

"TOM MERRY & CO. AT THE ZOO!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD—INSIDE!

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS—
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



THERE'S A LAUGH IN EVERY LINE OF THIS TOPPING TALE—

TOM MERRY and Co



Who says a jolly jaunt to the Zoo? Unlimited fun and adventure with Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. The one and only Gussy's going—and how!

CHAPTER 1. Not Appreciated!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY glanced round Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's, and coughed slightly.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were busily writing at the table. They did not look up. They knew what that little cough meant, and they kept their eyes steadily fixed upon their work, and their pens never ceased to travel for a moment.

D'Arcy coughed again, a little louder than before. The pens scratched on. Never had the chums of Study No. 6 seemed so deeply immersed in their work.

Arthur Augustus frowned slightly, and coughed a third time. Still the three juniors were deaf.

"I say, deah boys," said D'Arcy at last.

"Eh?" said Jack Blake. "Did you speak, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then don't!"

And Blake's pen scratched on. D'Arcy screwed his

monocle into his eye, and gave Blake a withering glance, which, unfortunately, only took effect on the back of his head, as Blake was bending over his work again.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't interrupt, Gussy, when a chap's doing German," said Blake imploringly. "Can't you give your silk hat another polish, or something, and be quiet?"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Der Knecht hat erstochen den edeln Herren," said Blake, in self-defence.

"Pway don't spout that wubbish to me, Blake."

"Der Knecht war selber ein Ritter gern."

"Weally, you know, I think you might put that wubbish aside for a minute, deah boy, when I have somethin' wathah important to say," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"If you call Uhland's Ballads rubbish, Gussy, I'm afraid we shall have to give you the order of the boot from the School House Literary Society."

"I withdwaw the word wubbish, but weally I should like you to listen to me. I wanted to ask you—"

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

at the Zoo!

By

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 2.

Up Against Figgins!

"If it's something about going to the Zoo, that's all arranged for Wednesday afternoon. We've arranged it, and we can't alter the arrangements, so don't talk about it. Let a chap get on with his work."

"Right-ho!" said Herries, looking up. "It isn't often anybody wants to work in this study, and it's hard to be interrupted when we do start."

"I suppose Gussy is a bit nervous about Wednesday," Digby remarked.

"Weally, Dig, I don't see why I should be nervous about a twip to Wegent's Park to see the Zoo!"

"Well, no, as we shall be there to look after you," agreed Digby. "Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther have promised to help us, and we're going to form a ring round you when we get into the monkey house. If any keeper tries to capture you to add to the collection, we're going to biff him, and—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"So don't you be nervous," said Digby encouragingly. "I know it's a rather risky expedition for you, but we'll see you through."

"I wefuse to weply to these dispawagin' and fwivolous wemarks. I was about to ask Blake a conundrum—"

"You were about to ask me a conundrum!" said Jack Blake, in measured tones.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You've interrupted my work, and bothered me in the middle of a translation, to ask me a conundrum?"

"Yes, deah boy. It's wathah a wippin' conundrum, you know. Why is a cobblah—"

"Scat!"

"Why is a cobblah—"

"You—you image! As if it isn't bad enough to have Lowther of the Shell setting up as a funny man!" said Blake. "I've always been absolutely determined on one point; that I never would stand a funny man in my own study. How Tom Merry can stand it in his is a mystery to me."

"Why is a cobblah—"

"Cheese it!" roared Blake. "I tell you I won't hear it!"

"Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

Jack Blake jumped up and seized the inkpot. D'Arcy jumped up, too, in great alarm.

Blake took aim.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Necktie, chivvy, or waistcoat?" said Blake. "I'm not particular, so long as you get it."

"Pway don't be a wuffian!"

"Will you promise, honest Injun, never, never to ask a conundrum again while you remain at St. Jim's?" demanded Blake.

"Bai Jove! Certainly not!"

"Then here goes!"

Blake made a threatening movement with the inkpot. Arthur Augustus skipped out of the study in a twinkling. Jack Blake was evidently in earnest, and not in a humour to receive a conundrum, however ripping, with anything like politeness.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "It is a cuwious thing that a pwophet is nevah without honah except in his own country, and a fellow is more appreciated anywhere than in his own study! I have wemarked that before, and it is vewy cuwious. People put up with Monty Lowthah's wotten jokes, and I weally don't see why they shouldn't appweciate a weally good one when they hear it."

Gussy was murmuring thus outside the study when three cheerful-looking youths came along the passage, and D'Arcy received three severe slaps on the shoulder, so suddenly that he jumped clear of the floor and uttered a startled howl.

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther—the chums of the Shell—grinned at Arthur Augustus as he swung round in alarm. D'Arcy rubbed his shoulders and stared speechlessly at the Terrible Three.

"Feeling pretty fit?" asked Tom Merry genially.

"You—you wuffian—"

"Why, what's the matter now?"

"You have stwuck me wuffly, and made my beastlay shouldahs ache."

"Thought you were having a snooze, standing up, like a horse," explained Monty Lowther. "Woke you up in case anybody should come along and biff you."

"Weally, Lowthah; but I am glad to see you fellows," said D'Arcy, changing his tone suddenly. "I wegard you as wuff wottahs, but I want to ask you—"

"Is it tin?" said Tom Merry, feeling in his pockets. "That's all right. I've got something left over from my last remittance. How much?"

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Mewwry, but I don't want to bowwow any tin."

"What do you want, then?"

"I want to ask you chaps a conundrum—"

"Oh, don't! That's Lowther's province!"

"My conundrum is not wotten like Lowthah's conundrums. Why is a cobblah like a sawfish?"

"Give it up," said Tom Merry.

"Do you give it up, too, Mannahs?"

"Yes, rather! Cut short the agony, please!"

"Do you give it up, Lowthah?"

"Yes; quick!"

"Because one wode a horse and the othah whododen-dwon," said D'Arcy.

"Eh?"

"Because one wode a horse and the othah whododen-dwon."

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron," repeated Tom Merry slowly and meditatively. "That sounds like the answer to a riddle. But what on earth has it to do with a cobblah and a sawfish?"

Arthur Augustus looked a little perplexed.

"It doesn't sound quite so wippin' as it did before," he admitted. "Pewwaps I have got the wong answah."

"Yes, I think it's vewy probable you have," grinned Tom Merry. "You ought to sort out your questions and answers before you spring conundrums on harmless people."

"Yaas, I am afwaid I have forgotten the cowwect answah," confessed D'Arcy. "It is the wuff wudeness of those wottahs in Study No. 6 that dwove it out of my head. That is certainly not the wight answah. But I say, deah boys—"

"Nuff!" said Lowther. "Be a good chap, and don't ask us any more conundrums."

"It is not a conundrum I have in my mind. I was goin' to tell you an awfully funny stowey—"

"We're fed-up with your funny stories," said Manners.

"Lowther piles them on too thickly. I'm off!"

And Manners walked up the passage.

"It's an awfully funny thing, Lowthah—"

"You can have all the fun to yourself, old chap," said Lowther, following Manners.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"Weally, Tom Mewwry, I must say I wegard your fwiennds as wotten beasts," he said. "I don't want to wun them down in any way, but I wegard them as feahful pigs. I say, you are not goin', are you? I have an awfully funny stowey to tell you."

"Take my advice, old chap, and keep it to yourself," said Tom Merry, and he walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus to think it over.

A minute later Tom Merry arrived at the door of Study No. 6, and opened it by the simple process of jamming his foot against one of the lower panels. The door flew open, and the hero of the Shell walked in, and the Fourth-Formers, startled by the crash, looked up from their work, Blake's pen scattering a variety of blots over his foolscap.

"You—you duffer!" ejaculated Blake. "Look what you've made me do!"

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry promptly. "You can write it out again to-night, you know. It will keep you out of mischief."

Blake slid his hand towards a ruler.

"Pax!" said Tom Merry. "I haven't come here to whack you youngsters this time. I want to ask you—"

"If you ask me a conundrum you'll get this ruler in the neck, whether it's pax or not," said Blake darkly. "We've had enough of that from Gussy!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I wasn't going to ask you a conundrum, kid. I wanted to ask you whether you knew that Figgins & Co. had ordered a trap in Rylcombe?"

Jack Blake started.

"Ordered a trap! What do they want a trap for?"

"To catch us in, I expect," said Tom Merry. "Have you forgotten that to-morrow is Wednesday, a time-honoured half-holiday with us, and that we're going to the Zoo?"

"Of course not. Figgins & Co. are coming with us."

"Yes, and so is Cousin Ethel!"

"We know that."

"And she is coming here this evening, to stay a couple of days with Mrs. Holmes. You are aware of that, too?"

"Yes; she told us so when she was here on her birthday," said Blake. "What are you getting at?"

"How is she coming?"

"She is staying in Wayland now. I expect she will drive over to-night."

"Then your expectations are a little off the track. Figgins won't blow his tin on a trap for nothing. My belief is that he is going over to Wayland in that trap to fetch Cousin Ethel."

"My hat!"

"He knows what time she will leave there, I dare say. If he arrives at her quarters say, half an hour before she would leave, she would naturally accept a seat in his trap instead of ordering out the car she came over in before, and giving the chauffeur the job of driving it back to Wayland for nothing."

"Very likely."

"Figgins is awfully deep. He hasn't said a word about it, but you can depend upon it that's his little game."

"But how do you know he's ordered the trap if he hasn't said a word about it?" asked Digby.

"Because I've just been down to Rylcombe," said Tom Merry coolly. "You see, I thought of the same wheeze myself. I went into old Brown's to ask him for his trap, and he was sorry he couldn't let me have it, as he was sending it up to the school at six o'clock to the order of Master Figgins. He offered to get another for me, but I didn't accept. You see, I was on the track. It's no good two traps driving over to Wayland to fetch one Cousin Ethel, is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"If Figgins goes, it's no good us going. We can't fight for her in front of her house, or anything of that sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Strategy is the thing. Only one trap can go, and there is no objection to Figgins ordering the trap and paying the bill, so long as the School House captures the trap and takes it over to Wayland for Cousin Ethel."

"Ripping good idea!" said Blake heartily. "We worked off a wheeze like that on Figgins & Co. once—collared their charabanc when they were going to a football match, or they collared our charabanc. It's much the same thing. It will be a ripping joke on the New House. The trap is coming at six."

"That's it!"

"There'll be a man in it, of course, and he'll have instructions to take in Figgins. He won't be able to argue with seven of us, though. We can put him down in the bottom of the trap, and you fellows can sit on his head while I drive."

"You can sit on his head while I drive," said Tom Merry.

"I hope you are not going to begin making trouble at the very start, Tom Merry."

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"Certainly not. There would be trouble if you drove!"

"That's all very well—"

"Then I don't see what you're grumbling at. Hallo, there goes the quarter to six!"

"No time to lose," said Tom Merry. "I should have got in here before. Only Gussy stopped me to tell me a funny story. But there's time if we buck up."

"I haven't finished my impot," said Digby.

"Blow your impot!"

"Shove it away," said Blake severely. "What do you mean by talking of impots when it's a question of the School House scoring over the New House?"

"If we don't do our prep—" began Herries.

"Rats! Come on, and follow your uncle, and don't jaw!"

Jack Blake's word was law in Study No. 6. Herries and Digby left their work, and took their caps, and followed Blake and Tom Merry downstairs. Manners and Lowther were waiting outside the School House, leaning on the balustrade.

"Turned a quarter to six," said Lowther. "No time to lose."

Arthur Augustus came hurriedly out of the School House.

"Hallo, you chaps! What is the difference between a wockin'-horse and a beef-steak?"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Blake. "We're on the war-path."

"What is the difference—"

"Choke him, somebody! Come on!"

And the School House juniors descended into the quadrangle, already dusky in the October evening, and D'Arcy followed with his conundrum still unanswered.

CHAPTER 3.

The Rivals!

IF there was anything that could stop the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 in the School House from ragging one another, it was a "row" with the rival House at St. Jim's. Fourth Form and Shell were always willing to pull loyally together to take a rise out of Figgins & Co., the leaders of the New House juniors. And their rivalry was keener on nothing more than on the subject of Cousin Ethel.

Ethel was D'Arcy's cousin, and as D'Arcy was a School House junior, he and his chums naturally regarded Cousin Ethel as School House property. The chums of the New House were far from admitting anything of the sort. Cousin Ethel was their chum as well, as they were ready to maintain with either tongue or fist, on any occasion, in any place, and at any time.

It was just like Figgins to assume to himself the honour and glory of ordering out a pony trap to fetch Cousin Ethel over from Wayland.

"We shall be able to handle Brown's man in the trap easily enough," Tom Merry remarked. "The trouble is, what are we to do with Figgins & Co.?"

"There are seven of us," remarked Digby. "We could bump them into the ditch."

"They'll have a crowd of New House rotters round to see them start, of course."

"H'm! Very likely. Then it will be a fight."

"That won't do. We can't afford to leave anything to chance."

"Pewwaps you had better leave it to me, deah boys. I can think out a swatagem—"

"Rats! Has anybody got an idea?"

"I can think out a swatagem—"

"We could get Fatty Wynn away by standing him a feed," Blake suggested. "But it won't be so easy with Figgins and Kerr."

"I have it," muttered Lowther. "Let's go up the road and meet the trap before it gets to the school. We can stop it, chuck Brown's man out, and there you are!"

"Good!" said Blake, with a chuckle. "And Figgins & Co. can go on waiting at the gate for the trap to come—like Sister Anne looking from the window in the fairy tale."

"But suppose Figgins & Co. are at the gate already?"

"Let's see whether they are."

The dusk was gathering over St. Jim's. The School House juniors made their way down to the high-arched gateway. Half a dozen forms loomed out of the dusk, and there was a murmur of voices. The party drew back a little.

"Figgy is there," muttered Blake. "And Kerr and Wynn, and French and Pratt, and some more."

"No good starting a scrap, then."

"You had better let me think out a swatagem—"

"If we go out they'll guess what we've gone for," said Tom Merry, with a worried look. "But if the trap arrives here, Figgy will have it as sure as a gun."

"Not without a tussle."

"A tussle won't do any good, with the New House within call. But I've got it—follow me!" said Tom Merry excitedly. He turned and ran along the school wall, to a spot where an old oak-tree slanted towards the stone.

"Good!" muttered Blake, catching the idea at once.

At that spot it was easy to cross the school wall. The juniors had done it before on many occasions. Tom Merry swarmed up the tree.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, we shall be bweakin' bounds, you know!"

"I expect Figgy's got a pass to Wayland," remarked Manners. "He couldn't go out openly in the trap without a pass. Monteith would give him one. We could ask Kildare—"

"No good asking for passes for seven chaps at once,"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"You—you—you— Are you coming?"

"You see, I have no gloves on. If you chaps will wait a quartah of an hour while I change into an old pair of twousahs and put on some stwong gloves, I shall be vewy pleased to climb the twee aftah you."

"Ass! Stay behind, then!"

"It's all wight! I'll make a sudden wush thwough the gate, and get thwough before the New House wottahs have time to stop me."

Blake, who was about to drop into the road, turned back quickly.

"Gussy! If you give the alarm I'll scalp you! Gussy!"

"It's all wight, deah boy! I shall make a sudden wush, you know!"

"D'Arcy! Hold on! I say—"



Jerking Figgy's collar and tie off, Blake gave the New House leader a few lashes with the tie, while Manners pushed at Kerr's head. The two juniors gasped with rage as they clung to the tail-board, striving manfully to drag themselves into the trap.

grinned Blake, "especially for a place so far out of bounds as Wayland."

"We could ask Kildare for one, Darrell for another, Rushden for another, and so on."

"That's wathah a good wheeze, deah boys!"

"No time! It's eight minutes to six now!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry's voice cautiously from the top of the wall. "There's no time to lose. Up with you, as quickly as you can."

And the hero of the Shell dropped into the road. Lowther and Manners followed swiftly, then Blake and Herries and Digby. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained till the last, looking very dubiously at the tree-trunk, which certainly was weather-stained and damp with the mist that hung over the quadrangle.

Blake looked down from the wall.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I weally think I cannot climb that twee, Blake!"

"Ass! You've climbed it before!"

But Arthur Augustus was gone.

Jack Blake dropped quickly into the road. It was too late to stop the swell of St. Jim's now.

"Buck up!" muttered Blake. "That ass D'Arcy is going to get out through the gate, and Figgy's will catch on at once. Run for it!"

"The young ass!"

"Cut!" muttered Tom Merry briefly.

The juniors broke into a run. They had to pass the gateway of St. Jim's to get to the village, but they trusted to their speed and the gathering dusk to hide them from the eyes of the New House Co. there. As they passed, there was a sudden commotion in the group of juniors in the gateway.

"Hold the young rotter!"

It was Figgy's voice.

There was the sound of a struggle. Then D'Arcy's voice raised in anguish.

"Welease me, you wottahs! You are wumplin' my collah and spoilin' my twousahs. I might as well have climbed the twee as have your filthy boots wubbed on me. Welease me!"

"Climbed the tree!" said Figgins. "What's the little game?"

"There's somebody scudding past in the road!" exclaimed Kerr.

"My hat! They're the School House bounders!"

"They've caught on!"

"They're after the trap!"

"Come on!" roared Figgins.

He dashed out into the dusky road, with a dozen New House juniors at his heels. But Tom Merry & Co. were past, and running down the road as if for their lives. It was a race now between the rivals of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.

Trouble in the Trap!

"HOLD on!" gasped Tom Merry.

There was a glare of lamps in the road, a clatter of horse's feet. A trap was coming from the direction of the village. In that quiet part of the country, traps were still the ordinary means of conveyance, and were a good deal more numerous than motor-cars. Tom Merry & Co. stopped.

"Halt!" shouted Blake.

The man driving the trap pulled in his horse as he saw half a dozen faces in the glimmer of the lamp.

"What be the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing much," said Tom Merry, jumping on the step, and getting up beside the man in a twinkling. "We've come from St. Jim's to fetch the trap, that's all!"

"I was told to give the trap to Master Figgins."

"That's all right!"

Tom Merry calmly took the reins from the man's hands. Lowther and Blake hustled him into the lane before he quite knew what was happening. Lowther pressed half-a-crown into his hand. He sat down upon the grassy bank. Digby had the horse by the bit, and he backed him and turned the trap round.

