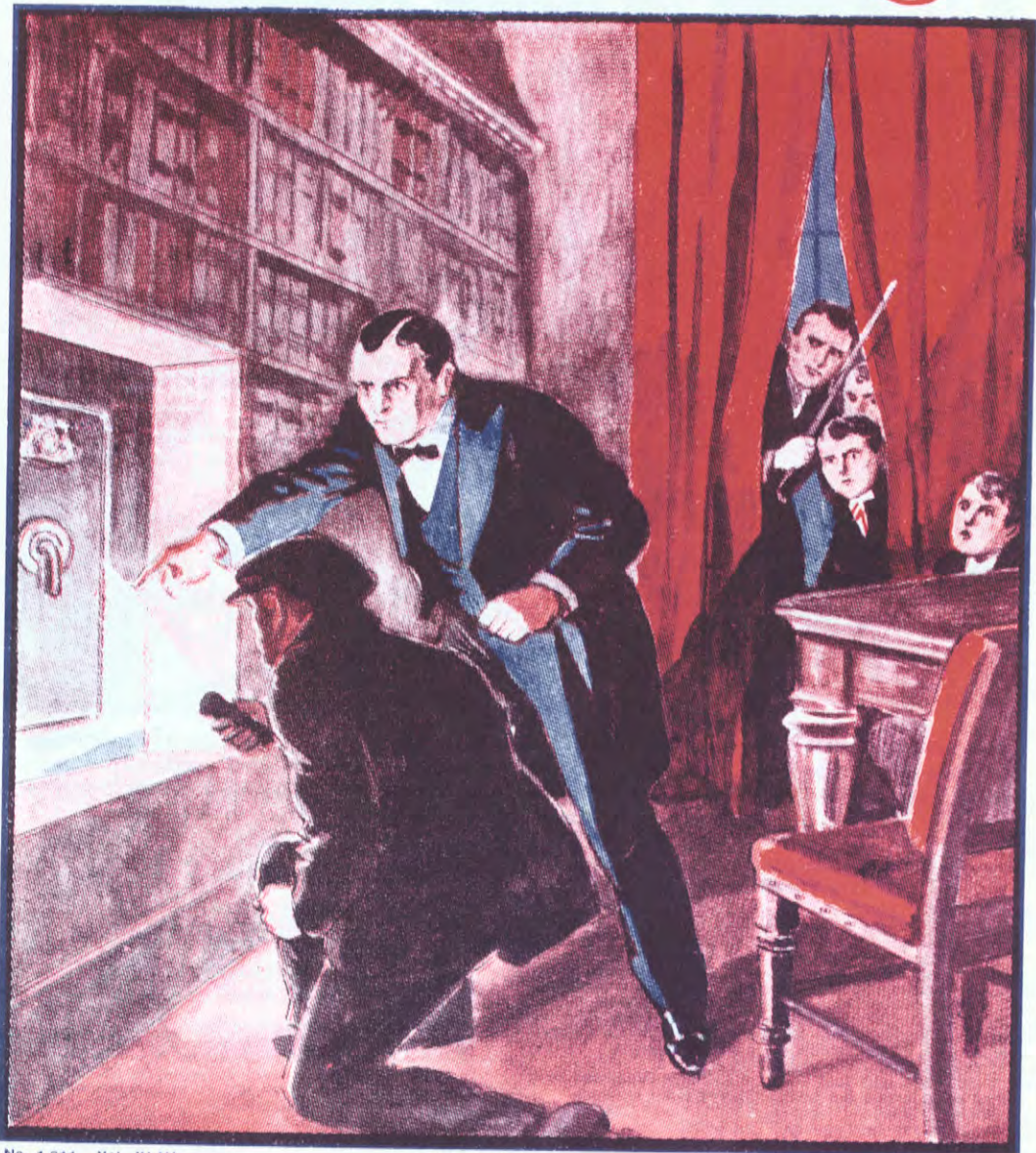


"THE MYSTERY OF EASTWOOD HOUSE!" GRAND SCHOOL-ADVENTURE YARN!

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

The GEM

2^d



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THRILLS AND FUN AROUND WHEN TOM MERRY & CO. SPEND A—

The MYSTERY of



Tom Merry & Co. discover that D'Arcy is taking Blake & Co. home for the week-end, so they decide to pay a surprise visit to Eastwood House! They certainly expect some fun, but hardly bargain for the strange adventures that befall them before they return to St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 1. The Week-Enders!

"WEALLY, it's too bad!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation in a tone of great annoyance, as he laid the letter he had been reading down upon the table in Study No. 6 in the School House.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were packing bags in the study, and they seemed too busy to hear D'Arcy's remarks.

At all events, they did not look up, and Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked from one to another with an expression of rising indignation.

"I say, it is weally too bad!"

"Yes," murmured Jack Blake: "a couple of pairs of socks will be enough, as I can borrow Gussy's if I run short."

"Weally, Blake—"

"What about dog biscuits?" asked Herries, looking up

from his bag. "I can't very well pack in dog biscuits. I suppose the grub will be all right for Towser at your place, Gussy?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You see, Towser won't eat anything. He's a particular dog. If you've got the right sort of dog biscuits at Eastwood House, why—"

"Did you speak, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I did speak! I remarked that it was weally too bad!"

"About those dog biscuits—"

"Pwaw wing off for a moment, Hewwies. I have just weceived a lettah from my governah."

D'Arcy's three chums were all attention at once. As a matter of fact, they were just packing to spend a brief holiday with Arthur Augustus at his father's house, and from D'Arcy's expression it seemed that something had gone wrong with the invitation.

EASTWOOD HOUSE!

By Martin Clifford.

"Nothing happened to the noble earl?" asked Blake. "You don't mean to say that he's had an accident, or anything, just now?"

"Certainly not. He has witten me a lettah—" said Digby. "Well, that has happened before, and you've survived." "It's no good being unreasonable. A chap's father will write to him sometimes. It's one of the things you have to expect."

"Pwavy allow me to finish, Dig. As you know, deah boys, my respected pawnts are now absent fwom home, and I thought it would be an excellent opportunity for me to give a little house-party at Eastwood House—"

"It was a ripping idea," said Blake. "Yaas, I wathah flattah myself that it was wippin'." I asked you fellows—

"And we accepted," said Blake blandly. "At a time like this, you can rely on your old chums to back you up."

"Yes, rather!" said Herries and Digby, with great heartiness. "Thank you vewy much. Then it occurred to me that, as a mattah of form, I ought to wite to my governah and ask his permish—"

"Well, I suppose he would take it as a compliment," said Blake.

"Yaas, and now he has weplied—"

Blake jumped up. "You—you ass!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that your governor has refused permission? My hat! Now all the fellows know that we are going to spend the week-end at Eastwood House! Why, we shall be the joke of the School House!"

"And the New House, too!" grunted Herries. "Figgins & Co. have got hold of it already!"

"Well, of all the giddy asses," said Digby, in measured tones, "I think Gussy is about the giddiest. His governor's refused permission—"

"He hasn't wufused permish, deah boys!" demanded Blake.

"Oh, don't begin to argue now. If your governor hasn't declined the honour we intend to do him, what is the trouble about? Explain!"

"I am twyin' to do so, but you asses keep on intewwuptin' me. When I am intewwupted I am thwown into a flattah, and then it is impos—"

"Will you come to the point?" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I am comin' to it as fast as I can. My governah says, first of all, that I am an impertinent young vascal—wathah a diawspewful way of addwessin' me, but you know what these governahs are—and then he says I am quite at liberty to use Eastwood House for the week-end, and that he will give instwuctions for the place to be put at our disposal—"

"Bravo!"

"Good egg!"

"But there is a condish, deah boy."

"Oh! And what is the condition?"

"It is wathah a wotten one. That is why I was annoyed, and—"

"What is the condition?"

"I am comin' to that. It weally looks as if my governah wewards as you youngstahs, you know, who cannot be twusted alone—"

"What is the condition?" shrieked Blake.

"Pwavy don't get excited, deah boy. The condish is that we take a mastah with us."

"Oh!"

"I weward it as wathah wotten. Lord Eastwood says that if a master at St. Jim's is willin' to spend the week-end with us at Eastwood House, we can have that little house-party, otherwise—"

"Otherwise we can't!"

"Pweecisely, deah boy!"

"The question is, what master shall we take with us? Which of the School House masters is the most deserving of being taken on a little run?"

"I plump for Railton," said Dig. "He might come, if you put it to him gently."

"Yaas, wathah! I suggest that we all go in a body to Mr. Wailton, and pwess him to come. We can put it to him, as a sport."

"Come on, then!" said Blake. "No good getting on with the packing if the week-end isn't coming off. Let's go and interview Railton."

And, leaving their bags just as they were, gaping open and half-packed, the chums of Study No. 6 made their way to the Housemaster's quarters.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry's Decision!

BUMP, bump, bump!

"Bai Jove, what's that?"

Bump, bump, bump!

The chums of Study No. 6 stared up the passage in amazement. At the other end was a box-room, in which the juniors of the School House kept empty trunks and lumber of all sorts. The box-room door was open now, and three youths were dragging out a big trunk. It was a huge cane and leather trunk belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which had cost a fabulous sum, and was the envy and admiration of all the fellows in the Lower Forms.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Bai Jove, what on earth is Tom Mewwy doin' with my twunk?"

"It's some little game, I suppose."

The Four Fourth-Formers ran along the passage. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the chums of the Shell, were bumping the big trunk along, up-ending it, and rolling it over to make it travel. They gasped and paused as the astonished four came up. Arthur Augustus turned his eye-glass upon them with indignant amazement.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, that's my twunk—"

"Is it?" said Tom Merry, leaning on the trunk to rest, and looking at D'Arcy across it. "By Jove!"

"Why, you know it is, you ass! It's my best twunk!"

"Good! That's all right!"

"Is it all right? I weward it as all wong! What are you dwaggin' my twunk out of the box-room for?"

"We want it!"

"I wufuse to allow my twunk to be used for any silly jape," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "If you want a twunk for a jape, you can use that wotten Sawatoga with Buck Finn bwought fwom Amewicah. It's in ther!"

"My dear kid," said Tom Merry, "you ought to know by this time that I'm a fellow of taste. I wouldn't be found dead in Buck Finn's Saratoga trunk if I could help it!"

"Yaas, I agwee with you that Finn's Sawatoga is a how-yah, but—"

"We're going to borrow this. I should have asked your permission, but it slipped my memory. You see, we're going away for a week-end."

"Bai Jove, so are we!"

"Yes, I heard about your silly excursion," said Tom Merry blandly. "That's really what put the idea into our heads."

"Oh, we could have guessed that!" Jack Blake remarked. "You Shellfish always follow in our footsteps in the matter of wheezes."

"Well, we admit the soft impeachment in this case," said Tom Merry. "If you week-end, why shouldn't we week-end?"

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "I week-end, thou week-endest, he week-ends. We week-end, you or ye week-end, they week-end. I week-ended, thou week-endested—"

"Oh, cheeze it!" said Blake, stopping his ears with his fingers as Manners went on conjugating that new verb. "Draw it mid!"

"Yes, rather," said Monty Lowther, "or we shall come to a weak end, some of us!"

"Rotten," said Tom Merry.

"I have no objection to you chaps week-endin'," said Arthur Augustus. "But as for my twunk—"

"You see, we're going to do the luggage-in-advance business, and save carrying our bags," explained Tom Merry. "Hence these tears—I mean, hence this trunk! We're going to put all our things into it and send it on."

"Yaas, that's wathah a good ideah, but—"

"If you'll kindly get out of the way, we'll shove it on. Oh, I forgot! Can we have the trunk, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall be vewy pleased to lend it you, but—"

"That's all right. Clear!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"My dear chap, you've lent us the trunk, and now we've got no further use for you," said Monty Lowther. "Travel along!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Give the thing a shove, you chaps!"

The Terrible Three shoved together, and the big trunk careered along. The chums of Study No. 6 flattened against the wall to avoid it, and the Terrible Three went on their way.

"Bump, bump, bump!"

The trunk was rolled down the Shell passage, and in at the door of Tom Merry's study. Then the door closed.

Through the shut door came a sound of laughter, as if the chums of the Shell were enjoying some little joke among themselves; but the Fourth-Formers did not hear it. They were going on their way.

"Bai Jove, that's a feahful cheek of Tom Mewwy!" D'Arcy remarked. "Fancy bowwowin' a fellow's twunk without askin' his permish."

"I say, I've been thinking—" began Herries.

"Oh, keep off the dog biscuits!"

"It's not the dog biscuits. I was thinking that if Gussy lent me his trunk, instead of lending it to those Shell bounders, I might take Towser down to Eastwood House in it."

"Bai Jove!"

"He would be all right in it," said Herries, mistaking D'Arcy's expression. "I could bore a few holes through the lid to give him air."

"Yaas," gasped D'Arcy. "I'm likely to let you bore a few holes through the lid of a nine-guinea twunk, to keep a beastly bulldog in it!"

"Towser's not a beastly bulldog!"

"Shut up!" said Blake. "Here's Railton!"

They were near the door of the Housemaster's study now, and Mr. Railton was just going into it. He looked somewhat tired; the week's work told upon him more than it did upon the cheerful Fourth-Formers. He glanced at the juniors as they hurried up, and held the door open in his hand.

"If you please, sir—"

"Do you wish to speak to me?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Come in, then."

Mr. Railton sat down, and the juniors stood before him. They felt a little nonplussed as to how to begin, and they exchanged glances without speaking. Mr. Railton looked surprised.

"You have something to say to me, my boys?"

"Yes, sir. Certainly!"

"Will you kindly say it, then? My time is valuable."

"Yes, sir, I know it is. The fact is—" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! The fact is—"

"This is how the matter stands, sir," said Digby. "The fact is—"

"The fact—" began Herries.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, no, sir. The fact is—"

"Pewwaps you had better leave it to me to explain, Blake. I dare say I shall make the mattah much cleawah to you. The fact is, sir, that we—we think you have been lookin' wathah wun down lately."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"You may not be awah, sir, that we take a great interest in your health, and regard it as a sewious mattah for you to be wun down."

"I will give you credit for good intentions, D'Arcy, and will not regard what you say as impertinence—"

"Oh, sir!"

"But I must ask you to kindly leave me undisturbed, and—"

"But weally, sir—"

"The fact is, sir," said Blake, "we want you—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

"Pewwaps I can manage it better, Blake—"

"Ring off, you ass!" whispered Blake. "I—"

"I wufuse to wing off. I can explain it to Mr. Railton."

The fact is, sir, we have turned the mattah over in our minds, and we considah that a week-end in the country would do you a feahful lot of good, sir."

"D'Arcy!"

"So we want you to wun down to Eastwood House for the week-end, sir."

"I don't quite understand you, I fear, yet."

"This is how the matter stands, sir," said Blake, taking the plunge. "We're going down for the week-end to D'Arcy's place, sir—you remember giving us permission? Lord Eastwood has written to D'Arcy that we can't go unless a master is willing to go with us, to see that we don't get into mischief. Of course, there would be no danger of that—"

"Of course not," assented Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"We'd rather you came, sir, than any other master—and as a matter of absolute fact, sir," said Blake confidentially, "we'd like you, anyway."

"You are very kind, Blake."

"I weally wish you had left it to me, Blake. I was puttin' it evah so much better to Mr. Railton."

"I am afraid you were not sticking so close to the facts, D'Arcy."

"Weally, sir! As a mattah of fact, I have been vewy much concerned lately about your health, and I weally considah that a week-end at Eastwood would set you up, sir. Honest Injun, sir."

"I will think it over," said Mr. Railton. "I quite understand Lord Eastwood's desire to have some responsible person in charge of a party at his house during his absence. I do not wish your little holiday to be spoiled, so—"

"We can't go unless you come, sir!"

"I will try to arrange it, either for myself or another master—"

The chums looked blue.

"I—I wish you could fix it, sir," said Blake. "You understand us so much better than the other chaps—I mean the other masters, sir. It would be jolly with you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, well, we will see," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "When do you leave?"

"Six o'clock train from Rylcombe, sir."

"Very good; I will let you know in an hour."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

And the juniors, feeling pretty well satisfied in their minds, left the study. They felt sure that Mr. Railton would come if he could arrange it; and, as Blake said, with Mr. Railton in the party, it would be almost as jolly as having no master at all with them.

CHAPTER 3.

Taggles Takes the Trunk!

"SHALL we want the cricket things?" asked Monty Lowther, looking up from the huge trunk which was being steadily filled with the belongings of the Terrible Three.

"Yes, rather! We may get a game of cricket."

"Nothing like being prepared," said Manners. "Shove in the whole outfit. That's one advantage about that trunk. It will hold everything we've got if we like."

Bats and stumps and balls were crammed in. Lowther suggested that there was room for poles and nets, but Tom Merry thought that would be taxing the capacity of D'Arcy's big trunk too far.

The chums of the Shell had already shoved in all the things they were likely to want for a week-end, and a great many things they were not likely to want. As Manners Lowther said, you never could tell.

"This week-end biz is a capital idea," Tom Merry remarked as he dropped in Manners' camera on top of the cricket stumps. "You'll want that, Manners?"

Manners gave a howl.

"I don't want it broken, ass!"

"Does it break?" asked Tom innocently.

"You—you duffer! I'm going to carry that myself. Do you think I would trust my camera on the railway?"

