, spread, in the course of the evening, to every part of the house.

Right up to bedtime that night all St. Jim's was yelling over the story of how Gussy had got slapped.

CHAPTER 4.

Fun in the Form-room!

"PUT the mice in her desk, Grundy?"

"Of course I have!"

"Sure those flowers of yours are well sprinkled with sneezing-powder, Gore?"

"Quite sure."

"That's all right, then," said Monty Lowther, with satisfaction. "Things simply mustn't go wrong. We've got to make this Form-room too hot to hold her."

"Hear, hear!"

"And here she comes!" added Crooke. "Now for the fun!" The class fairly buzzed with excitement.

It was the morning after Miss Janet Linton's sensational appointment as temporary Form mistress of the Shell, and feeling over that appointment was still at fever-pitch.

Overnight, a hundred and one wild schemes for frustrating the Head's plan were suggested. Grundy was in favour of open rebellion and a barring-out; Gore thought that if they all marched to Miss Linton and put it to her plainly that she wasn't wanted, she would go; others put forward schemes of an even more ingenious nature which had the disadvantage of being less practicable.

But despite all the talk, the Shell turned up in the Form-room next morning as usual. When it came to the point, nobody, with the exception of Grundy, felt like going as far as open rebellion; and even Grundy wasn't prepared to break out into open rebellion on his own.

The resentful juniors had decided, however, that they would give their new tutor as warm a time as possible. Hence the mice that Grundy had placed in Miss Linton's desk; hence also the "doped" bouquet which Gore held ready underneath his desk.

Miss Linton tripped into the Form-room and greeted her Form with a bright smile.

"Good-morning, boys!"

"Good-morning, miss!" responded the Shell. There was no harm in being polite to the unwelcome intruder. They could afford to be polite, anyway, in view of what was coming.

"First lesson this morning is Latin," remarked Miss Linton. "I propose to ask one or two of you to construe from your prep last night, and then we will proceed with fresh work."

"Thank you, Janet!" called out someone from the back of the class, and there was a delighted roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Linton coloured a little, but ignored the facetious interruption and went on:

"Before we begin, I should like to mention that I have obtained the Headmaster's consent to our taking off the second half of the morning for the purpose of a walk."

"Oh!"

The Shell didn't quite know how to take that. True, they weren't averse to a walk. It was a fine summer's day, and the open air was infinitely preferable to the stuffy classroom. But they didn't know what the walk involved. Miss Linton explained.

"At girls' schools organised walks are quite a feature. Here, apparently, they are quite an exception. I am hopeful that I shall start the fashion. Since coming to St. Jim's I have noticed a certain amount of slovenliness

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in the way you boys walk about; an organised walk occasionally, under the supervision of an instructor like myself, will probably remedy that."

"Wha-a-at!"

It was a yell from the Shell. They could hardly believe their ears. So that was Miss Linton's intention! They were to take an organised walk with Miss Linton as the organiser, just as if they were inmates of a girls' school.

Half-incredulous rage was depicted on the faces of the outraged Shell. Miss Linton did not observe it. She had turned to her uncle's desk, was sitting on his stool, and had made to open the top of the desk.

The Shell's rage gave way to expectant interest. They knew what was contained within that desk. Miss Linton did not.

But she very quickly became enlightened.

A shriek suddenly rang out. Then there was a crash as her stool went spinning away and Miss Linton jumped backwards.

A little grey mouse shot out of the opened desk, landed on to the falling stool, and crashed with it, then scuttled across the Form-room. A brown mouse followed it; then another grey mouse popped up, ran down the side of the desk, and circled swiftly round the raised platform on which the desk stood.

"Help, help!" shrieked Miss Linton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The instinctive fear of mice which characterises most of the feminine gender had changed Miss Linton in a moment from a stern schoolmistress into a frightened girl. The Shell found the change vastly entertaining. They roared. And Miss Linton continued to shriek.

"Want any help, miss?" asked Grundy. "We'll chase 'em away, won't we, chaps?"

"What-ho!"

The entire Form rose as one man and sallied forth like knights of old to rescue the damsel in distress.

They chased the three unfortunate mice backwards and forwards and round and round until some of them felt quite dizzy. In the process they knocked over desks, blackboard, bottles of ink, and all sorts of other odds-and-ends belonging to the Form-room, until the room began to present the appearance of a battlefield.

Not until the juniors had thoroughly tired themselves out did they succeed in chasing the three mice out of the room. By that time Miss Linton was almost in a state of collapse.

"All right now, miss!" grinned Grundy. "They've gone!"

"Oh dear! You're sure?"

"Downright certain, miss!" said Gore, coming to the fore with a nice-looking bouquet of flowers in his hand. "Now, please, will you accept these as a token of our respect and esteem?"

Miss Linton sat up and took notice again. She began to smile quite sweetly at Gore.

"Dear me! What a nice bunch of flowers! This is very nice of you, Bore—your name is Bore, isn't it?"

"Gore!" corrected Gore. "Rather pretty, aren't they?"

"They are really sweet—atishoo!" finished up Miss Linton suddenly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aaaa-shooo!"

"Oh, my hat! What a lesson!" gurgled Lowther.

"Atishoooo! 'Shooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tears began to stream down Miss Janet Linton's pretty face. Her sneezing grew more and more violent. And the more she sneezed, the more the Shell howled.

It was a little rough on the Girton girl. Tom Merry and most of the Shell had to admit that afterwards. It was not the sort of treatment they should have meted out to a lady, and in the ordinary way the Shell would not have dreamed of "japing" a member of the fair sex in such a determined manner. But resentment had driven them to it, and for the time being, at all events, they derived the maximum enjoyment out of the situation. They yelled. Miss Linton continued to sneeze.

She stopped eventually, of course. All good things must come to an end. And when she had at last composed herself again her first move was to seize the cane which hung beside her uncle's desk.

"You have played a trick on me, boy!" she said, with as much sternness as she could muster up. "Those flowers were sprinkled with snuff!"

"My hat! Now I wonder how that came about!" exclaimed Gore innocently. "Perhaps it was pollen, miss!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are a very impudent boy," said Miss Linton. "I am going to cane you. Hold out your hand!"

"Oh crickey!"

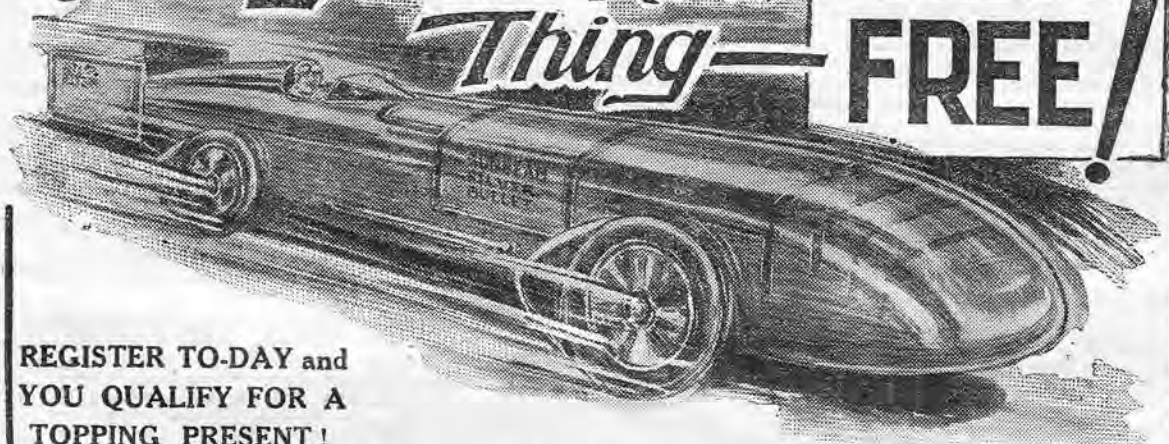
Gore looked inclined to rebel. Then he grinned and held

(Continued on page 10.)

GEE, BOYS! HERE'S SOMETHING FOR NOTHING.

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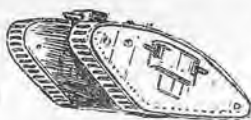
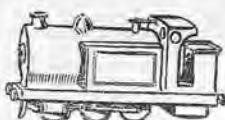
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Under Petticoat Rule!

(Continued from page 8.)

out his hand. Gore was not a bad-hearted fellow, and it seemed only just, after that terrific jape, to give Miss Linton her head.

Miss Linton raised the cane. The Shell watched breathlessly.

Then there was a gasp. For instead of administering the biting cut they were accustomed to receiving from Mr. Linton, the Girtion girl had merely flicked Gore's palm so lightly that he was still standing in ignorance that the blow had fallen.

"That will do," said Miss Linton. "Now return to your place!"

"Well, my hat!" said Gore. "Have I been caned, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anybody else like a sample?" grinned Lowther. "Try our palm-ticklers, gentlemen! All free—nothing to pay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy stood up on his hind legs. It was not often that Grundy was moved to do anything funny. But he thought he would try now.

"Please, miss!"

"Yes, Grundy!"

"Rats!"

"What—what—" gasped Miss Linton.

"Rats—and many of 'em! Now can I have the cane?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Shell.

Then the laughter ceased suddenly. The door of the Form-room had quietly opened, and a figure in cap and gown stood framed in the doorway.

It was Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House!

"You—you are actually asking for the cane?" stammered Miss Linton.

Grundy, in blissful ignorance that a newcomer was listening, nodded cheerfully.

"That's right, miss. I said 'Rats!' to you. Now I want to be caned!"

"Grundy!"

It was an awe-inspiring voice from the direction of the door.

Grundy almost collapsed in a limp heap at the sound of that voice.

"Ow! Mr. Railton!" he groaned.

"How dare you, Grundy!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Come out, sir!"

"I—I—" stuttered Grundy.

"At once, sir!"

Grundy tottered out.

"So you wish to be caned, do you?" asked Mr. Railton, in a grinding voice.

"I—I— Not at all, sir! You—you see, sir—"

"I heard you make the request with my own ears, Grundy. I intend to meet that request myself! Hold out your hand!"

Grundy, mumbling unintelligible things to himself, held out his hand; then the other hand; then the first one again; and so on, many, many times.

Very soon, Grundy was grunting. Soon after that, he was roaring. And before Mr. Railton had finished with him, the great man of the Shell was yelling at the top of his voice.

So Grundy got what he wanted. But after he had got it, he did not seem to be satisfied at all. As Monty Lowther remarked afterwards, there was no satisfying some people!

Mr. Railton, after a word with Miss Linton, then withdrew. And for the rest of the lesson, a pin might have been heard to drop in the Shell Form room. For the time being, all was quiet on the battlefield!

CHAPTER 5.

Organised Walking!

"HERE she comes!"

"With Railton, too!"

"Oh, dear!"

A groan went up from the Shell. Morning break had just concluded, and the other Forms were trooping back to their respective classes. The Shell remained talking in little knots in the quad, and discussing only one subject—Miss Linton's organised walk.

Now that the time had arrived, the Shell were looking forward to that project with inexpressible dismay. Occasionally in the past they had had an organised walk with Mr. Linton. That was bad enough. But the prospect of an organised walk with Mr. Linton's niece was positively alarming.

The only satisfactory feature about it was that the walk would take place during school hours, thereby eliminating derisive Council school lads from the village and fellows from Kylcombe Grammar School. At least, the Shell hoped that it would eliminate them. But there were still errand boys and other pedestrians to consider.

Tom Merry and one or two others had been talking over the possibility of reasoning with Miss Linton. But that possibility was quashed at the sight of Mr. Railton.

Mr. Railton eyed the Shell rather grimly.

"Boys! It has been arranged that you take a walk with Miss Linton for the remainder of the morning. I rely on you to conduct yourselves properly."

"Oh!"

"Should you do otherwise," said Mr. Railton, with an even grimmer look, "I shall hear of it afterwards, and I may say that I shall deal with offenders in a very drastic manner. That is all!"

And Mr. Railton then left the Shell to the tender mercies of the Girtion girl.

"You will form two-deep, boys," said Miss Linton, composed and cheerful again now after the break.

"Oh, dear!"

"Can't we just stroll along anyhow, Miss Linton?" asked Tom Merry.

"Be much more pleasant for everybody, wouldn't it?"

Miss Linton smiled, but shook her head.

"I am sorry, Merry, but that would spoil the whole idea. Organised walking is just what you boys need. Judging by the way you and your friends were running about on the station platform yesterday, you, in particular, need instruction in public deportment."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Form two-deep, boys!" commanded Miss Linton, as though she meant it.

THE MISADVENTURES OF THE WIGGA WAGGA BOYS!



The Shell reluctantly fell into line, and Tom Merry, his face rather red, gave up the argument and fell in with the rest.

"March!" said Miss Linton, and the organised walk began.

Across the quad, and through the gates marched the Shell, their faces expressive of the inward pain they were experiencing.

Miss Linton, smiling faintly, brought up the rear.

Taggles came out of his lodge at the gates and stared at the procession. Then a grin appeared on his hoary features—finally, he came out with a deep chuckle.

"Haw, haw, haw!" said Taggles.

The Shell crimsoned.

Gore, in the centre of the procession, had a pea-shooter in his pocket. With a backward glance at Miss Linton, he filled his mouth with peas and applied the weapon of war to his lips.

Shortly after that—about half a second after, to be precise—Taggles' chuckles changed to a yell of pain.

"Yoooooop! 'Ere, wot the—whooop!"

And the Shell, a little mollified, passed on, grinning.

Down the lane leading towards Rylcombe tramped the Shell. It was a glorious day, and they quite enjoyed the first part of the walk.

The enjoyment, of course, lasted only so long as there were no spectators. Unfortunately, spectators soon began to arrive.