The whole affair had not taken a minute. But a minute was much, when the best runners in the New House were on the track.

"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry, gathering up the reins. "Pile in!"

The juniors piled into the trap. It was a roomy vehicle, and held four as well as one beside the driver. Lowther and Manners crowded in, and Blake and Herries. Tom Merry was in the driver's seat, and Digby jumped up beside him. The whip cracked, and the horse was set in motion, back the way he had come.

There was a yell from the dusk, and Figgins came tearing into view.

"They've got the trap!"

"Stop them!"

"Follow the rotters!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn came tearing on. The other fellows were panting behind them.

The trap increased in speed. But Figgins put on a spurt, and hung on behind. Kerr made a desperate bound and also reached the trap. Their weight told, and their feet dragging on the ground acted somewhat as a brake. The speed of the trap slackened, and the rest of the New House party loomed into view again, running their hardest in pursuit.

"Kick them out!" yelled Blake.

He inserted his hand in Figgins' collar. Figgy's hands were both occupied in clinging on to the tail-board, and he could not defend himself. Blake calmly jerked his collar off, and tore away his necktie. Then he used the latter as a lash, and gave Figgins a few smart strokes with it. Figgins gasped with rage, and strove manfully to drag himself into the trap.

But Herries grasped his fingers and unloosened them, and Manners pushed him on the chest, and at last he dropped into the road. Digby turned round from his seat in front.

"Here's a long pin," he said. "Stick it into the silly chumps!"

"Good! Hand it over!"

Kerr hurriedly let go and dropped into the road. He bumped against Figgins, who was up and running again. They reeled over together. The trap increased in speed, and the New House juniors halted breathlessly.

"They're gone!" muttered Figgins.

"And we're done!" said Kerr.

"Clean done!" said Fatty Wynn dolorously. "Of course, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,286.

they've collared the trap to go over to Wayland to fetch Miss Cleveland."

"Of course they have!"

"And we can't stop them!"

Figgins snapped his teeth.

"Confound them! I wouldn't have minded it at any other time, but now—I did want to drive Cousin Ethel over here!"

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard that as wathah a feahful cheek on your part," said the voice of Arthur Augustus from the dusk. "You weally seem to look upon Ethel as if she were your cousin instead of mine!"

"Oh, you can go and eat coke, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort. I think——"

"Oh, rats!"

And Figgins & Co. returned to St. Jim's with extremely downcast looks. They had been done, and there was no getting out of that.

Tom Merry & Co. had taken the cake—and the trap! The victorious School House juniors were bowling along merrily through the dusky lanes. Tom Merry was driving, and handling the horse with ease. Tom had done a good deal of driving at his old governess' house at Huckleberry Heath.

"Licked!" said Jack Blake, with great satisfaction.

"We're all here excepting Gussy. I rather hope they will slay Gussy for giving us away as he did. It was touch and go."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Never mind; we are victorious. This horse isn't so rocky as old Brown's horses usually are. We are getting along all right. It's rather a weight for him to pull, six fellows, including Herries' feet."

"Let my feet alone!" growled Herries.

"You seem to be handing the hoss all right, Merry," said Blake. "You can drive over to Wayland, if you like."

"Thanks! I intend to."

"I mean, I'll drive coming back. We shall have to be as careful as possible, with a lady in the trap, you know."

"Blessed if I know how we're going to find room for a lady in here," said Lowther. "If Herries puts his feet over the side it would make a difference, of course."

"I'll put you over the side, if you don't shut up!" growled Herries.

"I'd like to see you put half of me over the side," said Monty Lowther, in the extremely polite tone he always adopted when he wanted to be impertinent. "Aren't you rather cheeky for a Fourth Form kid?"

"If you're looking for a fact ear, fathead——"

"I am, as a matter of fact."

Now that the row with the New House was over, the old rivalry was certain to break out between Shell and Fourth Form, and a word was sufficient to start it. Almost before Monty Lowther had finished speaking, Herries had passed an arm round his neck, and Monty Lowther replied by grasping him round the shoulders. They rolled in the trap, and there was a yell from Blake and Manners.

"Stop it! There's no room for rowing here."

"Chuck it, you asses!"

They did not chuck it. Blake unfastened the tail-board and let it swing down, and then stooped and grasped the struggling pair. He gave a heave, and Lowther's long legs hung over the back of the trap, and he clung wildly to the tail-board to keep himself from falling. Herries sat on the board, holding to the chain dizzily.

"Off you go!" said Blake coolly, and he put his foot against Lowther's chest.

"Hold on, ass! Stop it——"

"Travel, my son," said Blake, and he gave Lowther a gentle push.

Lowther's feet were dragging along the ground, and he let go, and sat down in the road.

Tom Merry drove the trap on without even looking round. There was no time to waste, and if the juniors chose to row and fall out of the trap, that was no business of his.

Lowther jumped up in the road, and yelled to the trap to stop. Manners gave Herries a shove, and the Fourth-Former clung to the tail-board for a moment, and then dropped into the road. Blake turned to the Shell boy wrathfully.

"What did you do that for, fathead?"

"What did you shove Lowther out for?" grinned Manners.

"He was making a rumpus."

"Well, and what was Herries doing?"

Jack Blake grinned.

"Oh, very well! Still, it's like your cheek to shove out a Fourth-Former, and I've a jolly good mind to bump you out after him!"

"Try it on, then!" said Manners.

"If you're looking for trouble——"

“I’m looking for all the trouble you can give me.”

“Oh, all right; here goes, then!”

They were in the bottom of the trap the next moment. Naturally enough, with the tail-board down, and the vehicle bumping along on a rough road, they were not long in rolling out. Fortunately the vehicle was a low one, and the slant of the tail-board saved them from a heavy fall. But the bump in the road was a hard one, and it jarred them considerably. They rolled apart in the dust, and sat up looking rather dazed.

“My—my hat!” gasped Blake. “Hallo, there, Tom Merry! Stop! Stop, there! Stop that trap!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Manners breathlessly. “He won’t stop!”

“Won’t he! I’ll jolly soon make him!”

Blake dashed after the trap. But he could not equal the speed of the horse. There was a flash of the lamps as the trap turned a corner, and then the light disappeared, and the hoofbeats died away in the distance. Blake halted breathlessly.

Tom Merry drove on. Digby looked back into the trap, saw that it was empty, and chuckled.

“They’re all out,” he remarked.

Tom Merry laughed.

“That’s their look-out. I’m not stopping this trap for anybody.”

“Right-ho! There wasn’t room for a crowd, anyway, and we had to find room for Miss Ethel,” agreed Digby. “I’ll get back.”

He took up Blake’s empty seat, and closed up the tail-board.

Tom Merry drove on, and Digby sat on the rugs with his hands in his pockets. The horse made little of so light a load, and ere long dashed up in fine style to the garden gate of the house on the outskirts of Wayland, where Cousin Ethel was staying.

CHAPTER 5. Not a Success!

“TOM MERRY!”

Cousin Ethel uttered the name in a tone of surprise, as Tom Merry was shown in by the maid-servant. Digby was remaining in the trap to look after the horse. Tom Merry coloured a little. For the life of him he could not tell whether Miss Cleveland was pleased or not.

Cousin Ethel was dressed for going out, and her coat and hat were close at hand. She had evidently been about to start for St. Jim’s. Miss Oldbury, her aunt, looked curiously at Tom Merry. Cousin Ethel hastened to present him.

“I thought you would like us to drive you over to St. Jim’s, Miss Cleveland,” said Tom Merry. “We’ve brought a trap over.”

“It is very kind of you,” said Cousin Ethel. “But I thought—”

“Very kind indeed!” said Miss Oldbury. “If you prefer to go in the trap, Ethel, we will not order out the car.”

“I think I will go in the trap, aunt. It is very kind of Tom to bring it over for me. Is anybody with you, Tom?”

“Yes; Dig!”

“No one else?”

“No one else, Miss Cleveland.”

In a few minutes Cousin Ethel took leave of her aunt and walked down to the trap with Tom Merry. She seemed unusually silent. Tom Merry glanced at her rather anxiously as they reached the garden gate.

“I—I say, Cousin Ethel,” he said awkwardly, “do you think it was a fearful cheek of me to drive over for you?”

Cousin Ethel laughed.

“Of course not, Tom. I think it was very kind of you, and I would much rather drive over with you than go in the car.”

“Then that’s all right.”

“Certainly. Only—” Cousin Ethel paused, and the gloom of the October evening hid the colour that came into her cheeks for a moment.

“Only what?” asked Tom Merry anxiously.

“I thought—I mean, I understood—that Figgins was coming over, and—”

Tom Merry chuckled slightly.

“He was unavoidably detained,” he said. “As a matter of fact, he was coming, and so were the rest of the fellows, Miss Cleveland, but the trap wouldn’t hold the lot, and there were a series of accidents. Figgins was awfully cut up at not being able to come.”

A momentary smile flickered on Cousin Ethel’s face. It is probable that she guessed something of the nature of the series of accidents. Tom Merry handed her into the trap, and she chose the seat beside the driver.

Digby looked expressively at Tom Merry.

“You drove the trap over here, Merry,” he whispered.

“Yes,” assented Tom Merry, “and I’m going to drive it back.”

“Look here, you beast, fair play’s a jewel, and—”

Tom Merry jumped up to the right-hand side of the front seat. Digby murmured something under his breath, and got into the back of the trap. But suddenly a twinkle shot into the Fourth-Former’s eyes.

“Would you care to drive, Miss Cleveland?” he asked. “This horse is a very quiet animal, and I know you could manage him first-rate.”

“Perhaps Tom could not trust me to drive,” murmured Ethel.

“Why, of course,” said Tom Merry immediately. “I—I should be delighted.”

“Thank you so much!”

“You ought to be this side, I think,” said Tom Merry, rising.

“Yes, it would be better. Perhaps you would not mind getting in the back of the trap with Digby, so as to allow me plenty of room.”

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose. There was an irrepresible chuckle from Digby. It was followed by a gasp. Tom Merry had contrived to dig his elbow into the Fourth-Former’s ribs in getting into the trap.

“Shall we start now?” said Cousin Ethel demurely.

“By all means,” said Tom Merry.

The girl shook out the reins. She was a good driver, and the trap bowled along merrily, the lamps glaring out into the October gloom.

Tom Merry sat in the trap looking rather downhearted. Digby grinned at him maliciously, and tried to catch his eye as often as possible to grin at him again.

The drive to St. Jim’s could not be called a howling success. Cousin Ethel drove, and was too busy with the reins to be able to turn her head once, or to exchange a single remark with either of the juniors. And Tom Merry was not inclined to talk to Digby, and Digby did nothing but grin and wink in the most irritating way at Tom Merry.

No one was sorry when the trap dashed up to the gates of St. Jim’s. The gates, of course, were closed. It was now a good hour past locking-up time, and call-over was finished at St. Jim’s. The juniors who had been left behind had scraped in in time for call-over. But there was a calling over the coals in store for Tom Merry and Digby.

Tom Merry jumped down and rang the bell.

Taggles, the porter, came grumbling down to open the gates, and he grinned sourly at the juniors as Tom led the horse in.

“Which Mr. Railton ‘as been askin’ arter you,” he said.

“He naturally would,” said Tom Merry calmly. “The affairs of the School House generally get into a rocky condition when I am away. I am glad to see that you are so concerned about the welfare of the Cock House at St. Jim’s, Taggles.”

Taggles grunted. He closed the gates after the trap. A tall, slim junior came into sight from the gloomy quadrangle. It was Figgins.

“Hallo, Figgy!” said Tom Merry affably. “Here’s your trap. You can get it back to old Brown’s now.”

“My trap!” said Figgins, in astonishment. “Not at all. Your trap, dear boy. How do you do, Miss Cleveland? I was coming over in the trap to ask you to drive to St. Jim’s, but an unforeseen accident prevented me.”

“Thank you very much, Figgins,” said Cousin Ethel sweetly.

Figgins walked beside the trap right up to the step of the Head’s house. Curiously enough, Cousin Ethel, who had found nothing to say during the drive over, was very chatty to Figgins. The trap stopped, and it was Figgins who assisted her to alight.

Knox, a School House prefect, loomed up in the light of the trap’s lamps.

“So you’ve come back,” he said grimly. “Ah, good-evening, Miss Cleveland!” He raised his cap. “Merry and Digby, you are to go straight to Mr. Railton’s study.

(Continued on the next page.)

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He wants to see you on most important business. Follow me!"

Tom Merry hesitated. It was rather rough to have to leave Cousin Ethel there with Figgins, and the trap was not disposed of. But there was no arguing with a prefect, nor did he wish Cousin Ethel to guess that he had a caning in store.

The girl held out her hand with a smile.

"Good-night, Tom!"

"Good-night, Ethel!"

"Good-night, Digby!"

"Good-night, Cousin Ethel."

The two School House juniors raised their caps and walked away. Then Cousin Ethel shook hands with Figgins. She had not had an opportunity of doing so yet. For some reason, Figgins did not let go her hand after shaking it, and Cousin Ethel seemed to quite overlook the fact that he was retaining it. Figgins cleared his throat two or three times before he was able to speak.

"I—I—I say, Miss Cleveland—Cousin Ethel—I wanted awfully to come over and fetch you from Wayland, but something happened."

"It was very kind of you, Figgins!"

"I'm so glad to see you at St. Jim's!"

"It's very pleasant to see the old place again so soon, Figgins."

"It's a long time since you were here."

"Exactly six days, Figgins."

"I—I mean it seems a long time," stammered Figgins. "It's—it's awfully good of you to let me take you to the Zoo to-morrow."

"Is it?" said Cousin Ethel, laughing. "It seems to me that the goodness is on your side, to take me. Have you rung?"

"By Jove, no!" said Figgins, colouring deeply. And he rang the bell with his disengaged hand.

But Cousin Ethel drew her hand away now.

The door was opened. Cousin Ethel shook hands with Figgins and bade him good-night. The junior raised his cap and turned away. The door closed and shut off the light and Cousin Ethel. There was a curious look upon Figgins' face as he walked off towards the New House. He seemed to be treading on air. Two youths loomed up out of the gloom and almost ran into him.

"Hallo, here you are, Figgy!" said Kerr. "Have you been taking a constitutional in the dark, or lost your way in the quad, or what?"

"Come on, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "We've got a ripping feed in the study. What do you think of fried gammon rashers and sausages, chips and fried onions, broiled cod and baked potatoes, eh?"

Figgins sighed.

"What's the matter?" asked Kerr.

"He's hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "I often sigh like that when I'm hungry. Blessed if I know why he's wandering about in the quad all this time, and losing the smell of the cooking. Come on, Figgy, old man. What do you think of broiled cod—"

"Ye-es. All right!"

"And chips and fried onions—"

"Oh, blow your onions!"

Fatty Wynn stared at his leader in blank amazement.

"Eh. What! What did you say, Figgy?"

"Sorry," said Figgins immediately. "It's all right. I'm jolly hungry, as a matter of fact. I'm coming in. Oh, hold on, though—there's the trap!"

"Tom Merry's job to deal with that," said Kerr.

"Tom Merry's just been marched off by a prefect. The horse will get on the flower-beds if he's left loose."

"You'll have to give Taggles a bob to take him home."

"I suppose so."

Figgins returned for the trap, and led the horse away. Taggles bargained for eighteenpence, and Figgins handed it over without a word. Then the New House Co. went into their quarters. And whatever sentimental thoughts and feelings might have dwelt in the breast of Figgins, it cannot be denied that he made an excellent supper in the study, and did full justice to the broiled cod, the gammon rashers and sausages, the chips and fried onions.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Digby were having a rather painful interview with the Housemaster of the School House. Mr. Railton listened patiently to their explanation that there had really been no time to ask for a pass before going out. Then he took up a cane. Two smart cuts for each of the juniors rewarded them for the trouble they had taken; and when they left Mr. Railton's study they did not receive much sympathy from their Form-fellows.

"Why didn't you stop for us?" demanded Manners and

Lowther, collaring Tom Merry as he came out rubbing himself.

"Well, I couldn't stop for every silly ass who fell out of the trap, could I?" said Tom Merry, in a tone of expostulation.

"I have already explained to Blake," remarked D'Arcy, "that it was a fearful cheek on his part to leave me behind. But you were most to blame, Tom Mewwy, as you were dwivin'. It is wathah fortunate for you that Mr. Wailton has caned you, as othahwise I should give you a fearful thwashin'."

"Bai Jove, I've had an awfully narrow escape," said Tom Merry, looking alarmed. "Still, I'd rather have the fearful thrashing than any more of your funny stories."

And he walked away, leaving D'Arcy asking Manners and Lowther the difference between a rocking-horse and a beef-steak, and waiting in vain for an answer.

CHAPTER 6.

No Joke!

Cousin Ethel had expressed, in a casual way, a desire to visit the famous Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park; and it had immediately occurred to Figgins that it would be possible to make a trip to that entertaining place one half-holiday.

He worked it out, and it was feasible. It was an hour to London by train from Wayland—sometimes less if you could catch an express. An hour there and an hour back was two hours for the travelling. A couple of hours in London made four. It could easily be done within the limits of a half-holiday if the juniors could get excused from afternoon call-over. And that relaxation it was not difficult to obtain.

Figgins & Co. had at first thought of keeping the idea to themselves. But Figgins, rugged as he was in many ways, had a sense of delicacy that never failed him when the gentle sex were concerned. The fact that he liked Cousin Ethel so well made it awkward to keep her all to himself, as it were. He felt that she would feel more at ease if her cousin were in the party. And if D'Arcy were coming, there was no reason why all the chums of the School House should not come. As a matter of fact, D'Arcy would have invited them if Figgins hadn't. And even failing that, it was extremely likely that they would have joined the excursion incontinently, knowing perfectly well that Figgins would have to keep up polite appearances before Miss Cleveland.

It had all been arranged for Wednesday afternoon. Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three had obtained the necessary permission from Mr. Railton to miss afternoon calling-over. Figgins & Co. obtained the same from their head prefect, Monteith. The coast was quite clear as far as that was concerned, and the juniors had a pleasant feeling of strangeness in the idea of going beyond bounds without a licking to follow.