"Then you can have it out again," said Lowther, taking up the camera. "Catch!"

"Don't chuck it, you ass!"

"You're mighty particular about that old camera," said Lowther, laying it on the table. "Still, I'm glad you're going to take it. I want to get a snapshot of Gussy's face when he sees us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three left off cackling for a full minute to roar with laughter.

Tom Merry wiped the tears from his eyes.

"It's a great idea!" he said. "We must admit that it emanated from Study No. 6. But when we heard that

D'Arcy & Co. had asked permission to leave school on Friday for the week-end, how long did it take us to make up our minds to go and do likewise?"

"About a second," said Lowther.

"Wrong!" said Tom Merry. "I was on it like a shot. You can only do it in decimals. It was about point-nought-nought-nought-one seconds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And didn't the Head play up like a little man?" said Tom Merry. "I dare say he thought that if a week-end was allowed to fellows in the Fourth, a week-end ought

in. Taggles was in a state between civility and grumpiness. Tom Merry's study generally tipped pretty well, but at the same time they were often stony, so the tip was not certain. The tip was uncertain; but the ascent of the stairs, and the carrying of the trunk was certain enough. So Taggles was rather more inclined to grumpiness than to civility.

"Hallo, Taggles!" exclaimed Lowther, jumping. "Hold on a minute—just as you are! Don't move!"

"Which I've come—"

"Don't move!" cried Lowther, snatching up pen and



Taggles took hold of the strap to pull it tight. He pulled and pulled, and Lowther slyly gave the trunk a little shove towards him. The result was startling. The trunk rolled over towards the porter and Taggles sprawled on the floor. "Oh!" he roared. "My heels!"

to be allowed to the Shell. That stops any suspicion of favouritism. We asked first in the Shell; and it was a case of first come, first served. We've got it. Lucky the Head didn't think of asking us where we were going to spend the week-end."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This trunk's finished," said Lowther. "The carrier man ought to be here by now. Hark! I can hear somebody's fairy footsteps on the stairs."

There were footsteps on the stairs, but far from fairy ones. The heavy tread could only belong to Taggles, the school porter.

There was a thump at the door, and Taggles looked

paper from the table. "Just as you are for a couple of hours, and the thing will be done. I'm thinking of painting Apollo for the Academy, and if I take a rough sketch now—"

Taggles turned pink. He didn't know whom Apollo was, but he could see that Lowther was being humorous. Tom and Manners roared.

"Apollo!" gasped Manners. "Make it Caliban."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which I've come 'ere—"

"Which we can see you have," said Lowther, laying down the pen. "If you've come for the trunk, we'll leave

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

the sketch till later. I want you to sit as my model for Apollo. Here's the trunk."

"Which it isn't strapped."

"Take hold of the strap, my son, and help me fasten it."

The trunk was locked. There were big, leather straps round the outside for additional security. Tom Merry felt in his pockets.

"Can you lend me a shilling, Manners?" asked Tom Merry.

Manners felt in his pockets in turn. Taggles brightened up considerably. He naturally assumed that the shilling was for him.

"Take hold, Taggy!"

"Certainly, Master Lowther, with pleasure, sir!"

Taggles took hold of the strap to pull it tight. He set his knees against the trunk, and took the thick strap in both hands. Lowther was holding the trunk firm. Taggles pulled, and pulled, and Lowther slyly gave the trunk a little shove towards him.

The result was startling.

With Taggles pulling, and Lowther shoving, the trunk, of course, rolled over towards the porter, and Taggles sprawled on his back on the floor.

"Oh!" he roared. "My heye!"

"Here, get on!" he said. "You oughtn't to fasten the straps before you lie down and rest, Taggles."

Taggles spluttered with rage.

He had bumped pretty heavily upon the floor, and he was not pleased.

"Which you did it on purpose!" he roared.

"I hope you haven't been drinking, Taggles," said Lowther severely. "Think of the example to youths like us."

It's simply shocking to see a man of your advanced years rolling about the floor of a study before the shocked eyes of three quiet and well-conducted youths!"

Taggles staggered up.

"Which you can fasten the trunk yourself, Master Lowther. There!"

"I dare say I can do it better alone," said Lowther. "I've had nothing stronger than tea to-day."

And he fastened the straps.

"Here's that bob, Tom," said Manners, producing the coin from his waistcoat pocket. "Shall we give Taggy a hand down the stairs with that trunk?"

"No, you won't," said Taggles, who knew what assistance from the chums of the Shell would be like. "It's 'ard work, but I can manage. It ain't labelled."

"We don't want it labelled till it's on the carrier's cart," said Tom Merry.

Taggles stared.

"You see, we're keeping it a little secret where we're going for the week-end," explained Tom Merry. "All the fellows will be staring at the trunk as it goes out. I want you to see the label stuck on after it's in the cart."

"Which I'll do it with pleasure, Master Merry."

"Good! You're a nice man, Taggles, always doing your duty faithfully without looking for tips, or anything of that sort. Thanks awfully for the bob, Manners! Come along to the tuckshop and have some ices."

Taggles face fell.

"Which I thought—'Ere, I'm blessed if I can carry this 'ere trunk! It's too 'eavy! If it falls downstairs and busts, I ain't responsible. As for that blessed label, you can stick it on yourself!"

"But I don't want it stuck on myself, Taggles. I want it stuck on the trunk."

Taggles snorted.

Tom Merry slipped the shilling into his pocket, and Taggles snorted again. His hand came out with a two-shilling piece in it, and Taggles brightened. It was really interesting to watch his face.

"Have you any conscientious objection to receiving a two-shilling piece, Taggles?" asked Tom Merry seriously.

"No, sir! Not at all, Master Merry!"

"You are quite sure you will not look upon it in the light of bribery and corruption? I don't want to undermine the manly independence and self-respect of an honest and hard-working school porter. Well, here you are, then."

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said Taggles, as he stowed the label in one pocket, the florin in another, and took the trunk on his shoulders. "I think I can manage this all right, sir; and I'll see to the labelling, sir!"

"Good for you, Taggy! You have a kind heart, and I'll leave you something in my will!"

Taggles stumped out of the study, leaving the Terrible Three grinning. A buzz of voices greeted the school porter in the passage, and Tom Merry and his chums followed him to lend him any assistance he might need—and they found he needed it.

CHAPTER 4.

Luggage in Advance!

THE week-end idea was considered a particularly ripping one by the juniors who were fortunate enough to have permission to leave St. Jim's on Friday evening, and to stay away till Monday morning.

But the juniors who did not have permission to do so did not look upon it in the same light. Most of them would have liked a similar little run; but, at the same time, they only said that the week-enders were lucky beggars, and hoped that they would have a good time.

But there were some who were annoyed and envious. Gore, the cad of the Shell, was furious on the subject. He hinted pretty broadly at favouritism, and he found several sympathetic hearers.

"Lot of good it would be for me to ask for a week-end," he said to Mellish. "Eh? Or, for you either!"

"That's what I think," said Mellish. "Fancy those kids in Study No. 6 getting a week-end off, and then Tom Merry. And only the other day they were allowed to go to Liverpool! I call it rotten!"

"Beasty!" said Crake. "It's all very well to say they're the top pupils, and work hard to make up for lost time. We'd all work hard if we could have extra holidays!"

"Of course we would," said Gore, who knew perfectly well that he wouldn't do anything of the sort. "It's rank favouritism!"

"Rats!" said Bernard Glyn cheerily. "You know you wouldn't work hard, Gore. If you would, you're old enough to be in the Fifth. You chaps are a set of silly, cavilling asses!"

And the Liverpool lad strode off, leaving Gore & Co. scowling. As Glyn was not going off for the week-end his opinion might be taken as a disinterested one. But it did not gratify the grumblers.

"I'm jolly well not going to take it lying down!" said Gore. "We ought to make a demonstration of some sort—something to show how our feeling runs on the subject. They're going by the six o'clock train from Rylcombe, and I hear that Merry is sending his luggage in advance. By Jove, and here it comes!"

Taggles was coming along the passage with the huge trunk on his shoulder. It was about as much as Taggles could manage comfortably, and he looked a little alarmed as the discontented juniors gathered round him.

"Let's help him," said Gore, with a wink to the others.

"That's pretty heavy, isn't it, Taggles?"

"You let it alone, Master Gore—"

"Lend a hand, Mellish!"

"Certainly!"

"Oh! Ow! You've done it now!"

Taggles staggered, and the trunk came to the floor with a crash.

Gore & Co. burst into a roar of laughter.

"Taggles, you are clumsy!"

"You pushed it over!" shrieked Taggles. "I'll—"

"Never mind; we'll get it downstairs for you!"

"I say," began Mellish uneasily, "pushing the trunk downstairs might mean smashing it open, and that might mean trouble."

But Gore was reckless.

"Lend a hand here! All together!"

The trunk, which was on castors, went shrieking along the linoleum under the pushing of a dozen hands. Taggles followed, protesting and threatening.

"Hold on, deah boys! What evah are you doin' with that trunk?"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice. He came out of Study No. 6, attracted by the uproar in the passage. The trunk was travelling along at a great rate, leaving deep scars in the linoleum from the castors.

"Get out of the way!" shouted Gore.

"Wats! That's my trunk!"

"You'll go over, then!"

The big trunk came rushing on, and D'Arcy caught it with his knees. He sprawled forward over the trunk, and clung to it wildly as it was rushed on towards the stairs. It was a free ride, but the swell of the School House did not seem to be enjoying it.

"Help! Bai Jove! Wescue!"

"Hold on!" shouted Tom Merry, racing along the passage with Manners and Lowther at his heels.

"Rats! We're helping Taggles to take the trunk down."

"Wescue, deah boys!"

Tom Merry caught Gore by the collar and swung him away. Lowther and Manners hit out right and left, and they cleared the passage in a surprisingly short time. There was wild confusion for a few moments, and yells and struggles and trampling of feet, and then the enemy fled.

The Terrible Three, dusty and a little dishevelled, but victorious over long odds, remained masters of the field of battle. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasped for breath, and tried to put his collar straight.

"Bai Jove! This has thown me into quite a fluttah, deah boys! The young wascals were goin' to chuck the twunk downstairs!"

"Rotters!" gasped Tom Merry. "You'd better have let us help you, Taggy. Come on, kids, we'll watch the trunk as far as the carrier's cart."

"Yaas, wathah! I'd come with you, deah boys, but I weally think I had bettah go and change my collah."

Taggles shouldered the trunk again, and carried it down, and marched out into the quad, and the dusty chums of the Shell followed him as a sort of guard of honour.

The big trunk attracted a considerable amount of notice in the quad. Three youths in flannels came over to look at it from the direction of the New House. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, and Figgins had a bat under his arm.

"Hallo!" said Figgins affably. "Sending away the family washing?"

"Oh, just going for a week-end!" said Tom Merry airily. "Sending the luggage on, you know."

"More week-enders!" said Kerr. "I hear Gussy & Co. are going. Where are you chaps off to?"

"We'll send you a picture-postcard to tell you," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry you Fourth Form kids can't get off!"

Figgins & Co. chuckled. The trunk and its guardians passed on, and it was duly labelled.

Meanwhile, Figgins & Co. were chatting and chuckling. Tom Merry's remark seemed to have furnished them with food for amusement.

"Curious how these School House kids never see things," Figgins remarked. "It hasn't occurred to them that other chaps may be going on week-end trips."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be a surprise for our kind host when we arrive at his house."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say," said Fatty Wynn anxiously, "it's all very well to arrange a surprise for a chap, Figgy, but there's one thing you haven't considered."

"What's that, Fatty?"

"Why, about the grub. When you take a chap by surprise, you have to take pot-luck. I don't mind roughing it, of course—a chap ought to be prepared to rough it always; but when it comes to going short of grub—"

"My dear Falstaff, you'll find the grub all right."

"Well, I'll take your word for it, Figgy; but, mind, you'll be responsible if there's any difficulty about supper!" said Fatty Wynn impressively.

"Don't worry, Fatty! If we run short of grub I'll do some cooking myself. You know how I can cook!"

"Yes, I do," said Fatty Wynn, not very enthusiastically.

"Oh, come!" said Figgins warmly. "You jolly well remember how I cooked a fig pudding—the time grub was short in the New House!"

Fatty Wynn involuntarily pressed his hand to the third button of his waistcoat, as if he felt a reminiscence of a pain there.

"Yes, I do remember, Figgy, and I make it a stipulation that if we run short of grub this week-end you don't cook any fig puddings!"

"Look here, Fatty Wynn—"

"I don't want to be unpleasant, Figgy, but I must say plainly that I bar your fig puddings," said Fatty Wynn firmly. "I wouldn't feed Herries' bulldog on your fig puddings. I wouldn't give 'em to young Wally's Pongo."

"Peace," said Kerr, interposing between his two chums, who were both growing rather excited, as they always did when that subject came up. "There won't be any shortage of grub, and Figgy won't have to do any cooking. Let's go and get our things packed, as we've got to catch a train to-night."

"Yes; but if Wynn says—"

"If Figgy says—"

"Oh, ring off, both of you. What's the good of ragging when we've got the best jape of the season on hand?" demanded Kerr.

And Figgins & Co. went off towards the New House, and were soon busily packing three bags for the week-end.

Tom Merry and his chums came back after seeing the big trunk off and looked in at Study No. 6. The chums of the Fourth had finished packing their bags, and were enjoying a well-earned rest and a substantial tea. Jack Blake was looking very satisfied with himself, and things generally, and he gave Tom Merry a genial nod.

"It's all right!" he announced.

"What's all right?"

"About Railton."

"What about him?"

"Oh, of course, you don't know! D'Arcy's noble governor insisted upon a master being in the party, and we asked Railton. We considered him the most deserving case. He's just let us know that he can come. Somebody is going to take the Sixth for him to-morrow morning, and he's coming to Eastwood with us for the week-end. Ripping, isn't it?"

"I wegard it as weally wippin'," said D'Arcy. "Wailton is a decent chap, and won't be a dwag on us."

"Oh, is Railton going?"

"Yes. You seem to be put out," said Blake, looking at Tom Merry. "Blessed if I see how it matters to you."

"Oh, it doesn't, of course!"

The Terrible Three went on their way, and the Fourth-Formers discussed their tea. Blake looked a little puzzled.

"I don't quite catch on," he remarked. "It looks to me as if those Shellfish had something up their sleeves. I wonder if they were thinking of any jape to work off on us, and Railton's presence has spoiled it?"

"Bai Jove! I wegard it as extremly pwob. I weally think we shall have a wippin' week-end, deah boys," went on Arthur Augustus. "The weathah is perfect, and my governah will have had all awwagements made for our weception at Eastwood. I am half-sowry that young Wally is not comin', but, aftah all, he nevah tweats me with the vespect due to an eldah bwothah."

"We didn't settle about the dog biscuits," said Herries, looking up from his egg.

"That's all wight, deah boy. There are ewevy vaviety of dog biscuits there, and Towshah will be perfectly comfy in the kennels."

"H'm! I don't know about leaving him in the kennels. Couldn't he come into the house?"

D'Arcy smiled a sickly smile.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy. Anythin' you like!"

"Boosh!" said Blake. "You're not going to palm off that beast on us like that, Herries. You'll be wanting to bring your cornet next."

"I could give you a tune in the train going down."

"Anybody causing wilful damage on the line is liable to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds," said Blake. "You'd better leave your cornet here. I suppose your noble governor has given them a hint at Eastwood about the grub, Gussy?"

"That will be all wight, deah boy. I weally don't know who is in charge there now, as the butlah is in London with my governah, but—"

"By Jove, that's a pity! I shall miss his whiskers."

"I don't know," remarked Digby. "Lord Eastwood's butler is a little bit overpowering. I believe he keeps the noble earl in his place rather strictly, and he doesn't like boys, either."

"Yaas, upon the whole, I am not sowry the butlah is away, deah boys. We shall be much more comfy without that imposin' person." D'Arcy looked at his watch. "I wathah think it's a time we called for Mr. Wailton, deah boys. Which of you is goin' to cawwy my bag?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"It is not a conundrum, Blake. I shall have my cane, and a coat on my arm, and I weally do not see how I am to cawwy a bag."

"Leave it there, and whistle it to follow," suggested Digby. "That's the only way to get it along, if you don't carry it."

And Blake, Herries, and Digby picked up their bags and left the study. D'Arcy hesitated a moment, and then he picked up his own and followed.

CHAPTER 5.

Wally Wants a Week-End!

"WALLY!"

"Wally!"

"Where's that kid, Wally?"

Jameson and Gibson of the Third Form were looking for D'Arcy minor, more familiarly known in the Form as Wally. Some of the Third-Formers, indeed, called him by his full name, Walter Adolphus, but that was only when—in Wally's own phraseology—they were looking for a thick ear.

Wally was generally very much in evidence, but just now he failed to answer to his name. Up and down the passages went his chums of the Third, looking for Wally, and calling his name in vain.

"Why, there he is!" exclaimed Jameson suddenly and indignantly.

And he pointed to a form standing by the window at the end of the corridor.

"The—the young bounder!" said Gibson. "He must have heard us all the time."

"What's the matter with him?" said Jameson in surprise. "Look at him!"

Wally did not turn his head at their footsteps.

He was standing with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, in an attitude of the most intense reflection. They came closer to him, and they stared at him, but he did not come out of his brown study. Jameson gave him a dig in the ribs that sent him gasping against the wall, and then he woke up to his surroundings.