The first was an unattached terrier which was nosing about the hedges. The terrier barked with delight on seeing the St. Jim's juniors, and, after fussing about for some minutes, decided to fall in at the rear.

Then a boy with a tradesman's delivery-tricycle joined up, his freckly face one huge grin.

The Shell glared at him. Some even shook their fists at him. But the freckled delivery-boy only grinned the more and pedalled slowly behind.

The organised walkers walked on, furious.

Near the village they encountered one or two loafers leaning against a fence for want of a better job. The loafers stared; then jeered.

"Ho! Look at 'em!"

"My eye! They've got their nurse with 'em!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Rush the rotters!" said Grundy sulphurously.

"Duck 'em in the ditch!" said Clifton Dane.

"Hold on, chaps; remember Railton!" warned Tom Merry, though he felt just as much like committing assault and battery on the loafers as the rest. And wiser counsels prevailed. The Shell remembered Railton and the grim look he had given before they started out, and the remembrance was strong enough to restrain them.

On marched the walkers, reinforced now by three jeering loafers.

They reached Rylcombe Grammar School, and at this point came the worst indignity. A point the Shell had forgotten previously was that the Grammar School worked to a different time-table from theirs. At the precise moment that they reached the big red-brick building, the Grammar School fellows were coming out from morning lessons.

Crowds were streaming out of the tall iron gates outside the building. At the sight of the Shell, those crowds halted, blinked, then gasped in wonderment.

Gordon Gay and a crowd of Tom Merry & Co.'s Fourth

Form rivals appeared out of the gates, and the Shell groaned in chorus.

"Oh, dear! Worst thing that could have happened!" moaned Lowther.

"My hat! Tom Merry and his crowd!" yelled Gordon Gay. "And—they've got a girl to look after 'em!"

"Ye gods!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammar School juniors yelled.

"Who's your lady friend, Merry?" called out Frank Monk.

"You never told us about her!"

"Does she tuck you up in your ickle cots at night?" yelled Carboy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's all join up!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Perhaps the poor dears might be attacked by rough boys and need our help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Grammarians.

Crowds of them, roaring with laughter, flocked into the road and attached themselves to the rear of the procession. Tom Merry and his fellows continued to march on, almost dancing with rage, but helpless in the knowledge that retaliation would mean trouble of a serious kind when they got back to St. Jim's.

Nearing Rylcombe the situation grew worse and worse. Two more errand-boys with tricycles joined up, then one or two gentlemen of leisure, who had been supporting the outer walls of the Green Man; and, to crown all, Police-constable Crump, Rylcombe's solitary representative of law and order.

On the way back to St. Jim's, Gordon Gay bribed an itinerant musician to lend him his cornet for a while, and thus, to the strains of martial music, the Shell returned to their own domain.

Morning lessons were over by the time the gates of St. Jim's were reached, and crowds of amazed juniors flocked out of the gates to welcome back the wanderers.

Yells of amazement and amusement rang out on all sides.

"What the thump—"

"What the merry dickens—"

"It's the Shell!" shrieked Jack Blake, of the Fourth.

"And just look at 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the last crushing blow. The organised walkers, who had unconsciously been increasing their speed all the way back from Rylcombe, broke into a run, and fairly streaked through the gates, leaving a breathless and indignant Miss Linton to bestow a withering look on the hysterical crowd and follow after at a more leisurely pace.

Long after that was heard, in the Shell quarters, sounds of lamentation, weeping, wailing, and a gnashing of teeth.

The organised walk had certainly added to the gaiety of Rylcombe and district. But from the point of view of the organised walkers, the affair had been most distinctly and decidedly not a success!

CHAPTER 6.

'Neath Janet's Window!

"I F I'm not intwudin', deah boys—"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he put his head round the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage that evening.

The Terrible Three looked up and nodded cheerily. The (Continued on next page.)



MY "STARS"!

events of the morning having receded a little into the background by this time, they were recovering their customary good-humour, and the swell of the Fourth was always persona grata in Study No. 10.

"Trot in, old scout!" ordered Tom Merry. "Welcome as the flowers in May!"

"Thank you, deah boy!"

"And wherefore the worried brow?" asked Lowther. "Quite a treat, by the way, to see a Fourth chap frowning these days; they haven't stopped cackling since Miss Linton arrived!"

"Something in that!" confessed Tom Merry, with a somewhat wry smile. "What's wrong, Gussy?"

"I've called to ask your advice, deah boy."

"Pleasure! Tell your uncles all about it, and we'll do our best!"

"It's about the lady Lowthah mentioned just now—Miss Linton, you know. I have already bwoached the subject to Blake an' the west in my studay, but the wottahs wefuse to tweek the mattah sewiously."

The Terrible Three looked interested.

"Hem! An affair of the heart, old chap?" hinted Lowther, with great seriousness.

Arthur Augustus coloured slightly.

"Bai Jove! I wondah how you guessed that, Lowthah?"

Lowther closed one eye to his grinning chums.

"It sort of came to me in a flash to-day that there might be some sort of—er—understanding between you and Miss Linton. It was when someone mentioned your name in class this afternoon."

"Bai Jove! Whatevah happened?" asked D'Arcy unsuspectingly.

Lowther shrugged expressively.

"Can't be sure, of course, but I thought she blushed and dropped her eyes, as though the sound of your name struck a kind of chord in her heart, you know!"

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

D'Arcy did not notice the observation. A smile of half-incredulous delight had suddenly appeared on his classic face. His monocle had dropped from his eye and, for the first time in history, hung, neglected, down the front of his waistcoat.

"Is this weally true, Lowthah?" he asked.

"Couldn't swear to it, of course, old chap. Don't go and mention to her that I said so, or anything like that!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I assuah you, Lowthah, that I wouldn't dweam of betwain' your confidence. But I am vewy intewested—vewy intewested indeed. Since I have gone so fah, I may as well say that I have taken a vewy great likin' to Miss Linton. I have even entainted the possibility of askin' the favah of her hand in mawriage!"

"Oh, crikey—I mean, fancy that!" spluttered Lowther. "Well, Gus, you have our very best wishes, hasn't he, you chaps?"

"Oh, rather!" chortled Tom Merry and Manners.

"If I might say so, Gus old man, it will be an ideal match," said Lowther, with owl-like gravity. "I'm pretty certain there's a chance that she'll reciprocate your feelings, too!"

Which statement could hardly have been termed a deviation from the truth, for there certainly was that chance—though a very remote one, as the Terrible Three appreciated!

D'Arcy coughed.

"I was wondewin' whethah you fellows could advise me as to the best step to take, in the circs. The posish is a little delicate, you see. Miss Linton is at pwesent a Form mistwess heah, whereas I am only a pupil. I hardly feel like appwoachin' her while our wrelative positions are so pecuiliarly awkward."

"Quite, quite!" assented Lowther. "Just a bit awkward, as you say. But there's a way out of the difficulty somewhere. In fact, I believe I've got it!"

"Bai Jove! What's the suggestion, Lowthah?"

"Why not serenade her?" asked Lowther, in an intense, impressive voice.

There was a gurgle from Tom Merry and Manners. D'Arcy jumped.

"S-s-sewenade her? Are you sewious, Lowthah, deah boy?"

"As serious as I've ever been in my life," answered Lowther—which statement did not amount to much, taking into consideration the fact that Lowther had never once been known to do anything serious.

"But—but suahly the custom of gentlemen sewenadin' ladies is confined to the Latin countwies—Spain, an' so on?"

"What if it is? This is just the opportunity to introduce it into England. It's the very solution of your problem, in fact. You admit yourself that you can't propose to her in

the ordinary way. Very well, then. Serenade her, and see what happens. If she tosses you a rose from her balcony—"

"But there is no balcony to Miss Linton's woom, deah boy!"

"Well, her window, then. If she tosses out a rose, you'll know it's O.K., and that you can hang your hat up."

"Ha ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry and Manners, unable to suppress their mirth any longer.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Take no notice, old chap!" advised Lowther. "Some chaps haven't a mind above rags and that sort of thing. They don't realise there's a deeper side to things."

"Bai Jove! That is pwecisely what I told Blake and the othah wottahs in my studay!" remarked Arthur Augustus innocently. "Anyway, Lowthah, I am inclined to think there is somethin' in your ideah. I weally feel like twyin' it. But what musical instwument can I play? I can stwum on a piano, but it's hardly poss to take a piano out into the quad."

"Borrow Herries' cornet!" suggested Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wish you chaps would be quiet!" said Lowther severely.

"Now, Gus, seriously, I should advise a ukulele; it's easily the most fashionable musical instrument for serenading purposes."

"But I can't play a ukulele, deah boy!"

"You don't need to, old chap! That's the beauty of it. With a uke, all you do is just bang your fingers on the strings, and music of a kind comes out naturally. Of course, your singing will be the real feature. You'd better choose a really first class sentimental song. Something that will go straight to her heart."

"What would you say to 'My Dweams'?" asked D'Arcy brightly.

"The very thing! Gus, old bean, you're made!" declared Lowther enthusiastically. "Now let's get busy!"

"Do you think it poss to do anythin' this evening?"

"Certainly. In fact, you've got to fix it all very quickly before a rival nips in and serenades her first. Manners can lend you his uke, can't you, Manners?"

"Anything for a quiet life!" grinned Manners.

"Things couldn't be better you see, Gus!" said Lowther genially. "And now's the best time of the day—what they call the gloaming, when romantic hearts turn lightly to thoughts of love!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Lowther rose and turned out a cheap ukulele from a pile of miscellaneous "junk" lying in the corner.

"Here you are, Gus! Now go in and win!"

"Bai Jove! But come to think of it, I may have difficulty in wemembewin' the words of 'My Dweams'!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in sudden alarm. "Pewwaps I'd bettah go an' get my music!"

But Lowther shook his head.

"Shouldn't trouble to, if I were you, Gus! She won't be listening to the words; when you forget, you can just hum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ready, old scout?"

"I am weady, deah boy; but—"

"Then come on!" said Lowther; and he grabbed the swell of the Fourth by the arm and dragged him out of the study.

Lowther didn't want anything to happen at this stage of the jape to spoil things.

Lowther and D'Arcy rushed out of the study.

Tom Merry and Manners, shaking with laughter, followed them, not meaning to miss the fun. As they went downstairs they passed on the news to all and sundry, and quite a stream of fellows began to follow in their wake.

And thus it came about that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth at St Jim's, for the first time in his life serenaded a fair damsel beneath her window.

A huge crowd had assembled and screened themselves in the bushes and trees in the vicinity. Arthur Augustus, of course, didn't know that. His eyes were fixed upwards on the window of his beloved.

Plank-plank! Plonk-plonk!

Sounds of discord began to ascend as Arthur Augustus strummed on Manners' musical instrument. The swell of the Fourth coughed, then his tenor voice rang out across the quad.

"I dweam of the day I met you,
I dweam of the light divine
That shone in your tendah eyes, love,
When—da, da, da—da, da—"

It was unfortunate that Gussy had forgotten the words. The romantic effect was rather lost when it came to the "da, da" part. But the crowd didn't trouble about that loss. They rather enjoyed it, in fact.

They roared.

Arthur Augustus carried on nobly:

"I dweam of the da, da-da, da, da,

That da, da-da, da, da, da!

Oh I da, da-da, da, da, da-da—"

A window was suddenly thrown up above the romantic serenader, and the startled face of Miss Janet Linton peeped out.

"Boy! How dare you!"

Arthur Augustus, carried away temporarily by the beauty of the song, did not hear.

After a moment or two, Miss Linton disappeared.

Then something else appeared out of the window.

It was a water-jug, held firmly in Miss Janet Linton's slim hand!

At the same moment, a stately figure in cap and gown appeared round the corner of the School House building.

There was a horrified gasp from the crowd.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Head!"

Dr. Holmes, all unconscious of his peril, strode towards D'Arcy. And at the very moment when he reached him the jug was inverted and a shower of water descended on his venerable head.

SWOOOOOOOSH!

CHAPTER 7.

A Brainwave from Grundy!

"OH! Oh! Dear me! Ow!"

The Head danced and spluttered and gasped.

Arthur Augustus turned round, dropped his ukulele, and jumped.

"Oh! B-b-bai Jove!"

"D'Arcy! You—you— Oh, how unpleasant!" gasped Dr. Holmes, dripping water all over the grass.

"B-b-bai Jove! My deah sir—"

"How dare you, D'Arcy!" hooted the Head furiously.

"How dare you, I say!" A muffled laugh came from the bushes. Dozens of figures were now flitting away through the trees. The Head noticed neither. His eyes were fixed on the surprised and disconcerted swell of the Fourth.

"Weally, sir, this is quite beyond me!" said D'Arcy. "It appeals, my deah sir, that you are wet!"

"It not only appears so; it is so!" thundered Dr. Holmes. "I have been drenched with water, D'Arcy, from one of the windows above. And I may add that it is entirely your fault."

"I assuah you, sir, that I thwew no watah!"

"That, D'Arcy, is obvious! What I am saying is that you were the direct cause of the water being thrown. By standing here and creating a dreadful, nerve-racking din—"

"Bai Jove! I pwotest, sir, that it was nothin' of the kind! If I might explain, sir, I was sewenadin'!"

"What—what—"

"Sewenadin' Miss Linton!" explained Arthur Augustus. "Bless my soul! You—you were serenading Miss Linton?"

"Pweicely, deah sir. As a maitah of fact, I was singin' a vewy charmin' ballad called 'My Dweams, an'—"

"Boy! Are you demented?" roared the outraged Head.

"Nothin' of the kind, sir, I assuah you. Pewwaps it was wathah an unusual step for me to take, but—"

"Ridiculous! Preposterous!" roared the Head. "I refuse to listen to such nonsense! Follow me!"

"My deah sir!"

"Not another word!" thundered Dr. Holmes.