On Wednesday all was smiles and good-humour among the juniors concerned. Study No. 6 forgot to chip the chums of the Shell. The latter, when they met Figgins & Co. in the quad, greeted them as cordially as if they had never borrowed their trap overnight, and the New House fellows were quite ready to forget and forgive. The day was fine, clear, and cool, and was evidently going to be dry. It was likely to be a ripping afternoon for footer. But the juniors were not thinking of footer. The afternoon's excursion filled their thoughts.

"It's a ripping day for an expedition," said Blake, as he came out into the quad after breakfast, and sniffed the keen morning air. "We shall have a jolly good time. It's a lucky thing, too, that we're all in funds."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I wired to my govannah yesterday, and he has turned up twumps in a weally wippin' mannah. After all, though, it was time he sent me another fivah."

"Good old belted earl!" said Blake.

"By the way," said D'Arcy, "what is the difference between a bulldog that has lost its fwont teeth and a papahchase?"

Blake seized the swell of the School House by the throat, and backed him up against the wall.

"What do you mean by suddenly setting up as a funny man?" demanded Blake. "For the last two days you have been boiling over with puns, brimming with conundrums, and reeking with funny stories. What's the game?"

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"There's the bell for morning school," exclaimed Digby. "Come on!"



"You young rascal!" cried the stout gentleman. "I'll chastise you with my umbrella—ow-w-w-w!" But he suddenly broke off with a howl of anguish as someone ran a pin into his leg, and danced on one foot, clasping his injured leg

Jack Blake released D'Arcy, shaking a warning forefinger at him. The chums of the Fourth set off towards the school, and D'Arcy put his disturbed collar straight.

When lessons were over, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther walked out into the quadrangle. The Fourth Form were already out, and a well-known lanky form was standing under the big beech in front of the Head's house. A graceful form stood beside it. Figgins was talking to Cousin Ethel. The Terrible Three strolled up, and Ethel greeted them with a bright smile.

"It's going to be a jolly afternoon!" said Tom Merry, as he raised his cap. "What time would it suit you to start, Cousin Ethel?"

"Cousin Ethel has just arranged that with me," said Figgins. "Brown's trap is coming to take us to the station."

Cousin Ethel nodded to the juniors, and disappeared into the house. Tom Merry looked expressively at the New House junior.

"Brown's trap will only hold four," he said—"or six at a pinch."

"It will only hold four on this occasion," said Figgins coolly. "Kerr, Wynn, and myself, besides Miss Cleveland."

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Rats!" said Figgins, walking away.

"Done again!" said Manners. "We can't raid the trap under Cousin Ethel's eyes. I'm beginning to think that it's about time we got a new leader."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully, and he, too, walked away.

Arthur Augustus strolled up and spotted the two juniors under the beech, and came quickly towards them.

"I thought I saw Cousin Ethel about here," he remarked.

"She's gone in," said Manners.

"I say, don't huddy away, deah boys. I wanted to tell you something—"

"You can tell Manners," said Lowther, walking off in one direction.

"You can tell Lowther," said Manners, walking off in another.

Arthur Augustus looked after one and then after the other with gathering indignation. He was simply bubbling over with funny stories, and it was hard that no one would listen to them. D'Arcy, the humorist, did not appear popular. He caught sight of Ethel in the Head's garden, and at once hurried to join her.

Juniors were not allowed there, as a matter of fact; but D'Arcy naturally considered that as his cousin was there he could safely relax the rule for once in his own favour.

Cousin Ethel smiled as D'Arcy raised his hat.

"Bai Jove, I'm glad to see you, Ethel!" said Arthur Augustus. "I should have been in the trap with you last night, only I was left behind by a set of fearful wotters. I weally think we shall have a wippin' time this aftahnoon, deah boy—I mean gal."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I hope so, Arthur."

"I want you to let me dwive you to the station," went on D'Arcy. "You see, I can get a little dogcart, and we can go alone; and all the othah wottahs can follow on foot. That will be wippin', won't it?"

"Yes; but—"

"That's awwanged, then. Pewwaps we can let Blake come in; but those New House wottahs are barred. There wouldn't be any woom for Figgins' feet."

"Only I have already promised Figgins to go in the trap," said Ethel demurely.

"Bai Jove! Have you weally? Couldn't you tell him you had changed your mind? That is the pwivilege of a lady, you know."

"I'm afraid not, Arthur."

"Well, it's wathah hard on me, you know. Won't you feel wathah nervous with Figgins dwivin' you?"

The girl laughed again. She would have felt nervous with D'Arcy driving her.

"I think not, Arthur. But I will ask Figgins to ask you to come in the trap."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"Vewy good! I shall be there to pprotect you, then, at all events. I say, Ethel, would you care to hear a funny stowwy—a wemarkably funny stowwy?"

"Certainly!" said Cousin Ethel.

"It happened at a dinnah-party," exclaimed D'Arcy. "It was awfully funny—ha, ha, ha! A chap suddenly seized a dish of stawbewwies, and put it on his head. The lady who was sittin' next to him said: 'My hat'—I mean she said: 'Good gwacious! What are you doin' that for?' And—ha, ha, ha!—what do you think he said?"

"I cannot guess," said Cousin Ethel.

"Ha, ha, ha! He said: 'Bai Jove, I thought it was pineapples!' Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel smiled with polite anticipation.

"Yes, Arthur?"

"Eh?"

"And what did the lady say then?"

"Er—she—I don't know. That's all, you know."

"But where is the story?"

"That's the stowwy," said D'Arcy, rather crestfallen.

"But didn't you say that it was a funny story?"

"Yaas, wathah! I'll tell it to you ovah again, if you like. You see, there was a gentleman at a dinnah-party, and he—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel laughed—a sweet, silver laugh. She certainly seemed to be amused, but whether it was at the funny story or at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, it would be hard to say. But she was certainly laughing; and the swell of St. Jim's was satisfied.

"I thought you would see it in the long run," he remarked. "You see, there are some jokes that you see at

once, and some that dawn on you aftah a time. This is one of the kind that dawn on you. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall tell Tom Mewwy that you can see the joke," said D'Arcy, beaming. "Gals have a keenah sense of humah than boys sometimes. I have often thought that Tom Mewwy is vewy dense. I asked him this mornin' the diffewence between a church clock and a lawa-mowah, and he said he would bowwow Skimpole's microscope and examine them before he committed himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, it was funny, wasn't it, about the pineapple?" grinned D'Arcy. "I know some more funny stories as good as that. There's the stowwy about the—"

Cousin Ethel looked at her watch.

"I'm afraid I must go into lunch now," she said. "And you had better get your dinner, Arthur, or you will be late."

And Cousin Ethel went in, still smiling.

D'Arcy walked away, quite satisfied with himself. A really good humorist likes to be appreciated. And a little feminine encouragement will often make a humorist feel that he is being appreciated at his proper value.

CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Gets Mixed!

C OUSIN ETHEL came down to the trap with Figgins. The New House leader coloured a little under the general gaze turned upon him, but looked as proud as Punch, nevertheless.

Kerr and Wynn formed a sort of guard of honour. Arthur Augustus came up and joined them, bowing over his silk hat in approved Chesterfield-Grandison style.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn gave him an expressive look as he accompanied them to the trap. But Cousin Ethel murmured a word to Figgins, and all was serene.

The trap was not what would have been called an elegant vehicle. As a matter of fact, Mr. Brown was accustomed to using it for the purpose of retailing vegetables to the inhabitants of Rylcombe and the vicinity. A fragrant odour of onions was still perceptible about it. And the most careful arrangement of rugs, draped gracefully over the sides, could not wholly conceal the legend: "T. Brown, Greengrocer, Rylcombe." But the vehicle was roomy and comfortable, and there was room for five—and what more could be desired? Figgins took the reins, Cousin Ethel seating herself beside him, and Kerr, Wynn, and D'Arcy entered the trap behind.

Many a pair of eyes watched them enviously.

"I suppose we're going to walk," said Monty Lowther. "This is getting monotonous."

"It's all right," chuckled Digby. "Cousin Ethel likes driving, and Figgins will have to ask her, you know. He'll look an awful ass going through Rylcombe with a girl driving him."

"Well, that's some comfort," admitted Lowther.

The juniors accompanied the trap to the gates. They heard a little colloquy as they went. Figgins had offered Cousin Ethel the reins.

The girl shook her head.

"But you would like to drive," urged Figgins, with a sinking heart, in case his offer should be accepted.

"Not at all, Figgins."

"I know you drive very well," said Figgins.

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"But I would really rather you drove," she said.

"Oh, very well, if you really wish it!" said Figgins, thinking that Cousin Ethel was a jolly sensible girl as well as the sweetest one in England.

The trap started down the lane in fine style. Monty Lowther looked expressively at Digby. Digby snorted.

"Well, she drove last night," he said.

"That was because Tom Merry had the ribbons," chuckled Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Tom Merry. "Let's get off! We shall have to take the short cut, and hurry up, too, to get there the same time as the trap."

The juniors lost no time in getting to Rylcombe. The trap had just arrived at the station, and was standing outside when they arrived.

Arthur Augustus jumped down to assist Cousin Ethel to alight; but Figgins had already done so. D'Arcy gave the long-limbed New House junior a look that ought to have withered him up on the spot, but which had no perceptible effect whatever upon Figgins.

"Get the tickets, Merry, will you?" said Figgins, who evidently considered himself the leader of the party. "Eleven first-class returns."

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"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors had pooled their cash for the occasion, and Tom Merry had the funds. He put down the money at the little booking-office, and received a sheaf of tickets. Five minutes later the juniors were in the train. The carriage was supposed to hold only eight, but, as Tom Merry said, they were all to go together, and the fault was with the railway company for not foreseeing things better.

"Fatty Wynn can sit on Gussy's knees," said Figgins. "That will save two seats."

"I should uttably wefuse to have Fatty Wynn sittin' on my knees," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. "He is a frightfully heavy weight, and he would wumple my—"

"It's all right," said Tom Merry hastily. "Cousin Ethel must have plenty of room, so we will have only four on that side, and seven on this. If I sit next to Cousin Ethel, I shall be able to—"

"I weally considah that is my place, Tom Mewwy."

"Now, look here, Gussy—"

"I insist—"

Figgins calmly dropped into the seat beside Cousin Ethel. The girl was looking out of the window as the train sped out of the station, and looked unconscious of everything.

"Don't make a row, you kids," said Figgins. "Take care of those tickets, Tom Merry. We should be in a fine fix if you lost them."

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, I weally wish you would not tread on my feet!"

"You shouldn't have such big feet, Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"A fellow must tread somewhere. And if your feet are all over the carriage—"

"Did you bring that package I gave you to carry, Figgins?" asked Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Eh?" said Figgins absently.

"Did you bring that packet I gave you?"

"Did you give me a packet?"

"Did I?" howled Fatty Wynn. "Do you mean to say that you don't remember my giving you a packet of ham sandwiches to carry just before we left the New House?"

"Yes; now you speak of it, I remember something of the sort," assented Figgins. "I'm awfully sorry to say, though, that I've left them somewhere."

"You—you—Where have you left them?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Figgins. "In the trap, very likely. It's all right. Brown's man is taking the trap away from the station, and he'll find the packet. He's bound to eat them, so they won't be wasted."

"And nearly an hour before Fatty will be able to get anything to eat," said Monty Lowther. "Figgins—Figgins, how could you?"

"It's all very well for you to be funny, Lowther. I get awfully hungry in this October weather. I had hardly any dinner—Figgins was hurrying me so—just the school grub, and a rabbit pie I took in myself, and some boiled cod, and a pudding. I hadn't any time for the cold chicken or the steak pie; Figgins was in such a hurry. He hardly ate any dinner himself, and I know jolly well he'll be hungry before we get to the Zoo."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins, colouring.

"I suppose I shall be able to get a lunch basket when we change at Wayland."

"I suppose you won't," laughed Tom Merry. "We have three minutes to get into the London express. Lunch baskets are barred."

"Then I don't see what's to be done. I've nothing to eat about me except a pork pie and a saveloy. What's to be done?"

"Eat the pork pie and the saveloy, and then go and eat coke!" said Manners. "You'll make me hungry if you keep on like this."

"That's all very well, but in this October weather—"

"Speaking of October weather," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "weminds me of a conundrum."

There was a general groan.

"I say, Ethel, deah boy—I mean, Ethel. Would you care to hear a weally wippin' conundrum?"

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said Cousin Ethel.

"Yaas, I thought you would. What is the diffewence between a church clock and a lawn-mowah?" asked D'Arcy, beaming round the carriage.

"What's that got to do with October weather?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, you're wight! That's the wong one. The one I meant to ask you is why is a moonlight night in October like the fwont page of the 'Magnet'?"

"Give it up!" said nine voices, with singular rapidity and unanimity.

"Do you give it up, too, Ethel?"

"Er—yes, I think so."

"Because one has a bat on the rocks, and the othah has a rat in the box," said D'Arcy.

There was a glare from all quarters.

"I—I don't quite see it," said Ethel. "But I dare say it is all right."

D'Arcy looked reflective for a moment.

"No, upon the whole, I weally think I have given you the wong answah," he said. "Pewwaps this is the wight one. Because one has a band on his hat, and the othah has a hand on his bat. Is that bettah, do you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel laughed. It was the quickest way of getting rid of the conundrums, and the juniors took their cue from their girl chum, and they all laughed. And D'Arcy, quite satisfied in his mind, laughed, too. Unfortunately this appreciation of his humorous efforts encouraged him to do his worst.

"A wathah funny thing occurred to me the othah day," he remarked. "You know, aftah we came home fwom spendin' the vac at sea the steamah was wecked, and Skimpole went down in a divin'-suit to wescue his micwoscope? The divahs tweeked us vewy wudely when they found we had been usin' their things. But the funny thing is—why do you think Skimpole went down in the divin'-dwess?"

"To look for the microscope," said Herries.

"Yaas, of course. But what othah weason?"

"Because he was a silly ass," suggested Manners.

"Oh, pway don't wot! This is a widdle!"

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We'll give it up," said Tom Merry. "Get it over!"

"That is hardly a wespectful way of puttin' it, Tom Mewwy."

"Well, get it over, anyway."

"Why, you see—ha, ha, ha!—he went down for divah's weasons," chuckled D'Arcy.

"He—he went down for diver's reasons, did he?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you say that occurred to you the other day?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It occurred to somebody else a few centuries ago," said Lowther, shaking his head. "I was brought up on that joke."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Wayland!" exclaimed Manners.

And the train stopped at the junction, where the party changed to the London express which took them on to Charing Cross.

CHAPTER 8.

At the Zoo!

ALIGHTING from the train at Charing Cross, Cousin Ethel walked along with Figgins, and the party then went to Trafalgar Square Tube Station. Tom Merry took the tickets, and they descended by the escalator.

"There's the train!" exclaimed Herries.

They quickened their pace, and arrived on the platform as a train came in for Regent's Park, and the juniors boarded it.

Just as the automatic doors of the train were closing a gentleman and a little boy entered the compartment, and they sat down opposite the juniors from St. Jim's.

The stout gentleman puffed and blew, and mopped his forehead with a handkerchief. He sat in the seat nearest the door.

When the sliding doors opened at the next station he shouted to a porter on the platform.

"Is this the right train for the Zoo?" he demanded.

"Yes," replied the man in uniform. "You get out at Regent's Park Station."

Arthur Augustus smiled at the old gentleman.

"Are you goin' to the Zoo, my deah sir?" he said affably.

The stout gentleman glared at him.

"I should be vewy happy to show you woud, if you like, sir," said D'Arcy. "I am takin' these fellows there, too."

"Young jackanapes!" murmured the stout gentleman.

"Alfred, stop sucking your finger this instant!"

"Yes, Uncle James," piped Alfred.

The train ran into Regent's Park Station, and the juniors alighted and entered a life. When they reached the Marylebone Road, Arthur Augustus looked round for

the Zoo. He adjusted his eyeglass and looked round again as if he thought it might be near at hand, but that he had passed it over in the first glance.

"I don't see the Zoo here, Tom Mewwy," he remarked.
 "Did you expect to?" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've got to cross the road, get into Regent's Park, and go round to the entrance on the Outer Circle."

"Is it a long walk?" asked D'Arcy doubtfully.
 "You'll know when you get there if you count the steps."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "I don't think Cousin Ethel ought to walk it," said Figgins. "There will be enough walking to do in the grounds, you know."

He made a sign to a taxi, and the driver brought the vehicle up to the curb in a moment.

Figgins calmly assisted Cousin Ethel into it. D'Arcy moved forward and stumbled over Kerr's foot. Before he could recover from the stumble Figgins was in the cab with Ethel and bowling away.

Arthur Augustus set his silk hat straight, jammed his monocle into his eye, and stared after the cab.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.
 Tom Merry led the way into Regent's Park, and the juniors walked along the Outer Circle.

A voice they were learning to recognise came to their ears.

"Alfred, throw away that toffee immediately."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "That old gentleman is goin' to haunt us this aftahnoon, I suppose."

The stout gentleman gave D'Arcy a glare as he passed with Alfred.

The juniors hurried on, but they missed Figgins at the entrance to the Zoo. Tom Merry paid for nine to pass through the turnstiles. D'Arcy was last, but he paused at the turnstile and looked round anxiously.

Blake poked him in the ribs.
 "Come on, Gussy. This isn't a place to go to sleep in—and you're blocking up the way."

"Pway don't poke my wibs in that wuff way, Blake! I am thinkin' about Figgins and Ethel. Pewwaps they are lost, and I cannot go into the Zoo in any comfort if Cousin Ethel is lost in London."

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "How could they possibly be lost? I suppose a taxi-driver knows his way to the Zoological Gardens."

"I have heard that countwy people comin' up to London have been dwiven to feahful places by cabmen, and wobbled and murthered."

"Oh, dear! Are you coming in or not?"

"I am afraid it's imposs for me to come in until I am assualted about Figgins and Ethel. I cannot leave my own cousin to be wobbled and murthered, and I am surprised at your suggestin' such a thing, Tom Mewwy."

"You—you unspeakable duffer! I tell you Figgins must be a good ten minutes ahead of us here, and he's gone in with Ethel!"

"I weally considah that we ought to be satisfied on that point before we devote the afternoon to pleasuah. If Ethel has been wobbled—"

"Duffer! Get out of the turnstile—you're blocking the way!"

"I am sowwy, but undah the cires—"

"Here comes Uncle James and little Alfred," said Blake.

"Get out of the turnstile, Gussy—they want to come in."