"Hallo! What—how—"

"We've been calling you," said Jameson, deeply aggrieved. "You must have heard us."

"I thought I heard a row!" said Wally. "It might have been you calling, or Taggles at work with that creaky old lawn-mower. I was thinking. Have you seen Selby?"

"Our respected Form master is in his study, and he can stay there for me," said Jameson. "I don't want to see him again. He's more crabby than ever this afternoon."

"Just my luck!"

"What do you mean? What do you want to see him for?"

"To ask leave for a week-end!"

Jameson whistled.

"Bosh! He's more likely to give you a licking! Talk about boarding the giddy lion in his den—why, that would be a gentle jape compared with asking Selby for a week-end now!"

"Still, it's only paying him a compliment to ask him before I go!" Wally remarked thoughtfully. "You see, my go-onah's not at Eastwood, and my brother Gus will very likely get into some bother if I'm not there to look after him. Then the butler's away, too, so Gus will be quite on his own. I put it to you—can I leave him in the lurch like that?"

Jameson and Gibson grinned. They knew exactly how much concern Wally felt for his brother.

"Upon the whole, I'm going; besides, I told you chaps I'd take you on a little run. You'd like a week-end at Eastwood, I suppose?"

"What do you think?" said Jameson emphatically. "But—"

"I've been thinking it out. Selby will have to give us permission; if he doesn't, we shall bolt!"

"But it can't be did! There's Raitlin in the party. What do you think he would say if we joined them, and—"

"No shan't join them. I'm going to turn up at Eastwood. Wait here for me while I go and speak to the Selby merchant!"

"Better think over it—" began Jameson.

But Wally was gone. When D'Arcy minor got an idea into his head he could be quite as determined as his brother Gus.

He tapped at Mr. Selby's door, and Mr. Selby's voice bade him enter, in a tone that would have discouraged everybody but D'Arcy minor. He entered, and the Third Form master looked him over, taking in every detail of his appearance, from his untidy mop of hair to his loose-laced boots and ink fingers.

"Well, D'Arcy minor, have you come to show me exactly how much untidiness a boy in my Form can exhibit at a given moment?" asked Mr. Selby, who had a sarcastic tongue, and generally let it go when he was talking to Wally.

"No, sir," said Wally meekly. "I came to ask permission to go home for the week-end, sir—to Eastwood."

"What?"

"My brother Gus has gone, sir, and I thought you might allow me to go, too."

"And you think you are sufficiently advanced with your lessons to be allowed to miss morning school to-morrow?" said Mr. Selby.

"I hope so, sir!"

"Well, your hope is entirely unfounded. I shall certainly not permit anything of the sort. You may leave my study, D'Arcy minor!"

"If you please, sir—"

"You may go!"

D'Arcy minor did not seem in a hurry to go. He was standing close to the open door, and his right hand was groping behind him, unseen by the Third Form master. Mr. Selby would probably have had something like a fit if he had known that Wally was extracting the key from his lock, but he did not know it.

"Well, D'Arcy minor, what are you waiting for?" snapped Mr. Selby.

"I should awfully like to go to Eastwood, sir, for the week-end—"

"Leave my study at once!"

The key was now in Wally's possession, and he retreated

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from the study and closed the door after him. In doing so, he slipped the key into the lock on the outside without the sound of it being noticeable.

Then, with a grin upon his smudgy face, he hurried back to Jameson and Gibson. They met him with a monosyllabic interrogation:

"Well?"

Wally shook his head.

"He won't give me leave."

"I told you he wouldn't!"

"Never mind what you told me, Jim! Look here!"

Selby's key is in the outside of the lock on his door—"

"How on earth did it get there?"

"Never mind! Go and lock the door—"

"Lock the door?"

"Yes; and bring the key away, and don't make a sound to alarm the Selby-bird!"

"But—but—"

"Do as I tell you, ass!"

Jameson made no further demur. He went along quietly to the Form master's study, and having ascertained that no one was in sight, he silently turned the key in the lock, and then abstracted it. He rejoined Wally, who signed to him to put the key in his pocket.

"Take that key away, and hide it somewhere," he said.

"Mind you don't let me know where you put it."

"Why not?"

"Because I shall most likely be questioned about it, ass!"

"Oh, I see!" said Jameson, with a grin.

A little later the three fags strolled out into the quadrangle. When their Form master wanted to leave his study there was likely to be a disturbance, and they did not wish to be upon the spot first. Wally knew the value of an alibi as well as the famous Sam Weller's parent.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wally. "Where are those Fourth Form bounders off to?"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were going down to the gates from the New House. Each of them carried a bag and a coat on his arm. The fags cut across to intercept them.

The Third were supposed to be a little in awe of the Fourth, but Wally was never known to be in awe of anybody or anything.

"Where are you off to, Figgy?" he asked cheerfully.

Figgins frowned.

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions," he replied.

"Oh, come off!" said D'Arcy minor. "Are you all week-ending now? I'll be bound your Housemaster hasn't given you leave! We know Ratty!"

"That's where you're wrong!" said Figgins. "Our Housemaster has been on a new tack lately, and has developed a good temper that has lasted nearly a week. He has given us permission, and we're off for the week-end!"

"Where are you off to?"

"Oh, we're going to the country!" said Figgins.

And then, for some reasons, the New House trio laughed.

Wally looked a little puzzled as he watched them go out of the gate. Instead of going down to the village, they clambered over a fence, and took a short cut towards the wood. Wally wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"They're taking a short cut to Wayland," he said. "They're going to catch the same train as Blake will catch—the six o'clock local from Rylcombe. Looks to me as if they had something on."

"There's something on in the School House," grinned Jameson. "Hark!"

From the School House came a distant sound of knocking. It must have been pretty loud on the spot for them to hear it at such a distance.

Wally chuckled joyously.

"It's the Selby-bird beating his little wings against the bars of his giddy cage!" he remarked. "Come on!"

And the three fags—two of them with some inward trepidation—returned to the School House.

CHAPTER 6.

Wally Makes Terms!

WALLY tapped at the door of the study. Mr. Selby seemed to be too enraged to know what he was doing, for he banged away with the tongue on the thick oak, though it was no longer necessary to announce the fact that he was shut up in his study.

The fact was known by this time all over the School House.

"Who is it? Can you open the door?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I can't pick locks," said Wally. "But—but—"

"Is that you, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where the key of my door is?"

"No, sir," said D'Arcy minor, with perfect and praiseworthy truthfulness. He hadn't the faintest idea where Jameson had hidden it.

"Ah! Do you think you could find it, D'Arcy minor?"

"I will try, sir, if you like."

"I think it very probable, D'Arcy minor, that you could find the perpetrator of this outrage, if you chose," said Mr. Selby thickly. "However, if you can find the key, I will promise to ask no questions."

"Yes, sir. It's a beautiful evening, sir, and I could go out to cricket practice, sir; but I'd rather try to be of service to you, sir. If I find the key, would you be kind enough to grant me a little favour, sir?"

"What do you want?"

"Well, sir, I wanted to go away for the week-end—"

"D'Arcy! I—I—"

"If you'd let me leave this evening, sir, and return on

"D'Arcy minor, if you bring the key here I will promise you to ask no questions on the subject. That is all!"

"Can't I have the week-end, sir?"

"Certainly not!"

"Very well, sir. I'll look for the key; but, of course, as I don't know where it is, I haven't much hope of its turning up."

And Wally made as if to retire.

Mr. Selby heard him moving away, and called him hastily back.

"D'Arcy minor! On second thoughts, I think you—you deserve some reward for finding the key, and—and if you find it and open the door, you shall have the week-end."



The square of window showed glimmeringly in the dark and the glimmer of it was interrupted by the shape of a man's head. Wally's heart beat hard. "Quiet!" he whispered. The window was slowly opening from outside!

Monday morning with my brother, I should take it as a great favour, sir."

"I—I—I—"

"And if you could give me leave to take Jameson and Gibson with me, sir, I should be awfully obliged."

There was a pause.

Mr. Selby, on his side of the door, was murmuring things that did not penetrate the thick oak.

He was in a cleft stick, and he knew it. He was pretty certain that D'Arcy minor could find the key if he chose. But if he did not choose, the Form master was a prisoner for hours—perhaps for the night—unless he adopted the uncomfortable, undignified, and perhaps perilous course, of descending from his window by means of a rope or a ladder. Mr. Selby had no desire to make an exhibition of himself in the quadrangle to a swarm of grinning boys. But the only alternative was to make terms with Wally.

"Thank you, sir! And Jameson and Gibson, too?"

"Yes," said Mr. Selby, with an effort, "and Jameson and Gibson, too. Pray find the key as quickly as you can."

"Certainly, sir! Thank you so much, sir! You are very kind!"

"Make haste with the key."

"I'll do my best, sir."

And Wally hurried off with his chums. They stopped at the other end of the passage to double up with laughter.

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally. "Isn't it great?"

"Immense!" said Jameson, wiping the tears from his eyes. "Fancy making the Selby-merchant climb down in this style! It's great—enormous!"

"Stupenjious!" grinned Curly Gibson.

"We must find the key now. No good finding it too soon, however, or he'll get suspicious."

"I think he's jolly suspicious now, if you ask me."

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"We needn't give him anything to go upon, though. Besides, he's a bad-tempered person, and it will do him good to cool his heels for an hour or two. We've lost the six train now, and we've got to pack, you know, so there's no hurry."

And the three young scamps walked coolly away to their own quarters and proceeded to pack. The hammering within the Third Form master's study had ceased. Mr. Selby felt pretty certain that D'Arcy minor would succeed in finding the key, and he had composed himself as well as he could to wait. And the crowd in the passage dispersed, it being recognised that the fun was over.

In half an hour Mr. Selby, losing patience, was knocking at the door again. Then Wally looked for the key, and—with the assistance of Jameson—found it under a desk in the Third Form Room.

He hurried to Mr. Selby's study with the key, and the Third Form master, hearing him coming, ceased to knock. Wally tapped at the door.

"It's all right, sir! I've found a key, and I think it's the right one."

"Try it," said Mr. Selby in a choked voice.

"Yes, sir. Half a mo', sir!"

Wally slid the key into the lock. It turned quite easily, and Mr. Selby gave a gasp of relief as he heard the click. He tore the door open, and looked down thunderously upon the innocent face of D'Arcy minor.

Mr. Selby would have liked to say things to the junior—things hot and strong—but he had passed his word, and he could hardly go back on it.

"It's all right now, sir," said Wally cheerily. "I'm so glad I found the key, sir!"

"You may go, D'Arcy minor!"

"Thank you, sir!"

And Wally scuttled off. Mr. Selby went down in search of a belated tea, and the scamps of the Third Form hugged

themselves with glee over the success of the scheme. Wally borrowed a time-table from Darrell's study and looked out the trains.

"It's all right," he said. "We can walk to Wayland and take our time about it, and catch a train to Winchester. It's all right. I'll go and fetch Pongo, and you chaps can meet me at the gate."

"Going to take Pongo?" asked Jameson, with a curious inflexion in his voice.

"Of course. You don't think I'd go for a week-end without Pongo, do you?"

"Oh! I thought this was going to be a pleasure trip!"

D'Arcy minor glared at his chum.

"If you don't like Pongo's company, Jameson, you can stick here."

"I love it," said Jameson sweetly. "I'd rather travel with Pongo than with a—a—prince! I'm looking forward to travelling with Pongo. When I die you will find the word Pongo written on my heart—"

"Oh, don't be funny! You can leave that business to Lowther of the Shell."

Wally snorted and went off in search of his shaggy favourite. The fags jammed their bags shut, and fastened them somehow. From Jameson's bag a brightly coloured fragment gaily floated, which, on closer inspection, would have proved to be the leg of a pyjama garment. But the Third-Former did not mind little things like that. Jameson and Gibson carried three bags to the gates, where they met Wally.

Bow-wow! Gr-r-r-r-r!

That remark came from Pongo. He was highly delighted at being released from his chain, and he was very frisky, and he showed a playful desire to sample Jameson's trousers with his teeth. Jameson, who had a bag in each hand, skipped out of his way and yelled to Wally.

"Keep that beast away, D'Arcy minor!"

"Oh, fags!" said Wally. "He won't bite! It's only his fun!"

"Keep him off, I tell you, or I'll biff him with these bags!"

"Look here, young Jameson, don't be a pig! Pongo's entitled to one free bite, and he's never had it yet."

"I'll give him a free biff!" gasped Jameson. "I'll—I'll biff him into little pieces if you don't call him off!"

Wally gave him an ear-splitting whistle, and Pongo trotted to his heels. The three fags left the school gates and took the short cut to Wayland. Jameson offered Wally his bag, but Wally declined it.

Jameson breathed hard through his nose.

"Do you think I'm going to carry your beastly bag to Wayland?" he demanded. "Do you think I'm a beast of burden?"

"I know jolly well you're a beast of some sort," said Wally cheerfully. "A beast of burden is the nicest kind of beast, so I don't see why you should object to being a beast of burden. I'll carry the bag, if you like, but I shall have to let Pongo's chain go if I do."

"Never mind!" said Jameson hastily. "I don't mind carrying the bag."

And he carried it.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins & Co. Join the Party!

"B AI Jove! Here's Wayland, deah boys!"

The train stopped in the station. Blake, Herries, Dig, and D'Arcy had been chatting pleasantly enough with Mr. Railton during the short journey in the local train from Rycombe. Mr. Railton was very pleasant—more cheery and chatty than the juniors had ever known him before.

He seemed to have thrown off, with his school duties, his school manners, and he was no longer the grave House-master of the School House, but a good-natured, pleasant companion, who could chat with the boys about cricket and dogs and field sports as if he were one of themselves.

The minutes fled by rapidly, and the week-enders were surprised when Arthur Augustus announced that the train was stopping at Wayland Junction.

Blake threw open the door of the carriage, and lifted out the bags that were handed to him. He took Mr. Railton's bag last, and held it. It was the largest and the heaviest of the five, but Blake meant to carry it. As he remarked to Digby, they didn't have a Housemaster under their wing every time they went a journey, and it would only be form to make much of Railton.

Herries was hurrying along to the guard's van for Towser. Mr. Railton looked round for his bag, and signed to Blake to hand it to him.

"I'm going to carry it, sir," said Jack Blake.

The Housemaster laughed.

"Nonsense! It's too heavy for you."

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"That's all right, sir. Please let me have it. D'Arcy will carry mine."

Arthur Augustus looked rather straight. He quite approved of Blake's carrying the Housemaster's bag, but he had expected Blake's bag to be passed on to Herries or Dig. Mr. Railton smilingly yielded the point, and Blake retained possession of the bag. There wasn't much carrying to be done just then, as there was only a platform to cross to reach the express. The latter train was already coming into the station.

"Here's the express, deah boys! Bai Jove, what's that wubbin' against my legs?"

"It's all right," said Herries. "It's only Towser's nose."

Arthur Augustus jumped clear of the platform.

"Ow! Keep that beast away!"

"He's all right. He likes to rub his nose on anything soft—"

"Then he's started at the wrong end of Gussy," said Blake. "Sit down, Gussy, and let him get at your head."

"I wogard that as a wotten remark, Blake. Keep that feahful beast away, Hewwies, or I shall kick him!"

"I wouldn't give much for your leg afterwards," said Herries.

"Wats! I am not afwaid of a dog, but that beast has no respect for a fellow's twousahs. Ewvery decent dog respects a fellow's twousahs."

"Here's the train!"

The express stopped, and Mr. Railton opened a carriage door. The juniors tumbled in, and the bags were piled on the rack.

"Bai Jove! I think we shall have this cawwiage to ourselves!" said D'Arcy. "That will be all wight, deah boys!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hallo! What's that?"

It was a shout from the platform.

"Urry up, there!"

D'Arcy looked out of the window. Three youths were racing along the platform, and he recognised Figgins & Co. at a glance.

Each had a strapped travelling-bag in his hand, and each evidently meant to catch the express. Figgins was first, his long legs covering the ground like lightning, and then came Kerr, and finally Fatty Wynn, perspiring freely.

Figgins caught sight of D'Arcy looking out, and grinned. He caught the handle of the door and swung it open, and the School House well started back.

"Bai Jove!"

"Here we are!" gasped Figgins. "Come on, kids!"

He scrambled into the carriage, throwing his bag in first. The bag plumped upon the knees of the astonished Mr. Railton.

But Figgins was in too great a hurry to notice that there was a master in the carriage. He leaned out and bawled to the Co:

"Buck up, there! Put it on, Fatty!"

"Urry up, there!" shrieked the guard. "Stand clear!"

"That's all right, old boy! We're not going to lose the express."

Kerr clambered in. Fatty Wynn put on a spurt to reach the open carriage door. His jacket was flying open, and in his haste all sorts of things were dropping out of the pocket. He left a trail of bananas and apples and sandwiches behind him on the platform.

He reached the door just at the same time as the guard. Figgins grasped the fat junior's shoulder to help him in, and he just escaped the indignant clutch of the guard, who slammed the door viciously after him and waved his flag.

The train started.

Figgins sank gasping into a seat. The seat was already occupied by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Figgins plumped heavily on his knees. There was a bowl from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ow! Gewwoff, you wottah! You're ewmuplin' my twousahs!"

"Sorry!" gasped Figgins, without moving. "That was a close shave but we've caught the express!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr. "We—"

He broke off and stared as his eyes fell upon Mr. Railton.