And he turned on his heel and stalked off towards the House in high dudgeon. Arthur Augustus followed him, pink with indignation.

There was laughter in the School House when he returned—chuckles in the Hall, grins up the stairs, and the echo of loud and uproarious laughter from the distance. D'Arcy scarcely noticed it, and certainly did not connect it with himself. There was nothing whatever to laugh at from his point of view. Lowther's brilliant project for serenading Janet Linton had somehow "gone west," and it was an occasion for tears, not laughter.

D'Arcy found even less reason for laughter when he reached the Head's study. Dr. Holmes was angry, and he did not spare the rod. Yells of anguish proceeded from Arthur Augustus before the Head had finished with him, and the romantic serenader's ardour was considerably cooled in the process.

D'Arcy went from the Head's study to the Junior Common-room, squeezing his hands under his arms as he went. There was a roar as he appeared in the doorway.

"Good old Gus!"

"Three cheers for Romeo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus looked rather surprised.

"Bai Jove! Whatevah is all the fuss about, deah boys?" he inquired.

"You, old bean! Head lay it on?" asked Manners sympathetically.

"Ow! Yaas, wathah! I used to hold a wathah high opinion of the Head, but I am beginnin' to have sewious doubts about him now. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of the Fourth sat down, still groaning. As he did so, there was a sudden commotion from the direction of the door as a hefty figure appeared on the scene.

"Look here, you men—"

"Hallo, hallo! Cheery old Grundy!" grinned Lowther.

"Nother lunatic at large, chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy tramped into the Common-room, his rugged face ablaze with excitement.

"Got it!" he roared. "The very idea you've all been waiting for! There's only one man in the Shell capable of thinking out an idea like this—that's me!"

"My hat! You've been thinking?" asked Lowther, in astonishment.

Grundy, who was rather slow on the uptake, nodded genially.

"That's what I said, Lowther! I've been thinking—thinking hard!"

"What ever with?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared.

"Funny, ain't you? Dashed good mind to whop you!"

(Continued on next page.)

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But you don't count, anyway! I'll explain my idea instead. It's about Miss Linton."

"Going to serenade her, Grundy? Better look out for Gussy if you do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy snorted.

"Serenade her, be blowed! I'm going to get rid of her! I'm the only man in the Shell capable of going the job, and I'm going to do it!"

"My hat!"

A prolonged chuckle escaped Grundy's lips. His great idea apparently amused him.

"It's a real stunner!" he said. "Gilt-edged and hall-marked, I can tell you! Wilkins and Gunn didn't think so when I told 'em just now, but they're silly asses! I knocked their silly heads together!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll do the same with any other silly ass who doesn't like the wheeze!" said Grundy truculently. "But, anyway, I'll tell you about it. The stunt is to make Miss Linton feel so uncomfortable that she won't feel like staying on at St. Jim's another day."

"Great pip!"

"Here's how it can be done," said Grundy, grinning cheerfully. "I'll dress up as a middle-aged man—"

"Eh?"

"Disguise myself, you know—false whiskers, and all that sort of thing—and call here to-morrow and ask to see her."

"M-m-my hat!"

"I'll choose a time when there are a lot of people about, and stroll up to her in front of everybody—"

"You—you will, will you?"

"And—and pretend—ha, ha, ha!—and pretend—" choked Grundy, laughing so heartily that he could hardly get it out.

"Cough it up, old bean!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

"And pretend that I'm her jilted lover! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

"Great Scott!"

The juniors looked at each other blankly.

"It'll be the jape of the term—the funniest thing that ever happened at St. Jim's!" yelled the great man of the Shell enthusiastically. "Up I'll roll, all dressed up, you know, and accuse her of deserting me for another! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

"I'll ask her to come back to me—beg her, with tears in my eyes! It'll be an absolute scream! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, jiminy!"

"She'll never survive it, of course," said Grundy, overcoming his mirth with difficulty. "The whole school will shriek over it, and Miss Linton will take the first train back to Girton!"

"D-do you really think so?"

"Bound to!" said Grundy confidently. "Leave it to me! I'll make St. Jim's too hot to hold her, believe me! Now, what do you think of it? Great, isn't it?"

"Well, my hat, great isn't the word for it!" said Manners. "It's—it's immense!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One moment, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been listening. Now he had risen from his chair and advanced towards Grundy, his eye fairly flashing fire behind his celebrated monocle.

"Do I undahstand you to say, Gwunday, that you pwopose to play this pwepostewous jape on Miss Linton?" he asked steadily.

Grundy glared.

"Just that! Got anything to say about it?"

Arthur Augustus eyed the great man of the Shell disdainfully.

"I have nothin' to say about it, deah boy; but if you attempt to cawwy out the uttably widiculous pwject you have just outlined, I shall most certainly do somethin'!"

"Think you're going to stop me carrying out the most brilliant wheeze that's ever been thought out?" hooted Grundy.

"Oh, ye gods! Nothing like modesty!" gasped Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy did not smile.

"I have nothin' furthah to add!" he said loftily. "I have expressed my opinion on the mattah, Gwunday; all I can say now is: Go on with this so-called jape at your pwail!"

"Can't say I'm struck on it, Grundy, old man!" grinned Tom Merry. "Better call it off!"

"Hear, hear!"

Grundy clenched his fists and glared round the Common-room.

"So that's it, is it?" he roared. "Dashed if you're not all as bad as Wilkins and Gunn! Well, I'm going on with it,

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anyway! Nothing will jolly well stop me now! Blow you—all the lot of you!"

And George Alfred Grundy marched out of the Common-room.

Grundy had spoken!

Strangely enough, the fact that he had spoken didn't overwhelm the Common-room, as might have been expected. All that followed Grundy as he tramped out was not a gasp of admiration, but—a loud roar of laughter!

CHAPTER 8.

The Jilted Lover!

NOTHING could stop Grundy. Nothing ever did. Grundy had made up his mind, and when Grundy had made up his mind, all the powers of heaven and earth could not deflect him from his course.

Sceptics derided, scoffers scoffed, and friends begged him not to do it. Grundy remained adamant.

After dinner on the following day he marched out of the School House carrying a mysterious leather case.

Half an hour later he returned, but no longer in the guise

of George Alfred Grundy. A startling change had come over him. He wore a suit several sizes too large for him, a battered bowler hat, and gloves of glaring yellow.

His clothing was not the only thing about him that had changed. Grundy's rugged face had also undergone a complete transformation. His cheeks were a flaming scarlet, his eyebrows a deep jet black, and his nose the colour of a ripe strawberry, and, to complete the disguise, a heavy pair of moustaches adorned his upper lip.

Grundy fondly imagined that he had assumed to the life the appearance of a gentleman in the late thirties. Unhappily, however, the fact was that he had merely succeeded in creating a grotesque edition of George Alfred Grundy, and the crowd waiting on the School House steps had no difficulty whatever in recognising him.

There was a yell as he appeared.

"Here he is!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Looks more lifelike than he ever did before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The disguised Grundy's jaw dropped a little at that unexpected welcome.

"My hat! How did you guess it was me?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you chaps, don't go and let on to Miss Linton or you'll spoil the whole game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the crowd.

Then the laughter died down suddenly as a slim, feminine figure appeared in the doorway of the House.

Grundy had timed it well. Miss Linton was just going out.

"Now for it!" murmured Lowther. "On the bawl, Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Linton nodded cheerfully at the juniors, who all raised their caps respectfully. Then she started down the steps.

She jumped as her eyes fell on George Alfred Grundy. Certainly Grundy at that moment was enough to make anybody jump.

"Dear me!" murmured Miss Linton.



At the very moment that Dr. Holmes reached D'Arcy the jug was inverted and a shower of water descended on his venerable head!



Then Grundy stepped forth. His eyes were gleaming, and there was a do-or-die expression on his face—or, at all events, on what could be seen of his face.

"Miss Linton!" he said in a falsetto voice. "Janet!" Simultaneously he raised his battered bowler-hat. The latter was a distinctly unfortunate move, for, by raising his hat, Grundy accidentally raised the wig he was wearing, thereby displaying his own tousled mop beneath.

"Grundy, the japer!" murmured Lowther. "Oh, help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Janet," said Grundy, replacing his hat on his head, and remaining in blissful ignorance of the movement of his wig—"Janet, you recognise me again?"

Miss Linton bestowed on the cheerful japer of the Shell what Lowther expressively described as the "marble eye."

"How dare you address me by my Christian name?" she exclaimed angrily.

Grundy laughed a falsetto laugh.

"Ho, ho, ho! Who has a better right than me to call you Janet?" he demanded. "I am your jilted lover. Do you recognise me?"

"Of course I recognise you. You're Grundy!"

"Wha-a-at?" shrieked the disguised Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are Grundy, of my Form. How dare you appear in these ridiculous clothes!"

"Well, my hat! Who told you I was Grundy?" asked the great man of the Shell, in astonishment. "Anyway, whoever it was, they may have been mistaken!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who is Grundy, anyway?" demanded Grundy, determined to carry out his plan at any cost. "Blow Grundy! My name's Bert—Bert Smith. You remember me now?"

"I remember you an hour ago as Grundy. If you are at St. Jim's under an assumed name, than I shall consider it my duty to inform the headmaster of the circumstances," said Miss Linton sharply. "You say your real name is Bert Smith?"

"That's it; Bert Smith!" said Grundy eagerly. "Not Grundy at all. You ought to remember me, considering that you jilted me!"

"J-j-jilted you?" stammered Miss Linton blankly. "Are you mad, Grundy?"

"Smith," corrected Grundy—"Bert Smith. And you jolly well jilted me—left me for another, by James! You broke my heart, in fact!"

"B-b-broke your heart?"

"But I'm a forgiving chap, and I'm willing to forgive and forget, and let bygones be bygones. Come back to Bert, Janet dear!" finished up Grundy pathetically, holding out his arms eloquently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled; they couldn't help it. The spectacle of Grundy solemnly going through with his programme, when it was obvious to everybody else that Miss Linton knew his real identity without a shadow of doubt, was indescribably funny.

"Boy—Grundy—" gasped Janet Linton, hardly knowing what to make of the extraordinary situation.

"Smith," once more corrected Grundy. "Blessed if I can understand how you keep on confusing me with this Grundy fellow! I'm Bert Smith, your jilted lover. Don't you remember those happy days of old, when we used to make daisy-chains together?"

"Oh, great pip!"

"Boy—boy!" gasped Miss Linton. "You are insane! You must have the attention of a skilled mental specialist immediately!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy turned red under his outer covering of scarlet. Somehow—he couldn't quite understand how—things didn't seem to be working out according to programme. The great jape didn't seem to be turning out quite so great as he had intended. Miss Linton, instead of being overcome, was merely annoyed, and she would insist on calling him Grundy all the time. Grundy simply couldn't understand it.

He decided to deal his master-stroke.

"So you won't come back?" he cried suddenly. "You refuse to have anything more to do with the lover you rejected so callously?"

"Boy—Grundy—"

"Then, in that case," said Grundy dramatically, "there is but one thing left for me to do. Life is worth nothing without you. I will quietly die, and trouble you no more!"

There was a howl as Grundy then drew from his pocket a sixpenny toy revolver.

"Oh, help!"

"He's going to commit suicide with a toy pistol!"

"How can you die quietly with a thing like that?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Linton, apparently, wasn't quite sure whether it was all a joke or whether possibly there might be something serious behind Grundy's threat, for she suddenly reached forward and tried to wrest the pistol from him.

knowledge they made up for in enthusiasm. Backwards and forwards and round and round they went, hacking and slashing and ramming at each other for all they were worth.

Clatter-crack-clatter!

"Whoooooo!"

"Ow-wow!"

There was a yell from D'Arcy as Grundy's foil caught him a smart crack on the chin, and a howl from Grundy as D'Arcy's foil prodded him a fearful prod in the chest.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Herries.

"Two to one in doughnuts on Gussy!"

"Have at him, Grundy—that's the right term, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Yells of encouragement, intermingled with yells of laughter, went up from the excited spectators.

A difference in styles became noticeable after the first minute. Grundy seemed to favour what might be termed a sledge-hammer movement, while Arthur Augustus developed a habit of using his foil as he might have used a battering-ram.

As neither paid much attention to defence, this difference in the two styles resulted in quite a lot of pain to the duellists. D'Arcy received a succession of whacks on his noble head, while Grundy got very severely prodded all over his manly chest.

The grease-paint which Grundy had used liberally in making himself up as Miss Linton's jilted lover began to get rather mixed up under the influence of one or two taps from D'Arcy's foil and a good deal of perspiration from Grundy himself. The jet-black eyebrows began to melt into the highly-coloured cheeks, and the ripe strawberry tint of the nose began to spread over the lips, devoid now of the face fungus which previously adorned them.

Altogether, Grundy at the end of a couple of minutes of fierce duelling was not exactly a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

And in spite of his confidence, Grundy found it not quite so easy to lick his immaculate opponent as he had imagined.

Arthur Augustus was slim and lithe and active and quick-thinking; Grundy was hefty and deliberate and rather slow-witted. The advantage was all on D'Arcy's side.

Roars of applause went up as the swell of the Fourth began to assert his superiority and drive Grundy back. The great man of the Shell didn't want to retreat; but that vicious prodding movement of D'Arcy's gave him no option in the matter. He fell back step by step, and then eventually losing his balance in missing D'Arcy on one occasion, and assisted by a final drive from D'Arcy's foil, George Alfred Grundy fell.

"Man down!" roared Jack Blake.

"D'Arcy wins the duel!"

"Well done, Gussy!"

"Put your foot on his chest and tread on him, old bean—that's what they used to do in the old days!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A cheering crowd swarmed round the victorious Arthur Augustus. And then—

There was a commotion at the back of the crowd. Then a series of agonised yells.