"Under the cires—"

"Ask the ticket man," said Digby. "He'll tell you if Figgy has gone in."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know. I say, deah boy, have you seen a long-legged wottah and a vewy pwetty girl come in duwin' the last quartah of an hour?"

The man in the office grinned.

"I'm afraid you must be a little more exact in your description, sir," he said. "There have been a lot of people in during the last quarter of an hour."

"Alfred, follow me through the gate and stop biting your nails."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Boy! You are standing in the way."

Arthur Augustus looked round and raised his silk hat to the stout gentleman.

"I am sowwy," he said. "I am makin' a few inquiries, and I shall not be long. My deah sir, the two persons I want to know about are a vewy skinnay, long-legged, fat-headed sort of a wascal, and a vewy charmin' young lady. If you kick me again, Kerr, I shall be compelled to disturb the harmony of the pwesent expedish by administewin' a feahful thwashin'."

"Just be a little more careful in talking about Figgy, then!" growled Kerr.

"The gentleman wishes to have an exact description so that he can recognise them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Boy, you are blocking up the way and wasting my time. Alfred, put your hat straight immediately!"

"Yes, Uncle James!"

"I am sowwy to incommode you, but, weally, I should be obliged if you would not intewwupt me, sir," said D'Arcy politely. "You put me off my stwoke. The young lady who came in with the long-legged chap was my cousin, my deah fellow, and vewy like me—wemarkably good-lookin', you know."

"A contradiction in terms," murmured Lowther.

"Pway wing off, Lowthah! The long-legged wottah I was speakin' of had a schoolcap on, and his necktie was probably on one side, and vewy likely there was some ink on his collah, and his waistcoat was wathah wumped."

The man in the office laughed.

"I think I saw the two you mention, sir," he said. "They came up in a taxi."

"Yaas, wathah! That's wight!"

"They went in about ten minutes ago."

"Thank you vewy much. I am gweatly relieved in my mind. I was anxious about Ethel, deah boys. And I shouldn't like even Figgins to be wobbled and murthered—though he had nevah tweeked me with pwopah respect."

"Boy, will you allow me to enter?" thundered the stout gentleman, who was growing most apoplectic in aspect.

Arthur Augustus lifted his hat again.

"Certainly, deah sir! I apologise most sincerely for havin' kept you waitin', and I weally hope it has caused you no inconvenience."

"Young jackanapes!"

"I weally must wemark that it is a wude, oppwobwious expvession, and— Welease me, Tom Merry! I wufuse to move until I have finished! Oh, you wottah!"

D'Arcy was dragged bodily away, and the stout gentleman was free to enter at last. The chums of St. Jim's walked on up the Terrace Walk, and at the bear pit on the right-hand side they caught sight of Cousin Ethel and Figgins looking down at the bears.

Potts, the Office Boy!



CHAPTER 9.
Fatty In a Fix!

IT was a fine, sunny afternoon, and the grounds of the Zoological Gardens were pretty well filled. There were a number of people round the bear pit, and at the refreshment stall close at hand.

Fatty Wynn stopped at the latter. The lady in charge did a thriving trade, apparently, in buns for the bears and nuts for the monkeys. But Fatty Wynn was not thinking of nuts for the monkeys and buns for the bears—he was thinking of himself.

He looked over the little buffet with a calculating air, and felt in his pocket for some money. Then he began to give his orders. Meanwhile, the other juniors joined Figgins and Cousin Ethel.

D'Arey gave his cousin a rather reproachful look.

"I have been feahfully anxious about you, Ethel," he said.

The girl looked surprised.

"Anxious about me, Arthur? Why?"

"I was wathah afwaid you might have been wobbed and murdahed, you know. I inquired at the gate before I came in, howevah, and learned that you were here by desowibin' Figgins to the ticket chap. I was gweatly velieved in my mind. I weally hope you will not get out of my sight again, deah girl. London is a vewy dangewous place, and you ought not to make me anxious, you know."

Cousin Ethel smiled. If she had been a boy she would probably have said "Rats." As she was a girl, she only smiled and looked at Figgins, and Figgins grinned.

The bear in the pit rose on his hind legs and opened his mouth for buns. He was a large, handsome black bear, and the expression of his face as he opened his mouth was comical to the extreme. He was evidently accustomed to being fed by the visitors, and looked for buns from every corner as a matter of course.

Tom Merry stepped to the buffet and bought a bagful of buns. Cousin Ethel smiled sweetly at the black bear, and he opened his jaws wider.

"He wants a bun, poor boy," said Ethel.

"Here you are," said Tom Merry.

He opened the bag, and Cousin Ethel took a bun. The bear's jaws opened wide.

Ethel dropped the bun into the pit, and the bear caught it in his mouth. A single movement of the jaws, and the bun disappeared. The jaws opened for another.

"My hat!" said Manners. "He will get indigestion at that rate. Fatty Wynn can't bolt buns like that!"

"Bai Jove, no! Fatty Wynn is boltin' somethin', though. I say, Fatty, deah boy, are you gettin' that cake for the beah?"

"No, I'm not," said the fat Fourth-Former.

"Give me that saveloy," said Lowther. "He's bound to like a saveloy."

"I haven't a saveloy. It's gone!"

"Make room here, boys. Make room immediately," said a well-known voice. "Alfred, you are not to lean over the parapet!"

"Yes, Uncle James."

"If you were to fall it would cause you considerable injury, and you would probably have to be removed in a taxi. I cannot be put to that expense."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"You may purchase a penny bun at the counter here. Take this penny, and mind you do not lose it. You shall

feed the bear with the bun. And stop sucking your thumb this instant, Alfred!"

"Yes, Uncle James."

Alfred purchased the penny bun. There was plenty of room for Uncle James on the juniors' side. They always treated elders with respect, from a regard of good form.

"Don't waste that bun recklessly, Alfred. You may break it into three pieces and feed the bear with it. And stop eating it yourself!"

"I—I wasn't, Uncle James."

"I distinctly saw you put a portion of that unwholesome pastry into your mouth, Alfred!"

"It—it was only a little bit, Uncle James. And—and I'm hungry."

"Pooh, nonsense! How can you possibly be hungry when it is only two hours since you had your dinner? I hope you will not make me sorry that I am conferring a treat upon you this afternoon, Alfred!"

"No, Uncle James."

"You may feed the bear. That is right. I will place the last piece on my umbrella, in order to make the animal climb the pole for it and display his agility for the improvement of your knowledge of natural history."

"Yes, Uncle James."

In the bear pit was a post, notched to make climbing easy. The stout gentleman impaled a fragment of bun on the end of his umbrella and reached it out towards the post, and strove with coaxing gesture to make the bear climb for it. But Bruin did not seem to be in a climbing mood.

The juniors of St. Jim's had ceased feeding him, from a motive of politeness, until the stout gentleman should be finished improving Alfred's knowledge of natural history. The stout gentleman grew very red in the face as the bear refused to climb.

He allowed the umbrella to sink at last, tired of holding it out, and the bear made a sudden snatch at the piece of bun, and seized it in his jaws.

The stout gentleman gave him a savage crack over the head with his umbrella, and the animal grunted.

"You brute!" muttered Tom Merry.

It was as well for the stout gentleman that no keeper was at hand to see his act of brutality. He frowned angrily at Tom Merry, perhaps feeling the justice of the junior's muttered remark, and then told Alfred to "come on" in a voice of thunder.

Alfred started and shrank, and then followed in the wake of Uncle James.

"By Jove, what a bwute!" muttered D'Arey. "And I wathah think that little chap would be just as happy if his uncle wasn't conferwin' a treat upon him this aftahnoon."

The bear had retreated to a corner of the pit, and was rubbing his head with his paw and growling slightly. Cousin Ethel tossed a bun to him, and he took no notice. The juniors, with caressing gestures, strove to bring him back to a good temper. All but Fatty Wynn. He was too busy.

The fat junior was sitting on the parapet, engaged upon a bagful of cakes he had purchased for himself.

Lowther reached towards the bag.

"Give us a few of those, Fatty," he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty. "I— Oh!"

As he moved quickly the bag slipped from his knees and fell into the pit. Fatty Wynn gazed after it in dismay. Nearly a dozen choice cakes were there, and his feed got cut short—nipped in the bud, as it were.

"OKAY, CHIEF!"



"Serves you right!" said Lowther. "Why couldn't you give one to the bear? He'll have the lot now."

"He won't take them," said Kerr. "He's going into his den."

The bear, all his good temper gone, had retreated sullenly into his den under the wall. Fatty Wynn looked after him, and then looked down at the bag on the paved floor of the pit.

"I say, it's a shame to waste good grub like that!" he said. "I'm going down for them."

"You can't," said Tom Merry. "It's not allowed to enter the pit."

"You can tell me if the keeper comes along."

"You won't need telling if the bear comes along!" grinned Lowther. "He'd be glad of a nice fat lump out of Fatty!"

"He's gone in; and, besides, he's tame. I'm going down for those cakes."

"Don't be an ass!" said Figgins. "You can't!"

"Who says I can't?" said Fatty Wynn, who could be obstinate when he chose. "It's an easy drop into the pit, and I could jump up and catch the coping again, and you could give me a hand out."

"Don't be an ass!"

Fatty Wynn slid over the rail to the inward side. Tom Merry ran forward to stop him. But the fat Fourth-Former dropped quickly into the pit.

He stooped for the bag of cakes, and crammed it under his jacket.

There was a yell of alarm from the juniors.

"Look out! He's coming!"

Fatty Wynn gave a gasp and looked round. The black head of the bear was protruding from the den, and there was a spiteful gleam in his eyes. Fatty made a spring to catch the stone coping, and dropped back a foot short of catching it. The bear growled, and came fully into view. He was evidently annoyed by the invasion of his domain.

Fatty stood petrified for the moment.

"The post!" shouted Tom Merry. "Climb the post!"

Fatty Wynn understood. He made a spring for the post in the centre of the pit. The junior was plump, but he was active. The deep notches in the post rendered climbing easy. In a twinkling Fatty Wynn had swarmed up the post, and reached the top of it. He was out of reach of the bear; but he was out of reach of escape also, for it was a physical impossibility to get from the top of the post to any of the sides of the pit.

"Help!" gasped Fatty. "Ow! Help!"

The bear stopped at the foot of the post and growled. He had refused to climb for the sake of the stout gentleman's proffered bun. Perhaps Fatty Wynn seemed to him a more juicy and tempting morsel. At all events, he reared himself upon his hind legs and grasped the post with his paws, with the evident intention of climbing.

"Help!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

Cousin Ethel turned pale. Lowther jammed a bun on the end of his cane, and reached it out to the bear. Bruin took no notice. He climbed the post, and the shouts and gesticulations of the juniors, and the buns and cakes they pelted him with, made no difference. He took no notice, but slowly and steadily climbed the post after Fatty Wynn.

CHAPTER 10.

Buns for the Bear!

"MY hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Fatty will be clawed down!"

It looked like it. Fatty Wynn was at the top of the post now, and could go no farther. The bear was climbing steadily, and was almost within reach of him now. The red jaws had opened wide.

It was not a question of life and death, but Fatty Wynn would certainly have been badly mauled if the bear had dragged him down. The juniors were almost at their wits' end. It was Tom Merry who thought of a way to help.

"Fatty—Fatty, you've got the cakes! Drop one into his mouth!"

"Good wheeze!" shouted Figgins. "Buck up, Fatty!"

Fortunately Fatty Wynn had sufficient presence of mind to act upon the suggestion. He clung to the top of the post with one arm and looked downward.

The red muzzle of the bear was not a foot below him. Fatty Wynn shuddered; but he had plenty of pluck.

He slid his free hand into the bag under his jacket and extracted a bun. The bun dropped fairly into the bear's mouth.

Bruin seemed a little astonished at this reception. He coughed and choked, for the bun had gone very far back in his capacious throat. He dealt with it, however, munching it up, clinging to the post with his paws the while.

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Then he opened his mouth wide again. But he had ceased to climb.

Fatty Wynn breathed a little more freely, and so did his friends round the bear pit. So long as the bagful of cakes and buns lasted, the fat Fourth-Former was safe.

"Keep it up!" shouted Blake.

Fatty Wynn dropped another cake. A single movement of the powerful jaws crunched it, and it disappeared, and the red mouth opened wide for another.

The sight was comical enough, and but for Fatty Wynn's peril the juniors would have enjoyed it. But it was no laughing matter for Wynn.

He dropped another and another morsel into the bear's mouth, and the animal, clinging to the post, munched one after another.

The supply ran short, and the perspiration gathered on Fatty Wynn's brow as he dropped his last cake.



As Gussy had no more biscuits for the elephant, he stretched out his trunk, took hold of the hand and dragged the swell of St. J.

The bear munched it, and opened his jaws wide again.

Fatty Wynn looked round helplessly.

"Help!" he gasped. "Ow! He's coming up again! Ow! Help!"

The bear waited for a few moments. Then he made a movement to climb higher. Tom Merry deftly threw a bun across, and the bear caught it in his jaws. His attention was taken from Fatty Wynn for the moment.

Lowther held out a cake on the end of his cane, and the bear reached for it, snapping with his jaws. Lowther drew it back, and allowed it to fall to the floor of the pit. The bear scrambled down after it.

"Oh!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Oh, keep him there somehow! The brute!"

"More buns—quick!" said Figgins.

Lowther made a clean sweep of a huge pile of buns on the buffet. The juniors fairly pelted the bear with them. Bruin's good temper seemed to return. He bolted the buns

at an alarming rate, which certainly could not have been good for his digestive organs.

Fatty Wynn was palpitating on top of the post. The bear was letting him alone, but there was no escape from his perch. Figgins called to him:

"Slide down, Fatty!"

"I—I can't! The beast—"

"He's busy now! Slide down, and I'll help you up the other side—quick, before he starts on you again!"

"Suppose he—suppose he goes for me?"

"Then we'll all jump in, and he'll have to go for the lot of us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All—all right, Figgins! But—but—"

"Slide down, I tell you!"

"V-very well!"

There was clearly nothing else to be done. Fatty Wynn

and rubbed his paw over his eye. But Fatty Wynn was in safety now, and the hail of comestibles ceased.

Somewhat ruffled and dusty, and bathed in perspiration, the plump junior stood on the safe side of the rails.

"By Jove!" he gasped. "That was a narrow escape!"

"Yes; for the bear," remarked Monty Lowther. "He would have had fearful nightmares to-night if he had bolted our Falstaff."

"Yaas, wathah! It would have been wathah wuff on Bwain."

"And you might as well have let him have the cakes first as last," said Lowther. "He had them, you see, and nearly had you, too."

"Let's get on," said Tom Merry. "We've got a lot to see. I think Fatty had better agree not to fall into any more animals' dens, or we shall waste the afternoon without seeing anything of the Zoo. And somebody had better settle up for all those buns."

The girl in the buffet looked as if she thought so, too. Lowther paid up cheerfully, and the party moved on. Fatty Wynn paid no heed to the badinage of his chums. He was only too thankful to have escaped the jaws of the bear.

Arthur Augustus had been looking thoughtful for some moments. As the juniors walked on he gave Tom Merry a nudge. The hero of the Shell looked round.

"I say, Tom Mewwy, I wanted to ask you—"

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"What is the difference between a black beah and a niggah with one eye?"

Tom Merry stopped his ears and ran on.

CHAPTER 11.

In the Lion House!

JACK BLAKE looked at his watch.

"Hallo! We shall have to buck up!" he exclaimed.

"For what?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

"To see the lions feed. They're fed at half-past four, you know. It's worth seeing."

"Yaas, wathah! I particularly wanted to see the lions feed. Pway, where are the lions?"

"In the lion house, of course, fathead!"

"I object to bein' called a fathead!"

"I object to your being one, you know, but it can't be helped. This way to the lion house," said Blake, leading the way.

"How do you know that is the way to the lion house, deah boy?"

"Because I can see the name on the place through the trees, ass!"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"The things you don't think of, Gussy, would fill the 'Encyclopedia Britannica,' and leave a lot over," said Blake.

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"It's a quarter-past four now," observed Lowther.

"Then what's the good of goin' in now?" said D'Arcy.

"We haven't vevy long to stay here, you know, and we don't want to waste a quartah of an hour."

"People crowd in to see the lions feed," explained Jack Blake, who, having been to the Zoo before, naturally adopted the airs of a cicerone. "If you don't buck up, we shan't get into the house at all. I've seen them filling up all the space between the railings and the opposite wall."

"Bai Jove! I nevah—"

"No, of course you didn't! Come on!"

The juniors lost no time in getting to the lion house. Figgins looked anxiously at Cousin Ethel to see if she was afraid. But she wasn't. Cousin Ethel was not the sort of girl to be afraid where there was no danger, and she had never fainted in her life. She only smiled when she heard a roar from within the big building.

Blake was right in thinking that there was no time to lose. People were hurrying towards the lion house from all quarters to see the animals fed. The wide, long hall was already pretty full. In front of the long row of huge cages, or, rather, dens, runs an iron railing, within which the attendants wheel down the truck containing the food at feeding-time. Some of the spectators were crowding up to the railing to get as near as possible to the scene, while others occupied the seats at the back of the hall.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and looked round for a seat. Blake seized him by the arm and dragged him away.

"Come on, ass, here's a place for us!"

"I gweatly pwefer to sit down, Blake."

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to give the animal a pat on the trunk. But the elephant suddenly forward. "Oh!" yelled Gussy. "Help! Bai Jove!"

slid down the post as quietly as he could, on the farther side from the bear.

Bruin was gobbling up buns, and had no eyes for Fatty Wynn. His back was turned to the fat Fourth-Former.

Figgins swung himself over the rail at the back of the pit, and, with his chest on the stone, reached down with both hands towards Fatty Wynn.

He could just clasp hands with the fat Fourth-Former. But Wynn was no light weight. It was impossible for Figgins to lift him in such a position.

"It's all right, Figgy," gasped Wynn, "I can climb!"

Kerr was kneeling at the top ready to give a hand. With Figgins grasping his hands, Fatty Wynn scrambled up, and Kerr reached down and got a grip on his collar.

Then he was dragged bodily out of the pit.

The bear looked round and growled.

"More buns," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus hurled a bun, and caught the bear in the eye instead of the mouth. The animal growled again,

"You'll have to sit down on the floor, then."
 "There are seats on the othah side of the hall."
 "They're all taken, centuries ago—at all events, half an hour ago."