"I've lost a lot of grub," said Fatty Wynn. "Looks to me now as if we shall very likely get hungry before we get to D'Arcy's place."

"My place!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Figgins. "We— Oh, is that Mr. Railton?"

"Yes; it is Mr. Railton," said the School Housemaster quietly. "Will you explain what this means, Figgins?"

"My—my hat! Are you with these bounders—I mean these chaps, sir?"

(Continued on the next page.)



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Old Lady: "I suppose you sailors are very careful at sea?"

Sailor: "Oh, no, mam! We try to be as wrockles as possible!"

NORMAN PATTISON, 9, Roe Lane, Southport, Lancs.

NOT AS ADVERTISED.

Tommy: "Mummy, that dentist wasn't really painless, as it said in his window."

Mother: "Did he hurt you, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Oh, no, mummy, but he yelled like any other dentist when I bit his finger!"

ALFRED MORRISON, Mill Lane Lodge, Stanley Park, Anfield, Liverpool.

KNOT RIGHT!

Man (being shown round carpenter's shop): "What are these holes in this plank?"

Carpenter: "They are knot holes."

Man (angrily): "They are holes! Do you think I don't know a hole when I see one?"

ROLAND SEAGER, 10, Oxford Street, St. Philips, Bristol.

SO QUIET!

Clerk: "How did you get on with the boss about a rise?"

Office Boy: "Oh, he was like a lamb."

Clerk: "What did he say?"

Office Boy: "Baa!"

OLIVER WELLS, Lathom Park Nurseries, near Ormskirk, Lancs.

IT HURT!

Small Boy (taking shoe into cobbler's shop): "Please will you take this nail out of mother's shoe?"

Cobbler: "Does it hurt her?"

Small Boy: "No, but it hurts me. This is the shoe she spanks me with!"

W. F. DOLMAN, 52, Lucas Road, Highfields, Chesterfield.

HOW CHILDISH!

Old Lady (reading newspaper): "Well, there now, I never knew firemen were so childish. Why, it says here that after the fire had been got under control the firemen played on the ruins for hours!"

E. JUMP, 15, Welbeck Street, C.-on-M., Manchester, 15.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

"Certainly!"

"I—I didn't know that, sir! My hat!"

"Have you leave to be here, Figgins?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Our Housemaster has given us leave for the week-end!"

"Indeed! And where are you going?"

Figgins hesitated.

The School House juniors were looking at him curiously. They had a glimmering of the truth, and they could not help grinning—except D'Arcy. He was thinking of the knees of his trousers, upon which Figgins was still sitting.

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Figgins.

"Pway excuse me for intewwuptin' you," said Arthur Augustus, with elaborate irony, "but you are wuinin' my twousahs, Figgins."

"Oh, blow your trousers!"

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort—I mean—"

"Ring off, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "Let's hear what Figgins has to say for himself."

"I wufuse to wing off! Figgins is spoilin' my twousahs, and if he does not immediately wemove himself I shall stwike him!"

Figgins chuckled, and rose from his seat on D'Arcy's knees. D'Arcy anxiously smoothed out the creases and wrinkles in the hitherto immaculate "bags."

"You see, sir," said Figgins, a little haltingly—he had not expected to have to explain himself to a Housemaster—"you see, sir, we heard that these young 'uns were going for a week-end to Eastwood, and we thought they might get into mischief. You know what D'Arcy is, sir!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"So we thought we ought to come and look after them, sir," said Figgins. "We're going to Eastwood for the week-end."

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Railton could not help laughing.

"Without the formality of an invitation?" he asked.

"Well, sir, we don't stand on ceremony with an old friend like Gus. You can always rely on Gus to play up like a little man," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! I wogard this as feahful cheek on the part of these New House boundahs; but, at the same time, I shall be vewy pleased to welcome them to Eastwood for the week-end," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "The only thing I object to is Figgins sittin' on my knees and wumplin' my twousahs."

"It's all right, Figgy!" said Blake, in his hearty way.

"It's a pleasant surprise, and we're all jolly glad to have you!"

"Good!" said Figgins. "Of course, we shall make ourselves useful. I am going to look after Gussy!"

"You are goin' to do nothin' of the sort, Figgins!"

"And I hear that Lord Eastwood's butler is away with his lordship. I should be perfectly willing to buttle in his place, if necessary."

"Weally, Figgins, I could not allow you to undahtake the duties of a butlah, even if you were capable of doin' so—which I strongly doubt. Besides, although the butlah is away, there is a substitute in his place—a vewy weliahle person named Jelf—so I heah fwom my governah. I have not seen him, but I think he must be a vewy decent and respectahle man, because my young bwothah Wally cannot stand him. If Mr. Wailton does not object, I shall be delighted to welcome you wettahs to Eastwood."

"Of course, I shall be pleased," said Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"Then it is settled, deah boy!"

"Thanks, awfully!" said Figgins affably. "You can rely on us to make ourselves at home, Gus, and to see that we want for nothing."

"Yes, rather!" said the Co. heartily.

Mr. Railton and the juniors of St. Jim's chatted merrily as the express raced on its way. Then Herries, looking out of the window, announced:

"Winchester!"

"Bai Jove! What a wemakably short journey! We change here, deah boys!"

The party changed into the local train, and in a very short time reached Easthorpe, the station for D'Arcy's home. A car was in waiting, which conveyed them speedily to Eastwood House. As they entered the hall, Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass, and looked at a slim, dark-skinned man who was bowing to him as if he were worked by machinery.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, with his eyeglass fixed on the stranger, who, in garments and manners, looked like a less plump addition of Lord Eastwood's imposing butler. "Bai Jove! Whom may you happen to be?"

"His lordship will have informed you, sir, that, owing to the absence of—"

"Oh, I see! You are Mr. Jelf?"

"Yes, sir; and very happy to welcome—"

"Exactly, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm vewy pleased to make your acquaintance, Jelf. I suppose the wooms are all weady?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Mr. Jelf. "I had his lordship's instructions rather suddenly, sir, but everything was prepared at once, sir. It was very sudden, sir." And there was a curious glint in Mr. Jelf's light eyes that made Blake, who was watching him, think that this sudden week-end visit wasn't wholly acceptable to the butler's substitute at Eastwood House. Perhaps he had planned a little week-end for himself. "Everything is ready, and the supper—"

"Yaas, wathah; that's an important point. I am feahfully hungwy, Jelf!"

"Everything is prepared, sir. Your friends have not yet arrived—"

"Yaas, they are heah with me."

"But the others, sir, whose trunk came some time back."

"I was not expectin' any other visitahs, Jelf."

Mr. Jelf looked surprised.

"But the trunk has come, sir—luggage in advance!"

"Eh? I don't quite compwehend!"

"The trunk has been taken upstairs, sir."

"I will see to it. Pway come this way, Mr. Wailton, and I will show you your quartahs. You chaps know where to go—same quartahs, and you can look aftah yourselves."

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Blake. "We're not going to stand upon ceremony, I assure you. This way, kids!"

Mr. Jelf proceeded upstairs. The bed-rooms occupied by the fellows of St. Jim's when they came to see D'Arcy all opened off a wide passage. In the passage a huge trunk was standing, where it had been set down, and Arthur Augustus uttered an exclamation of surprise at the sight of it.

Potts, the Office Boy!



"Is that the twink, Jelf?"
 "That is it, sir."
 "My hat!" howled Blake. "That's the trunk Tom Merry borrowed from Gussy!"
 "My word!" said Digby.
 "Arthur Augustus looked surprised."
 "This is wathah mystewious," he said. "Tom Mewwy howwowed my twink to go away for the week-end, and now I find it here! This is vewy we-markable!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I fail to see the cause for your mewwiment, Figgins!"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Don't you see? Tom Merry didn't tell you where he was going to spend his week-end, did he?"
 "No; he kept that a secwet for some weason."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "He's going to spend it here!"
 "Here?" ejaculated D'Arcy, in amazement.
 "Yes. Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove, you know, I wegard that as wathah funnay! You had bettah make pweparations for three more wottahs—I mean, three more fwiends of mine, Jelf, deah boy."
 "Yes, sir," said Jelf.
 And Arthur Augustus piloted the amused Mr. Railton to his room. Herries, of course, had gone to look after the disposal of his bulldog, and the other juniors, as they had promised, looked after themselves and made themselves at home.

CHAPTER 8

Tom Merry Arrives!

MR. JELF, whether he was pleased or not by the arrival of the week-enders, had certainly made excellent preparations for them.

The supper was superb, and a big fire roared in the wide, old-fashioned room where it was laid. The aspect of the room, with the firelight gleaming on the oak panelling and the shining crockery and silver, was very genial. And Arthur Augustus welcomed his guests there with the air of a prince.

It was a merry party that sat down to supper.

And what a supper!

Dinners at St. Jim's, though substantial enough, were nothing to it.

And, besides the more solid portion of the meal, there were pastries of all sorts—the work of the cook at Eastwood, who was pleased by the keen appreciation the St. Jim's juniors had always shown for her handiwork.

The juniors were of an age that defies indigestion, and they did full justice to the excellent things prepared for them.

Mr. Railton, as D'Arcy observed with pleasure and relief, was keenly enjoying himself.

The swell of St. Jim's was usually pretty well assured of himself, but he had had some slight doubts as to his ability to entertain a Housemaster.

Mr. Railton was monarch of all he surveyed in the School House at St. Jim's, and the juniors trembled at his frown.

For one of those same juniors to be entertaining him as a guest was a novelty, and it was no wonder that even D'Arcy felt a little uneasy at first.

But Mr. Railton was easy to entertain.

He was cheery and chatty, and as genial and contented as could be wished; and the juniors, it need not be said, did not allow themselves to take any advantage of his geniality. He was as chummy as possible, but they were careful not to lose anything of the respect they owed him. Any undue familiarity would have spoiled the whole thing; but D'Arcy & Co. were not likely to err in taste to that extent.

The supper was more than half through when sounds of arrivals were heard without. Arthur Augustus had warned Mr. Jelf to be prepared for fresh arrivals. They had come now. The rattle of wheels on the drive told that the lack from Easthorpe was bringing the Terrible Three to the house.

D'Arcy laid down his knife and fork, with a smile.

"It's those wottahs!" he remarked.

Figgins looked up.

"We'll kick them out for you, if you like," he said.

"Of course, a chap going to a week-end party without an invitation is an unheard-of thing!"

"Absolutely!" said Kerr gravely.

"Impossible!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm surprised at Tom Merry!"

D'Arcy looked a little bewildered.

"But you fellows—" he began.

"We'll kick them out," said Figgins. "Rely on us! You've only got to give the word!"

"But I don't want them kicked out, deah boy! I am goin' to make them vewy welcome. I have given Jelf instructions to show them straight in."

"We'll show them straight out, if you like. They ought to be made an example of for their cheek!"

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "You'll be the death of me, Gussy!"

"Oh, so you were wotting, you wottah! I— Hallo! Here they are!"

The door was thrown open, and Mr. Jelf announced the new arrivals.

"Come in, deah boys!"

The Terrible Three entered.

They were ingratiating smiles upon their faces, and they bowed very respectfully to Mr. Railton, who regarded them with a smile.

"Good-evening, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "I hope we're not late. Of course, you were expecting us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hope our luggage has arrived safely," said Monty Lowther.

"Quite safely, deah boy."

"I see you've got supper ready," Manners remarked.

"Quite weady. Would you like to be shown to your quartsahs first to take your things off! Jelf, kindly show my fwiends to their quartsahs!"

"Yes, sir."

The Terrible Three went upstairs. They were feeling a little puzzled. D'Arcy was acting as if an unexpected arrival of week-enders was quite the ordinary thing. They were surprised, too, by the appearance of Figgins & Co. there.

"My hat!" said Lowther, as he towelled his face after plunging it into a basin of water. "My hat!"

THAT'S ODD!



"Eh? What? Are you talking to the towel?" asked Tom Merry.

Lowther removed the towel from his glowing face.

"My hat!" he said. "Figgins & Co. must have played the same game, and palmed themselves on Gussy for the week-end! Cheek!"

"Awful nerve!" grinned Manners.

"Yes, some chaps are cool," agreed Tom Merry, dragging a comb through his thick, curly hair. "I wonder if Cousin Ethel will be here to-morrow?"

"Oh, certain!" said Lowther. "Bound to come! Gussy looks very cheerful, considering how his party's been enlarged for him."

"Yes, doesn't he? Come on, or all the supper will be gone."

They descended.

Supper, hot and plentiful, was ready for them, and they wired in with a right good will.

"I didn't expect to see you here, Figgy," Tom Merry remarked, when he had taken the first keen edge off his appetite and had time to speak.

Figgins chuckled.

"And I didn't expect to see you," he replied.

"Some people have a lot of cheek," Lowther remarked casually.

"They have!" said Kerr, with emphasis.

"I am weally happy to welcome you all under my woof, or, more strictly speakin', undah my governah's woof!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy kind of you to come and spend a week-end with me."

"Well, we couldn't resist such a pressing invitation, you see," said Tom Merry, pausing over his chicken. "We simply had to come."

D'Arcy turned an inquiring monocle upon him.

"I—I do not comprehend—"

"You see, Blake," explained Tom Merry, "Gussy begged so hard that we had to put off several invitations to spend the week-end with dukes and earls, and came down here instead."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It was really pathetic to see Gussy," said Lowther.

"There were tears in his eyes."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Almost on his knees," said Manners. "Of course, under the circumstances, we had to come."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"But I'll tell you what, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "There seem to be some bounders here who have come without being invited, and if you like we'll chuck them out for you."

"With pleasure!" said Lowther.

"Quite so!" assented Manners.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"We were just making the same offer," chuckled Figgins. "The offer's still open, Gussy, if their faces worry you, or anything of that sort."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Gussy, you're a little man, and you're cook's another, and I'm jolly glad I accepted your pressing invitation. And—and if you like, I'll listen to you singing the 'Prize Song' from 'Die Meistersinger.'"

"I hope to give you some extensive selections from my wepertoire to-morrow evenin', Tom Mewwy. I twust you are gettin' on all wight, Wynn?"

"Yes, rather!" mumbled Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full of chicken. "Thanks!"

Fatty Wynn was having an exceedingly good time.

The hour was late when the boys had finished a substantial supper. They were tired and ready for bed.

Mr. Railton stayed up to smoke a pipe, while the juniors of St. Jim's went up to their sleeping quarters.

Mr. Jelf looked in half an hour later, and found Mr. Railton seated in an easy-chair before the fire, his pipe in his mouth, smoking, and apparently thinking. The Housemaster of St. Jim's looked round as Mr. Jelf coughed.

"Is there anything more I could do for you, sir?" said Mr. Jelf.

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"Nothing—thanks!"

Mr. Jelf retired, closing the door, and walked away with a silent tread that reminded one strangely of a cat.

Mr. Railton went on smoking. A quarter of an hour passed, and then Mr. Jelf looked in again.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Certainly not!"

"Ah—er—excuse me! I fancied you rang, sir."

Mr. Railton smiled slightly, and rose to his feet. He thought that Mr. Jelf was a dutiful servant who did not

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

wish to go to bed till the last of the guests had retired, and he took Mr. Jelf's return as a strong hint that it was time to go upstairs.

The Housemaster went to his room, and Mr. Jelf extinguished the lights. But he did not go to his own quarters. He remained in the lower hall for some minutes, apparently listening. He heard Mr. Railton's door close above, and remained listening for a minute or two longer. Then he quietly made his way to the back of the house, and let himself out into the grounds.



Wally let the tongs fall into the fender with a crash that rang like thunder on his sleep. "Bai Jove! What's that?" "Burglars!" roared W.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally & Co. Have to Walk!

"CHANGE for Easthorpe!"

Wally sat up and yawned.

"Hallo! We change here! Wake up, you kids!"

It was a late train, and the scamps of the Third were asleep in it when it rolled into Winchester. Wally shook Jameson and Gibson, taking both of their ears for that purpose, and effectually awakened them.

"Change here, you duffers! Do you want to go on to Southampton?"

SURPRISE IN NEXT WEDNESDAY'S RIPPING YARN: "THE COMING OF 'KANGAROO'!"

"Grooh!" said Jameson.

"Yaw-yaw-aw!" said Gibson.

"Pongo! Pongo! Where are you Pong?"

Pongo crawled out from under a seat, and blinked sleepily.

The three juniors tumbled out of the carriage, Wally carrying his shaggy pet in his arms.

"Here's the local!" he said. "Tumble in, and get to sleep again, for goodness' sake, before you yawn your heads off!"



under through the silence of the night. Arthur Augustus started from bed. "Bai Jove!" D'Arcy major skipped out of bed.

"I'm sleepy," said Gibson.

"You look it! Shall I chuck you in?"

They entered a carriage, Wally taking Pongo in with him. Jameson and Gibson dropped off to sleep as soon as they sat down, and Wally glared at them. He was harder himself, and could stand late travelling, or almost anything else, without turning a hair. He nursed Pongo, and Pongo went to sleep on his knees. Wally whistled to pass the time.

The fags of the Third had hoped to catch a train from Wayland at an earlier hour—the train, in fact, that Tom Merry and his chums had caught. They had missed it

by ten minutes or so, and had had to wait an hour for the next. That hour was spent in mutual recriminations. All three of them very earnestly investigating into the reasons why the train was lost, and whose fault it was. They were very nearly at blows when the time the next train was due.