"Yaroooooh! What the thump—"

"Ow-wow! Who on earth—"

"What is it? Yooooooop!"

Yelling juniors scattered in all directions. As they scattered, a slim girlish figure was seen to be advancing to the centre of the crowd, an expression of grim determination on her face and a cane in her hand.

"Oh, my hat!" roared Tom Merry. "It's Miss Linton!"

CHAPTER 10.

Putting Her Foot Down!

"HOW dare you!"

Miss Linton's tone was severe. It was more than severe. It was almost fierce. There was something about it that had never been there before, the juniors thought.

In fact, Miss Linton looked different as well as sounding different. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were blazing; her lips were set in a grim, hard line; her whole attitude was aggressive.

In her hand was a cane. A cane from Miss Linton had been a matter for laughter only a few hours before. But Miss Linton had evidently had a charge of electricity in her right arm or something very similar. Judging

by the yells of those who had stood in her path, anyway, the cane from Miss Linton was no longer a matter for laughter.

"How dare you!" repeated Miss Linton, eyeing the amazed juniors with the eyes of an enraged tigress.

"What the thump—" gasped Tom Merry.

"I forbade this encounter; yet it has taken place all the same. How dare you!" cried Miss Linton, stamping her foot on the ground.

"M-m-my hat!"

"What's happened?" asked Jack Blake wonderingly.

"I am waiting for an explanation! You have been fighting; you, D'Arcy, and you, Grundy! What have you to say?"

"B-b-bai Jove! I twust you are not offended, deah gal—"

"How dare you address a Form mistress in that disrespectful manner, D'Arcy!"

"Oh, gweat Scott! Sowwy, deah gal—Miss Linton, I mean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" cried Miss Linton so fiercely that the laughter died away in an instant.

George Alfred Grundy scrambled to his feet, glaring.

"My hat! So you've turned up!" he grunted.

"Grundy!"

"Think I'm going to be told by a blessed girl whether I can scrap or not?" hooted Grundy. "Not likely! I'm going on with this scrap—"

"Duel!" corrected Lowther.

"Well, duel, then. I'm not finished—not by a long chalk! Ready, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

Grundy picked up his fencing-foil and made a rush.

But before he could reach the swell of the Fourth, a slim but firm hand had grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and yanked him back.

"You utterly incorrigible boy!"

Grundy jumped, and his eyes almost bolted out of his head as he turned round and recognised his captor. It was Miss Linton!

"What the thump—" gasped Grundy.

"You disobedient, disrespectful boy! Didn't I tell you that I was not going to allow fighting?"

"And didn't I tell you I wasn't going to be dictated to by a blessed girl?" roared Grundy. "Lemme go!"

"You will not attempt to go on with this ridiculous encounter?"

"Of course I will!" bawled Grundy. "Lemme go, I tell you!"

"I shall not let you go until you promise not to attempt to go on with the fight! Promise!"

"Shan't!"

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"Promise!" repeated Miss Linton, shaking Grundy like a ferrier shaking a rat.

Grundy roared.

"Lemme g-g-g-g. I t t t-tell you! I—I—I—Whoooooop!"

"Promise!" said Miss Linton relentlessly.

"Ow! You'll sh-sh-shake me to p-p-pieces! All right! I'll promise!"

"You will not try to fight with D'Arcy again?"

"Ow! No!"

"That's better," said Miss Linton, releasing the great man of the Shell! "And now, Grundy, I am going to cane you. Hold out your hand!"

"Wha-a-at!" hooted Grundy.

"Hold out your hand!" ordered Miss Linton, raising her voice considerably. "I am going to cane you—severely!"

"Oh, my bat!"

Grundy stared at the Form mistress of the Shell.

"You—you're going to cane me?" he stuttered. "And suppose I say you're jolly well not going to cane me?"

"In that case, Grundy, I shall cane you all the more severely. Hold out your hand!"

Grundy seemed to explode with wrath.

"Hold out my hand—to you? Not me!"

"Then I shall have to use force. Merry! Manners! Noble!"

"Oh! Yes, Miss Linton!"

"I must ask you to assist me by forcing Grundy to hold out his hand and be canded. Please do so!"

The three juniors addressed hesitated.

"Hem!"

"If you don't mind——"

"Are you going to obey me, or not? If not, then I shall be compelled to go to the Head and report the circumstances."

"Oh, great pip!"

"Do as I say!" commanded Miss Linton. "Immediately!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Noble, better known as Kangaroo, stared at each other, then stared at this amazingly determined Form mistress.

Then, after a moment's hesitation, they closed round Grundy.

Grundy gave them a glare.

"If you fellows lay your paws on me——"

"We're going to, old bean!" said Tom Merry.

"Can't help it!"

"Then I'll bash you!" roared Grundy, placing himself in a fighting attitude. "I'll smash you all into little bits—Yaroooooh!"

Somehow, the bashing and smashing didn't take place. Tom Merry and his two colleagues found it quite easy to surround Grundy and render him helpless without sustaining any damage themselves.

"Got you!" said Tom Merry. "Now, hold your hand out, Grundy! Don't play the giddy ox!"

"Hold it out for him!" ordered Miss Linton.

"Oh, crikey!"

Tom Merry found himself obeying—he hardly knew why. While Manners and Kangaroo held the struggling Grundy back, Tom applied a grip to his elbow that forced his hand out straight.

Miss Linton raised her cane, and it fairly sang through the air.

Swish!

"Yarooooooooh!" roared Grundy. "Ow! That hurts!"

Swish!

"Whooooooh! Oh crikey!"

Swish!

"Ow-wow! Help! Lemme go! I won't struggle now! I'll let her cane me if you'll lemme go!"

"Release him then!" ordered Miss Linton, and Tom Merry and Manners and Kangaroo stepped back.

Grundy, an indescribably comic figure in the remnants of his disguise, then held out one hand after the other, and Miss Linton's cane descended again and again till Grundy was fairly howling with pain.

The leopard had changed her spots with a vengeance! Punishment from Miss Linton was quite obviously not a thing to be despised now, and respect for the Gilton girl grew with every howl from Grundy.

GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,163.

"That will do!" said Miss Linton at last. "Now the Shell will go back to the Form-room for special detention."

"Sp-special detention?"

"What the thump——"

"Over the Fourth I have no jurisdiction, so I am unable to order you any punishment for the disgraceful scenes that have taken place here and in front of the School House this afternoon. But I will see to it, at all events, that my own Form receives adequate punishment. Report back to the Form-room immediately!"

"Well, my hat!"

The crowd fairly buzzed with indignation.

But, strangely enough, there were no longer any threats or attempts at insubordination.

Every member of the Shell in the crowd reported back to the Form-room like a lamb!

CHAPTER 11.

Au Revoir!

"MERRY!"

"Yes, miss!"

"When was the Great Fire of London?"

"In the year 1666, miss!"

"Quite correct! Noble!"

"Yes, miss!"

"Who succeeded Charles II. as King of England?"

"James II., miss!"

"Sit down, Noble. Grundy!"

"Yes, miss!"

"What notable personage landed in England on November 5th, 1683?"

"William of Lemon, miss!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, William of Orange, miss. That right, miss?"

"Quite right, Grundy. You may sit down again."

The Shell Form room was a hive of industry.

Twenty-four hours had passed since Miss Linton's amazing change of attitude. In that time Miss Linton had succeeded in completely mastering the Shell. There had been difficulties, of course. Gore and one or two others had kept up the revolutionary attitude as long as they could. But even those diehards had now been subdued, and Miss Linton was unquestionably dictator in the Shell.

Sheer determination had gained her the victory. The incident on the School House steps had shown the Form master's niece that she would lose control completely unless something drastic was done. She had chosen to do something drastic, and she had succeeded.

As Grundy sat down, a stately figure in cap and gown stepped from the doorway in which he had been standing for a minute or so, and advanced to Miss Linton's desk, smiling. It was the Head.

Dr. Holmes bowed to the temporary Form mistress.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Linton. You are getting on well with the Shell?"

"Excellently, thank you, sir!"

"I congratulate you, Miss Linton. You have done well—very well indeed!" said Dr. Holmes. Then, turning to the class, he added: "And I also congratulate you, boys, on

having the common sense to accept a most unusual arrangement in such a loyal spirit."

And the Head, fairly beaming, quitted the Form-room, leaving the Form mistress flushed and happy, and Shell feeling that there was something to be said for being nice to a temporary Form mistress, after all!

Miss Linton had won through!

There was no doubt about it.

Now that she had done so, the Shell found that working with a schoolmistress had many advantages.

When she found that her victory was secure, Miss Linton became the cheery schoolmistress imaginable, and halcyon days followed for the Shell. The Form master's niece, despite a rather awe-inspiring knowledge of the classics,

(Continued on page 23.)

SPECIAL FOR NEXT WEEK

"‘DIZZY’ DESMOND—DAREDEVIL!"

By Martin Clifford.

"ONE-TON WILLY" IN ANOTHER THRILLING ADVENTURE

By Cowpuncher Johnny Carter.

"CHICK CHANCE—ADVENTURER!"

By Robert Murray.

"THE WIGGA WAGGA BOYS!"

THE ORACLE'S CHEEKY CHINWAG WITH THE EDITOR,

and

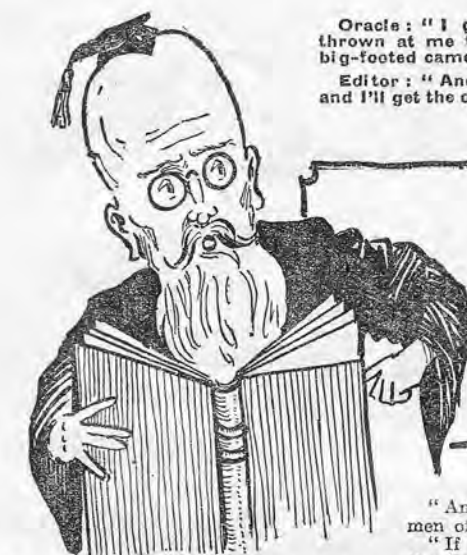
PROFESSOR PIMPLE'S TRIP ROUND THE WORLD!

ORDER YOUR "GEM" EARLY.

Oracle: "I got another bag full of queries thrown at me this week by that noddle-headed, big-footed camel, the Ed.!"

Editor: "Another remark from you, my lad, and I'll get the office-boy to sit at your desk!"

HOW MANY BEANS MAKE FIVE?



THE Office-Boy has been wearing a new suit this week and a very fed-up expression. I think he must have won the suit in a raffle, but I know how he got the fed-up look. He got that through trying to kick my top-hat across the office. He didn't know, when he came in on Monday morning, and saw the Oracle's ancient tile on the floor, that yours truly had concealed an outsize in bricks beneath its glossy exterior, and when our ambitious youth went to



The Office-Boy soon found that a large-size in bricks rested beneath the topper!

kick it—Ooooh! My hat! I mean, his foot! Ha, ha, ha!

Yes, chums, the ancient one is smartening himself up a bit. And the Editor says he's very pleased with me and is going to keep me on after all, and bring his children up to see me one day, because they've got tired of going to the Zoo.

The Editor's beginning to tumble what a lot of brilliance there is under the old cranium, even if there's no brilliantine on top of it, and the other morning he gave me a cigar—what d'you think of that, my lads? I know what I thought of it, when I tried to smoke the thing. And when I set fire to my whiskers trying to light it, he was jolly helpful, and threw the jug of boiling water that had come in with the tea over me at once to put out the fire. Kind, I call that—for an Editor, I mean.

When the flames had been extinguished, he said:

"Can you tell 'A Girl Admirer' what it is that makes the wind whistle?"

"The wind whistles, sir," I said, "because it's familiar with so many airs."

"And who are the three most famous men of to-day?"

"If you've got two brothers, sir, and they're half as clever as you, then the answer is staring me in the face," I told him.

"That's a very good answer," said the Editor. "'Designer' writes to ask how tattooing is done?"

"The skin is punctured in the pattern desired, and coloured material is rubbed in, which becomes indelibly fixed. In New Zealand the Maoris brought tattooing to a very high art, covering the whole of their bodies, including their faces, with beautiful designs."

"It's a pity," said the Editor, "some people were not born Maoris. Can you tell W. Jessop, of Newport, what a 'Needle-gun' is?"

"I can, sir. The needle-gun was a breech-loading rifle used by the Germans in 1870, but it was found to be less efficient than the muzzle-loading rifles then in use, as the range was short, and the escape of gas at the breech was very great. They were eventually replaced by the Mauser rifle."

"Can you tell a Leeds reader what Ades are?"

"That is the name in America for drinks made from lemons, limes, and oranges. Usually a maraschino cherry and some cracked ice are added, and they can be got in the States at soda-fountains and drug stores. Nowadays, they have electrical machines installed, so that the fruit-juice is squeezed out in front of the customer. It is estimated that in this way the United States uses three million boxes of fresh fruit in a year."

The Editor gazed admiringly at the



Tattooing is an art which is much indulged in by the Maoris, Zulus, and other coloured races.

dome of thought that serves as a resting place for my hat in wet weather.

"Now let me ask you one," I said. "What is the shortest poem in English?"

"Hired."

"Tired?"

"Fired!" said he brightly.

"You're wrong, Ed," I chortled. "The shortest poem is called 'Lines Written on the Antiquity of Fleas.'"

"Adam."

"Had 'em."



Portrait of an American hiding behind a glass of Ades!

"I didn't ask you in here to waste my time with silly questions," said he sternly, "and don't address me as 'Ed.' And just take your whiskers out of the ink-pot, please. A reader of the GEM has been told that oysters grow on trees. Somebody has been having a joke with him."

"Not at all, sir," I said. "On the islands of the Caribbean, in Cuba, Trinidad, Barbadoes, and Colombia, there are plenty of trees with their lower branches covered with oysters. These oysters are carried on to the trees by the tide and the spray, the trees, by the way, being unusual, because they can grow in salt water."