"Pewwaps I may find some vacant."
 "Oh, you can go and look if you like," grinned Blake.
 "You won't see the lions feed if you do, that's all. Run along!"

"I weally think I had better go and look for a seat, as I feel wathah exhausted aftah so much walkin'!" said D'Arcy. "Ethel, will you come and sit down?"

The girl shook her head.
 "I prefer to watch the lions, Arthur," she replied sweetly.
 "Oh, vewy well. Don't let my cousin get cwushed in the crowd, Figgins."

"I'm looking after Miss Cleveland," said Figgins. "That's all right."

Arthur Augustus went to look for a seat. Figgins, by rare good fortune, found a place at the rail just opposite the den of the largest lion—a really royal beast. Cousin Ethel stood beside him there, squeezed against the rail. Figgins put his strong arm behind her to keep off the pressure of the crowd.

Blake, Digby, and Herries were crammed against the rail in front of the big tiger, while the Terrible Three were farther along in front of another lion's den. Kerr and Wynn were just behind them, looking over their shoulders. It was getting close upon feeding-time now, and the animals were very restive.

The tiger was walking up and down his cage with endless, tireless movements, and the lion and lioness in the largest den were sniffing and snuffling to and fro as if they knew that feeding-time was coming—and doubtless they did.

"By Jove! I can smell the grub they're bringing!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, sniffing. "It niffs just like ham and mustard."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.
 "What's the row?" asked Lowther, staring at him.
 "The grub you can niff is Fatty Wynn's sandwich."

Lowther looked round.
 Fatty Wynn was crammed up close behind him by the crowd, and he had hardly room to get his sandwich to his mouth. The fragments of it, as he ate, dropped on Lowther's jacket.

Monty made a movement of disgust.
 "You horrible cannibal, are you gorging again?" he exclaimed.

"Again!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn indignantly. "I haven't had anything to eat since we were at the buffet near the bear."

"Well, don't use my shoulder for a plate, anyway, and don't poison me with the fumes of that horrid ham and mustard."

"This is a jolly nice sandwich—"

"Gr-r-r-r! Take it away and bury it!"

"I'm jolly hungry," said Fatty Wynn, as the last of the sandwich disappeared. "Could you fellows give me a little more room while I get a cake out from under my jacket?"

"No, we couldn't!" said Lowther promptly. "And if you start any more grubbing here I'll tap you on the shins, so look out!"

"I get awfully sharp set in this October weather—"

"I can hear them bringing the grub along. Ask the keepers to let you have a bit."

There was a crash of the truck on the rails laid for it to run on. The sound was evidently familiar to the animals in the dens. There was a general whisking of tails and roaring and growling. The tiger marched up and down more swiftly than ever, sniffing at the bars. The truck came round the corner and ran along before the cages, and the lions roared in real earnest.

"You must allow me room," said a voice the juniors had heard before. "I must allow my little boy to see the lions feed. Alfred, hold my hand, and leave off sucking your thumb this instant."

"Yes, Uncle James!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Kerr. "You mustn't shove like that!"

"I insist upon having room for my little boy to see the lions feed!"

"You should have come earlier, then."

"None of your insolence, boy! You can squeeze up a little closer, I am sure! I will not be treated with insolence! Alfred, if you do not keep close to me I shall box your ears!"

"Yes, Uncle James!"

"I hope you will not make me sorry that I have taken the trouble to give you an afternoon's enjoyment," said the stout gentleman severely. "You boys must squeeze up a little! I insist upon this little fellow seeing the lions feed!"

"Lift him up, then," suggested Tom Merry. "He can see over our heads!"

But this, apparently, did not suit the stout gentleman's ideas. He perhaps wanted to see the lions feed himself; Alfred certainly hadn't much chance unless he was lifted up. The St. Jim's juniors were closely packed in front of him, with the crowd jamming them on either side. Alfred was not up to Fatty Wynn's shoulder, and Fatty was the shortest of them. But the stout gentleman did not lift Alfred up.

He pushed the boys to get a place for himself.

"You are purposely taking up too much room!" he said. "I shall call an attendant if you do not squeeze up closer!"

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "It's hot! I shall faint if that old codger squeezes me any closer to Lowther!"

"You'll spoil my jacket!" growled Lowther.

"How dare you refer to me as an old codger, boy! Squeeze up! Alfred, why do you not squeeze up? Squeeze up immediately!"

"Yes, Uncle James!" piped Alfred.

The unfortunate little victim of Uncle James' generosity tried to squeeze up. He shoved against Tom Merry, who looked round sharply.

Then the good-natured junior smiled, and, seizing the weedy little fellow in his strong arms, he hoisted him upon his shoulders with a single movement.

"Now you can see, chappie," he remarked.

"Th-thank you!" gasped Alfred. "I—I—I am sorry I pushed you, but—"

"Alfred, get down immediately! You are obstructing my view! Get down immediately!"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" said Monty Lowther, giving the stout gentleman a dig in the ribs with his elbow—more or less accidentally. "There's too much of you, you know."

"Ow! Oh! You young rascal! Oh, I will chastise you with my umbrella! Ow—w—w!"

The stout gentleman had grasped his umbrella to use it as a weapon of offence, but at that moment someone ran a pin into his stout calf and he hopped away with a howl of anguish. The umbrella clattered on the floor, and the stout gentleman danced on one leg, clasping the other with both hands.

There was a rush of some newly arrived sightseers to fill the place he had inadvertently left vacant, and by the time he had done dancing and nursing his leg sightseers five or six deep shut him off from little Alfred and the juniors of St. Jim's.

The lions were being fed now. Huge masses of meat were wheeled along on the trucks and thrust under the bars of the dens. The lions seized the lumps and bore them into corners of the cages to lick and gnaw them. It was not pleasant but it was an interesting sight.

The roaring died away, only some low growls being heard as the meat was devoured.

The crowd broke up.

"Bai Jove! I thought you fellows were lost!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice as he came through the thinning crowd, and rejoined the juniors of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry set Alfred upon his feet. Fatty Wynn slipped a big bar of milk chocolate into his hand, and the little fellow whipped it out of sight before the terrible eye of his uncle was upon him again.

"Alfred—Alfred, where are you?"

"Here I am, Uncle James!"

"How dare you separate yourself from me! I might have lost you, and been put to the trouble of looking for you. I am beginning to regret that I took the trouble of bestowing an afternoon's enjoyment upon you, Alfred. Come with me at once!"

"Yes, Uncle James," said Alfred meekly.

"Bai Jove, I don't think I should like that old gentleman for an uncle!" said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the retreating figure of the stout gentleman. "I wathah imagine that Alfred isn't havin' what you'd call a wippin' time."

"Did you see the lions feed, Gussy?"

"No, Tom Mewwy, I did not see the lions feed. All the seats up there were occupied, and no one seemed inclined to make woom for me. I could not see ovah the heads of people tallah than myself, so it was imposs for me to see the lions feed. I considah—"

"Never mind, you can see Fatty Wynn feed," said Monty Lowther consolingly. "He's starting on some more sandwiches now."

"Oh, weally, Lowthah—"

"Keep an eye on Gussy," said Tom Merry, as they quitted the lion house. "We're going into dangerous quarters now for Gussy."

"What do you mean, Tom Mewwy?"

"We're going to a place where chaps like you don't always come out again, that's all."
 "Bai Jove, what place is it?"
 "The monkey house."
 "Oh, really, Tom Merry?"
 But Tom Merry only smiled.

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy Still at It!

"THERE'S some refreshment rooms near the monkey house, I believe," Fatty Wynn remarked, in a casual way as the party proceeded.
 "Yes, I shouldn't wonder," assented Tom Merry. "This way to the New House—I mean to the monkey house."
 They entered the large building. It was pretty well filled. The fine October afternoon had brought many visitors to the Zoo. The sight of the monkeys was very

able to receive nuts offered them by visitors, crack them in their teeth, and devour them. This almost human intelligence is very remarkable, and—and— Oh!"
 The stout gentleman was looking at the cages as he talked and walked, and he had walked right into Manners. The amateur photographer fell over sideways, and the stout gentleman stumbled over him. He came down with his palms on Manners, and his knees on the ground.
 Manners twisted round and looked up wrathfully. The stout gentleman was looking down still more wrathfully, and their eyes met.
 "You—you young rascal!" gasped the stout gentleman.
 "You did that on purpose."
 "You utter idiot!" roared Manners. "You've spoilt my photograph!"
 "You have given me a shock!"
 "You've wasted a film!"
 "You—"
 The stout gentleman staggered to his feet. Manners jumped up and picked up his camera. The next moment

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interesting, and especially their almost uncanny resemblance to human beings. D'Arcy stopped at the first cage, and put up his eyeglass to survey the inmates.

A wizened old monkey came close up to the bars, in expectation of nuts.

"Speak to him, Gussy," said Lowther.

"Eh?" said the swell of St. Jim's, with a start. "What did you say, deah boy?"

"Speak to him! You can see that he recognises you."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Come now! It's awfully snobbish to disown a relation who's down in the world."

Arthur Augustus deigned no reply to that remark. He walked on to the next cage, and Lowther chuckled. Manners brought out his Kodak.

"I must have a snap of these curious little beggars," he said. "There's a good light just here. Keep the people out of the way."

It was rather a cool request. People were passing and re-passing every moment. A stout gentleman and a little boy had just come in, too. But Manners was an enthusiastic amateur photographer, and he thought of nothing else but his photographs.

"Certainly, old chap," said Lowther, who had coolness enough for anything. "People, you are requested to keep back."

Manners took a couple of snaps, and then set his camera for a "time" exposure. He glanced round, and beckoned to Tom Merry.

"I say, Tom, do you think you could sit down and keep quite still for a few seconds, while I rest my camera on your head?" he asked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm jolly sure I couldn't," he replied.

"Do you think you could, Figgins?"

"Fraid not," grinned Figgins.

"You see, it needs to be quite firm for a time exposure," said Manners. "They're never satisfactory if you hold the camera in your hand. It's bound to move. I've always found it so. I suppose I can kneel down and rest it on my knee."

And he did, in the middle of the path, up the side of the building.

"Yes, Alfred, these are the monkeys," said the stout gentleman, waving his umbrella towards the cage. "You will observe in them a remarkable intelligence. They are

the umbrella came down on Manners' shoulders. The junior gave a whoop, and turned round on his assailant, but Tom Merry promptly dragged him back.

"Leggo!" roared Manners. "Do you think I am going to have a picture spoiled, and be biffed with a gamp into the bargain? Lemme alone!"

"You can't biff a man old enough to be your father. Don't be an ass!"

"Well, then, let him keep his beastly gamp to himself!" growled Manners, rubbing his shoulder. "It's bad enough to have a picture spoiled, and a film wasted, without—"

"Cousin Ethel's looking this way."

"Oh, it's all right!" grunted Manners.

The stout gentleman, apparently satisfied with his vengeance, strode on. He called to Alfred, who was grinning, whether at Manners or his uncle, it was not clear—perhaps at both.

"Come along, Alfred! How dare you laugh! Alfred, I am surprised at you, and I am sorry I took the trouble to give you a happy afternoon. Come along—at once!"

"Yes, Uncle James!"

"Better take snaps for the rest," grinned Lowther. "You ought to get a collection, too, to shove in the family album."

"Oh, don't be funny! We're getting too much of that from D'Arcy."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Manners marched on. He took several more snaps, the camera having fortunately escaped damage in the fall. The juniors made a tour of the building, stopping before almost every cage. The monkeys were decidedly amusing. Some of them were swinging, some climbing, some chasing one another. All of them seemed to like nuts, and to expect a good supply of them.

Cousin Ethel fed the little fellows through the bars, Figgins keeping her supplied with nuts from a big bag he had purchased for the purpose.

"Funny little beggars, aren't they?" said D'Arcy, joining his cousin. "Speakin' of monkeys reminds me of a conundrum. What is the wesemblance between a gowillah and a Manchestah cotton factory?"

"Between which?" asked Figgins.

"A Manchestah cotton factory and a gowillah."

"Oh, a gorilla! Give it up!"

(Continued on page 19.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,286.

SEE WHAT'S IN—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! I expect the majority of you have already seen the wonderful picture-stamps our companion papers, "Modern Boy," "Ranger," and "Magnet" are giving away each week. A good number of you, I feel sure, have entered into this Great Free Gift Scheme with enthusiasm. You are to be congratulated. Such a Free Gift Scheme as this is too good to be missed. For the benefit of those of my readers who are in the "dark," let me hasten to put them wise. Each of the three papers named above are presenting to readers for a considerable number of weeks

SIX SUPER PICTURE-STAMPS PER WEEK.

Thus if you buy this week's "Magnet" you will find six wonderful stamps inside its pages. The whole set of 144 stamps is divided into six subjects—Rough Riders, Ships, Aeroplanes, Dogs, Locomotives, and the Art of Self-defence. Each set contains twenty-four different pictures, and each picture is a masterpiece of craftsmanship and colour printing. All Gemites are advised to participate in this amazing scheme. Get any or all of the above-named papers this week and see for yourself!

THE FIGHTING FAG!

By Martin Clifford.

That's the title of next Wednesday's real gem of a story, starring your favourites at St. Jim's. Stand by for a big surprise, for the young brother of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrives at the school! What's he like? Is he as fastidious as his elder brother? Does he wear a monocle? You'll be impatient to find the answer to these questions, but you will be well rewarded when you read next week's A.I. tophole, first-class school story. Look out for another thrill-packed story of

"THE WORLD WRECKERS!"

and another laughter-raising comic "strip" showing Potts the Office Boy.

THE FLOATING BOTTLE!

A young fellow from Deal got his big thrill quite recently when he learned that a bottle which he had thrown into the sea on March 2nd, "just for a lark," had been picked up in Nissun Fjord, Denmark. The "picker up," so to speak, was a Mr. Steth, who was good enough to write to the Deal schoolboy (his name and address had been enclosed in the bottle) informing him that he "retrieved" the bottle on August 2nd, and asking when the bottle was "sent." If that bottle

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possessed the gift of speech what a tale it could tell of its buffetings during that five months' journey.

A TEASER!

Tom Rawlings, of Bristol, writes: "Can a young man whom we will call A be both the stepson and son-in-law to a man we will call B." I must confess the query made me think a bit. But here, I believe, is the correct answer. If A's widowed mother married B, who was a widower with one female child and A married that daughter, he would be both stepson and son-in-law to B. Am I right, Tom?

ARSENAL OR "THE" ARSENAL?

Here's another interesting query, raised by a Soccer enthusiast. The correct name of this famous London club is Arsenal. The authorities won't recognise the "The" for this reason. Whenever any alphabetical list is made of League football clubs, Arsenal comes first. This is what is called a "publicity stunt." I wonder if my correspondent knows why Arsenal wear red jerseys. As far back as 1886 two players from Notts Forest Football Club joined the Royal Arsenal Football Club, but they had so little ready cash that they wrote to their former team and asked if they could borrow the "condemned" jerseys of the Notts Forest players. In due course discarded jerseys from the Notts Forest fellows arrived and were gratefully received by the newly-formed Royal Arsenal Club. As a tribute Arsenal wear to this day the same coloured jerseys as Notts Forest.

GOOD LUCK TO 'EM!

When you read this par England's Test cricketers will be well on their way to Australia. Among them will be W. E. Bowes, the famous Yorkshire bowler who was picked at the last moment. His peculiar bumpy deliveries "got him in the news" during our cricket season, but despite what his detractors say, Bowes is a difficult bowler to play. During the month of August he skittled out first-class batsmen in startling fashion. His average read ninety-two wickets for the cost of thirteen runs apiece. With luck he may be the "surprise packet" we all hope will be sprung on the dour batsmen of Australia. Anyway, let us wish England's Best the best of luck!

THIS WEEK'S HOWLER!

School Examiner: "It is recorded that Captain James Cook made three voyages round the world. During which one did he die?"

The Know-all: "The second one, sir!"

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

A man fell off the Clifton Suspension Bridge and was killed. But the wrist-watch he was wearing was still ticking, and the glass was unbroken, though it had fallen two hundred and forty feet!

ORDER YOUR ANNUALS NOW!

When that kind aunt or generous uncle hints about your Christmas present, or your birthday gift, if your natal day falls between now and Christmas, steer him round to the newsagent. There you will find such Annuals as will make your mouth water—such Gift Books as will delight the heart of every boy and girl. "The Holiday Annual," price six shillings, needs little introduction here. This year it beats its own record of quality and quantity. The "Popular Book of Boys' Stories," price two shillings and sixpence, is another bargain worth your attention. And the same applies to the "New Zoo Annual," price six shillings, the "Modern Boy's Annual," price six shillings, and the "Modern Boy's Book of Motors, Ships, and Engines." This latter makes its appearance on the market for the first time, price seven shillings and sixpence, but its success is assured. Have a look at the above books—they cover such a wide range that you are bound to find among them what you want. All of them are strongly recommended. For those of you who prefer to purchase your own Annuals through a Christmas Club, facilities are provided at all the leading newsagents and bookstalls.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Teacher: "The word anonymous means a desire to keep one's identity hidden. And—who is that whispering in the class?"

Voice: "Anonymous, sir!"

PLUCK!

She was only a girl, but she allowed them to swamp her with highly inflammable spirit and then set light to her. Next she walked casually through burning bushes and emerged unscathed. But—and here's the explanation—she was wearing the very latest type of non-inflammable dress. Still, it requires iron nerves to go through such an ordeal, although the inventor of the dress might be absolutely certain in his own mind that the dress is safe.

ANOTHER RECORD?

While the famous "Cheltenham Flyer" was creating a new speed record last month, officials were timing every mile of the journey, reporters were scribbling away their impressions as the express thundered over the metals, and film experts were taking a sound film of it all. Naturally the passengers were excited. But the crowning point of the excitement was reached when a hen in the guard's van calmly laid an egg and told the world so in the "usual fashion." Is this a new record?

WORLD'S SMALLEST ENGINE.

It is exactly one inch long, this novel engine, and it works perfectly. An electric motor drives it, but the motor only weighs a quarter of an ounce! The load this midget loco can pull is one and a half ounces. How's that for a record?

YOUR EDITOR.

TOM MERRY & CO. AT THE ZOO!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Do you give it up, Ethel?"

"Certainly, Arthur!"