However, the journey was nearing its end now.

It was a short run to Easthorpe, and not far from the village to the house. But as the train rattled on through the darkness, a thought occurred to Wally that made him leave off whistling.

He was not expected home, and so there would be no car at the station to meet him. The village hack would be gone home long ago, and there would be no vehicle to be had, unless he knocked up the Eastwood Arms and hired a trap. The alternative was to walk to Eastwood House.

The walk was little in itself. In the morning Wally would have walked it cheerfully, but at midnight, after a long and tiring journey, it was a different matter. Wally could have stood it without flinching, but he had strong doubts about Jameson and Gibson.

The train rattled into a dim country station. Wally shook his companions.

"Here you are!"

"Grooch!"

"Yaw!"

"Oh, get out! Here, fetch 'em, Pongo! Seize 'em, Pongo!"

"Gr-r-r-r! Bow-wow! Yap!"

"Keep that beast away!" yelled Jameson, jumping up.

"Yah! Keep him off!"

"Get out, then!"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"Rats! Get out!"

Jameson and Gibson bundled out, and Wally flung their bags after them, levelling Jameson with the platform. Then he jumped out with Pongo.

Jameson picked himself up, and glared at Wally. He was inclined to go for the hero of the Third on the spot, and it was not the consideration of what was due to his host that stopped him. Politeness was not carried to any wild excess in the Third Form at St. Jim's. But he was too sleepy to fight.

"Here we are!" said Wally. "I say, porter, is there anything on wheels to take me up to the House?"

The porter, who knew Lord Eastwood's hopeful youngest son well, scratched his head thoughtfully.

"I'm afeared there bean't, young master. The 'ack's gone 'omo!"

"I suppose you couldn't carry us, could you?" asked Wally, with such a perfectly grave face that the slow-witted porter took him quite seriously.

He shook his head.

"I'm afeared I couldn't, young master."

"You could take one under each arm, and one on your back, and the bags on your head, couldn't you?" said Wally persuasively.

"I'm afeared I couldn't do it, young master."

"Then we shall have to knock up the Arms for a trap," said Wally. "Come on, you kids, and do stop yawning! You're giving me an ache in the jaw!"

"I'll give you a worse ache in the jaw if we have to walk it," growled Jameson.

"Oh, shut up!"

They left the station. It was the last train in, and the place was already almost in darkness.

Outside the darkness was thick, and the silence complete. Wally looked round him and crossed the village street. He bumped a packed bag on the door of the Eastwood Arms.

"What are you making that row for?" demanded Jameson sleepily.

"This is where we get a trap."

"Oh! They're fast asleep."

"I'll jolly soon wake 'em! Yell, you beggars!"

They yelled. They bumped on the door and yelled and shouted. Pongo caught the infection, and yelled, too, barking at the top of his power, which was very considerable.

But the host of the Arms was a sound sleeper. It was a full five minutes before a window was heard to open above, and a night-capped head was put out into the dim starlight.

"Is that somebody there?"

"No," said Wally sarcastically; "the row is making itself. There isn't anybody here!"

"What do you want, a-disturbing an honest man at this time of night?"

"I wasn't disturbing an honest man. I was waking you up."

"Look here—"

"I want a trap, Jukes."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Jukes. "It's young Master Wally."

THE GEN LIBRARY,—No. 1,311,

I'm awfully sorry, young Master Wally, but you can't have a trap."

"Why not?" yelled Wally.

"The 'orse is loose in the fields, and bless you, it'd take an hour to catch him!" said Mr. Jukes. "And my man is gone to the village, and I'm that bad with lumbago—"

"Look here, I must have a trap!"

"You can have the trap if you like, Master Wally, but there ain't no 'orse."

D'Arcy minor danced with rage. Jameson and Gibson looked at him with fixed, accusing glares.

"This is what comes of missing trains!" said Jameson.

"Who missed a train?" yelled Wally, whose temper was rising.

"You did! You—"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, young Jameson, you're going the right way to work."

"Yah!"

"I'm jolly well—"

"This is a week-end, is it?" said Curly Gibson. "I'm enjoying myself—I don't think!"

"You can walk back if you like!" roared Wally.

"Yah!"

"I could put you up if you like, young gents," said Mr. Jukes from the window. "I've got beds—"

"That's not a bad idea," said Jameson. "Of course, Wally could pay the bill."

"Rats!" said Wally. "Do you think we're going to have those Fourth Form duffers and Shell rotters grinning at us to-morrow? They'll say we were afraid to walk in the dark. Bosh! We're not going to stay here. We'll leave the bags here and save carrying them, though."

"Put 'em in the porch, Master Wally."

"Come down and take 'em in!"

"They'll be quite safe in the porch," said Mr. Jukes, apparently not hearing what Wally said. "Good-night!"

"Come down, I tell you, and—"

The window closed, and Mr. Jukes did not hear any more of Wally's remarks. The youngest scion of the house of D'Arcy snorted wrathfully.

"The bags will be all right in the porch," he said. "They'll send them up in the morning. Come on!"

"Can't he come down and take them in?"

"Oh, rats! Come on!"

"What are we going to sleep in to-night?" demanded Gibson.

"Beds, I suppose, dunny!"

"My pyjamas are in that bag. I—"

"Take 'em out and tie 'em round your neck if you like, idiot!"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"Oh, shut up! Do you want to stay here jawing all night? We can get all the things we want from Gussy. We can raid his room once we get in. Do come on!"

Wally started down the road to Eastwood, and the others followed him, grumbling very audibly. It was a relief not to have to carry the bags, but they didn't like the walk. Wally whistled to Pongo, who came running round his heels. He took no notice of the growling of Jameson and Gibson.

They tramped on through the darkness, under the shadow of heavy trees.

Wally stopped suddenly at a low wall bounding the park towards the lane.

"Give us a bunk up," he said.

"What on earth—"

"It's a short cut through the park; we save a quarter of a mile."

"We shall lose ourselves there."

"Stuff! I know every inch of the place; I was brought up here!"

"It looks jolly dark!" said Gibson, hesitating.

"If you're afraid of the dark you can go round by the lanes. I'm going this way!" And Wally swung himself on the wall. "Give me up Pongo!"

"I'm not going to touch the beast!"

"I'll give you a thick ear if you don't!"

Jameson handed up the mongrel, who rewarded him by snapping at his hand, and Wally dropped with the dog to the inner side of the wall. Jameson and Gibson had no choice but to follow. In the wood the night was darker than ever, and faintly from afar came the chimes of midnight from the village.

Curly Gibson shivered as he looked round him in the black shadows.

"Ugh! What a horrible place!"

"Bosh! It's all right! Don't be a baby!"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"Shut up!"

Wally led the way, and they followed. They were careful to keep close to him, for without a guide they would certainly have lost their way in the trackless wood. It seemed a marvel that Wally knew which way to go. But he

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

had spent his earliest years in the woods at Eastwood, and he knew the ground on the darkest night. The vague, black, shadowy trees were well-known landmarks to Wally.

He led the way without a fault, and the juniors were soon treading a path through a thinner wood, where something of the dim starlight came filtering down through the foliage.

Suddenly Wally halted. He grasped his companions, one in each hand, by the shoulder, with such suddenness that they both gasped.

"Silence, you idiots!" whispered Wally fiercely.

"Wh-wh-what's the matter?"

"Didn't you hear it?"

"No. What?"

"That whistle! There it is again! 'Shh!'"

Through the wood a low whistle rang from the direction of the house. The three fags of St. Jim's were within sight now of the great facade of the mansion, if it had been lighted up. They could see nothing of it in the dark.

That strange low whistle sent a creepy thrill through the juniors.

It was evidently a signal made by one human being to another, and it showed they were not alone in the dark wood.

"Poachers!" whispered Jameson.

Wally nodded vaguely. He supposed it must be poachers, but it was strange. What could poachers be doing up so close to the house, in that part of the wood where there was no game, and had been no game for years? They were close upon the gardens, and the spot was the last imaginable one for a meeting place of poachers.

"Quiet!" he whispered.

They remained still, silent, with beating hearts. The first whistle had been a signal, answered by the second; and the second whistle was followed by a faint sound of footsteps coming from the direction of the house.

The juniors scarcely breathed.

A dark figure loomed up in the gloom, and passed so close to them as they crouched against the trees that Wally could have touched it by stretching out his hand.

It passed on, and disappeared into the black recesses of the wood.

CHAPTER 10.

In the Dead of Night!

WALLY & CO. were quite silent for some minutes, crouching there in the blackness with wildly beating hearts.

The figure had passed on, and was gone, and they had seen nothing of it save the black shadow flitting by for a second.

Who or what it was they could not guess.

But Wally was certain that the form was not clad in the rough garb a poacher would naturally have worn; he was almost certain that he had caught a glimpse of a white collar.

No sound came again from the wood. It was pretty certain that the man, whoever he was, had met his comrade, and no further signal was necessary.

Wally was the first to break the silence.

"Come on!" he whispered. "No good sticking here!"

"If you ever bring me on any short cuts again—" murmured Jameson.

"Rats! Get a move on!"

The wood was eerily silent. But for that whistle and the flitting shadow under the trees, the juniors would have believed themselves quite alone there. But they knew that two men—men on some ill errand—were lurking somewhere in the dim shadow of the trees.

"Quiet!" whispered Wally, as they moved. "They must be poachers, I suppose. Anyway, it wouldn't be healthy for us to run into them, I expect. Come on quietly! If you would leave off shaking and trembling, Curly, you'd make less noise!"

"I wasn't trembling!"

"Well, if that's a new thing in gymnastics, you can leave it till we get in. Come on, Pongo—come on, you beast!"

They came out of the trees, and hurried towards the house. After that thrilling moment in the wood, they were anxious enough to get indoors. Gibson's mind was full of pictures of shadowy forms and bludgeons, and Jameson looked very uneasy. Even Wally's nerve was a little shaken.

The house loomed up, dark and silent. Wally did not feel inclined to ring and knock up the inmates at that hour, and so he skirted the mansion, with the intention of finding some entrance for himself at the back. Jameson blundered into a shrubbery, and fell down, and the others had to stop and drag him out. Jameson rubbed himself ruefully and wrathfully in the gloom.

"Nice week-end, this!" murmured Gibson.

"Oh, come on! What's the matter with you, Jameson?"

"I'm hurt!"

"Bosh! Get a move on, for goodness' sake! I don't see

what you want to lie down in the shrubbery for, when you can be in bed in a few minutes, if you like it!"

The English language was not adequate to express what Jameson felt at that moment, so he remained silent. They passed on in the dark, Wally leading the way.

"Ain't you going to knock them up?" growled Gibson.

"Not at this time. One must have a certain amount of decency, you know. Noblesse oblige!"

"Oh, don't work your mouldy French on me! How are you going to get in?"

"Through a window!"

"Suppose there's a burglar alarm?"

"There isn't!"

"Well, you'll break your neck, I expect!"

"Well, if I break my neck, you can ring the bell, and save yours! Blessed if I know which window to tackle! Hallo!"

"What's up now?"

"This door is unfastened."

"Some careless ass!"

"Lucky for us! Come on!"

Wally opened the door. It gave upon a stone passage, which, as he knew, communicated with the butler's pantry.

The juniors went in, and Wally closed the door behind him. He imagined that it had been left unfastened by a careless servant, and so he was careful to fasten it after him.

"That's Jelf's work!" he growled. "I never liked that chap! The old butler would as soon have cut his head off as gone to bed and left a door unfastened. The fellow Jelf doesn't like dogs, which shows he's a beast, and I'm not surprised at his leaving a door open. Come on, Pongo!"

"I'm jolly hungry!" said Jameson.

"So am I! There's bound to be a lot of grub about, if you know where to look for it!" muttered Gibson.

Wally chuckled.

"I know where to look for it; I've been there before! Come on, and I'll see if I can rig up a fire in my room, and we'll get some supper up there, without waking any of the servants."

Gibson and Jameson brightened up a little. The walk in the fresh air had made them more wakeful, and they were terribly hungry. The prospect of a cheery fire in Wally's room and a substantial supper cheered them up wonderfully. But as Wally was leading the way, he suddenly stopped, breathing hard.

"Hark!"

It was the rattle of a door-handle that had caught his ear in the silence. The fags started, and their hearts throbbed.

Someone was trying, from outside, the handle of the door Wally had fastened a minute before.

The handle creaked again and again, as if the man outside could not understand how the door came to be fast, and expected to open it without an effort.

"It's a burglar!" whispered Curly Gibson.

"Must be!" muttered Jameson. "Are you sure you shot the bolt, Wally?"

"Quite sure!"

"Hang it! Where are you going?"

Wally did not reply; he was creeping silently back towards the door. The handle was still now, but he thought he could detect the sound of muttering voices outside.

"Somebody's trying to get in, and no mistake!" muttered Wally, as he rejoined his chums. "I wonder we didn't run into them. It must be the fellows who were whistling to one another in the wood."

"I-I-I— Hadn't you better wake the house?"

muttered Gibson.

Wally did not reply; he was thinking. There was a creaking sound, and he turned towards a little window that was near the fastened door. The square of the window showed glimmering in the dark, and the glimmer of it was interrupted by the shape of a man's head outside.

Wally's heart beat hard.

"Quiet!" he whispered.

For the window was opening from without. Only a few feet of space separated the juniors from the head of the man outside.

He was looking intently into the darkness, and they made out the light glint of his eyes.

"Is anybody there?"

It was the man at the window who asked that question, and Wally gave a sudden start and a gasp of relief.

For it was the voice of Mr. Jelf, the new butler.

CHAPTER 11.

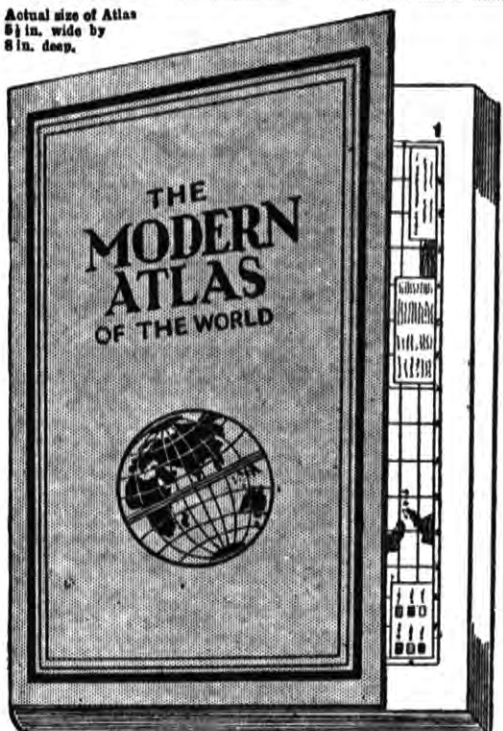
Wally & Co. Make Themselves at Home!

"JELF!"

Wally uttered the exclamation, and the man at the window started, and made a sign with his hand. It was as if he was signalling to someone behind to keep out of sight. Yet how could that be? For how could

(Continued on page 19.)

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THE EDITOR.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 1,311.

PARS AND YARNS FROM—



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HALLO, chums! You can look forward to an extra-special story of St. Jim's next Wednesday, for Martin Clifford introduces a new boy—a fellow from "Down Under"—from Australia. He's a great lad, is this newcomer to the ranks of Tom Morry & Co., and you'll take to him at first meeting. Make a note of the title—

"THE COMING OF 'KANGAROO'!"

and prepare for a hundred per cent entertainment. By way of ideal contrast in a really tip-top programme comes W. E. Johns' wonderful story of the Great War.

"THE SPY-FLYERS"

gets more thrilling with every instalment, and is a story that will be remembered by Gemies for many a long day to come. Please do me the favour of speaking to your non-reader pals about this epic of the Great War; I'm sure they will want to read more of it the moment they sample a few chapters.

"POTTS, THE OFFICE BOY"

will be found again in next week's grand number, for he's too good a "turn" to leave out, whilst there will be another column of readers' jokes for which, as you know, I award prizes of half-crowns. To complete this full value-for-money issue of the GEM there will be another page of news paragraphs and readers' replies. Order your GEM in advance—a good thing should not be missed!

AN AVALANCHE OF FISH!

You put your money in the slot, and, hey, presto! out shoots a hearty meal of good fresh fish for the waiting sea lions! The new automatic machine at the Regent's Park Zoo has turned out quite popular with visitors, both young and old. And, of course, the ever-hungry sea lions are fully in favour of this new method of entertainment. But there's a snag! Only the other day the automatic machine fused when a visitor put his coin in the slot. Instead of a "snack" of fresh fish descending, something like thirty pounds of whiting fell scallap into the pool. Did the sea lions turn their heads? No, sir, they began to scoff that unexpected banquet in double-quick time. Old Bill, the largest and strongest sea lion, managed to bolt about three-quarters of the fish while his pals were just thinking how grand everything was. As a result, Old Bill had to be placed on short rations for a day or so—just to even things up!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

THE TELL-TALE SHUTTER!

Smaah-and-grab raiders who first take the precaution of "borrowing" someone's car before they start their real job will have to look to their laurels. Just recently an eminent police chief invented a special shutter which the owner of the car lets fall into place and then looks before he leaves his car unattended. As this shutter falls directly over the entire windscreen and bears the legend "Parked" painted on it in large letters, the car-raider will think twice before he squats in the driving-seat and starts up the engine; for unless he's got X-ray eyesight he won't be able to see where he's going!

THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD?

He's reckoned to be Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Harry Carstairs, of Barnsley. Did you read the other day that this great man hadn't got any loose change—due to the stringent American banking laws—when he wanted to tip his caddie, so he presented him with a cheque for three shillings. And though Mr. Rockefeller is the richest man in the world, that caddie had to wait a day or so before he could find a tradesman willing enough to cash the cheque!

A WOULD-BE FILM STAR!

Folk who have watched Hans Schlichter, of Belgrade, grow up from childhood, wonder when he will stop growing. At the age of twenty he stands seven feet six inches in his socks, and, according to the doctors, there is every likelihood of his reaching a height of nine feet before he really stops! Hans doesn't seem to mind. He's set his heart on being a film star, and while he's waiting he is learning foreign languages. At the moment of writing, Hans can speak four foreign languages fluently.

CAN YOU BEAT THIS?

I read in a newspaper the other day of an exercise practised by a boy of nineteen. He can touch his toes, without bending his knees and "fudging," 2,200 times in the space of fifty-five minutes. Another thing, he keeps his heels together, which, of course, makes the exercise much more difficult than if you stand with your feet apart. If any of you GEM readers feel that you can knock this record sideways, have a shot at it. I had a go myself—but I'm not so young as I used to be. Not in the joints, anyway!

HOW MANY APPLES HAVE YOU EATEN?

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away." You've all heard that old saying a few times, I'll wager.

Well, the other day, a prominent individual with a title to his name was telling a big audience that he had eaten five apples a day since he was a boy. In all he estimated that he had devoured about eighty thousand juicy apples. To the wondering audience he trotted out the old wives' saying with which I have commenced this paragraph. And then, when he got home, he fell a victim to bronchitis. Bad luck, what!

FIDO TO THE RESCUE!

He was a fine-looking spaniel, cheery, good-tempered—in fact, very docile. But appearances are often deceptive. You should have seen this particular docile specimen of the canine tribe when a fox suddenly sprang out of a chicken-house and attacked the dog's master the other day. Followed a savage, furious battle between the cornered fox and the "docile" spaniel. But the spaniel won, and, incidentally, saved his master's life. So don't think that because your dog looks docile that he hasn't got grit. You never can tell until a real test comes along.

THE MAGIC APRON!

It isn't magical, of course, but if you had been present recently at the secret trials of a new device for landing seaplanes in rough weather, carried out by a British aircraft carrier, you would have thought of that word first. This "magic" apron takes the form of a huge length of canvas, strengthened by stout wooden spars which run throughout its length. When the sea is rough and scouting seaplanes wish to get aboard, the apron is unrolled over the stern of the aircraft-carrier and kept in position by the speed of the ship. This device "flattens" the waves and provides a smooth "fairway" up which the plane can taxi with comparative safety. When the apron has done its job it is rolled up, like a carpet, and stowed away. Nobby idea, what?

A REPLY TO THOMAS BADDELEY!

He wants to know how many motor-cycles there are in the world? That's a stiff question, Thomas, but I've had the facts looked up and the answer is round about two million seven hundred and fifty thousand. Of these, it is reckoned that Germany has the most.

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY!

Who is the sinister figure seen breaking into the Bridge House? What can be the explanation of the repulsive, expressionless face that appears at one of the windows when the sour-tempered tenant, who lives by himself, is out? These are baffling mysteries to Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co., the popular chums of St. Frank's, until— Well, read the magnificent long complete yarn for yourself. It appears in to-day's sparkling number of the "Nelson Lee Library," price 2d.

THE SMALLEST CAMERA.

The smallest camera in the world, "Regular Reader," is said to be no larger than the size of your thumbnail. I've never seen this camera, so I pass on the information for what it is worth.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MYSTERY OF EASTWOOD HOUSE!

(Continued from page 17.)

the respectable Mr. Jelf have any companions there at that hour?

"You know the chap?" gasped Jameson.

"Yes, rather; it's Jelf! I've heard his yaup before."

"Is that you, Master Wally?"

Mr. Jelf's voice was strangely shaking as he asked the question, and he was peering in with his light eyes intently.

"Yes, Jelf; it's me right enough!" replied Wally promptly and ungrammatically.

"Are you alone, Master Wally?"

"No. Two chums with me."

"Oh! Was it you fastened the door?"

"Was it you left it open?"

"Yes," said Mr. Jelf. "I—I have been in the grounds."

"Well, I can see you haven't been in bed," said Wally. "Do you want to come in?"

"Yes. Please open the door."

Wally opened the door, and Mr. Jelf entered. His face was a little pale. The hero of St. Jim's Third shut the door and fastened it again.

"I didn't expect you to-night, Master Wally," said Mr. Jelf.

"I don't suppose Gus did, either," said Wally, with a chuckle. "But I've come, you see. What on earth were you doing in the grounds at this hour, Jelf?"

"I have heard that suspicious characters have been seen in the neighbourhood," said Mr. Jelf slowly. "You know there was an attempted burglary case, an attempt to steal his lordship's silver. I went out to look round the house before going to bed."

"Good for you, Jelf; but it was rather silly you left a door unlocked. I suppose that was you trying to get in just now?"

"Certainly, Master Walter."

"You gave us a start. We took you for a burglar, and you're jolly lucky that I didn't set Pongo on you at the window."

Mr. Jelf laughed.

"I am glad you didn't, Master Walter."

"So am I—Pongo is rather particular what he eats," said Wally. "Have you seen any suspicious characters?"

"Oh, no—nothing at all!"

"Well, I have!"

Mr. Jelf gave a violent start.

"You—you have, Master Walter?"

"Yes, rather. There was some chaps in the wood whistling to one another, and we caught a glimpse of one of them, who came from the direction of the house," said Wally. "Of course, it was too dark to recognise them."

"Ah, that is why I went out!" said Mr. Jelf. "I heard a whistle."

"Looks as if there's a burglary planned for to-night, then. Suppose you telephone for the police!"

"I don't think it's necessary, Master Walter. They have cleared off, or I should have seen something of them. I shall not go to sleep for some time, anyway. Can I get you young gentlemen anything?"

"Oh, that's all right, Jelf; we wouldn't think of bothering you this time of night!" said Wally good-naturedly. "You can cut off to bed."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Jelf smoothly. "I know my duty, sir. I am sure you would like something brought up."

"Well, if you insist, Jelf, you shall stand us a feed," said Wally. "Come on, you kids; we're in clover now. I'll turn Pongo loose in the house, Jelf, in case those rotters should try to get in."

"Not at all necessary, sir—"

"Rats! I know what's necessary. Pongo won't sleep a wink, and if there's a sound he'll wake the house. Come on, kids!"

"Master Augustus might object, sir—"

"Let Master Augustus rip! I'm going to wake him up, anyway. Eh? What did you say, Jelf?"

"N-nothing, sir."

"It sounded uncommonly as if you were swearing, Jelf."

"Oh, Master Walter!"

"Well, buzz off and get some supper, and bring it to my room. Get me the things for the fire, and I'll start it."

And Wally, Jameson, and Gibson went upstairs laden with sticks, and carrying a scuttle of coals between them. Wally switched on the electric light in his room, and they started a fire. The crackling of the wood in the grate was a cheerful sound. One boomed out from the clock in the hall.

"Nice time to come home—what?" grinned Wally. "Stick some more coal on, Jimmy!"

"Right-ho!" said Jameson.

"I didn't say the whole scuttful, you ass! Nice mess you've made the grate in, haven't you?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Better air the bedclothes," said Wally. "We shall all have to sleep in one bed; can't wake up servants to make beds this time of night. This is what comes of losing trains, young Jameson."

"Well, you lost the train, and—"

"Don't jaw, kids! It's too late! Jelfy, my son," went on Wally, as the new butler entered the room, with a tray and cloth over his arm, "scrape up some bedclothes from somewhere, and we'll air them before the fire here. I see my bed isn't made. I'll make Gus sit up for that!"

"Master Augustus didn't know you were coming, sir."

"He ought to have known I wouldn't let him come home for a week-end without me, Jelfy. Don't make excuses for him—he's an unbrotherly beast, and I'm going to wake him up when I've had supper. Upon the whole, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have Gussy's bed, you kids. It's a big four-poster, and there's room in it for half the Third Form at St. Jim's. We'll turn Gussy out and have his bed."

"Good wheeze!" said the other two with one voice.

Mr. Jelf laid the table. He brought up a plentiful supper, and when he was gone the juniors fell to, and Jameson and

Get This Out and Keep It By You!



Gibson expressed unbounded admiration for the butler and the supper.

The meal was over at last, and Wally rose from the table, yawning.

"When you chaps are ready," he said, "we'll go and have Gus out."

"I'm ready."

Wally led the way to his elder brother's room. He turned the handle of the door and entered and switched on the light.

Arthur Augustus was sleeping peacefully.

Wally picked up the tongs in the grate and allowed them to fall upon the fender with a crash that rang like thunder through the silence of the night.

Arthur Augustus started from his sleep.

"Bai Jove! What's that?"

"Burglars!" roared Wally.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy skipped out of bed. Wally made a sign to the others, and in a second they had pinned D'Arcy by the arms, and were rushing him to the door. The swell of St. Jim's was too surprised to resist.

"Bai Jove! What's the beastly maffah? Wally, have you run away from school again, you young wascal? Where are the burglars?"

D'Arcy found himself in the passage. Wally closed the door and locked it. The next moment D'Arcy, shivering in his pyjamas, was hammering on it.

"Wally, open the door, you young wascal!"

"It's all right, I'm going to bed! The burglars haven't entered the house. I expect they've gone to bed, too," said Wally through the keyhole. "You can go and turn in with Blake or Dig."

"Open the door at once, you young wascal!"

"Rats!"

The three Third-Formers went calmly to bed. They found plenty of pyjamas belonging to Gussy, and though they were a trifle baggy for them, that did not seriously interfere with their comfort. They turned in, in Gussy's big bed, and were fast asleep in two minutes, while the swell of St. Jim's was hammering at the door.

Mr. Jelf came along the passage.

"Dear me! Master Augustus, what is the matter?"

"Those young wascals have taken my woom," said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! I nevah heard of such feahful cheek in my life! Open the door!"

"Hallo! What's that row?" asked a sleepy voice; and THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,311.

Blake looked out from his door. "Is it burglars, or a fire, or what?"

"Young Wally has turned up, and he's collared my bed and locked me out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any reason for wibald mewwiment, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose I shall have to turn in with you, Blake. I shall certainly give young Wally a faithful thwoshin to-morrow."

And D'Arcy, simmering with indignation, turned in with his chums; and in the borrowed bed Wally & Co. slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER 12.

A Little Too Previous!

MR. RAILTON was surprised when he met D'Arcy minor the next morning, but smiled good-naturedly on hearing that the leader of the Third had obtained leave of absence for himself and his two chums to spend the week-end at Eastwood House.

Breakfast at Eastwood House was what Jack Blake described as a movable feast. They had it when they wanted it, and most of the juniors turned up at different times.

The week-end party had grown to much larger size than was originally planned. Arthur Augustus had brought down three chums and the Housemaster, and the addition of Figgins & Co. had made eight, and the Terrible Three made eleven in the party. Then came the fags of the Third, making the number up to fourteen. But all agreed that the increase of numbers made the week-end jollier. It was a case of the more the merrier. If there was trouble between the fags and the Fourth-Formers, that would only, in Wally's phrase, make things livelier.

Lively things were certain to be while Wally was about. Between him and Fongo the surroundings could never be slow.

"We are gettin' up a ewicket match this mornin', sir," D'Arcy remarked to Mr. Railton. "Would you care to play, sir?"

"With all my heart!" said the Housemaster cheerily. "There will be one foeman worthy of your steel, sir—Mr. Dodds, the curate of Hucklebawwy Heath. You know—the place where Miss Fawcett, Tom Mewwy's governess, lives. He is bringin' his local team ovah for a match to-day."

"Good!"

"I am afraid they will be wotten bad ewicketers," said D'Arcy. "They are farmer chaps, you know, and Mr. Dodds has taught them to play. But Mr. Dodds is a wippin' ewicketer. He played us once at St. Jim's. My Cousin Ethel and Miss Fawcett are comin' ovah with the party, and I am expectin' them before lunch."

Figgins looked round quickly. Kerr was talking cricket to him, but Figgins left a remark unanswered at that moment.

"Did you say your cousin was coming, Gussy?" he asked. "Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" said Figgins, with such heartiness that D'Arcy turned his monocle upon him with a fixed stare.

"Weally, Figgins, I am vevy glad you are so pleased—"

"I was just thinking," said Figgins hurriedly, "that it would be only attentive to meet them at the station."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"When do you expect them here?"

"In time for a vevy early lunch."

"Let me see—there's a train in at Easthorpe at twelve," said Figgins. "I suppose they will be coming by that. Will you be sending a conveyance to fetch them?"

"You see—"

"Excuse me," said Figgins, "there's Kerr calling. I think I shall be going for a stroll down towards the village this morning, Gussy."

"But, you see, Figgins—"

But Figgins was gone. He linked arms with Kerr and Fatty Wynn and strolled away.

Arthur Augustus looked after him attentively till he was out of sight. The swell of St. Jim's appeared to be a little puzzled.

Jack Blake slapped him on the shoulder a few minutes later, and D'Arcy jumped.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Thinking something out?" asked Blake cheerily. "What do you say to a cycle ride?"

"I was thinkin', I was speakin' about my Cousin Ethel comin', and Figgins has gone down to the station to meet the twelve twain."

"I think I might stroll along, too," remarked Blake.

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"Yaas, certainly, lut—"

"Come on, Dig! I say, Herries, are you coming?"

"Blake—Blake—"

But Blake was hurrying after Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy walked slowly towards the house. The Terrible Three met him in the drive and stopped him. D'Arcy looked at them.

"Where are the kids?" asked Tom Merry.

"They've gone to meet the twelve o'clock twain at the village because Cousin Ethel is comin'," said D'Arcy. "They wouldn't give me time to explain that Ethel wasn't comin' by twain."

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

"Yaas, it is wathah funny, when you come to think of it," said D'Arcy, breaking into a smile. "I tried to tell them, but they wouldn't give me time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They are comin' ovah from Hucklebawwy Heath in a charabanc, as a mattah of fact," said D'Arcy. "I mean the ewicketahs, you know. Cousin Ethel and Miss Fawcett are comin' by car."

"Good!" said Tom Merry heartily. "My old governess will be surprised and awfully pleased to see me here unexpectedly, and so I think I ought to go down the road to meet her."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'll jump on my bike and be off," said Tom Merry. "I mean Gussy's bike, of course. That is the best of being the son of a giddy earl. You have a bike at school, and a bike at home, all ready to lend to your best chum when he wants to go and meet your cousin. D'Arcy is an awfully lucky chap."

"Weally, I am thinkin' of goin'—"

"You are going to get the things ready for the cricket? Good! It's ripping weather for a match. Lowther and Manners will help you. I know where to get the bike—don't trouble to come!"

Tom Merry hurried off, leaving D'Arcy rooted to the ground. Lowther and Manners uprooted him, so to speak, by taking him by the arms and marching off to the lawn which was to be used as a cricket ground. There they kept him busy making arrangements, Mr. Railton coming out to help.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry buzzed along merrily on D'Arcy's bicycle to meet his old governess and Cousin Ethel.

CHAPTER 13.

Cousin Ethel!

BUZZ-Z! Ting-a-ling!

Tom Merry rang loudly as he came in sight of a car on the road from Hucklebawwy Heath, and the stalwart young man who was driving put on his brakes.

There were two other persons in the car—Miss Priscilla Fawcett and Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry jumped off his bicycle and ran up to the car, with a face red with exertion, cap in hand.

"Dear me! It is my darling Tommy."

"Tom Merry!" exclaimed the curate of Hucklebawwy Heath; while Cousin Ethel smiled. "I did not expect to see you here, Tom."

"No," said Miss Fawcett. "What a joyful surprise! His headmaster has probably insisted upon his taking a holiday, as he is in a weak state of health."

Tom Merry laughed, as, standing on the step of the car, he shook hands with the occupants.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle, dear. I'm week-ending with Gussy."

"You look very red, Tommy. I'm afraid it is a hectic colour in your cheeks," said Miss Fawcett anxiously.

"It's scorching on the bike, that's all."

"Dear me! Have you been scorching?" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, greatly distressed. "We found the sun very warm, and had to put up our parasols. I must get out immediately, and in one of these farmhouses I may find the materials for a poultice for your dear little face."

"I—I mean riding fast," said Tom, "not scorching in the sun. It's slang!"

"Oh, I see! You have greatly relieved my mind, Tommy. But I am sorry to see you dropping into the use of slang. I hope you do not talk slang as a rule!"

"Certainly not," said Tom Merry. "It's a rotten habit—simply impos—, you know. I'm always awfully careful—I don't think! I thought I'd come and meet you on the road. I'll get in the car, if you like—I can fix my jigger behind."

"Mayn't it damage it, Tommy?"

"It doesn't matter—it isn't mine!"



"You are fairly caught!" said Mr. Railton. "Surrender!" The crackman gave a desperate glance round and made a furious spring to the door. Mr. Railton was upon him like a tiger. In the powerful grip of the Housemaster the ruffian reeled back. At the same moment Figgins leapt upon Jeff!