"You can go to lunch now," said the Editor, "and give your false teeth some exercise!"

"Thank you, sir," I said, and going out, I bumped into the Office-Boy, so I gave him the rest of the cigar, "and look here," I told him, "if I catch you listening at the keyhole again I'll clip your ear. D'you follow me?"

"I'd like to," he said. "In black!"

Never mind. Just wait!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,163.

ALL ONE-TON WILLY'S ARGUMENTS CARRY GREAT WEIGHT!



ONE-TON WILLY

"IN THE JUG!"

Told by Johnny Carter of Broken B Ranch.

CHAPTER 1.

One-Ton Chews Tobacco!

AS I told you before, One-Ton Willy Wood was Sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch because he elected himself to that same post. The guy who was sheriff before One-Ton was sure the crookedest sheriff that ever disgraced the silver star, and it was One-Ton who unmasked him. Two-Gun Turton was that crooked he made a corkscrew look like a plumb line. When he left Hammertoe in a hurry One-Ton said he'd be sheriff, and we let him because we scented a spot of fun.

Now, it didn't matter which way you looked at One-Ton, there was always a lot of him. He wasn't very tall, but his girth sure was the most amazing thing that ever was seen. They did say as how his daddy had to give Willy's horse an iron tonic once a week to help him bear up under the load; but, believe me, boys, what that cayuse really wanted was a concrete tonic.

Howsomever, there was One-Ton sitting in the sheriff's office, with his fat feet on the desk, and the old chair groaning something awful under the strain. There was a cheroot between his fat lips, and, although he smoked it, he didn't enjoy it. One-Ton never had smoked cheroots before, and he only did it then because he had a notion in his fat head that sheriffs always did smoke them things.

Four of us from the Broken B Ranch blew into town one fine and large day, with our pockets full of dollar bills and our hearts plumb full of jollity. When a guy's been out on the mesa for more'n a month rounding up the spring steers and branding 'em he sort of hankers after town life by way of a change, and he sure is ready for any bit of fun that comes along.

That's how we were. There was me—Johnny Carter—and Long Lane and Red Ryan and Hank Smith, all bona fide cowpunchers from the Broken B, and out for fun. We hadn't laughed for a month, and we was just aching for an excuse to split our faces, when, as we ambles up the main street of Hammertoe Gulch—which is the only street in the burg—we passes the sheriff's office, and Long Lane looks in and grins.

"Hallo, old-timer!" he says. "And how's things with you?"

One-Ton looks at him kind o' haughty, because he feels his position quite a lot.

"Oh, so-so!" he says, as if it was nothing to do with Long Lane.

"And haven't you had no hold-ups round here?" asks Hank Smith.

"And no rustling?" I pipes in.

"And no murders?" asks Red Ryan.

"Nothing of the sort," growls One-Ton. "For why? THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,163.

BAD MAN LOCKS UP SHERIFF AND BEATS IT!

Sheriff escapes and beats up bad man!

Ain't I Sheriff of Hammertoe? I'd sure like to see the guy what 'ud try any funny stuff on my location. Things is quiet, boys, and I aims to keep 'em quiet."

"You don't say!" exclaims Hank Smith. "I takes off me hat to you, sheriff!"

"I don't want you to do that and catch cold!" snaps One-Ton, guessing we're pulling his fat leg. "I've just been the rounds, and I'm resting. If you'll take your ugly face off my doorstep I'll be plumb obliged, Hank Smith."

If any other guy had said that same to Hank he'd have drilled holes in him before he'd have finished talking. But everybody humours One-Ton. All the same, I could see that Hank was chafing under the collar.

"You're getting fresh, sheriff," he says. "This location is so quiet you reckon you're the world's champ. But here's a guy who'll trim you, sheriff; so watch out, buddy! It's coming!"

And—crack!—like a streak of lightning Hank brings his six-shooter from the holster and fired. The bullet cut One-Ton's cheroot in half as it stuck out of his mouth, and

One-Ton was so plumb astonished to see the lighted half sail out of the window that he swallowed the other half. Yes, sir, he did. And his fat face goes a dirty green. He claps one hand to his rounded belt and looks like he'd bitten a frog in two—which isn't amazing, as you'll agree if you've ever had tobacco where your dinner ought to be.

Believe, me, tobacco is fine to smoke, but it's pizen to eat; and One-Ton learnt that lesson off by heart.

Not that we stayed to examine him. Oh, no; we just split the air with guffaws and ambles on our way up to the saloon.

Naturally, the boys present there wants to know what the row is about, and when we tell them they all rushes out of the saloon and down the street in order to see One-Ton trying to forget what tobacco under the belt tastes like, and we are left alone with the bar-tender.

"Well," says Hank Smith, "I ain't got any objection to One-Ton being sheriff, but if he gets up on his hind legs and tries to crow over yours truly I'm willing to argue about it."

"Same here!" says Red Ryan. "And I'm beginning to wonder whether we've done right in letting him be sheriff."

"Why for should you wonder that?" I asks.

"It's like this," says Red. "S'posing some quick-shooting son-of-a-gun blows in on Hammertoe ripe for red murder and robbery, what will One-Ton do? He may be plumb full of grit—and I'm not saying he isn't—but if he can't shoot quicker and straighter than any bad man who comes along, then he's no use to Hammertoe, and he won't keep law and order."

"What you mean," puts in Long Lane, "is this. If we starts kicking up a shindy, One-Ton isn't capable of dealing with that same."

"You've hit it," says Red Ryan.

"Then it's time we educated our sheriff," says Long Lane, with a grin. "Who's game to start a row and see how he handles the case?"

"I am!" cries Hank, pulling out his six-shooter and wrecking a window-pane. "Let her rip, boys!"

The bar-tender only grins. He knows we'll pay for the damage, and that it's only a spot of fun we're after. But, believe me, we made the air fairly hum with bullets, and if there were any invisible fairies round them parts they must ha' got lead-poisoning. In five minutes there wasn't a pane o' glass in that saloon, and we stuck bottles up on the counter and smashed them with bullets. You have no idea what we did to that saloon, and the row we kicked up was enough to give a deaf man a headache!

And then along comes One-Ton, with the other boys behind him. He flings open the door of the saloon and stands there with a gun in each hand.

"Stop this, you desert rats!" he pipes. "Put yer hands up—pronto!"

Well, he's got guns and he might shoot. We puts our hands up, all except Hank Smith, and he's got his back turned to the door. One-Ton blazes at him.

"Hank Smith," he cries, "I counts three, and then—"

But Hank turned round on one heel, and he flings up his hands, and as his hands go up he flings a bottle. It was cleverly done. I'll say that much. The base of that bottle catches One-Ton a biff on the belt, and it sounded as if someone had kicked a bass drum.

Bong!

One-Ton opens his mouth to gasp. Both his guns explode, and the bullets go through the ceiling. Then the fat sheriff went out backwards through the doorway, because he just can't help himself, and he collapses in the middle of the road, flat on his back—or, at least, as flat as ever he could be, which isn't saying a lot.

All the other boys troop into the saloon, laughing fit to split; and there's One-Ton lying in the road staring up at the stars, because the sun had set and it's growing dark. All the wind is knocked out of him, and he's groaning and gasping like a wounded heifer.

We shut the doors and we all laugh and laugh, and then set to for a game of cards. Ten minutes later Hank Smith peers outside cautiously, and when he pulls his head inside he looks puzzled.

"He's gone!" he says. "Now, what d'you know about that?"

"Just what I told you," puts in Red Ryan. "He's no good for sheriff. I ain't holding it against a man when he gets beaten to a draw in a gun fight, nor when Hank slapped him with a bottle. But if he ain't got the sand to come back and fight for law and order then he's not good enough to be Sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch."

"Hear, hear!" we all cries lustily.

But old Pete Callaghan, who's too old for anything but wisdom, ups and speaks his bit.

"Boys," he said, "don't think I love that fat lizard what calls himself sheriff. I don't. But I allow that there's more ways of keeping law and order than beating a man to the draw and letting the fresh air into his carcass with a dose o' lead. Fair play's a jewel, boys," he says. "So I plead for a chance for the sheriff. Let it keep till to-morrow morning, and if One-Ton hasn't done anything about it, then we'll take the star off his outside in shirts."

"Well spoken," says Red Ryan. "And that goes with me."

"And with me," I speaks up.

And no sooner had those words passed my lips than the doors open and One-Ton stands there glaring around the saloon. But the amazing thing is that both his guns are in his holsters, which is no way for a sheriff to tackle bad men.

But he doesn't tackle anybody. No, sir, he just walks straight up to Hank Smith and pins a star on his shirt.

"Hank Smith," he says, "I appoint you my deputy."

"What for?" asked Hank, feeling suspicious.

"I'll tell you," says One-Ton. "I bears no malice for the way you pulls a laugh on me. I reckon I can get a laugh out of you to even up matters later on. That can wait," says he. "But just about now there's serious work to do and I need help. There's a bandit from

Cactus County heading this way and you and me's going to corral him."

"If you want a posse, sheriff," I begins. But he shuts me up pronto.

"I don't want a posse!" he snaps. "What's got to be done has got to be done in silence and carefully. Hank and me can manage. Come on, Hank!"

"But I don't want to be deputy," says Hank.

"It isn't what you want," puts in One-Ton. "It's what you are. I've done made you deputy, and if you refuses I'll arrest you for contempt of the law. So chew on that! On the other hand, Hank Smith, if you're yellow—"

"Me?" roars Hank. "Yellow? Here, show me that bandit, you lump of fat, and see if I'm yellow!"

"Come on, then," says One-Ton. "And you boys stay right here, because I don't want that bandit scared out o' my location. This way, Hank."

We all stares and gapes as he marches out, with Hank bringing up the rear. What his game was we couldn't tell. At that moment we never thought that he'd dare say there was a bandit when there wasn't. But we were plumb rattled and not sure whether to trust that fat skunk or not.

Of course, we didn't know what happened to Hank immediately. We found that out afterwards, but I'll tell you here and now. One-Ton plods along to his office and his fat feet go plomp, plomp! in the road. He's very important, and he's mighty proud.

"I wants you to understand, Hank," he says, "this bandit is sure a desprit character, and he's plumb strong. You and me's going to jump on him and get him alive, and afore we sets out to waylay him we'll unlock the goal all ready to hurl him in. You get me?"

"It's a good idee," says Hank. "Nothing like having things all set."

So they goes to the adobe hut beside the sheriff's office, which is always used as the jug, goal, or lock-up, whatever you like to call it, and One-Ton unlocks the door and flings it open.



We see a lot o' arms and legs hurtling about and four o' 'em has hoofs!

"All serene," he growls in a business-like manner. "But isn't that a rope in the corner, there?"

"It is a rope," says Hank peering through the gloom. "Why?"

"It might come in handy," said One-Ton. "Go in and get it."

Hank thinks nothing. He goes in to get it, but as he stoops to pick it up One-Ton's gun jabs him in the ribs, and the sheriff talks turkey in his off-side ear.

"Put yer hands up, Hank Smith," he says.

Hank can't refuse with that gun making a brand on his ribs. Maybe One-Ton isn't a good shot nor a quick shot, but Hank knows he couldn't miss, and he can't do a thing else but obey.

"You snake in the grass!" he hisses, reaching for the why. "What is the big idee?"

One-Ton relieves Hank of his guns before he replies.

"Hank," says he, "maybe you're the world's champ as a fun-maker, but it's my bounden duty," he says, "to keep law and order in this part of the world, and I'm going to do it. And when the judge comes round here you answer the charge of battery and assault with a bottle!"

"But I can't stay here till the judge comes!" roars Hank. "I gotta be up on the ranch to-morrow."

"You won't be there," said One-Ton, "unless your pards bail you out. D'you think they'd do that?"

Hank takes a deep breath. He wants to throttle One-Ton, but he dursn't move with a gun in his ribs.

"Yes," he says, hoping for the best. "You run along and ask 'em, there's a good chap."

"All right," replies One-Ton. "You don't deserve it, but I don't want to be hard. I'll go. Stand still and turn your back to the door."

Hank obeys, cursing like mad, and One-Ton backs out of the lock-up, slams the door, and locks it, then comes back to the saloon looking mighty pleased with himself.

We knew afterwards that he had everything ready, but we didn't know it then. We were plumb amazed to see him back so soon.

CHAPTER 2.

In the Jug!

ONE-TON sits down at our table, and talks quiet so that no one else can hear.

"Boys," he says, "d'you know the name of that bad man I corralled jest now?"

"No," we tells him.

"Then it's Hank Smith," says he.

"What!" we bawls. But One-Ton has the muzzle of a gun peeping at us over the edge of the table.

"It's the truth," says he. "I done put Hank Smith in chokey for slapping me with a bottle, and there he stays unless you guys like to hand me yore guns and toddle along to bail him out."

Well, I ask you! What could three self-respecting cow waddies do but help a pard out of chokey? We had our fun with One-Ton, but you couldn't argue against the fact that he was sheriff, and Hank had no right to bang the sheriff in the belt with a bottle and knock his brains out. No, sir. We was plumb in the wrong, and we knew it.

"See here, One-Ton," says Long Lane. "We done had our laugh, and right now is where we pays for it. Here's my shooter. I'll come."

Mc and Ryan follows suit. The other boys in that saloon don't know what's happening, and we don't tell 'em. We leaves there with One-Ton and toddles over to the lock-up, and there is Hank sitting on a stool gnawing his fingernails. He looks up and fumes a bit, then he speaks.

"Mind that moth-eaten, bloated elephant don't fool you," he says.

(Continued on the next page.)