"But you haven't tried to guess it yet," said D'Arcy, rather indignantly.

"I—I'm afraid I'm not good at guessing conundrums," said Cousin Ethel, laughing.

"It's a jolly good one, and I should particularly like you to guess it, because I've forgotten the beastly answer, you know, and if you guessed it correctly I should know it again," explained Arthur Augustus. "I remember it was a wippin' answer."

"Better go and sit in a corner and think it out," suggested Figgins; and he passed on with Cousin Ethel, leaving D'Arcy wondering what Figgy had really meant.

"There's some refreshment rooms yonder," Fatty Wynn remarked as they came out of the monkey house.

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry. "This way for the antelopes!"

"I should like to take a snap of the antelopes," said Manners. "There might be a chance of getting some of the lions, too, now that the crowd has gone. Would you fellows like to come back to the lion house for about a quarter of an hour before going farther?"

"I'll think it over," said Tom Merry, "and let you know before bed-time to-night. This way for the giddy antelopes!"

"What about the refreshments?" asked Wynn.

"It's not tea-time yet."

"I've got a feeling as if it were, though."

"Oh, wats!" said D'Arcy. "Come and see the antelopes. I'll tell you that wippin' story about the tin saucepan, if you like, to keep your mind occupied; or that wippin' one about the chap at the dinnah-party."

"Don't talk to me about dinner-parties!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "My word! Couldn't I just do with a large helping of ox-tail soup, a double lot of whitebait, about half a dozen entrees, and a chicken, and—"

"Let's get off before he makes us feel hungry," explained Digby; and the juniors walked off towards the antelope house.

Fatty Wynn and D'Arcy followed.

"I say, Wynn, it was feahfully funny, you know. It was at a dinnah-party."

"Oh, cheese it about your rotten dinner-party!"

"Weally, Wynn, I regard your remark as—"

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Fatty Wynn. "Come and sit down at the buffet, and I'll listen to the yarn. I've no doubt it's awfully funny. What do you say?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am feelin' wathah exhausted, and I should like to sit down for a little while. Cousin Ethel seems to be gettin' on all wight without me."

"She does, for a fact. This way to the refreshments!"

"You see, Wynn, it was at a dinnah-party—"

"You sit here, and I'll sit under the shade. What are you going to order?"

"Oh, I'm not hungry. It was at a dinnah-party—"

"But I am, you know. I always get extra hungry in this October weather. You can get sandwiches here, I believe, and nobby little cakes and buns and tea."

"Yaas, but—"

"I've blewed all my tin, all I had left over from my whack towards the tickets," explained Fatty Wynn. "If you don't want to treat a chap to tea say so, and I'll borrow a few bobs of you till to-morrow."

"I shall be extremely happy to stand tweek, deah boy."

"That's better! Hallo, Miss—Miss— Why the dickens doesn't that girl come? She must know I'm hungry by my thin looks, I should think."

"Bai Jove! I hardly think—"

"This way, miss! I'll have some sandwiches and pork pies and anything else you can get me in that line. Never mind the expense."

"Bai Jove!"

The table was soon piled with eatables. Fatty Wynn started. There was not so much variety in the provisions as he could have wished. But he was hungry. He ate with a keen relish, stopping every now and then to gulp down a cup of tea. Arthur Augustus watched him curiously.

"You can go on with the story," said Fatty Wynn graciously.

"It was at a dinnah-party," said Arthur Augustus. "A gentleman who was dinin' suddenly lifted a dish of stwawbewwies up and put it on his head."

"Did he really? Pour out another cup of tea for me, will you? Are you sure you won't have a cup yourself?"

"Quite suah, thank you, deah boy."

"Then pour out another one for me, and it will save me leaving off. No need to waste time, you know. This tuck isn't as good as we get at Dame Taggles', at St. Jim's. But any port in a storm. I'm jolly hungry. Go on with the story. You were saying something about strawberries and cream, weren't you? My hat! Couldn't I do with some strawberries and cream now! But go on."

"He suddenly lifted a dish of stwawbewwies on top of his head—"

"Who did?" asked Fatty Wynn, stirring his tea.

"The gentleman I was speakin' of. He was at a dinnah-party, and he suddenly lifted a dish of stwawbewwies and cream—I mean, a dish of stwawbewwies—on top of his head. The lady next to him said: 'Cwikey!' I—I mean, she said: 'Good gwacious! What are you doing that for?'"

"Is there any more milk in that jug, D'Arcy?"

"No. She said: 'What are you doin' that for—'"

"Sorry to interrupt you—it's an awfully ripping yarn—but I wish you'd catch the attendant and get some more milk. Take the jug and look for her. She's near here somewhere."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"There she is!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, pointing with his spoon. "Take the jug, and she will give you some more milk like winking. There's a good chap!"

D'Arcy's politeness was limitless. He took the jug and obtained a new supply of milk, the attendant giving him a sweet smile in addition. He returned to the table with it, and Fatty Wynn milked his fifth cup of tea.

"Thanks awfully, D'Arcy! Where had you got up to? I say, perhaps you had better start the yarn again from the beginning, and then I shall get a clearer idea of it. Don't mind me."

"It was at a dinnah-party," said D'Arcy. "A gentleman suddenly lifted up a dish of molasses—I mean, stwawbewwies—and put it on his head. The lady who was sittin' next to him said: 'My word, what are you doin' that for?' And he—ha, ha, ha—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Fatty Wynn.

Arthur Augustus looked at him suspiciously.

"I haven't told you the joke yet, deah boy."

"Oh, haven't you?" said Fatty Wynn, rather taken aback.

"I—I thought, as you laughed, it sounded funny, you know, the way you said it. But go on."

"Shall I begin again at the very beginning?"

"Oh, no!" said Fatty Wynn hastily. "Just go on from where you cackled."

"Well, the lady said: 'Bri Jove! I mean, she said: 'Goodness gwacious! What are you doing that for?' He had put a dish of stwawbewwies on his head, you know."

"Yes, I know. Go on with the washing."

"Well, and she asked him whatevah he was doin' that for. And he said—ha, ha, ha!—he said: 'Sowwy! I thought it was pineapples.'"

"Did he?"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn had put his foot in it once already by laughing when D'Arcy laughed before he saw the joke. He did not mean to make the same mistake again. He remained quite grave now, looking inquiringly at D'Arcy.

"Go on, old chap. I've nearly finished this grub, and we'd better join the others."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Go on. Tell me the rest of the story."

"I've told you all of it," said D'Arcy.

"My hat! Is that all? I mean, where's the joke?" Then Fatty Wynn remembered the feed he had just enjoyed, and, knowing for certain that it was time to laugh, he laughed. He laughed with great heartiness. "Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" The feed was worth it.

Arthur Augustus beamed upon the fat Fourth-Former.

"Yaas, it was funny, wasn't it?" he said. "Tom Mewwy couldn't see the joke. Weilly couldn't see it. Most of the chaps I have told that stow to can't see the joke. Cousin Ethel saw it, though not at first. There are some funny things that dawn on you after a time, you know."

"I think we ought to get after the others," said Fatty Wynn hastily. He thought that one feed, one story, was a fair deal. "If you settle up we can be getting along."

And Arthur Augustus settled up, and they got along.

CHAPTER 13.

The Purloined Pun!

TOM MERRY & CO. had seen the antelopes and many other animals by the time Arthur Augustus and Fatty Wynn joined them. In addition, Tom himself had had a ride on a camel. The juniors had been present when Uncle James had refused little Alfred a ride, and Tom, taking pity on the boy, had given him a ride on his camel. Uncle James had been annoyed, but the juniors were now quite used to the irascible old gentleman.

Blake looked into the guidebook he had bought. "Better go and see the sea-lions fed," he remarked. "It's about time."

The party proceeded towards the quarters of the sea-lions. They were disporting themselves in the water, among the artificial rocks erected for their benefit.

A keeper was coming down with a basket of fish to feed them, and a crowd was gathering round the railings. The sight was a curious one, and worth watching.

The attendant stood on one side of the sheet of water and hurled the fish one by one, and the seals swam after them in every direction.

One seal, perched on the high rocks, caught the fish thrown at him at a distance of twenty yards or more in his mouth, scarcely failing once.

"My hat! That chap is keeping up his wicket well!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the third fish disappeared into the mouth of the seal on the rocks. "Look at him! There goes another—he's got it!"

"And another, bai Jove!"

"And another! He won't be out this over!" grinned Digby.

Another and another fish flew. Then one was missed and struck on the flipper of the seal.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Out!" he said. "Leg before wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fish, hurled in various directions, splashed into the water, and the seals swam after them unerringly. The big one on the rocks opened his mouth again, and the attendant sent another and another across. There was no more leg before wicket. Each fish was stopped in the seal's mouth, and it was amazing to see him dispose of them so fast.

Arthur Augustus was buried in thought as he watched the seals feeding. Digby tapped him on the shoulder, and he started.

"Think you'd like some of the fish?" asked Digby.

"No, Dig, I was not thinking I should like some of the fish," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I regarded the suggestion as ridiculous. I was thinkin' of a joke."

"Oh, no wonder you looked worried!"

"I will tell it you if you like."

"Thanks! I don't want to be worried, too."

And Digby retreated.

Arthur Augustus sniffed disdainfully and turned to Blake.

"I say, Blake, dear boy, you know when they hunt the seals in the Arctic seas they stick them with spears, don't they?"

"I believe so," assented Blake.

"They call it sealin' when they hunt the poor beggahs, don't they?"

"So I've heard."

"Good! Then why are the blows they give the poor beggahs like the stuff you fasten up a lettah with?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake scratched his head.

"Blessed if I know," he replied.

"Because they are sealing-whacks," said D'Arcy. "See? Sealing-whacks! Sealing-wax!"

"No, I don't quite see," said Blake, with an air of meditation. "In the first place, how do you know they whack the seals?"

"I suppose they biff them in some way, dear boy," said D'Arcy. "If they give the seals whacks when they are sealin' they give them sealing-whacks!"

"But they hunt them in the open air."

"Eh? Who said they didn't?"

"But there couldn't be any ceiling in the open air."

"Ceiling! Who's talking about a ceiling?"

"You are! You said they give them ceiling-whacks. Now, there isn't any ceiling there, and if there were why should they give it whacks?"

"Weally, Blake! Look here, I'll tell you the thing again from the beginnin'—"

"That you won't!" said Blake promptly. "Tell it to Herries!"

The party moved on. They entered the building devoted to deer and other animals of the same sort. Blake consulted the guidebook and said there was a gnu to be seen, and Arthur Augustus promptly declared that he gnu it. The whole party looked at the swell of St. Jim's when he made this statement.

"You knew it, did you?" said Blake. "How could you possibly have known it when you haven't been to the Zoo before?"

"You misapprehend me, dear boy," said D'Arcy, with the expansive smile of a punster. "I didn't say I knew it—I said I gnu it!"

"You knoo it, did you?" said Lowther. "Where did you pick up your Cockney pronunciation?"

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"You don't undahstand me, Lowthah—"

"Oh, yes, I understand—I have heard Cockneys speak before now!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you are wathah dense. I was, as a mattah of fact, makin' a pun. G-N-U—gnu. I gnu it! Do you see?"

"Do I see what—the gnu?"

"No!" howled D'Arcy. "The pun!"

"What pun?"

"The one I just made!" shrieked D'Arcy, growing exasperated. "Gnu—know! Don't you see it now? I gnu it!"

"You knew what?"

"You—you astoundin' duffah! Don't you see it, Blake?"

"Yes, here it is," said Blake, stopping and looking at the gnu. "Funny looking beast, ain't he? I wonder if he would like some buns?"

"I don't mean that—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean. Hold your gloves between the railing here and see if he will gnaw them."

"I uttahly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"I gnu you wouldn't," said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Monty Lowther—and the whole party burst into a concerted roar.

D'Arcy looked at them with withering indignation.

"Bai Jove! What are you cacklin' at now?" he demanded.

"My pun!" said Blake. "Didn't you see it? I said I gnu you wouldn't—gnu—knew! See?"

"You—you feahful wottah! That's my pun!"

"You don't understand! Gnu—knew! I gnu you wouldn't. See? It's a pun on the name of this animal," said Blake, in a tone of patient explanation.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"I wefuse to allow you to collah my puns in this unblushing way, Blake! I made that pun myself only a few moments ago—"

"Oh, Gussy!" echoed the rest of the party, apparently equally shocked.

D'Arcy looked from one to the other. They were all looking at him reprovingly.

"You—you uttah asses! You—you—weally—"

"I don't think D'Arcy can do anything but apologise!" said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Are you going to apologise to Blake, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly not! I wefuse—I distinctly wefuse!"

"Then I must say that you're guilty of very bad form. I don't see how I can regard as a friend a chap who bones another fellow's puns and refuses to apologise."

"It was my pun—I said I gnu—"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"You uttah, feahful wottahs!"

"Oh, it's no good arguing with Gussy!" said Blake. "He ought to apologise, being caught in the act, as it were, but I pass it over. Let's get on!"

"Bai Jove! I insist—I mean I insist upon explainin'."

But the party moved on, and D'Arcy's explanations were wasted on the desert air.

CHAPTER 14.

An Elephant Takes to Gussy!

IT was getting near time for the juniors to leave the Zoo. But they could not possibly go without seeing the elephants, and then having tea.

Blake led the way to the big building which contained the huge animals. In each of the compartments, save one, was an elephant, the other containing a rhinoceros. The elephants came to the front of the cages, and several of them held out their trunks for biscuits.

"Sweet!" said Cousin Ethel caressingly, as she held out a little biscuit—and a long proboscis whipped forward and took it from her fingers.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "They're fine cweatuahs, and no mistake! I say, Tom Mewwy, why should an elephant be able to twavel vevy wapidly?"

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron."

"Oh, pray don't wot! Why should an elephant be able to twavel vevy quickly, Figgins?"

"Because one has a rat on the box and the other has a bat on the rocks," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins, I weward you as a silly ass! I say, Hewwies, why should an elephant be able to twavel vevy quickly, dear boy?"

"Couldn't say."

"Because he can travel without packin' his twunk!"

"Can he?" said Herries indifferently.

"Yaas, wathah! Of course he can! Elephants don't pack that sort of twunk, you know."

"Don't they? All right, I'll take your word for it. I

say, have you any tin? The attendant will give us some grub for the elephants if you have."

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus turned to the man in charge of the elephants. "Can you give me some gwub to feed the elephants—if it's allowed, deah boy?"

"Certainly, sir."

The attendant went away, and in a minute or less returned with a double handful of huge biscuits.

"Here you are, sir!"

"Thank you vewy much! What is the charge for these biscuits, pway?"

"There is no charge, sir."

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" said D'Arcy—and he turned away with the biscuits.

The man looked after him very curiously.

study, you know, and make it up a little bed under the table of a night."

"Oh, pway don't be funny, Lowthah. I have lately been makin' a study of weal humah, and your wotten jokes give me a pain."

The last elephant stretched out his trunk for another biscuit. Like Oliver Twist, he wanted more. D'Arcy had no more biscuits, so he stretched out his hand to give the animal a pat on the trunk.

The elephant misunderstood. He took hold of the hand with his trunk, and D'Arcy was dragged forward.

"Oh!" yelled D'Arcy. "Help! Bai Jove!"

The attendant gave a shout and the elephant released the hand he had captured. D'Arcy did not try to pat any more elephants after that.



The stout gentleman, looking at the cages as he came along, walked right into Manners as he was taking a photograph. Crash! "Ow!" The man fell headlong over the St. Jim's junior, and Manners let out a howl of anger.

Herries gave a chuckle.

"You ass!" he muttered. "Ain't you going to give him something for his trouble?"

"I— Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that! Hold the biscuits, will you, Hewwies?"

Herries held them and proceeded to feed the elephants with them. It was very amusing to see the huge animals stretch out their trunks through the bars and take the biscuits with the delicate tip of the proboscis.

Arthur Augustus felt in his pockets and turned to the smiling attendant

"I'm awfully obliged to you, deah boy," he remarked. "Will you do me the honah to accept this half-crown, with my kind wegarads?"

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Not at all, deah boy. I am extremely obliged to you!"

D'Arcy reclaimed some of the biscuits and fed the elephants. The good-natured attendant brought him a fresh supply, and the swell of St. Jim's went along the rail, feeding all the huge animals in turn. The biscuits were soon gone.

"Bai Jove! I like these animals!" said D'Arcy. "I wondah whethah the Head would allow me to keep an elephant as a pet at St. Jim's!"

"Bound to," said Lowther. "You could keep it in your

"I say, there's a rhinoceros in the enclosure round the corner!" said Fatty Wynn. "He's a big, funny-looking sort of brute. You ought to come and see him. He will eat cakes, and the buffet's just opposite, and you can get cakes there."

"One for the rhinoceros and two for yourself," grinned Lowther.

"Well, as a matter of fact, you know, I'm getting rather hungry, and it's no good forgetting that time's getting short, and we haven't had tea yet. Best to be sensible about it."

"Keep away from the railings, Alfred! No, I will not purchase any biscuits for you to feed the elephants. The elephants undoubtedly receive their proper food at the hands of the attendants, and I should regard it as a piece of reckless extravagance. Take your thumb out of your mouth immediately."

"Yes, Uncle James."

"Here, let's go and see the rhinoceros!" gasped Lowther. "Time we were out of this. I'm getting fed-up with Uncle James this afternoon!"

The party left the building. In the enclosure at the back, where he had gone out for a little walk, was a huge rhinoceros. They looked at the rhino through the railings, and the rhino looked at them.

Cousin Ethel threw in her last biscuit, and the rhinoceros munched it up.

"I'll get some more, if you like," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll just cut across and order tea for the lot while you're looking at the rhinoceros."

"No hurry," said Figgins.

"Better see to it," said Fatty Wynn. "If there's any more time we can have another look round after tea. I'll see to it. You can rely on me to get the best spread the place will provide—trust me for that!"

"Yaas, wathah! I say, Hewwies, what is the difference between—"

"I'll go along with Wynn," said Herries. "I'm thirsty, and I'll start with lemonade."

Figgins fetched some biscuits for Cousin Ethel to throw to the rhinoceros. The huge animal ate them stolidly enough. Then the juniors walked over to the buffet. There were seats arranged round little tables in the open air, and in the golden October afternoon it was very pleasant.