"Dear me! Tommy, I hope you are not becoming careless of other people's property."

"That was a joke, dear," explained Tom Merry. "I can manage. It's Gussy's bike, and I wouldn't damage it for untold tuck. That's all right!"

"Are you sure it is safe, Tommy darling?"

"Well, we shall hear if it falls off," said Tom.

"If you are ready—" began Mr. Dodds.

"Quite! Cut ahead!"

"Oh, Tommy, what a way to speak to Mr. Dodds!"

"It's Tom's way," said the curate, smiling. "I know Tom. I am glad Tom is at Eastwood, as it will make up a stronger team. I warn you that my farmer lads are in good form, Tom!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll give 'em a tussle, sir."

The car bowed on. The charabanc with the cricketers was following at a slower pace. As they drove on Miss Fawcett made many affectionate inquiries about Tom Merry's health, and whether he wore flannel next to his skin, and kept his feet quite dry—questions which Tom answered hurriedly, and which brought continual dimples to the cheeks of Cousin Ethel.

The hero of the Shell was glad when they reached Eastwood. As the car entered the drive several juniors came in sight, walking home from the village. Figgins & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6 had watched the twelve o'clock

train in at Easthorpe, and their feelings, when they saw Cousin Ethel in the car, were too deep for expression.

They raised their caps, and Tom Merry waved his hand genially as if he took the salutes to himself.

"Beast!" murmured Figgins. "I'm going to speak to Gussy."

"So am I!" murmured Blake.

The car drove up to the house. Gussy was still busy on the cricket ground, when half a dozen wrathful juniors rushed up to him. Blake caught him by one shoulder and Figgins by another, and both pulled him at once, with the result that his jacket nearly came off.

D'Arcy stared at them in surprise.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boys?"

"I've been to the station—"

"I've been to the station—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you ass—"

"Why, you duffer—"

"Ha, ha, ha! It was wathah funnary. You wouldn't give me time to tell you that Cousin Ethel was comin' ovah in a car. You see, she's been stayin' a couple of days with Miss Fawcett. I tried to explain— Ow!"

They bumped him down in the grass and left him there.

The charabanc containing the amateur cricketers from Huckleberry Heath drove into view. It contained a sturdy set of lads—farm lads and young mechanics of Huckleberry,

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whom the curate had formed into a cricket team. D'Arcy hurried off at once to greet his guests.

Arthur Augustus, in spite of some curious manners and customs, had nothing at all about him that could, by any stretch of imagination, be considered snobbish. He seemed to be quite unconscious of the fact that he was the son of an earl, and the richest man in the county, as he greeted the cricketers, most of whom were a little awed at coming to the great house. They were soon put at their ease by the hearty greeting of Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Jelf had seen it that there was a substantial lunch ready for the new arrivals, and it was a merry meal.

Mr. Railton was very glad to meet Mr. Dodds, who was an old acquaintance, and he joined in a discussion upon the state of Tom Merry's health with Miss Fawcett in the gravest possible manner.

Everybody, of course, wanted to sit next to Cousin Ethel, and everybody meant to show her, after lunch, what good cricket was really like.

There was some little difficulty on that score, however. D'Arcy had only expected to have three St. Jim's fellows with him, and he had intended to make up the team with some fellows from Easthorpe. Now, however, he had an overplus of cricketers. There were enough fellows of the Fourth and the Shell to make up an eleven, without counting Mr. Railton. Wally & Co., however, meant to play. Wally pointed out that it would be ridiculous to leave out the best batsman they had, and so he, at all events, would have to be put in.

"And who's going to captain us?" said Blake.

"Mr. Wailton, of course," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sure Mr. Wailton will do us the honah of acceptin' the post."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Railton.

"Bravo! It's for the captain to make up the eleven," said Figgins. "Mr. Railton can pick out the chaps he thinks best."

Mr. Railton looked a little perplexed.

He did not want to make invidious distinctions, and though some of the juniors, like Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins were first-class cricketers, some of them were "much of a munched," as Blake expressed it.

Blake and Figgins and Tom Merry had to go in, as the best bats, and Fatty Wynn, of course, as the champion junior bowler of St. Jim's. The places of the rest were

decided by tossing a penny, odd man out, and the juniors contentedly abided by the result of chance. Wally was in, so he was satisfied. Lunch being over, the teams adjourned to the cricket field, and the stumps were pitched for the match.

CHAPTER 14.

A Curious Cricket Match!

MISS FAWCETT was accommodated with a comfortable garden chair, and Cousin Ethel with another beside her. Mr. Railton and Mr. Dodds tossed for choice of innings, and the latter won, and elected to bat first.

The Huckleberry Heathers opened the innings with Mr. Dodds and a big, ruddy-faced youth named Hutton. Mr. Railton put Fatty Wynn on to bowl against Mr. Dodds.

Fatty Wynn was a bowler of renown at St. Jim's, but Mr. Dodds was an old blue, and one of the finest amateur cricketers in his county. He had, as a matter of fact, played for his county, and won great credit there. Wynn's bowling would have been dangerous to many county cricketers, but Mr. Dodds played it easily.

The curate swiped the balls away with ease and grace, and the runs piled up rapidly. And an odd run at the finish of the over gave him the batting still.

"Over!" said the umpire.

Mr. Railton bowled the next over, but he did not make any impression on Mr. Dodds' wicket. The runs mounted up while the curate had the bowling, but the other wickets fell pretty rapidly, especially when Mr. Railton was bowling. Fatty Wynn, too, was a terror to the Heathers.

Cousin Ethel smiled as she looked on. The match was principally between Railton and Dodds, and the boys were only filling up time.

The fieldsmen, who had had plenty to do, came off the ground looking ruddy and warm when Mr. Dodds' side were all out for ninety. D'Arcy, of course, came over to the ladies. D'Arcy was wearing a Panama hat, and he looked very handsome in it.

It was a single innings match, and so all depended on this innings. Mr. Railton opened with Tom Merry and D'Arcy. Mr. Dodds went on to bowl. D'Arcy was staring at a wrecked wicket the next moment.

"Bai Jove!"

"How's that?" shouted the Huckleberry Heathers.

"Hout!" shouted Mr. Jelf, who was acting as umpire.

"Bai Jove! Wasn't that a twial ball, sir?"

"Not at all!"

"Then I pwesume I am out. It is vewy surpris'in." And Arthur Augustus carried out his bat, looking very much surprised.

"Dear me!" said Miss Fawcett. "Is Augustus out?"

"Yes," said Ethel. "He was bowled!"

"How curious! A bold player ought really to stay in a long time," said Miss Fawcett. "However, he was overbold, and ran unnecessary risks."

Ethel did not give her opinion. Figgins went in next, and the girl was watching Figgins. But Figgins was not there long to watch. Mr. Dodds' second ball went through his wicket like a knife through cheese.

"What price duck's eggs?" grinned Wally, as the great Figgins came out.

And Figgins made no reply. He was looking dazed.

Kerr was in next, and then Blake and then Digby and then Fatty Wynn. Each of them retired to the tent with a big round nought to his credit, and Mr. Dodds was credited with the double hat-trick. The faces of the Huckleberry Heath team were jubilant; while the St. Jim's countenances correspondingly lengthened. Six down for nought was a bad start.

Tom Merry had been standing idle at his end all through that disastrous over. But now Mr. Railton came in and joined him.

And then a change came. Tom took a single run, which gave Mr. Railton the bowling. And then the master of the School House proceeded to make the fur fly, as Blake jubilantly expressed it.

Fifteen for the over raised the spirits of the Saints. Then Mr. Dodds tackled Tom Merry's wicket. But Tom, though he did not venture to hit out against the curate's bowling, kept his end up, and lived through it till the batting again came to the Housemaster.

Tom was content to keep his wicket intact, and leave the scoring to Mr. Railton. And the Housemaster showed that he was quite capable of doing what was expected of him.

The runs piled up, and the score stood at forty-five when Tom Merry's wicket fell to a lightning ball from Mr. Dodds.

The other juniors came in and went, but Mr. Railton was piling up the runs.

There was a shout as the score reached ninety. It would be a draw, at all events. St. Jim's were last man in,

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"Well, don't make a row! Quiet, Pongo! We can keep in cover, behind those chairs—don't knock them over, Figgins!"

"I'm not knocking them over."
"Well, mind you don't. We shall be able to cut them off from the door if they go over to the safe—it's in the wall, there, behind a dummy set of bookshelves."

"Very well," said Mr. Raiton. "I hope you have not disturbed our night's rest for nothing, D'Arcy minor."
"It's all right, sir!" Wally chuckled. "My word, won't Gus be wild at being left out of this!"

"Hark!" said Tom Merry.
There was a faint, indefinable sound. A minute later the library door was open, and, though the watchers could see nothing in the darkness, they knew that at least two individuals had entered the room.

The hearts of the watchers beat painfully. There was little further doubt that Wally's information was correct.

Mr. Raiton's hand closed tightly upon a heavy Malacca cane; Wally kept his hand over Pongo's muzzle.

There was a whispering voice in the darkness.
"Show a glim."
"Wait a moment."

The answering voice was familiar to all of them—it was Mr. Jelf's.

"Rotter!" murmured Tom Merry.

A light glimmered out. Mr. Jelf had only paused to close the door. He carried a lantern in his hand. Two dark figures became visible. They did not look round them, but crossed directly opposite to the wall.

"Is that it, Jelf?"

"Yes, it's behind the bookcase," whispered Jelf. "I can move that—it is simple—but the safe is beyond me. If you can manage it—"

The other laughed scoffingly.

"I've cracked a bank's strong-room before now!"

"Then you ought to be able to manage this."

"Open the case, and I'll show you."

Mr. Jelf pressed a knob and a section of the bookcase swung back from the wall. The steel door of a safe was disclosed. The other man, evidently a professional cracksmen, bent his head a little and examined it in the light of an electric torch.

"Well!" said Mr. Jelf in a hushed, anxious tone.

"It won't take me a quarter of an hour."

"Good! I shall be on tenterhooks the whole time!"

"There's no danger. That confounded dog is not in the house now—"

"He's in the boy's room—safe enough from here. If the young hound hadn't turned him loose last night—"

"This job would have been safely done!" chuckled the cracksmen. "You should have found some way of dealing with the brute!"

"He wouldn't let me touch him—besides, there would have been suspicion in the morning. They would know that the dog had been dealt with from within."

"I suppose so. It was safer to leave it—if you are going to stay and cover up your tracks."

"Of course I am—I have my character to consider."

The cracksmen chuckled.

"Of course, I forgot that."

"Get on as fast as you can."

Crack!

"What's that?"

"It's all right—it's going! I— Fury!"

The cracksmen broke off with a yell as the library was flooded with electric light. Mr. Raiton had quietly stretched out his hand to the switch.

The two scoundrels looked round, almost paralysed at the sight of the Housemaster and the four boys and the dog. Mr. Jelf's knees knocked together. He was not of the stuff that heroes are made of.

"You are fairly caught!" said Mr. Raiton. "Surrender!"

Mr. Jelf, overcome, dropped helplessly on his knees, and a strong pair of hands closed on his collar. The cracksmen gave a desperate glance round and made a furious spring to the door. Mr. Raiton was upon him like a tiger. In the powerful grip of the Housemaster the ruffian reeled back.

Mr. Jelf made a rush to escape as they gathered round the ruffian. He was grabbed by Figgins, and they rolled over together, falling against Mr. Raiton, whose grasp on the cracksmen did not relax for a moment.

Five minutes later D'Arcy rang up the police station, and in an hour's time the two rascals were taken away in custody.

agreed that the credit of the capture was due to D'Arcy minor. They made much of Wally. He bore his blushing honours, thick upon him, with his usual nerve.

Jameson and Gibson came very near to violently assaulting him for not calling them, instead of Tom Merry and Blake, to deal with the burglars. But all the others had only praises for Wally. He had certainly saved Lord Eastwood from a loss amounting to more than ten thousand pounds. Even Arthur Augustus condescended to commend Wally, and Wally received the commendation in a far from grateful spirit.

"It was weally vewy clevah of you, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus. "The whole mattah reflects gweat credid upon you, doah boy!"

"Yes, doesn't it?" said Wally. "Not much upon you, though, kid! You'd have gone on snoring while they were lifting the governor's tin!"

"I do not sniah, as you know vewy well!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Besides—"

"I told you you'd be glad I brought Pongo to Eastwood for the week-end!" grinned Wally. "You remember that, Gus?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am vewy surprised that you saw through that awful wascal Jelf, when he succeeded in deceivin' me. It is weally most wemarkable!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You'll never understand it, Gussy, so don't try!"

"But it is weally vewy wemarkable, Tom Mewwy! This wascal Jelf has confessed that he had a lot of dirty gamblin' debts—he had been bettin' on waccourances, which was vewy impwopah conduct for a butlah—and he had to pay, so he said. And then he thought of wobb'in' the governah. I wogard him as an ungwateful wotlah. It appeahs that he had evewythin' awanged for the burglary on Friday night, but the week-end party comin' down interwupted the little game."

"That's how I worked it out," said Wally. "He met the other chap in the wood, you see, and I heard 'em whistling. And he'd have had him in all the same if I hadn't left Pongo loose in the house—on purpose. I wasn't sure about it, and I was too tired to sit up on spec, or I'd have worked this last night. But I knew there wouldn't be any burglary, anyway, while Pongo was on the watch. Jolly lucky for some of you I came down for the week-end!"

"Don't let it get into your head, though," suggested Jameson. "If you go back to St. Jim's with a swelled head it means lickings in the Form!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wally. "I think the governor ought to stand me a fiver over this, and we'll have a picnic. I'm jolly well going to ask him!"

"Yaas, wathah! But the most wemarkable thing about it is that that wascal Jelf took me in! I am not surprised at his takin' the governah in, as he had an excellent wecord, and had nevah been guilty of anythin' of this sort before; but, with my twainin' as an amateur detective, I ought to have seen through him at once! It is weally vewy wemarkable!"

The others couldn't see anything remarkable in it, but D'Arcy persisted that it was really very remarkable indeed, and they let him have his way.

The exciting incident had certainly enlivened the week-end. It furnished the juniors with a great topic on their return to St. Jim's.

The week-end, like all things good or bad, came to an end at last, and the boys bade farewell to Miss Fawcett, Cousin Ethel, and Mr. Dodds, and a cheerful party entered the train on Monday morning. And Wally went back to school with a crisp fiver in his pocket—a reward from his "governor" for the keenness and promptness he had shown. And three heads were bent together all through the journey, and a whispered discussion went on among the scamps of the Third as to the best possible means of "bluicing" the fiver.

It was a merry party in the train, and the juniors arrived at St. Jim's in high spirits, and there Mr. Raiton was metamorphosed into a grave and serious Housemaster again, hardly recognisable as the merry week-end of the past few days. And in the afternoon the juniors were grinding in the class-room again, which Monty Lowther said was a weak-end to the week-end—a remark which his chums obstinately refused to understand after he had explained it to them half a dozen times.

THE END.

(Another new boy arrives at St. Jim's next week. In "THE COMING OF 'KANGABOO'" you will meet Harry Noble, the boy from Australia.)

AIR THRILLS OF THE GREAT WAR!

The Spyflyers

By Flying - Officer
W. E. JOHNS.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

REX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER are chosen by **MAJOR TREVOR** for Secret Service work. They become interested in the behaviour of a British machine, and, following it, see it land, unmolested, on a German aerodrome. Determined to discover just what is happening, they don German uniforms, and set off for the German aerodrome flying a Hannoverana machine which they have recently captured. On their way they are attacked by a British Camel. Tony tries to scare it off by bursts of fire, but the Camel pilot persists in his attack and Rex and Tony are helpless. They cannot fight back!
(Now Read On.)

At the German Aerodrome!

HELP came from an unexpected quarter. A scarlet and black Fokker Triplane dropped out of the sun and the Camel pilot was forced to engage an opponent likely to cause him more concern. The crew of the Hannoverana did not see the end of the combat, but seized the opportunity of getting away while the going was good, and left the two scouts to work out their own salvation.

Rex gave a startled cry of dismay as Tony turned and faced him. A bullet had ripped open the front of his coat, his goggles were smashed, and a tiny trickle of blood flowed down from under his helmet; but he breathed a sigh of relief as the observer held his thumbs up, the universal signal that all was well.

"Only a scratch—bit of glass!" he yelled, and Rex turned again towards the aerodrome that was their destination. Without warning the engine suddenly spluttered and died away; the propeller stopped revolving, and Rex looked anxiously ahead to see whether he would be able to reach the aerodrome.

"We've got to go down, anyway!" he yelled, and Tony nodded, understanding.

"Good job we've got these clothes on," continued Rex, "and this should add colour to our tale," he added, pointing to the signs of the conflict. In spite of the deadly nature of what lay before them they could not repress a smile. To be attacked by a British machine and rescued by a German was ludicrous. But Rex had little time for idle speculation. He reached the aerodrome with height to spare and made a neat tarmac landing, notwithstanding the fact that he had to come in with a "dead" stick—as a stopped propeller is called.

"Are you all right, sir?" called a mechanic who had run out to meet them.

"Jawohl," replied Rex instantly, dropping into his part.

There were expressions of wonderment at Tony's narrow escape and they turned to examine the machine. It was

soon ascertained that a bullet through the petrol tank had done the damage.