Being the Diary of Professor Pimple's head prefect—age 40—who faithfully records the "eggsetting" adventures of "P.P.'s" Academy in their tour round the world. Last week they got as far as Wapping Stairs.

AFTER the Professor had been downstairs several more times to bathe his eye, he began to dance up and down the deck with the Captain, until suddenly they stopped dancing and started an argument about binnacles. Pimple said binnacles were things they found on ships after a voyage, and the Captain said they weren't, cos there was only one binnacle on his ship, and he brought that with him. So the Professor sat down with his back to the funnel, and the Captain went up the stairs to a landing with a railing along it and walked up and down as if he was trying to find something to floor the Professor with. I think he found it, because I saw him pick up something and hide it up his sleeve.

By this time Pimple found he could see us best with only one eye, so he shut one eye and then the other, until he shut them both at once by mistake. Soon after that he began to snore.

After a very loud snore a lady sitting near me screamed and said the ship had struck a barrier reef, and we'd all be drowned. She threw her arms

round me and said she had seven children, and none of them knew how to swim. I had always been taught to knock a drowning person unconscious if they cling to you, and I was just picking up a ginger-beer bottle to hit the lady with, when Pimple woke up and said he taught swimming as an extra, and if she liked to have all the kids taught together, he would do them cheap, viz., seven for sixpence.

Then he called the Captain down from upstairs, and the Captain came running down saying: "It's barnacles, you old fool, not binnacles." But Pimple stopped him, and looking very dignified, he said: "I want you to anchor your ship as near Lambeth Baths as possible. I have seven pupils who wish to learn swimming."

I was glad when I heard Pimple say "Lambeth Baths," cos you get a costume, and towel and soap, fourpence first class, and can stay in as long as you like.

But the Captain said he wouldn't, cos having got the bloomin' ship going after a lot of trouble, he wasn't going to jolly well stop her for anybody.

Suddenly everybody started pointing at a light, and getting excited, as if they were surprised to see it there, and Pimple told us it was the Nore Light, and in a fog you couldn't see it, nor any other light neither, which was why it was called that. Then Sniffy asked me if Noah would know the way to the Ark if the light went out, so I told Sniffy the Captain was Noah, and he asked the Captain if he was Noah, and the Captain hit Sniffy with the thing he had picked up to floor Pimple with. I expect it was a belaying pin, that being the thing sailors knock people down with, and Sniffy didn't ask any more questions after that.

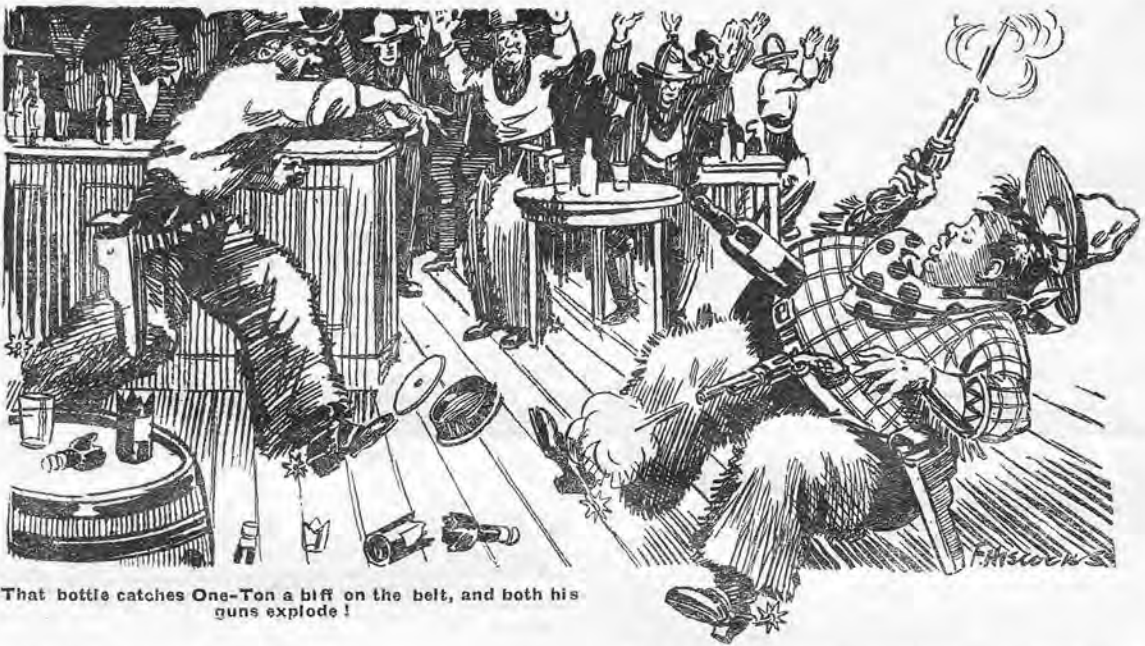
We were getting well out to sea by now, and we saw a lot of things bobbing about on the left of the ship. The Captain said he expected they were a school of porpoises, often found in these waters, and at the mention of the word "school," Slogger Brooks and Buster Brown were both very sick over the side, that word being enough to upset a chap at any time.

I rushed downstairs to tell Pimple about the porpoises, and found him still bathing his eye with some black stuff in a long glass. We came up just in time to see some of the porpoises get up and walk away, lighting cigarettes and laughing a lot together, and Pimple got angry and said they were doing it on porpoise.

Then the Captain started shouting orders, and told us afterwards we had had a very narrow escape, as his man had steered the ship on to Margate sands, and the moving shapes we took for porpoises were people sitting about on the beach.

The Captain said the ship was "listing," and I asked him if I could help with the list to save time; but he said no, and soon we were sailing smoothly away for the High Seas.

At least, I thought he said High Seas; but Pimple said we were going to the High Street to have some whelks which he wanted to give us a lesson about, so I will write down what we learn about whelks when I come back.



That bottle catches One-Ton a biff on the belt, and both his guns explode!

One-Ton looks very annoyed.

"Hank Smith," says he, "I'm aiming to do my duty, but you don't make it easy. I done brought you pards to bail you out. I'll unlock the door, and you gents can walk in and arrange terms."

Which he does, standing back for us to enter, and with a gun in each fat fist to make sure we try no funny stuff. But as soon as we're inside bang goes the door, and there is One-Ton laughing fit to burst his fat sides, and going red in the face over it.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he guffaws. "Hold me, somebody! Four clever cow waddies comes to take the rise out o' the sheriff. And now look at 'em."

We get hot under the collar and go for that door. We grab the bars and shake it; but it's built too strong to shift, and One-Ton laughs more than ever.

"This is beyond a joke, sheriff," snarls Hank. "Let us out. We done got to be back at the ranch afore sun-up. It's our bread-and-butter you're fooling with, you fat perisher—you!"

"It's false pretences!" roars Red Ryan.

"I like that," says One-Ton. "You makes me eat half me cheroot, and you wrecks the saloon with gunfire. So I puts you in here to cool down a bit. You can't fool with me, gents, not any sense."

"We've got to get out of here, pronto," I says. "Run down to the saloon and get the boys to bail us out."

"No," says One-Ton. "You guys done hurt my dignity, and you'll bail yourselves out."

"How much?" I bawls.

"Money is degradin'," says One-Ton. "I won't touch a cent of yore money. You made me eat half me cheroot, so I'll tell you what, boys. Watch me!"

He takes two cigarettes out of his pocket and breaks them in half.

"There!" he pants, after the exertion. "You'll eat a bit each."

"It'll poison us," moans Long Lane.

"If you won't eat, you won't get out of here," says One-Ton.

He leans against the door and grins at us, and we see we've got to humour him. Red Ryan who used to chew bacy eats his bit and makes out he liked it, and we all follows suit. Then we get that queer pain under our belts, and One-Ton laughs till he cries.

"If you could only see yourselves!" he hollers.

"Never mind that," says I. "Open the door."

"No," he says. "I done changed my mind. It'll cost you five dollars each, gents."

He puts his fat hands through the bars for the money, and Hank Smith glares at him.

"You miserable, fat-faced double crosser!" he bawls. "I'll smash you so's your own—"

But he stops talking, and dives at the door. One-Ton lets out a yell, but it's too late. Hank had him by the arms, and he couldn't move away from the door.

"Get the key!" pants Hank, holding on like grim death while One-Ton plunges about like a steer being branded.

I get my arms through the bars, and feel in his pockets for the key. It isn't easy because One-Ton is pulling to get away, and Red Ryan and Long Lane is ill-treating the fat sheriff by smacking his face and pulling his fat nose. Taking it all in all there was some fracas going on around there just then.

And just when I think I've got my fingers on the key, and I'm getting all set to let rip a howl of triumph, out of nothing at all comes a stab of flame, the crack of a six-shooter, and a bullet what whistles past our ears, and flattens on the wall behind us. Natcherally Hank lets go of One-Ton, and because he's been pulling to get away, he just goes flying backwards like a hogshhead of molasses rolling downhill.

We get a glimpse of a masked bandit astride his mustang. But it was only a glimpse, because the next second One-Ton's mighty bulk comes hurtling into the picture, and what happens ain't clear. There's a sort of plop as One-Ton hits something, and there's a lot of yells and bad words and the whinnying of the hoss. There's a good many thuds as bodies hit mother earth, and in the dim light we see a lot o' arms and legs all thrashing about, and four of 'em has hoofs.

"Whoopee!" cries Hank Smith. "The fat idjit has done upset the bad man from Cactus County. Unlock the door!"

"My middle name ain't Houdini, nor it ain't Maskelyne," I says. "Ef you can open the door of a lock-up without the key, then go to it, cowboy."

"Mean to say you didn't get that key?" asks Red Ryan.

"I did not," I says huffily. "You hombres was that plumb scared of a bullet you let him go too soon. Why blame me?"

There wasn't much more sense in blaming anyone. There we were, under lock and key, and that was that. We stared through the bars at what little we could see in the gloom of arms and legs going around in the dust.

"Serves the fat waddy right if thet rustler punctures his hide," says Long Lane. "He locked us up in here."

Well, we stays right there without arguing and watches, and it's tolerably plain to any right-minded man that for once One-Ton is plumb onlucky. Ef that bandit had come afoot and One-Ton had cannoned into him, that bad man would be flatter'n than one o' Widow Magee's cookies under my pony's hoof. But it never worked out that way at all. No, sir, that bad man had come into town astride horse-flesh, and even One-Ton couldn't squash man and hoss. True, he done knocked 'em over, but he never squashed 'em.

And the first on his feet was the hoss, and he sets his ears back, snorts, and lights out for the mesa. He's sure had enough o' Hammertoe Gulch, where fat men came out o' the night horizontally, in a manner o' speaking.

And number two on his pins is the bad man. We ain't got a gun between us, or we could ha' dropped him where he stood. He has a gun in each hand, and he kicks One-

Ton in the ribs until the fat sheriff pulls his face out o' the dust and scrambles to a decent, civilised, and upright position. We stared at that bad man, and we didn't care ef he was plumb rude about it, neether. We saw a hefty loose-limbed man. His mug was masked, but below the mask was a pair of moustachios, jet black and long, that struck me sort o' familiar, though I had a dim sort o' notion that the last time I done saw them top-lip adornments they was curled upwards at the ends instead of downwards.

But I don't pay too much attention to it then, and there was no time to argue it out, for the bad man poked One-Ton in the fatness with a six-gun and growls at him.

"Reach for the sky unless you're anxious to go to heaven," says he.

And when One-Ton, shaking like a jelly, does as he's told, the bandit relieves him of his ironware.

"Air you the sheriff of this burg?" asks the bad man.

"Y-yes, s-sir," stammers One-Ton. "But I'm s-sure p-plumb lenient, s-sir."

"I don't want no more o' yore leaning!" rasps the bandit. "It's too v'ilent. Where's the key of the lock-up?"

"P-please, it's hanging round me n-neck on a pi-piece o' string," says One-Ton.

And you done ought to ha' heard me say me ABC backwards. I'd been feeling in the fat swab's pockets for that key, and he had it on string round his fat neck all the time. Say, what d'you know about that?

"March!" orders Mister Bad Man. "I done see you got two, three crim'nals in the coop, and in you goes to lecture 'em on their evil ways."

One-Ton says nothing, 'cause he guesses a still tongue makes a wise head when there's a gun poking hard against yore off-side kidney. He hands his key to the bad man, who grins at us through the bars.

"Boys," says he, "you'll kindly step right back against the wall yonder, and turn round so's you cain't see me. I'm plumb shy, boys, and it makes me awkward to be looked at. I'm sure apt to tremble when folks stare at me, and me finger being on a hair-trigger at this blessed moment, it might go off, and there'd be a sure regrettable accident in these parts. You get me?"

We see that the bad man is enjoying the situation, but we cain't discuss the matter with him without our guns, so we goes to the farthest side of the lock-up and turns our backs to him. He opens the door, and One-Ton is shoved inside. The door slams, and the key is turned in the lock. We swing round in time to see the bandit shy the key over the roof of the lock-up. Then he chuckles some.

"So-long, boys!" he says, and fades away.

CHAPTER 3.

Beating the Bad Man!

"THE pesky toad!" growls Red Ryan.

"Why blame the bad man?" snarls Long Lane. "Look at our sheriff, gents! Locked up in his own jug by the first outlaw who blows into town!"

"How could I help it?" whines One-Ton.

"I know you couldn't help it!" sneers Long Lane. "The only thing you can help is yourself at dinner, you fattened calf—you! Call yourself a sheriff! Why, some sheriffs I know would ha' rather been blown to bits than give up the key like you done!"

"I'm going to catch him," says One-Ton.

"And how?" murmurs Hank.

"That's like you!" says One-Ton. "Use your brains! Cain't you suggest a thing? 'Cause if you cain't, I don't want you as deputy."