The juniors were not displeased to sit down and rest. They had had a very enjoyable couple of hours in the Zoo; they had not seen half of what was to be seen, but they had done very well considering.

There was time now for a quick tea and a run back to Charing Cross, and then to catch the train home, after a jolly afternoon. They were all pretty sharp set by this time, Cousin Ethel as well as the rest. There was no humbug about Cousin Ethel. When she was hungry she ate, and did not nibble a cake in public and reserve her more serious performances for the privacy of home.

Fatty Wynn had ordered as good a meal as the place afforded. It had not the variety of a study feed at St. Jim's, but it was welcome enough to hungry boys and a hungry girl.

"I say, Piggy, ain't you hungry?" asked Fatty Wynn, rather anxiously.

"Eh, yes," said Figgins absently.

"Why don't you eat something, then? You haven't had a mouthful yet, and we've got to buzz off pretty soon," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, cheese it! That's all right!"

Cousin Ethel smiled.

Figgins was so busy looking after her that he had no time to think of himself. But she made him sit down at her table and eat. Figgins, as a matter of fact, was hungry, and he ate well enough.

Fatty Wynn looked at him and saw bread-and-butter and eggs disappearing pretty quickly, and looked relieved.

"That's better!" he said. "Blessed if I didn't think there was something wrong with Piggy, Miss Cleveland. He ate hardly any dinner before we came out, and he sat there in a sort of dream, you know, while there was boiled beef and carrots on the table. Who on earth's that kicking my ankle? If that's one of your jokes, Gussy—"

"I'm not kickin' your beastly ankle, deah boy!"

"Perhaps my foot knocked against it," muttered Figgins.

"Oh, it's all right if it was you!" said Fatty Wynn. "It hurt, though. But as I was saying, when a chap forgets that there are boiled beef and carrots and a fig pudding on the table there must be something wrong with him. I began to be afraid that Figgins was ill, Miss Cleveland—I did, really. You can always tell that a chap's ill if he goes off his feed—it's an infallible sign. Now I never go off my feed."

"Bai Jove, you're wight there, Fatty!"

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Time we were gone," he said.

"I could eat a little more, Tom Merry," said Fatty Wynn, "if you could wait a bit."

"If we wait till you eat any more, Fatty, we shall have to catch the last train," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'll settle up here, and then you will have to shift."

And Tom Merry settled up, and Fatty Wynn, much against his will, shifted.

They walked to the exit of the Outer Circle, and strolled out of the park.

CHAPTER 15.

Homeward Bound!

TOM MERRY stopped a motor-bus in Marylebone Road, and the party clambered aboard. They swarmed up the steps, but there was no room for all on top.

Cousin Ethel and Figgins went inside, but D'Arcy and Herries remained on the step, with no place for them above or below.

"No more room, gentlemen!" said the conductor.

"That is wathah wotten," said D'Arcy. "I suppose we can stand if we like?"

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"It is not allowed, sir. There's another bus coming on behind."

"I suppose we had better all get off again," said Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy!"

"Rats!" replied Tom Merry cheerfully. "There wouldn't be room for eleven on that bus either. You two chaps get on it, and mind you rejoin us at St. Martin's Church."

"Oh, vewy well! Jump off, Hewwies!"

Herries had already jumped off. D'Arcy followed suit.

There was a second motor-bus close behind, and the two juniors boarded it. They mounted to the top, where there was plenty of room.

There was a twinkle in D'Arcy's eye. He nudged Herries.

"Hallo!" said Herries, looking round.

"I say, Hewwies, old chap, shall I tell you that wippin' stow about the dinnah-party?"

Herries felt in his pocket. He had left his "Magnet" at St. Jim's. He glanced round the street. The motor-bus was passing along Euston Road, and the surroundings were not inviting to the gaze. He had nothing to read, and there was nothing to look at. So he nodded graciously.

"Go ahead," he said. "Don't be too long-winded, old fellow."

"There was a gentleman at a dinnah-party," said D'Arcy, rather discouraged. Herries was sometimes very dense, and he did not seem what could be called exactly eager to hear the story. "It's an awfully funny thing, Hewwies. He suddenly took up a dish—"

"Who did?"

"The gentleman I was speakin' of at the dinnah-party."

"What was his name?" asked Herries.

"I—I weally do not know," said D'Arcy. "The name has nothin' to do with the stowy."

"Curious to tell a yarn about a chap whose name you don't know," said Herries. "But go on."

"Well, we will call him Wobinson."

"But was his name Robinson?"

"I weally do not know, Hewwies. You see—"

"No good calling him Robinson if his name wasn't Robinson," said Herries, shaking his head. "Better stick to the facts, or it will lead to confusion. Tell me the story as far as you know it, and I dare say I shall be able to make it out."

"Very well," said Arthur Augustus, with a sigh. "The gentleman was at a dinnah-party, and he suddenly took hold of a dish of stawbewwies and lifted it on top of his head."

Herries stared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Are you joking?" he demanded. "What's the good of pretending that a chap lifted a dish of strawberries on top of his head. What should he do it for?"

"That's part of the stowy."

"Story isn't the word. It's a jolly good crammer!" said Herries. "Did you know the man?"

"Of course I didn't!"

"Then how do you know whether he did anything of the sort or not?"

"I wead the stowy," said D'Arcy. "You see—"

"Well, get on with it," said Herries distrustfully. "Mind, I don't believe a word of it! You've got hold of some sort of rot, and you've been taken in. Go on!"

"Weally, Hewwies, you are vewy twyin'," said D'Arcy patiently. "The gentleman placed the dish of stawbewwies on his head. The lady next to him said: 'My only hat!'"

"I don't believe a lady would say anything of the kind!"

"No, that's wathah wong. She said—"

"Don't you remember the story?"

"Yaas, wathah! She said: 'Good gwacious—'"

"That's a bit different from what you said just now. But keep it up. Mind, I don't believe a word of it!"

"She said: 'Good gwacious, what are you doin' that for?'"

"No wonder," said Herries. "She would naturally be a bit surprised. Not that I believe anything of the sort really happened."

"And then he said—ha, ha, ha—"

"He said 'Ha, ha, ha,' did he?" said Herries. "And why in the name of all that's idiotic did he say 'Ha, ha, ha?'"

"I don't mean that he said 'Ha, ha, ha,'" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I was just laughin' myself because it's such a funny stowy, you know. He didn't say 'Ha, ha, ha.'"

"I see. You oughtn't to cackle in the middle of a story," said Herries. "It spoils the effect. But what did he really say when she asked him what he was putting the dish of strawberries on his head for?"

"He said: 'Sowwy, I thought it was pineapples.' Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries waited.

D'Arcy laughed again, and then glanced at Herries' solemn face.

"Well, and what did she say then?" asked Herries.



In a moment the stout gentleman brought his umbrella down on Manners' shoulders. The junior gave a whoop, and would have turned on his assailant but for Tom Merry's restraining hand. "Leggo!" roared Manners. "Do you think I'm going to have a picture spoiled and be biffed into the bargain?"

"I weally am not awah of any of their furthah conversation," said D'Arcy in a rather stately manner. "I have welated the whole of the stoway."

"Is that the whole of it?" asked Herries, looking decidedly puzzled.

"Yaas, watah!"

"But what did you mean, then, by saying that it was a funny story?"

"It's one of those jokes that dawn on you aftah a time," said D'Arcy. "You'll burst out laughin' in a minute, when it stwikes you."

"I don't think I shall do anything of the kind. It sounds like a story that's got mixed up somehow," said Herries. "In the first place, it's a practical impossibility for anybody to put a dish of strawberries on his head at a dinner-party. Was he a guest at the party, or was he giving it?"

"I weally do not know," murmured D'Arcy, beginning to wish that he had not told Herries that story.

Herries had a practical mind, and he always liked fully to satisfy himself upon a subject, and it looked as if he was going to analyse and dissect that story till he got fairly to the bottom of it.

"Well, that's an important point," said Herries, wrinkling his brow thoughtfully. "You see, if he was giving the party he could play any monkey trick he liked at his own table; but a guest wouldn't care about doing such a thing as shoving a dish on his head. I'll bet you that he wouldn't get asked to dinner at the same place again in a hurry."

"I—I—I pwesume not, Hewwies."

"But supposing that he did put the dish on his head," pursued Herries. "Mind, I say only supposing, for I don't believe a word of it. Suppose that he did put the dish on his head, what was that to do with pineapples? Are you sure that it was pineapples? If it was, I must say I don't see where the joke comes in."

"It might have been ice-cream."

"Ice-cream!" said Herries, starting off on a new line of investigation. "Then what he really said was 'Sorry; I thought it was ice-cream.'"

"Yaas, I suppose so," said D'Arcy feebly.

"That doesn't let in much light on the matter. Are you absolutely certain that it was strawberries in the dish in the first place?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I should like to get to the bottom of it," said Herries keenly. "We ought to be able to thrash it out between us. It's a pity you don't know the man's name. Do you know the name of the lady who was sitting next to him?"

"No, I don't."

"You see, you're jolly careless in getting your facts together. You tell a yarn about a man at a dinner-party, and you don't even know the names of the people concerned. You suggested that his name was Robinson just now."

"It might have been Robinson."

"That's all very well—might have been. What I want to know is, what the man's name really was? Not that I believe for a moment that he would put a dish of strawberries or anything else on his head. That's a bit too thick."

"Pway dwop the subject, Hewwies! You are exhaustin' me."

"Well, I'd liked to have got to the bottom of it."

And Herries wrinkled his brows again. He did not speak, but it was clear that he was thinking over the story of the man at the dinner-party, and trying to solve the mystery.

The motor-bus glided through the busy streets, or rather, bumped and snorted through them, and St. Martin's Church came in sight at last.

D'Arcy and Herries alighted, and found Tom Merry & Co. waiting for them in a group at the corner of Duncannon Street. They crossed to Charing Cross Station, and as they entered the enclosure Arthur Augustus walked on into an entrance on the right-hand side, down the steps.

"Hallo, there! Where are you going?" yelled Blake.

"Come on, deah boys, I can hear the twain comin' in!" shouted D'Arcy. And he broke into a run.

Blake broke into a run in pursuit.

D'Arcy dashed on. Blake caught him up and grasped him by the shoulder.

"You shrieking ass!"

"Pway don't wumple my jacket, Blake! This station

looks wathah diffewent now, doesn't it? Where's the beastlay platform, deah boy?"

"Come out, you duffer!"

"I wefuse to come out! We shall lose the twain if we don't huwwy!"

"Ass! This is the Tube station you've bolted into."

"Bai Jove! Is it weally?"

"Yes, ass! Come on!"

"Before I come with you, Blake, I want you to distinctly undahstand that I wefuse to be alluded to as an ass!"

Blake jerked him along. He propelled the swell of St. Jim's up the steps with one hand on the back of his collar, and the other at his waistbelt.

Arthur Augustus struggled in vain. Several people stopped to look on, doubtless finding the sight amusing. D'Arcy was run out of the Underground station at full speed, and rushed right into the waiting group at the top of the steps.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Lowther, staggering back from the impact. "What the dickens—"

"Blake, I no longah wegard you as a fwend!"

"I still regard you as a troublesome ass!"

"Undah the cires—"

"Come, Arthur!" said a gentle voice. "We mustn't lose the train."

"I beg your pardon, Ethel. But that wuff wottah is weally enough to make an angel lose his beastlay tempah sometimes!" said Arthur Augustus.

Ethel slipped a hand through his arm, and D'Arcy calmed down instantly.

The homeward bound adventurers entered the great station, and arrived on the platform in good time for the train.

Five minutes later they were whizzing homeward in the express.

CHAPTER 16.

Gussy Gives It Up!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was somewhat silent during the first half of the journey.

The train rushed on through a pleasant landscape, growing dim as the sun sank lower in the west. Herries was looking very thoughtful in his corner

of the carriage. He was still thinking over the mystery of the man's peculiar action at the dinner-party.

Figgins was talking in a low voice to Cousin Ethel, and Manners and Lowther were playing chess on a pocket-board belonging to the former.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Digby were busily discussing football prospects in the junior Forms at St. Jim's, and Kerr was reading a "Magnet" he had bought at the railway station. Fatty Wynn was reflecting, and the subject of his reflections were twofold—the last feed he had at Regent's Park, and the one he was going to have in the study in the New House at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus' face suddenly brightened up.

"Bai Jove, deah boys—"

"What I say is," said Blake, "that a fellow belonging to Study No. 6 can't, under any circumstances, be left out of a junior football eleven. It's not in the nature of things."

"I say, deah boys—"

"It's been a pleasant afternoon, hasn't it?" murmured Figgins, under cover of the louder football discussion. "I wish you were staying over Saturday, Miss Cleveland."

"Do you really?"

"We are playing the School House on Saturday, and I should play ever so much better if you were looking on, you know. It would make a fellow buck up."

Cousin Ethel laughed softly

"I might come over and see the match," she said.

Figgins' homely face brightened up, and looked almost handsome.

"Will you really, Ethel?"

"It's no good arguing, Tom Merry. A fellow belonging to Study No. 6 can't—"

"Can't play footer for toffee!" said Monty Lowther, looking up from his chess for a moment.

"No!" exclaimed Blake. "Can't be left out of the footer eleven."

"Veal and ham pie," murmured Fatty Wynn. "It won't take long to warm it up. And I left the wood and paper for the fire all ready in the study. That won't take a minute. I'm getting jolly hungry, Kerr. I thought of laying in that veal and ham pie."

"Deah boys, I weally wish you would pay me some attention for a moment."

"Go and eat coke, old chap!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I was going to welieve the monotony of the journey by welatin' a vewy funny stowy."

"Hold on!" said Herries. "I haven't got over the last yet."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I believe it's all rot," said Herries deliberately. "I've thought it out in every possible way, and I can't make sense of it. Either you've got it mixed up, or you've left something out, or else the yarn is a catch from beginning to end. I certainly don't believe that anything of the sort ever happened. I say, you chaps, Gussy says there was a man at a dinner-party who put a dish of straw-berries on his head. He doesn't know the man's name, or the name of the man who was giving the party, or the names of any of the party concerned."

"Weally, Hewwies, you are vewy twyin'! But the stowy I was just goin' to welate was about the tin saucapan."

Blake took out his pocket-knife and opened the largest blade.

Arthur Augustus watched him with nervous interest.

"That's right," said Lowther, looking round. "If he starts on the tin saucapan, kill him, and we'll hide his body under the seat."

"Quite right!" said Tom Merry, with a nod of approval. "I believe in giving every chap a chance, but D'Arcy has passed the limit. As a matter of fact, it's a case of too much D'Arcy."

"Exactly! Too much D'Arcy!" assented Blake. "You see, Gussy, you're too much, and too often. That's what's the matter with you."

"I wefuse to hold any further conversation with you, Blake."

"Good!"

"I wegard you as a beast, Tom Mewwy."

"Good!"

And the journey was finished without any of the party being enlightened as to the adventures of the tin saucapan.

"Wayland!" yelled a voice from the gathering dusk.

The train stopped at the well-known station. The party crossed the platform and entered the local, already waiting. Then they buzzed off for Rylcombe, and ere long arrived, and the journey was over.

As the party came out of the little country station a



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trap loomed up in the dusk, and a man touched his cap to Figgins.

It was Brown's man, and Brown's trap.

"Ere you are, sir!"

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove," murmured D'Arcy, "I neva thought of that!"

Figgins had arranged with Mr. Brown for his trap to meet the train. There was room in the trap for the New House Co. with Ethel and D'Arcy. The School House juniors looked at one another, and at the astute Figgins.

"There's the station hack you can have," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand.

"Thank you!" said Tom Merry.

The trap drove off with the New House juniors and D'Arcy and Cousin Ethel.

The School House boys gazed after it with mixed feelings.

"Jolly thoughtful of Figgins!" remarked Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes; and I'm glad Cousin Ethel has a lift to the school. Girls get more tired than we do walking. I'm going to walk it, though."

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther. "And there's one comfort—Gussy is in the trap, and we shan't have any of his little jokes on the way home."

The juniors arrived at St. Jim's. Brown's trap had done the distance much more quickly, and was long gone.

Cousin Ethel was indoors, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had gone to their quarters in the New House.

Through the thickening dusk a light gleamed from the window of Figgins' study, and there was a red glow from within that told of a fire burning cheerily, and Blake almost thought he could detect a smell of cooking.

Fatty Wynn was evidently making things hum.

"I'm feeling peckish myself," remarked Digby. "I'm ready for something. Where are you off to, Herries—tuckshop?"

"No; I'm off to feed my bulldog."

And Herries hurried away.

The rest of the juniors entered the School House. Arthur Augustus was lounging gracefully in the Hall. He had evidently had his tea. He nodded affably to the newcomers.

"I've had tea with Goah," he remarked. "Awfully obligin' fellow, Goah. He wanted me to lend him a bob, but I hadn't anythin' smaller than half-a-crown, and he said that would do. Feahfully obligin' chap! If you chaps would like to hear the stow of—"

The "chaps" passed hurriedly on. Blake and Digby stopped at the door of Study No. 6, and Blake turned up the gas.

Tom Merry paused and looked in.

"I don't know how you chaps are fixed," he remarked; "but we've got a good supply in our study, and if you care to come along to tea—"

"What-ho!" said Blake heartily.

"Bring your teacups, then. And some plates, if you have any. Hallo! What are you blinking at, Dig?"

Digby had picked up a little book from the floor. He was staring at it blankly. He turned over the leaves and whistled.

"What is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! The origin of Gussy's latest outbreaks as a funny man. Listen!" Digby read out the title in the book. "'Jones' Jest Book: Two Centuries of Funny Sayings and Doings. Price Sixpence.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

The book passed from hand to hand. There was no mistake about it. There were all D'Arcy's latest jokes, his riddles, his conundrums, his funny stories. There, staring from almost the first page was the story of the dinner-party. The swell of St. Jim's had evidently been studying that little book in secret, and had dropped it by accident on the floor of the study. The name "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy" was sprawled across the flyleaf in D'Arcy's well-known hand.

"I've got an idea," said Tom Merry, chuckling. "Hand it over. We'll fix it up in a way that will show Gussy that we are on the wheeze, and perhaps he'll go easy on the funny-man business from now on."

And Tom Merry opened his pocket-knife, and proceeded to dismember the jest book with a merciless hand.