"How long will it take to put this right?" asked Rex anxiously.

"An hour, perhaps more," replied one of the mechanics.

"Good, hurry up with it," growled Rex in the true German fashion as he turned towards the sheds. His eyes ran swiftly over the machines on the tarmac and in the hangars, but the SE 5 was not among them. An officer strolled up to them.

"You've had a close one," he smiled. "How did it happen?"

Briefly, Tony described the combat. At the mention of the red and black Triplane the German pilot's eyes opened wide.

"You will be avenged," he assured them. "That was von Ketner of the Jagdstaffel 7. He has fourteen victories already and he has only been at the front a month. But come in and have a drink while you are waiting," he invited them. "My name is von Henkel."

Unable to refuse they followed their host into a sparsely furnished room, with a long trestle table running down the middle. The German shouted an order and an orderly entered with three large mugs of beer.

"Prosit!" toasted the German, raising his glass.

"Prosit!" echoed the others.

Several more officers joined them and Tony had to repeat the story of their adventure. But Rex was watching a man in flying kit who was seated near by in earnest conversation with a German officer wearing the uniform of a Hauptmann (Captain). He sauntered across to the window near them, ostensibly to look at the weather, for the sky was beginning to cloud over. Finishing his survey of the sky, he turned and glanced casually at the man in flying kit whom he was now facing. It was only a glance, but it showed him all he needed to know. The flying coat was undone, exposing a tunic—A British R.F.C. tunic!

Rex had barely rejoined the others when the two men from the corner walked over to them, but he noticed that the flying coat was now buttoned to the throat.

"You've just had a combat, I hear," said the Hauptmann. Rex nodded. "Yes, sir, I got my tank holed," he replied. He was scarcely able to restrain a sigh of relief when the two passed on, for at the back of his mind was a dim suspicion that he had seen the face of the man in flying kit before, but where, he could not remember.

"You had better ring up your squadron and tell them you are here," said the Hauptmann over his shoulder.

"I think it is hardly necessary, sir, thanks," replied Rex easily. "The machine should be ready by now and we shall be home in a few minutes."

The Hauptmann nodded. "As you wish," he said shortly. "Come," said Rex to Tony, "let us see if the machine is ready," and after thanking their hosts for their hospitality, strolled along the tarmac to where the machine was ticking over, evidently being tested.

"She is all right, sir," called an Unter-Officer. They climbed into their places, waved away the chocks, taxied into position, and took off. The whole thing was done so easily and faultlessly that Tony marvelled at the very simplicity of it. Rex looked back over his shoulder, grinning broadly.

"I always thought you were a Boche," jeered Tony. When they were half-way home Rex tilted his left wing down, and beckoning to Tony, pointed to the ground. In the middle of the field, in the centre of a group of German soldiers, lay a torn and twisted plane. It was painted black and red.

"Von Ketterer will score no more!" yelled Rex above the noise of his engine. "I hope that Camel pilot is satisfied with his dirty work and isn't hanging around here, or it will be a bad business for us!" he shouted, grimacing.

They reached the line without being molested however, and raced through the inevitable archie to Neuville, where they landed and taxied quickly into the hangar. Ten minutes later they were once more in their proper uniforms with their disguises carefully packed away.

"Well, that's that!" said Tony, with a sigh of relief. "What's the next move?"

"To watch this S.E.5 bird, of course," replied Rex. "We've got his game weighed up now. Once we find his rendezvous over this side of the lines, we shall catch a queer basket of fish, or I'm very much mistaken. We'll keep an eye open for him over this side to-morrow, in the Bristol."

"Are you going to tell the major about this?" asked Tony.

"No; I don't think so, not yet," replied Rex thoughtfully. "I think we'll keep what we've discovered under the hat until we have something definite to lay before him. It shouldn't take long."

They wheeled out the Bristol fighter, returned to Maranique, and spent the rest of the day quietly talking over their adventure.

It was about six-thirty when Pat MacLaren, their flight commander, put his head round the door of their room.

"Are you boys coming to Veleroy?" he grinned.

"Why, what's on?" asked Rex.

"Guest night. It should be a merry evening—the tender leaves in ten minutes if you want to come, and it won't wait," he announced, as he withdrew.

"What do you say, shall we go?" asked Rex.

"Fine!" replied Tony. "No. 219 Squadron are at Veleroy; they're a cheery crowd. They've got Camels."

"Come on, then, let's get dressed!" said Rex briskly.

The tender, with its rollicking party was soon en route, and half an hour later it pulled up with a screeching of brakes in front of the door of the Camel pilot's mess. As they entered the room, Rex and Tony looked around with interest to see if there was anyone there whom they knew; at Rex's elbow a fair-haired lad, still in his teens, was talking rapidly to a group of interested listeners.

"And he hit the deck with a devil of a bang," he concluded, amid roars of laughter.

"I hear you got the red-and-black Tripehound to-day, Tommy," sang out a new arrival, hurrying up to the group. The Camel pilot nodded.

"Yes, we've had one or two goes at it, but I got him to-day. It was a pretty close shave, though. I had chased a blinking Hannoverian half-way to Berlin, and the Jerry in the back seat had shot a bit off my left aileron, which didn't improve matters. He beetled off when the Tripe arrived. I was soared stiff when the other Hun butted in, because I had to chuck my machine about, and thought every minute the aileron would drop off. I had to take a chance on it, though, and—"

His voice trailed away as the group moved slowly towards the dining-room.

Rex nudged Tony in the ribs and chuckled.

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"So that was the lad who shot us up to-day," he grinned. "I wonder what he would say if he knew that it was you who busted his aileron!"

His voice died away into an inarticulate gasp. Tony, watching Rex's face, saw it turn pale, and an expression of incredulous amazement creep over it. He was staring straight over his, Tony's, shoulder, at something behind him, and Tony, swinging round and following his gaze, choked back an exclamation of astonishment. There, not five yards away, was the man whom they had last seen only a few hours before in the German mess.

Rex was about to drag Tony away, but before he could do so, the door was thrown open, and Major Trevor entered.

"Hallo, Fairfax!" he cried cheerily. "How are you?" And then, catching sight of Rex and Tony: "Hallo, you boys, so you're here, too, are you? You know Fairfax, I suppose?"

There was no avoiding it. Indeed, the whole thing had moved so swiftly that Rex had had no time to think, much less to act. Almost before the words were out of the major's mouth, they found themselves facing the stranger.

"No, we haven't met," said Rex in a voice which he strove to keep steady, and as they shook hands, Rex thought he saw a gleam of recognition leap into the other's eyes.

"Pleased to meet you," said Fairfax. "I seem to have seen you somewhere before, but I can't think where."

"Oh, probably at another guest-night somewhere," replied Rex easily. "I've been dodging up and down the line for about six months now."

"Ah, I expect that was it," replied Captain Fairfax, turning to shake hands with Tony. Whether he recognised him or not, neither Rex nor Tony were afterwards able to say; at any rate, if he did, he made no comment.

The entrance of an orderly to announce dinner saved what Rex well imagined might develop into a difficult situation.

"What are you going to do?" asked Tony, as they seated themselves at the table.

"Keep an eye on him and speak to the major at the first opportunity. Just look at him," he went on, nodding towards Captain Fairfax; "he seems to know everyone. I suppose it isn't possible that we've made a mistake?"

"No!" Tony shook his head emphatically.

"Well, it's jolly awkward to say the least of it!" continued Rex. "It's all very well to say we've seen an officer over the lines, but it sounds a pretty cook-and-bull story, doesn't it? We should look fools trying to put him under arrest, which is what we ought to do. We have only our word for it, remember, and what are we going to say about ourselves being over there? Dash it! When all is said and done, Fairfax might just as well put us under arrest. Let us wait and see what the major has to say."

Immediately dinner was over Rex sought Major Trevor and took him on one side.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, "but can you tell me anything about Captain Fairfax?"

"Fairfax—why? Is he a spy?" smiled the major broadly.

Rex grinned sheepishly.

"I should have thought you have heard of Fairfax," went on the major. "He is a regular soldier, and has been mentioned in dispatches several times. He got the M.C. he is wearing for a particularly plucky show. He used to be a flight-commander in 217 Squadron, but he is at Divisional Headquarters now—one of the keenest officers in the Service."

"I see," said Rex slowly, absolutely nonplussed.

"What made you ask?"

"Oh, I only wondered!" replied Rex, feeling that he had made rather a fool of himself. "I seem to have seen him somewhere before. Now, please take me seriously, sir. I suppose—er—well, er—I suppose he is absolutely beyond any possible suspicion of—er—espionage?"

"Good heavens, man, what are you talking about?" replied the major angrily. "You must be crazy! What in the name of fortune made you say such a thing?"

"Only that I saw him sitting talking to Hauptmann von Rasberg, commanding the German staffel at Varne, in the officers' mess there this morning," replied Rex, nettled.

Major Trevor took a quick step backwards as if Rex had struck him. For an instant he stared in open-eyed amazement, and then his surprised look gave way to one of amusement. He threw his head back and burst into a long peal of laughter. He laughed and laughed again until half the officers in the room were laughing with him. "Well, that's a good one," he said, wiping his eyes. "I'd love to tell him that; in fact I will—after the war!" And then he became serious again, and put his hand on Rex's shoulder in a fatherly manner. "I'm sorry I laughed like that," he said soberly, "but, really, the idea of Fairfax sitting in a German mess is too utterly preposterous. Why, his very record puts him beyond any possible suspicion." He dropped his voice to a whisper. "So you landed in German territory to-day?"

Rex nodded.



While Tony joined the German officers for a drink, Rex was watching a man in flying kit sitting at a table in earnest conversation with a German captain. His flying coat was undone, revealing the tunic—a British R.F.C. tunic!

"What did you find?" asked the major, his eyes narrowing as his professional instinct was aroused.

"Nothing," admitted Rex frankly, "except what I have just told you."

"Well, I think you can forget that; faces are very much alike, particularly in uniform. Be careful," he admonished him. "I should be the last man to discourage you from taking any step, however desperate, in your work, but I should be sorry to lose you."

Rex looked up into the major's keen soldierly face, and felt a glow of pride. While the British Army possessed such splendid officers as Major Trevor, they could not lose the war, he thought proudly.

A New Proposition!

REX was awakened the following morning by the insistent summons of his batman.

"Come along, sir, please!" called the ack-enna. "Fine morning, sir! Wing are on the phone asking for you."

"What's that you say?" asked Rex, as, with tousled hair, he scrambled wild-eyed from the bed. "All right! Get me a cup of tea! I'll be back in a minute!" He flung on a dressing-gown and hurried to the telephone.

"Yes? Lovell here!" he called. "What's that? Oh, good-morning, major! Yes, yes—I will, sir—ten o'clock! Good-bye!" He hung up the receiver, hurried down the corridor, and awakened Tony, who was still sleeping soundly. "Come on, laddie!" he called. "It's late. The dawn patrol will be back before we are dressed, and the major wants us in his office in half an hour."

"I wish you wouldn't wake me up with a start like that," grumbled Tony.

A hurried breakfast and they were on the tarmac warming up their engine before taking off.

"If he wants any more tunnels blowing up you can tell him to do his own blowing!" he shouted in Rex's ear. "Tell him yourself!" jeered Rex as he waved away the checks.

His fitter examined the sky in every direction and saluted briskly—the "all clear" signal. Rex glanced at the wind indicator, taxied out on to the aerodrome, and slowly opened the throttle. The versatile two-seater swung up over the sheds and away in the direction of Neuville. When the abandoned aerodrome lay below, Rex throttled back, side-

slipped neatly over the hangars, landed, and taxied up to the shed which they had taken over for their own use.

"What do you think he wants to see us about?" asked Tony, as they made their way to the major's office.

"I'll be able to tell you better in half an hour!" replied Rex. "We shall soon know! Here we are!"

He tapped sharply on the door of Major Trevor's office, and in response to the curt "Come in!" opened it and entered.

"Hallo! Here you are, then!" said the major. "Take a seat, both of you! I won't be a minute!" He sealed a packet, rang for an orderly, and handed it to him. "Now," he said, when they were alone; and then paused as if uncertain how to begin.

"No more tunnels to be blown up, sir?" asked Rex, with a smile.

"No, not exactly," replied the major seriously, resting his chin on his hand.

Rex started.

"Not exactly. Something like it, eh?"

The major nodded.

"This is the position," he said slowly. "I have a dangerous mission for somebody. Unfortunately, the pilot who would normally undertake it has—er—met with an accident which will prevent him doing it for me."

"Walked into his prop, or something?" asked Rex, professionally interested.

"No," replied the major. "He went over the lines two nights ago and has not returned."

"When are you expecting him?" inquired Rex.

The major shook his head.

"I am not expecting him," he said grimly. "He was shot at dawn this morning at the back of the riding school in Lille."

Rex reached for his cap.

"Ugh!" he shuddered. "Come on, Tony—this is no place for us!"

"Wait!" The major held out a restraining hand. "Listen to what I have to say first. I do not think this mission is as dangerous as the one you have just done. Briefly, it consists of landing behind the German lines and taking a message to an address in Lille. That's all. If you will do this for me I shall be greatly indebted to you; if you will not, I have no intention of pressing you—I must find someone else."

"Tell me more about it," said Rex slowly. "I doubt if

"It will," agreed the major. "You would have to fly over after dark and land wherever you wish, although, obviously, it would have to be somewhere near Lille. You would go to an address I should give you, deliver a letter, wait for a reply, and then get back as soon as possible. One man might do it alone, although if both of you go one might remain by the machine while the other goes on alone in Lille. Two people make it easier to re-start the propeller for the return journey, but that, of course, is your own affair. Your two greatest dangers are these: In the first place, you might land in a trap, and, secondly, your machine might be found while you were away, in which case you would have to get back across the lines, or into Holland or Switzerland, a best you could—and that is no easy matter."

"A trap! What sort of a trap?" asked Tony curiously.

"The Germans have a habit of putting strands of wire across fields in which an aeroplane might land. The result is, of course, that the machine crashes when landing. But if you seriously think of undertaking this mission," went on the major, "I think the time has come when, in fairness to yourselves, you should know more about the work on which you are engaged. Make yourselves comfortable—it will take a minute or two."

He took a fresh cigarette from the case in front of him and tapped it reflectively on the desk.

and tapped it reflectively on the desk. "In the first place, no mention is ever made of secret mission outside Intelligence circles," he continued, "and even then it is only touched upon when it is absolutely necessary. We know that the Germans made secret missions by air very early in the War, and France soon followed suit. As a matter of fact, it was easier for France than it was for Germany, for this reason—after landing, a German agent found himself in France, a hostile country, with every man's hand turned against him. On the other hand, a Frenchman found himself in his own country, or in Belgium, although the territory was occupied by the Germans. But he could always look for support to the peasants or working classes who were still there. After all, they were his own countrymen, and, of course, spoke his own language—another valuable asset. Secret missions soon became the order of the day, and in an attempt to check them France was forced to take the public into her confidence. Listen to this." The major rummaged among some papers in a drawer and took out a printed slip. "This has been broadcast all over France," he added

"In the event of an aircraft landing, when an aeroplane is seen to land outside a military aerodrome, the civil population are required to warn the nearest military authorities with the utmost speed, failing that, a civil authority. If the passenger cannot be captured his appearance should be noted and the authorities warned."

A reward will be given to anyone who captures, or causes to be captured, an enemy agent landed by aeroplane."

"Well, that is clear enough, and it shows how serious things must have become for the French authorities to publish it," said the major, replacing the slip in the drawer. "The usual work of a special mission pilot," he continued, "consists of taking and landing in hostile territory a passenger whose duty it is to collect information of military value—the positions of guns, ammunition dumps, movements of troops, and so on. Sometimes the job is more specific, as it is in the present case, and the agent has to deliver a message or damage a structure of military importance to the enemy. The risks are obvious. If the agent is taken he is shot. A pilot caught landing one is also shot, and his uniform would not save him. Needless to say, only volunteers are chosen for this work—usually civilians who know the district well. I should send such a man with you to-night, Lovell, but for your knowledge of German and the fact that you two are comrades and derive a good deal of moral support from each other's company."

"The pilot, having dropped his man, comes back home, and the affair is finished unless he has previously arranged to pick up his man again at a certain place and time. The agent usually takes with him carrier pigeons, which he releases when he has any special information to impart. Finally, in case you think the work is *infra dig*, it may interest you to know that some of the most famous pilots in the French Flying Corps have volunteered and actually carried out special missions."

The major dropped his voice.

The major dropped his head. "Vedrine and Navarre, both renowned pre-war pilots, and Guynemer, the famous ace, have all done their share of this work. Unfortunately, the work of an agent is unknown to the world, and you can imagine the stoic spirit of the sacrifice that is necessary. The man who gets killed in the fury of combat dies a soldier's death; the man who faces a firing party, against a blank wall, in the cold grey of dawn, does not. Well, now you know more about the business, what do you say? Will you go?" concluded the major.

"This is all very interesting," said Rex, after a moment's pause—"very interesting indeed. Personally, I would rather be at a squadron, but as someone has to do the work—and we happen to be particularly well equipped for it—well, I'm your man, major."

"And you will go to-night?"

"I will."

"And you—"

The major turned to Tony.

"Where Lovell goes I go," he said briefly.

(Rex and Tony have a pretty tough job in front of them, so look out for super-thrills in next week's grand installment of "The Spy-flyers!")

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