"Shades o' night!" cries Hank. "That reminds me! Was that guy the bad man from Cactus County?"

One-Ton sneers at him.

"Talk sense, Hank Smith!" says he. "Ef I reely thought there was outlaws and rustlers hereabouts, d'you think I'd be fooling around with coyotes like you and your pardners?"

"What!" howls Hank. "You spun that yarn and made me deputy jest to get even? You miser'ble, splay-footed, fat-nosed son of a blown-out desert rat! Ef I don't—"

And he jumps at One-Ton. He hits him, too, plomp on the nose.

"Ow! Stop it!" yelps One-Ton, trying to dodge Hank's fists. "You're hurting!"

"I'll hurt you!" bawls Hank. "You wait! I ain't fair started in yet!"

One-Ton tries to get away, and Hank goes after him. But there's not a lot o' room in that lock-up for that sort o' horse-play, and Hank trips over Long Lane's legs which do have to be curled up at times. Hank staggers, and goes biff up against the wall with enough force to half-daze him. He circles round, slips, and sits down rayther heavily.

The way he got up was sure amazing. And it didn't stop there, neether, for he was hi-yi-ing round the

lock-up and dancing about, clawing at his pants something ter'ble to behold. Then he gives a wrench, and we see he's got a length of wire in his hand. It must ha' been stuck in the ground with the pointed end uppermost, and Hank sure had found it!

He goes to the door and gets busy on the lock. For about three minutes he's sweating and saying things under his breath, and the wire is scraping and grating in the key-hole. Then suddenly there is a click, and the door swings open, and natcherally we all walks out.

One-Ton is as quiet as a mouse, and he turns away, but Hank grabs him by the fat arm and hauls him back.

"Not so fast!" says he. "You said you'd cotch this bad man, and we're the hombres to stand by and see you do it! This way, gents!"

One-Ton don't like the prospect, but he cain't cry off. We march him off to the Hammertoe Ranchers' Bank, and through the gloom we done see the bad man crouching in the porch doing something to the door.

We approaches mighty quiet, and One-Ton is shaking so that his teeth chatters. It was a wonder the bandit never heard him. Hank is shoving One-Ton forward, and One-Ton is trying to walk backwards.

"Go on!" hisses Hank.

"It's murder!" whines One-Ton. "I ain't got me gun!"

But Hank is smarting over more'n one wrong done to him, and he sure aims to make One-Ton smart, too. So he jabs that piece of wire into One-Ton's pants, and the way our sheriff yelled was enough to put the willies in a statue. And more'n that, gents, One-Ton leapt forward to get away from the point of that wire. He never worried about where he was going—he just went. And he shot plumb into the porch of the bank atop of the bandit—plomp!

Not that he stayed there, for the bandit fought back, and out came One-Ton again, rolling over and over in the dust. And that same second there was a blinding flash and a ter'ble explosion from the door of the bank. That bandit was blowing up the bank. Leastways, he aimed to do that, but One-Ton had made him drop the match, and it went off premature-like.

There was lumps of bank floating about in the air for a minute, and then, with a thud, the bandit arrived at our feet, stunned by the dynamite going off under his chin. We pounced on him, but he was senseless, though a long way from dead. His clothes was in ribbons, his mask was gone, and only half the moustachios was on his lip. The other half was hanging on one ear. And we knew him at a glance. It was Two-Gun Turton, who had been sheriff afore One-Ton barked in on the scene.

Natcherally, with a report like that dynamite made, all the inhabitants of Hammertoe came for a look-see, and by the time they arrived One-Ton had guns stuck in his holsters and was standing with a foot on Turton's chest.

"I done cotched him!" he bleats. "You boys lock him up."

"Without a key?" sneers Hank.

"I got a duplicate," says One-Ton, diving down inside his shirt collar. "Lock him up!"

"Not so fast!" says Hank. "You'll write down you ain't got a thing against us, or we gives you away to every tough guy within ten miles of here!"

One-Ton is plumb agreeable. He fumbles in his pockets and pulls out pencil and paper.

"Hank Smith," he writes, with a trembly hand, "what is the brother of Clem Smith, and Johnny Carter, and Long Lane and Red Ryan, are discharged without a spot on their Stetsons."

We reads it, and grunts with satisfaction and turns away. One-Ton is strutting about like a turkey cock.

"It's my night out, gents!" he says, after some of the boys had put Two-Gun Turton in the coop. "I'm going to celebrate!"

"I'm not!" says Hank miserably. "That half-cigarette I done consumed sure sits heavy on me stomick! I'm hitting it home!"

And we all felt that way about it, too. We was going green and ghastly; so we forked our cayuses and headed for home, but we didn't gallop none. No, sir; we rode awful careful, and every time we got jolted we yelled enough to turn the moon blue.

We sure had turned the tables on One-Ton and got ourselves out of a tight fix, and yet, looking back, it seemed as if One-Ton had the best of the laugh. But he was born lucky that way, was One-Ton, and it 'ud be a long time before us waddies tried any funny stuff on him again, although we longed for the day when One-Ton would come up against it. Better luck next time, perhaps!

(Another amusing yarn of One-Ton Willy will appear in next week's GEM. See that you read it, chums!)

CHICK CHANCE-ADVENTURER!

By ROBERT MURRAY.

(Introduction on page 26.)

Treachery!

BANG, bang! Chick sent two blinding, sizzling Very-lights streaking into the sky. Within twenty seconds there was not a living pigmy to be seen. Like rabbits they had dived headlong into the dense undergrowth, amid outraged screeching and chattering from disturbed parrots and monkeys.

Almost at the same instant as the last light flickered and died, the huge tropical moon pushed its silver rim over the crest of the trees and soared majestically into the sky.

"I shouldn't think we'd have any more trouble with them two-legged blackbeetles," said Horace, with a sigh of relief. "All the same, I reckon we'd be far safer upstairs, Chick. There's bags of room, and it's plenty light enough to take off."

Chick shook his head.

"I'm thinking of Lobula," he said gravely. "We can't very well make any attempt to find him; but if he's still alive he might manage to escape and try to rejoin us. We'll wait here until daylight. It'll be sunrise in another three hours."

The uncertainty regarding the faithful black's fate threw a cloud of depression over the three chums, which was deepened by the fact that they were helpless to make any move to aid him, even did they know him to be alive.

"Poor old Lobula!" muttered Horace gloomily. "Pity we couldn't have left Roscoe on guard. It wouldn't have mattered so much if he'd got soaked over the onion, and carried off. Listen! What's that noise? Sounds like a blessed tank, or an elephant coming."

There was a crashing and tearing of undergrowth far away in the depth of the forest that gradually swelled louder and louder on the heavy silence.

"By gosh, it may be Lobula!" exclaimed Herbert hopefully.

It was no human being, but a magnificent, fully-grown deer that burst out of the forest into the flooding moonlight, and checked in alarm at sight of the big plane, with its widespread wings and gleaming fuselage. The animal was in the last stages of exhaustion, its flanks heaving and lathered with foam, its slender legs heaving beneath it.

Too late it wheeled, and darted towards the farther side of the wide clearing. Silent as a shadow, a lean, yellow form flashed from amid the trees and uttered one thunderous, exultant roar as it bounded twenty feet through the air, to land clean on top of the fleeing deer.

It was one of the biggest lions Chick Chance had ever seen. One sweep of its paw snapped the deer's neck like a stick of macaroni, so that it described a complete somersault, and was dead before it struck the ground.

Chick gasped and rubbed his eyes incredulously. As if by magic six more lions, and as many lionesses glided into view, to stand like tawny statues in the moonlight, surveying the crouching figure of their more fortunate comrade.

It was a magnificent and impressive spectacle—a spectacle that the three airmen never forgot. Here they saw the monarchs of the forest in their natural state, standing around like so many great cats, lashing their tails and



The plane shuddered and creaked from end to end as the lion clung to the side of the fuselage.

blinking their yellow eyes, while the leader of the pack tore snarlingly at the carcass of the unfortunate deer.

"Great Christopher!" exclaimed Horace, in an awed voice. "I didn't know there were so many lions in the whole of Africa."

Herbert shivered. The protection of the aeroplane fuselage suddenly seemed to have become very frail and inadequate. He felt like a sleepwalker suddenly awakening to find himself walking through the streets in his pyjamas. Instinctively he reached to close the steel shutter over the window.

The sound, slight as it was, was sufficient to attract the attention of the great beasts. Snarling, with bristling manes and swishing tails, they commenced to slink stealthily around the big monoplane in an ever decreasing circle.

"I believe the beggars can smell us in here," declared Horace uneasily. "Now I know what a mouse in a trap must feel like with a cat hanging about outside."

"We're as safe as sardines in a tin," sniffed Herbert confidently. "I'll bet ten to one them pigmies don't show themselves again while this circus is going on."

One lion, bolder than the rest, suddenly stalked forward and reared up on its hind-legs, to rest its great paws on the extreme end of the right wing tip. Chick uttered a shout of alarm. The whole plane tilted crazily to one side beneath the weight of the huge beast as it sunk its claws into the doped fabric, and hung on like a cat to a table edge.

It was Burke Roscoe who foolishly thrust his pistol over

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LION TRIES TO RIDE IN AN AEROPLANE!

the lips of the cockpit, firing wildly until the magazine was empty. Most of the bullets went wide, but two of them struck the lion in its muscular shoulder, inflicting no more than minor flesh wounds.

With a thunderous roar of fury the great animal dropped and crouched. It launched itself straight for the lofty cockpit in a magnificent spring that propelled it through the air like a living thunderbolt. There was a terrific shock, and the plane shuddered and creaked from end to end as the lion clung to the side of the fuselage, rending the tail-windscreen to fragments with one sweep of its taloned paw.

The huge maned head and snarling jaws loomed within a foot of Chick Chance's face. A wave of hot, fetid breath sickened him as he staggered back, and emptied the contents of his automatic into the infuriated beast's gaping mouth.

One of the steel-jacketed bullets must have reached the base of the brain, for the lion pitched backwards, ripping a long strip from the edge of the cockpit as it dropped to the ground, jerking and plunging in its death agonies.

"Phew, that was a close call!" exclaimed Chick, snapping a fresh clip of cartridges into the magazine of his pistol. "Stand by to repel boarders! We don't want any more visitors like that one."

But the sound of the shots, and the fate of their mate, seemed to have startled the remainder of the lions. They had retired to a safe distance, where they crouched full-length on the ground, growling uneasily as they stared in unblinking curiosity at this strange winged creature that had invaded their natural domain.

Their patience was as great as their curiosity. An hour passed, but they did not stir from their positions. There was to be no more sleep for the adventurers that night. Chick remained on guard in the cockpit, while Herbert made some coffee with the aid of a spirit-lamp, and opened a few tins of sardines.

"I reckon them cats are waiting for the milkman to call," grinned Herbert, as he brought Chick a welcome cup of steaming hot coffee. "If they're still there in the morning we'd better make Roscoe hop down and spin the prop."

The false dawn glowed and faded. Half an hour later the blazing sun challenged the night, stabbing the east with spears of flame that routed the moon and stars. Chick stretched his cramped limbs, and started as he gazed over the side of the fuselage. There was not a lion to be seen. Silent as shadows they had slunk back into the depths of the jungle, leaving no sign of their recent presence save the lifeless body of their companion, and the heap of bones which was all that remained of the unfortunate deer.

Far away in this distance loomed the great Mountain of the Lion, the only guide to the Black City of the Amazali, now that they had lost the services of the faithful Lobula.

Chick was taking no chances. There was no living being in sight, but it was impossible to tell what dangers lurked a hundred yards away beyond the wall of trees. Now that the lions had vanished it was not unlikely that the pigmies might return to the attack, but they would have to come out into the open to make any effective use of their crude weapons. The present range was too great for spears or blowpipes.

Horace was left in charge of the machine-gun, while Chick himself slid over the edge of the cockpit and dropped to the ground. It took all his strength to shift the body of the dead lion, which was stretched right in front of one of the landing-wheels.

He made a quick but thorough inspection of the plane. The rudder and tail-fins were not damaged in the least, but the wings were ripped and torn in half a dozen places, and a bone-tipped spear was firmly embedded in one of the struts.

He wrenched it free, and carefully selected two lumps of friable dried earth, which he wedged beneath the landing-wheels in lieu of chocks. Once the motor was started the pull of the prop and the weight of the machine would gradually reduce them to dust.

"Chick! Here—quick!"

Horace's voice was sharp with excitement as he stood erect in the cockpit, and pointed straight ahead down the wide tree-lined clearing.

"What do you make of that? Looks like something moving to me! Might be a herd of blessed elephants taking an early morning stroll!"

Chick clung to the edge of the fuselage with one hand and shaded his eyes with the other. All he could see at first was what looked like a cloud of dust, far away in the distance. But within the cloud there were moving figures, and a gleam of metal reflecting the rays of the sun.

Chick reached for a pair of field-glasses. He uttered a gasp of mingled amazement and alarm as he placed them to his eyes and turned the screw. An astounding spectacle leaped before his vision. Bearing down upon them at a steady trot was a band of at least forty tall, magnificently built black men, whose skins gleamed like polished ebony in the sunlight.

Each wore a leopard-skin kaross, and rings of some yellow metal gleamed on their wrists and ankles. They were armed with round shields, and long spears tipped with shimmering steel. On their heads were nodding plumes of white feathers.

They came on in regular formation, like well-trained soldiers, spurning the dust beneath their black feet in a long, graceful stride that carried them over the ground at an amazing pace.

Chick's face was flushed with excitement as he passed the glasses to his companion and dropped lightly to the ground. He realised the truth in a flash.

"Great Godfrey!" yelled Horace. "What have we struck this time? First it's pigmies, and then it's lions, and now it's an army of blessed giants coming to visit us!"