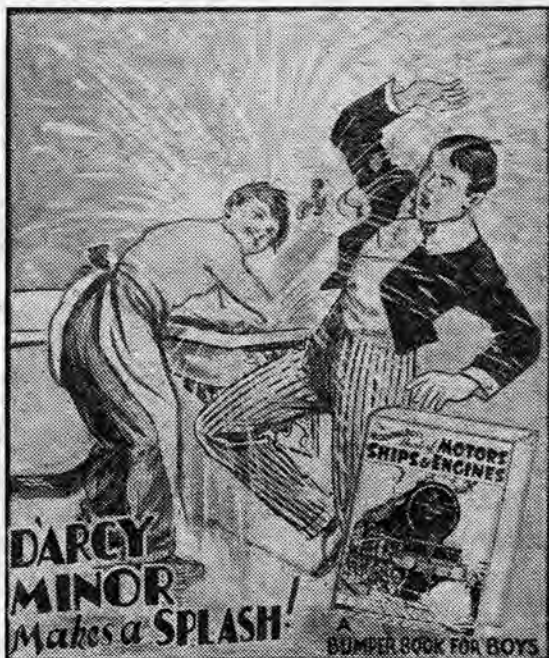
Five minutes later the juniors left the study, chuckling gleefully. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming upstairs, looking rather troubled.

He hurried towards the juniors as they went towards Tom Merry's study.

"Hold on a minute, deah boys! Have you seen a little book lyin' about anywhah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Weally, Tom Mewwy—weally, Blake—"

"Better look in the study," grinned Blake.

The juniors walked on, to partake of a merry tea in Tom Merry's study.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and stared after them for some moments, and then slowly entered Study No. 6. The gas was turned down. D'Arcy turned it up, and in the flood of light looked round the study. Then he gave a gasp:

"Bai Jove!"

The book of which he was in search was very much in evidence. The leaves of the jest book, dismembered mercilessly, adorned the walls of the study. The cover was sticking over the mantelpiece, with a knife through it, pinning it to the wall. The leaves were all round the study, stuck on the walls with pins or gum, forming a sort of dado.

Arthur Augustus stared at them blankly.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured again.

He was discovered. There was no doubt upon that point, for there was the jest book in fragments in evidence of the fact. And for the third time Arthur Augustus murmured, "Bai Jove!" Then he strolled along to Tom Merry's study.

The tea-party there greeted him with a shout of laughter.

"Hallo, funny-man!"

"What price 'Jones' Jest Book'?"

"Price sixpence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry. "The game's up, and Gussy, the funny-man, is dead and buried. Sit down and have another tea, Gussy, and say farewell—a long farewell—to the story of the dinner-party."

And D'Arcy did.

The swell of the School House had finished his career as a funny-man.

THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,286.

THRILLING ADVENTURES AMID ICE AND SNOW!



By J. E. GURDON.

The World Wreckers are a band of criminals who have discovered the secret of controlling the earth's weather. From their headquarters, somewhere in the Antarctic, they threaten to demolish the British Empire by floods and droughts unless they are paid a vast sum of money. In reply the British Government send out an expedition against them. After various encounters, Jim and Rex Tempest, the airmen of the expedition, capture Krughanger, one of the Wrecker chiefs. Later, they rescue members of the expedition who have been captured, after which they succeed in blocking the entrance to the Wreckers' stronghold with a fall of snow. Returning to the submarine, Jim and Rex don diving suits and set out by way of an under-sea tunnel to reach the Wreckers' headquarters. Suddenly, however, a heavy object drops on Rex.

In Deadly Danger!

SO stunning was the shock and the horror of its total unexpectedness that the boy almost lost consciousness as he fell helplessly beneath the impact. Deep into the mud he was plunged, and the world became a black nightmare of struggling against sticky bonds.

Yet the thing that had attacked him never ceased its pressure. It seemed as if coils were wound about his waist. Then he felt himself lifted from the mud and dragged irresistibly away.

Fiercely he fought, clutching at the coils that gripped him. His fingers slipped, unavailing, from their slimy, leathery surface, and the weight of the water turned his blows into feeble pushes.

Through the scuttles of his helmet then there filtered a greenish, phosphorescent glare. He twisted over on to his back and lay still for a moment, petrified by the first glimpse of the dreadful monster that held him.

Its head was dome-shaped, its enormous eyes gleamed dully, and its snout was like a trunk, curving downwards.

But for all its fantastic gruesomeness there was still something dimly familiar about the apparition.

Recognition, when it came, brought such a flood of strengthening relief that he all but wrenched himself free.

It was no unknown sea devil that had him in its clutches, but a man clad in a diving dress, although of colossal size and peculiar design.

The dome-shaped skull was his enemy's helmet; the trunk-like snout was his breathing tube.

"Grrr, you big stiff!" roared Rex, redoubling his struggles. "Lemme go!"

His efforts were as useless as the wriggles of a puppy held up by the scruff of its neck. The giant merely tightened his arms—those leather-clad arms that Rex had taken for snaky coils—and held him as helpless as a python holds a goat.

Then again began the steady, ruthless dragging.

THE GEN LIBRARY, No. 1,286.

In moments of deadly danger Rex's brain always became cool and clear. That quality came to his rescue now.

Two vital facts he realised—one was that fighting was utterly useless and a sheer waste of the strength he would need so urgently if ever he were given the slightest chance to escape; the other was that Jim must see the light of the giant's lamp, and would, therefore, be coming to his aid.

Ceasing his futile struggles, he therefore lay limply in his assailant's grasp, only striving to make himself as heavy and awkward as possible.

"Jim will be coming soon," he thought, "and then the two of us will give this Carnera blighter something to write home about!"

But minutes passed, and still there came no sign of pursuit or help. Moreover, the speed of their progress was steadily increasing.

Rex knew the cause of this, and his heart sank—they were already inside the tunnel and the tide had turned. Soon it would be sweeping them along at seven or eight knots. With every drifting second his plight grew more desperate.

Once again he made a savage bid for freedom, putting every ounce of sudden strength into the effort.

It was his last attempt. The force that the giant had hitherto used was as nothing compared with the crushing squeeze that quenched the boy's hope.

Rex heard his ribs crack, felt the air driven gasping from his lungs, then the surrounding glare changed from green to red, from red to black, and he knew no more.

An aching chest was the first sensation that crept back into his consciousness. He moved, choked, blinked, and gazed around, slowly recognising and remembering.

He was lying on the shores of the subterranean lake which he and Jim had already once visited. His helmet had been removed, and he could see the waters of the lake gleaming like ink in the reflected light of the giant's lamp. The giant himself was squatting close by—huge, menacing, and also without his helmet.

"Hallo!" said Rex foolishly.

His captor's response to this remark seemed completely meaningless.

"The cylinder," he growled—"what did you do to it?"

Rex gaped at him.

"The cylinder," repeated the colossus. "You have somehow damaged it. That I know. But to make an inspection would take long, so I carry you back to tell me. That saves much time; and if you tell me the truth, perhaps I will not kill you."

Rex's mind was working rapidly.

"Speaks like a dago," he thought. "I bet this chap is that Pirelli brute that Krughammer told us of. Wonder what he means by the 'cylinder'? I'd best stall him off—pretend to understand—gain time—"

"Come!" rumbled Pirelli, shifting impatiently. "I wait. Tell me."

At that moment, however, Rex was utterly incapable of speech.

Looking over the Italian's shoulder, he had seen a ring of ripples break upon the surface of the lake. Through the centre of the ring a glistening metal dome arose.

Almost the boy yelled aloud. Jim had come!

Another set of ripples broke. A second copper helmet caught the light.

Rex choked in his excitement. One rescuer he could understand, but two—

A terrible voice broke in upon his bewilderment.

"Speak!" roared Pirelli, raising a fist like a cannon-ball.

Once more presence of mind brought Rex deliverance.

"Must keep the brute occupied," he thought. "Got to give 'em a chance."

"Oh, the cylinder!" he babbled aloud. "I see what you mean now. Didn't understand at first. Now, don't get restive. You make me nervous. How can a chap know what he's saying when there's a great hand like a ham hanging over his head? Swot him, Jim!"

As the two mysterious, goggle-eyed monsters from the deeps sprang upon Pirelli, so Rex leapt also.

Even with the odds at three against one he had expected a fearful and doubtful fight. To his astonishment, however, the huge Italian crumpled beneath the first onslaught, to sprawl, stunned, upon the sand. Then the mystery was explained as he saw that one of the attackers was gripping a heavy spanner, and stood ready to deal a second blow if the giant moved.

The other was making signs to show that he needed help in getting off his helmet.

The Cylinder!

"WHAT cheer, Jim!" said Rex, when this task was accomplished. "Who's your ferocious friend?"

"Dunno! He jumped on me at the same time as this big brute dropped on you, but he never put up much of a scrap. In fact, he let me shake him off quite easily, and joined in the chase after you. We'd better get him out of his helmet and ask a few questions."

Although curiously reluctant, their unknown ally offered no actual resistance as they unclamped the metal globe and lifted it from his shoulders.

Jim turned the lamp on his face.

"Great snakes!" he ejaculated softly. "It's Sweetly!"

For several seconds he and Rex stared in silent astonishment at Sweetly, the round-faced, amiable cook, who had come out with them from England, had turned traitor, and had joined the enemy.

Under their unwinking scrutiny the wretched man shuffled miserably.

"Don't look at me like that, sir," he pleaded. "I'm sorry I double-crossed you an' the captain an' the commander an' the boys. I wouldn't have done it if I'd known these World Wreckers was the murderin' devils that they are! I only thought it was a chance to make a bit of easy money, an' that it wouldn't do no harm—"

With a gesture Jim cut short the mumbling apology.

"Never mind about your motives," he interrupted. "The point is—what were you and this man doing out in the sea? And why did you come back to help us instead of him?"

Sweetly looked down at Pirelli's huge bulk and shuddered. "We was going to do summat to the cylinder," he answered.

"What cylinder?"

"I dunno. But it's summat devilish what the professor and he have planted out there in the sea—summat to do with their weather tricks. Pirelli, he goes out there sometimes an' fiddles with it, an' sometimes he takes a cove with him, an' when he does the cove never comes back."

"I see. Not a nice chap to share a picnic with."

"That he ain't!" agreed Sweetly fervently. "Well, when we got somewhere near that cylinder we bumped up against the submarine, an' while Pirelli was making up his mind what he was going to do about it you two gentlemen came

creepin' out. Pirelli, he tackled Mr. Rex, an' I drops on you, just in case he happened to be looking, but as soon as he sheered off I stops scrappin' an' come along with you to lend a hand."

Jim pondered. The man's story was plausible enough, and fitted in with his own experience of the affair.

"Tell me," he said, struck by a sudden thought—"why should they have chosen you for this job if Pirelli's companions all come to some sticky end? Did they suspect you of double-crossing them in the same way as you did us?"

"Maybe," admitted Sweetly slowly. "You see, I'd been gettin' a bit friendly like with the boys from the sub, wot they've gaoled back here in the caves. An' then, I've found a new an' secret way of gettin' out of this mountain—though I don't see how any of 'em could ha' twigged I'd done it."

It was Rex who first caught the full significance of Sweetly's words.

"Boys from the sub!" he repeated tensely. "D'you mean—prisoners?"

"I do," was the stolid response. "Fifteen of 'em, taken when you gentlemen made the raid in the tank. Gassed they was, but they're O.K. now. I was detailed to cook for 'em, an' I've got the key of their cell, an' I'd planned to lead 'em all out through my secret passage—an' then Pirelli, he comes an' says I'm to go diving with him!"

Jim drew a deep breath, and sat down, motioning the others to follow suit.

"This," he said solemnly, "is where we hold our last council of war. But before we start we'd better tie up our Italian pal. He's beginning to snort and squirm."

Thanks to this fateful meeting and conference, an hour later nineteen men emerged through a narrow crack in the northern face of the mountain, and found themselves at the bottom of an immense crevasse of ice. They were Jim, Rex, Sweetly, and the fifteen rescued men from Q47, four of whom were staggering under the weight of Pirelli, now fully conscious but efficiently trussed and gagged.

Although the escape had been made without hitch or pursuit, thanks to Sweetly's key and his uncanny knowledge of the mountain's labyrinths, it was a very relieved and exhausted party that stood gazing up at the narrow ribbon of grey sky which showed between the towering walls of ice.

"Gosh," gasped Rex, puffing breathlessly, "I'm glad to be out of those tunnels! For the last hour I've been feeling like a blind germ trying to find his way out of a chunk of black sponge cake!"

Jim, however, did not respond to this flight of fancy. He was staring around at the sky and the walls of ice, and as his followers noted the expression on his face a strange silence fell upon them all.

Yet his words, when he spoke, were simple, despite their terrible significance.

"It's raining," he said quietly, "and the ice is melting."

"And it's hot!" added Rex, in an awestruck whisper.

At that, realisation came to them all.

In the heart of the Antarctic, where nothing but snow had fallen for a million years, a deluge of warm rain, like a tropical storm, was drumming down out of a leaden sky, while ice, which had endured through countless centuries, was melting before their eyes.

The least imaginative in that band could guess what this meant—thousands of millions of tons of snow and ice changed to water and rushing to the sea—the birth of a new ocean—tidal waves flooding far continents—the possibilities were limitless and appalling.

Rex was the first to break the silence.

Coming Shortly

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"Phew!" he breathed, mopping a steaming forehead. "Can't we move on somewhere? It's like a furnace down here in this glacier! And we've got five miles to go before we reach the drome!"

Those five miles took five hours to cover—five hours of slipping, scrambling, swimming down interminable avenues of ice, all flooded by rushing streams which grew steadily deeper.

Above the bubbling, hissing, and splashing of water there sounded a steady, droning throb that swelled and sank like a note of a distant organ pipe.

"There's a hurricane blowing up aloft!" thought Jim grimly. "We're sheltered down here; but—golly!—we're going to catch it hot when we reach the open!"

Yet, although he was prepared for something terrific, even Jim stood aghast when they arrived at the foot of the glacier and viewed the stupendous spectacle that raged over the level ground.

No longer was the rain falling vertically. Blown out by

the wind, like curtains of beads, it lashed across the aerodrome, stinging and blinding.

Already the snow had nearly vanished, and bald patches of rock were showing through. The air was stiflingly hot, the sky had changed from grey to sulphurous yellow, and over all there hung a flickering pall of unceasing lightning.

"Just the day for a joyride!" howled Rex, but the wind tore away his voice unheard.

Again and again on the journey across the open a man was blown flat, or whirled away, spinning and rolling; but they reached the first of the hangars without any casualties, and so at last gained cover.

Here, however, disappointment awaited them, for, although each of the seven hangars was stacked with machines in various stages of dismantlement, in them all there were only three planes that appeared to be airworthy.

Of these, one was a single-seater, one a two-seater, while the third was a cabin monoplane freighter which might, at a pinch, carry a dozen men.

"The boys were all called off work yesterday," said Sweetly, explaining why the sheds were all deserted. "They'd been told to pull the planes to pieces an' pack 'em; but the professor, he must have changed his mind."

Jim nodded.

"No doubt he wanted his machines underground before turning loose this storm," he remarked; "then he got the wind up about something and decided not to wait. Well, we'll have to do the best we can with these kites. Rex, you'd better take the two-seater with Petty Officer Strang as navigator. It's got a full set of instruments. All the rest will have to pack into the freighter, which I'll fly. It's a pity we can't use the single-seater, but— Yes, Kelly?"

One of Q 47's engineers had stepped forward.

"I can fly, sir," he announced. "I used to be a test pilot, R.N.A.S., till my nerve gave out. I've stuck to the ground ever since. But I'd like to have another shot now, sir, because, no matter how you try, you'll never get all the chaps into that freighter."

Jim eyed him keenly. He knew the man well as an expert at his job, and one who had proved his pluck time after time on sea and on land. But for a victim of "flying nerves" to take up a single-seater in a hurricane sounded like rank suicide.

"Honestly, sir, I'll be O.K.," insisted Kelly, noting his hesitation.

There was nothing boastful or nervous about him, Jim observed. Eyes and mouth were steady. It looked as though the peril that overhung them all had enabled him to conquer his air-shyness. And what he said about the freighter was painfully true.

"Good man, Kelly," said Jim quietly. "You fly the scout.

Wear a parachute, and take off first. Rex, you follow immediately after with Strang. I'll come last in the freighter, as I'll need the largest run.

"Make for the southernmost peak of the Victoria Mountains. The flood won't climb there for months. We'll all meet there and decide what to do. Now, off you go—and good luck to you!"

After that there was no more talking, but each man quietly, swiftly, and efficiently set about his appointed job, inspecting rigging, filling up with petrol, collecting parachutes, or clearing away the surrounding confusion of dismembered aeroplanes.

Only one factor favoured the desperate flight to come—the gale was blowing full against the doors of the hangars, and the machines could, therefore, fly straight out from shelter, dead into the eye of the wind.

Kelly climbed into his cockpit, tested the controls, and signalled for the chocks to be withdrawn.

With a mighty roar from the engine he shot out through the open doors, there to be caught by the hurricane and whirled aloft like a leaf.

For a second Rex watched the tiny storm-tossed silhouette of his plane, black against the yellowish pall, then he waved good-bye to Jim, and pushed forward the throttle.

That take-off was unlike anything that he had ever experienced.

No sooner was the machine in the air than the controls seemed to become crazy beneath his hands and feet. Mighty forces beating on ailerons and elevator, sent the stick churning around in the cockpit so that he could scarcely hold it. The rudder-bar banged to and fro on its pivot, despite all the pressure of his legs.

To see was utterly impossible. Once, when he ventured to peep round the windscreen, he was almost stunned, for rain struck him in the face like a hammer-blow, bruising and cutting.

Yet, so automatic had become the art of flying, after many hundreds of hours in the air, that, somehow, his senses sorted order out of the chaos. He found and kept a level keel, arduously climbed level with Kelly's machine, and cleared the water from the face of the compass.

One glance at the instrument caused him more dismay than all the raging of the storm.

It was spinning like a mad thing, and as useless as a broken toy.

Not a trace of ground below, horizon around, or even of sky above. Smothering and obliterating, the rain shrouded all.

(Make sure you read the concluding instalment of this powerful serial next week. It is packed with thrills from first to last.)

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