"It must be the Amazali!" declared Chick grimly. "The giant warriors of the Black City. That's the bunch that captured Eustace Latimer and his daughter!"

"And they look like capturing us, if we don't hop off pretty quick!" exclaimed Horace uneasily. "How did they know we were here? You didn't drop 'em a postcard to tell 'em we was coming?"

"Ten to one they saw those Very-lights last night," guessed Chick shrewdly. "They must have been visible miles away. Probably this is just a scouting party sent out to investigate. Give her the switch, Horace!"

The advancing horde of giant blacks was less than a quarter of a mile away as Chick rushed round to the front of the plane and grasped the blade of the tractor. To his relief, the engine caught at once, bursting into a mighty song of power that flung back a thousand echoes from the black forest and steaming jungle.

The Amazali were now so near that he could hear the muffled thud of their bare feet on the sun-baked ground. They checked for a moment as the thunder of the motor burst on their ears, but came on again with a hoarse, menacing roar.

Chick kicked away the improvised chocks. The machine surged forward at once, and in the nick of time he managed to leap up and hook his fingers over the edge of the fuselage.

A terrific jolt, as the landing-wheels struck a ridge in the ground, almost broke his hold. For a moment he hung by one hand before he managed to secure a fresh grip, and, with an effort that nearly wrenched his arms from their sockets, hauled himself up into the pitching, swaying cockpit.

"Give her the gun, Horace!"

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

CHICK CHANCE, R.A.F., V.C., D.S.O., in company with his two chums, Herbert and Horace, late air-mechanic and pilot-sergeant of Chick's old squadron, agree to fly to Central Africa to look for a Professor Latimer, who has come into a fortune of half a million pounds, but does not know it. If Latimer is not found within three months the money is to go to Burk Roscoe, an arrant scoundrel. Reaching Lakola, the three chums fall foul of Roscoe, who, tries to steal their plane and murder Lobula, a native guide who alone knows where Latimer is. The three airmen manage to escape, however, only to discover their enemy clinging to the under-carriage of the plane. A substantial bribe to give up the hunt and return to Lakola fails to tempt Chick, and the party continues their journey until they reach a forest near the Mountain of the Lion, where, according to Lobula, the professor was taken captive by the giant warriors of the Amazali. Aroused from his slumber at the dead of night, Chick makes the startling discovery that Lobula is missing and that the plane is surrounded by a fierce horde of black-skinned, half-naked savages. Opening fire, the airmen succeed in scaring away the natives, who flee into the forest, falling over one another in their haste.

(Now read on.)

The lanky airman revved the engine until the needle of the tachometer touched fifteen hundred. The Amazali had halted again, and were planted solidly in the path of the big monoplane, stamping their feet and flourishing their spears defiantly.

"The poor saps!" grunted Horace, as he pulled back on the stick. "There's going to be an almighty smash if they don't get out of the way!"

Chick cung to the edge of the cowl and held his breath. The tail of the plane came up, and she bumped twice in two gigantic bounds before she lifted her nose in the air. The sight of this huge winged, roaring monster soaring into space like a giant vulture was too much for the black men.

Dropping spears and shields they flung themselves headlong to the ground. A part of the landing-gear actually clipped the plume of feathers from one man's head as he ducked beneath the rising plane.

Graceful as a seagull the machine circled and climbed. All immediate danger was past, but there was a distressed expression on Chick's face as he sagged against the side of the cockpit and dashed the perspiration from his eyes.

"Poor old Lobula!" he said huskily. "I don't suppose we shall see him again. He may have a black skin, but it's whiter than lots of Britishers I've known!"

"You're right there, Chick," agreed Herbert. "Poor old Lobula was one of the best. Without him, goodness knows what'll happen."

Back in the saloon, Burk Roscoe heaved a sigh of relief as he felt the monoplane leave the ground and zoom into space. He peered through one of the narrow windows. The ground was now a thousand feet below, and the Amazali looked like black ants as they stood shouting and gesticulating in impatient rage and chagrin.

Roscoe's eyes glinted cunningly as he dropped a hand to the pistol in his pocket. So far, Chick Chance had neglected to ask for its return. During the excitement and suspense of the past ten minutes Roscoe's presence had been temporarily forgotten, let alone the gun with which he had been entrusted.

The man was alone in the saloon, save for Herbert, who was staring out of the window in the opposite side of the fuselage. Horace was at the controls, and Chick was crouched beside him, with his back turned towards the rear part of the plane.

Here was the opportunity that Burk Roscoe had been waiting and hoping for. The fact that these three young adventurers had saved his life, and given him a square deal, despite the treachery he had displayed, meant nothing to him.

There was only one person that mattered in Roscoe's life, and that was Roscoe himself.

A quick step carried him to the centre of the saloon. The roar of the engine drowned all other sounds. Deliberately Roscoe's pistol rose and viciously it fell. The heavy barrel crashed across the back of Herbert's head, and without as much as a groan, the little airman crumpled and collapsed in a limp heap.

"That ought to keep you quiet for a few hours!" Roscoe grinned maliciously as he stooped and relieved Herbert of the pistol at his belt. "If my luck holds good, I shall be back at Lakola before the sun sets again! And Eustace Latimer won't be the only person who'll never see England again!"

A loaded gun in each hand, the man stepped boldly towards the entrance to the cockpit.

"The next thing to do is to try to locate the Black City," Chick Chance was saying, as he knelt by Horace's side and focused his field-glasses on the distant Mountain of the Lion. "According to what Lobula told us, it's somewhere on the other side of that range of mountains. To cross them is going to be a tough job in itself. We'll have to climb to an altitude of at least twelve thousand feet—"

Chick turned his head, conscious of some hard object that was dug painfully into the small of his back. The hard object was the gaping muzzle of an automatic, the butt of which was gripped firmly in Burk Roscoe's left hand. In his other hand was a second pistol that was levelled unwaveringly at Horace's head.

"Stick 'em up, Chance!" ordered the man harshly. His lips were curled back in an evil snarl, and his eyes were cold with menace. "Make a single false move, and I'll plug you clean through the brain! The same applies to that skunk by your side! The boot's on the other foot now, and you've got to dance to my tune! Grab the air!"

Horace's jaw dropped as he flashed a glance over his shoulder. Chick's tanned face slowly whitened.

"Roscoe, you treacherous hound!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"Cut the talk!" snarled the man. "If there's any talking to be done, I can do it all myself! For the last time, stick up your hands!"

Reluctantly the young airman obeyed. He was temporarily stunned by this swift disaster that had befallen them. With a flick of his foot, Roscoe kicked the pistol from the holster at Chick's side. It sailed high in the air, and whipped out of sight over the edge of the cowl.

"You dirty skunk!" yelled Horace wildly. "Where's my pal? Where's young Herbert?"

"Where you'll dashed soon be if you don't keep your mouth shut and do as I tell you!" snapped Roscoe. "Turn this plane round! That's the first order you've got to obey!"

Horace resorted to a desperate trick. With a kick of the rudder-bar and a jerk of the stick, he put the plane into a steep-banked, left-handed turn that flung the right wing high in the air. It was a manoeuvre that was designed to throw Roscoe off his balance—perhaps topple him over the side into space—and it might have succeeded but for the fact that the man was wedged securely in the narrow doorway leading to the saloon.

Spang! A bullet sang past Horace's ear and ripped a jagged splinter from the side of the cockpit.

"I shan't miss the next time!" said Roscoe calmly. "Try any more tricks like that, and I'll blow your head off!"

Horace groaned disgustedly as he levelled out. He had a desperate idea of risking a sharp loop, but he realised that neither he nor Chick was strapped in.

"I've got the upper hand now, and I mean to keep it!" Roscoe's voice was sharp with venom and deadly intent. "I can fly this plane as well as the next man, and I shan't hesitate to shoot the two of you, if I find it necessary!"

Chick stared grimly at the man. Inwardly he was seething at his utter helplessness, cursing himself for having allowed the man the opportunity to turn the tables in this manner.

"Look here, Roscoe, what's the game?" he asked sharply. "If you think we're going to fly you back to Lakola, you've got another guess coming! I'll see you to blazes first!"

Roscoe smiled mockingly. "It is my intention to return to Lakola alone!" he drawled. "You, if you wish, may continue your rash and futile search for Eustace Latimer. You have still time to accept the offer I made you yesterday."

"I'd answer you in the same way as I did yesterday, if I had the chance!" flashed Chick furiously.

"You are foolish!" Roscoe's lips tightened, and the pistols in his hands were as steady as rocks. "You are throwing away twenty thousand pounds, and your lives as well, probably. But that is your concern. Now, listen to me! Straight ahead I can see a level piece of ground that would appear to be an excellent and safe landing-place. We will land there. Let me make it quite clear to your friend, the pilot, that if he does not land this plane safely, and at once, I shall ask him only once more—and that will be after I have shot you through the head and flung you overboard!"

Chick and Horace glanced helplessly at one another. The latter shrugged his shoulders as he pushed forward on the stick and put the plane into a steep glide. As yet Chick had not fathomed Roscoe's reason for wishing to land, but it was soon to be made clear to him.

The man had displayed shrewd judgment in his selection of a landing-place. Actually it was a continuation of the natural roadway through the forest, where they had spent the previous night, but as far as the eye could see in either direction there was no sign of the band of Amazali that had attacked them.

Horace brought the machine to earth in a smooth, three-point landing. At a sharp order from Roscoe he did not switch off, but throttled down until the motor was just ticking over. The man's eyes gleamed maliciously as he glanced warily along the barrels of his pistols.

"Here, my friends," he said suavely, "is where we say good-bye!"

Horace blinked incredulously.

"What! You getting out here?" he jerked.

"No; it is you who are getting out here!" corrected Roscoe, with a deep laugh. "Keep your hands above your heads, and walk straight through the saloon! You will find your friend in there. Take him with you."

Chick uttered a sharp cry of protest.

"Roscoe, you can't be such a cold-blooded villain as to dump us here without food or weapons! It would be nothing less than murder!"

"It will be murder if you don't leave this plane in just one minute!" threatened the man darkly.

"At least, give me a gun."

"Oh, no! I am not so trusting as you, Chance!" mocked Roscoe callously. "If you hadn't lent me a gun last night you wouldn't find yourself in this fix. I can't afford to take a similar risk. I am in a hurry to get back to Lakola. Should you happen to find Mr. Latimer, pray give him my kind regards!"

It was all Chick could do to keep himself from springing at the man's throat. Between them he and Horace lifted the senseless figure of Herbert and carried him out into the blazing sunlight. Roscoe stepped after them, pistols poised, his face a mask of evil menace.

"Walk!" he ordered harshly. "And keep on walking until I tell you to stop!"

The two airmen had no option save to obey. Every moment Chick expected to feel the pang of a bullet in the back as he swung Herbert over his shoulder and headed away from the plane.

Their last hope was gone. Their daring enterprise had ended in ignominious disaster. They were stranded in the heart of unknown Africa, without food, weapons, or the slightest chance of finding their way back to civilisation. Foul treachery had won the day for Burk Roscoe!

(So it would seem. But "Chick" Chance never knows when he's beaten: he's the world's champion optimist. Keep your peepers on him next week, boys.)

Under Petticoat Rule!

(Continued from page 18.)

proved to be a friendly, good-natured, and easy-going girl, and very soon captured the hearts of all her pupils.

Their resentment being now a thing of the past, the Shell found it surprisingly easy to put up with the chaff of the rest of the school. Indeed, that chaff very quickly died a natural death, and Miss Linton's pupils, by the irony of fate, eventually found themselves envied instead of derided.

It was a very satisfactory conclusion to the affair.

The day came when Mr. Linton once more took charge of the Shell, and the Girton girl, by now the most popular figure at St. Jim's, had to depart.

All the Shell, and quite a number of fellows belonging to other Forms, accompanied her to the station.

The train steamed in, and Janet Linton took her place in a first-class carriage, a dozen willing hands piling her hat-box and personal impedimenta on the rack.

Then, at the last moment, there was a roar as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his face red, and his monocle flying behind him on its cord, came sprinting down the platform.

In his hand was a massive bouquet of roses!

"Bai Jove! Just in time!" he gasped. "Pway make way for me, deah boys!"

"My hat! It's Gussy!"

"Good old Gustavus!"

"Say it with flowers, old bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus rushed through the crowd and pulled up before Janet Linton's compartment, then hastily made the presentation.

"A few flowahs, deah gal!" he said simply, and was

rewarded with a dazzling smile from the heroine of his dreams and a quiet:

"Thank you, D'Arcy. You are very thoughtful!"

The swell of the Fourth took his courage in both hands.

"Miss Linton—Janet, if I may say so—" he began.

"Oh!" exclaimed Janet Linton, with an odd look at D'Arcy.

"Defoah you go, deah gal, there is one question that has been on my lips evah since—"

"Stand back there, young gents!" called out the Rycombe porter at that moment.

And D'Arcy's intended proposal didn't materialise, after all!

Caps were waved, and a roar of cheering went up from the St. Jim's juniors. Then the train began to move away.

"Good-bye, Miss Linton!"

"Good-bye, Janet!"

Arthur Augustus stood on the footboard for a moment.

"About that question, deah gal—" he began.

Then he was cut short by a remarkable happening.

Janet Linton leaned forward, and, to the uproarious delight of the crowd, deliberately kissed the astonished swell of the Fourth! And D'Arcy alighted on the platform again in a dizzy state in which he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels!

Afterwards, he decided, on consideration, to postpone the matter of asking the favour of Janet's hand in marriage, and rest content with the happy remembrance of that good-bye kiss. Which, in all the circumstances, was perhaps just as well!

THE END.

(You'll find another peach of a yarn in next week's GEM, entitled: "DIZZY" DESMOND—DARE-DEVIL! You'll regret it, chums, if you miss it!)

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