

"THE D'ARCY CUP!" RIPPING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN INSIDE!

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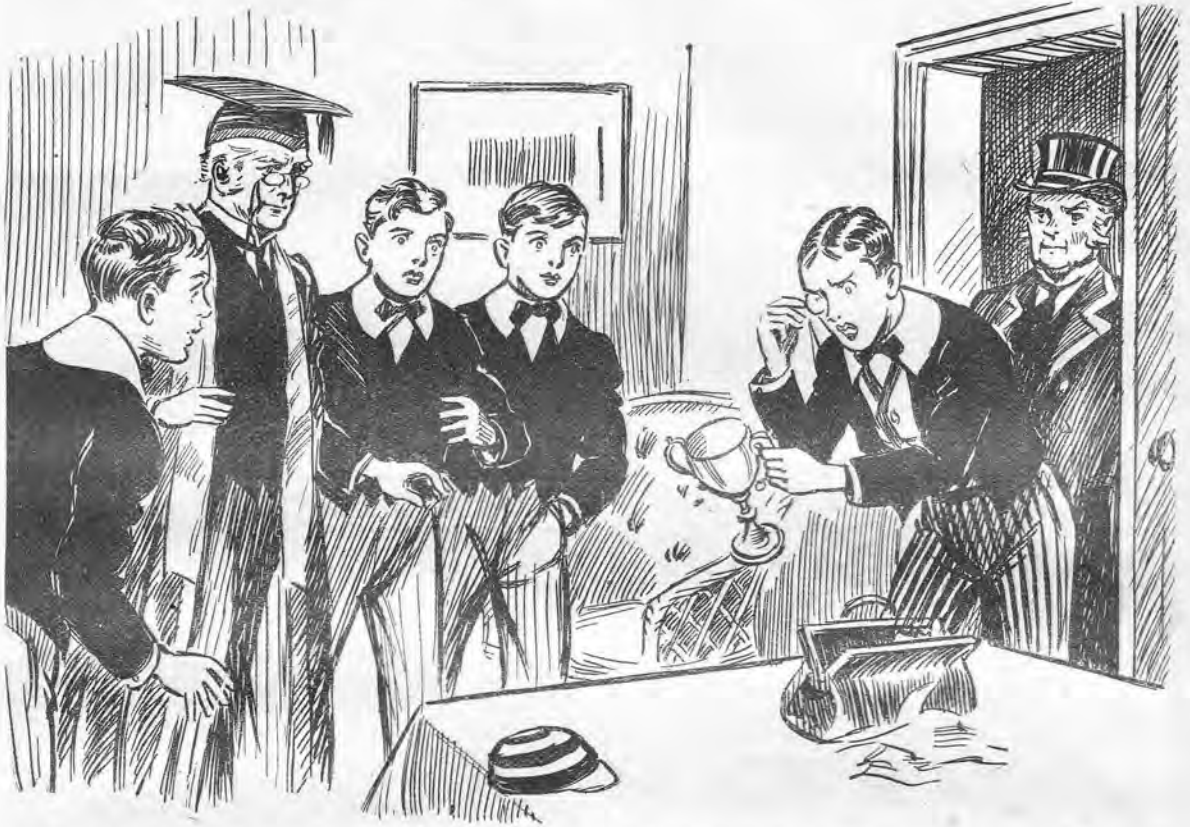
The GEM

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LORD EASTWOOD PRESENTS A CUP FOR WATER POLO—BUT ARTHUR

THE D'ARCY CUP!



Tom Merry & Co. take up water polo at St. Jim's, but when it develops into a free fight in the water and the Head arrives on the bank in time to witness the scene—the new game is banned! Are they downhearted? No!

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy Writes Home!

"I WEALLY must wequest you, deah boys, to keep this wotten table steady!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's. "Mannahs, please get off the table and sit on the sofa—"

"I tell you," declared Tom Merry soberly—"I tell you, Blake, the idea has only to get a start, and it'll become as popular as ice-cream after a cricket match."

"I agree with you there, Merry, my son," said Jack Blake heartily. "Ever since that big match came off at Wayland the fellows have been talking about nothing except water polo. The game will catch on at St. Jim's right enough if we can get a good start."

"Mewwy, deah boy, you are shakin' the wotten table—"

"Dry up, Gussy! We are talking business."

"I wefuse to dwy up, and I wefuse to have this wotten table shaken by Mannahs. How can I wite to the patab—"

"Oh, don't trouble about Gussy, Merry!" said Blake, jerking his thumb towards the elegant form of Arthur Augustus. "He's in a wound-up mood. The point is, what's to be done? It is an excellent idea of mine that the first water-polo match played at St. Jim's should be between the School House and the New House, but we want something to lift the wheeze out of being a wheeze—I mean, something to give it an official flavour, and cause the seniors to open their eyes."

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"Very well put, Blake," said Herbert Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell. "I might even say excellently put."

"Yes, only it's piffle," said Tom Merry. "Still, I see what young Blake was driving at."

"You don't say so, young Merry!"

"Yes, kid, I do. If you just let it get about that the two Houses are playing a water-polo match, the fellows will take about as much notice of it as they do of Skimmy's Determinism. Dry up, Skimmy! I repeat what I said before—what you want is a shield or a cup or something to be played for each season—"

"And as I also said before, you might as well whistle for a breeze," said Jack Blake—"that is, unless you feel like presenting one yourself, Merry."

"Thanks, Blake, for the suggestion; but the fact is, one funny murchant in the coll is enough, and Lowther is still at large. What we want is a pot of some sort—"

"Weally, Mewwy, I considah it's wathah bad form to bang your fist on the table when I am witin' to the patah!" explained Arthur Augustus. "I considah it's weally wotten form, as a mattah of fact. An', Mannahs, I must wequest you to get off the table instantly. If you wefuse, I have no alternative but to thwash you—Ow!"

Without making an answer, Manners of the Shell Form sprang down from the table, the result being that the small table made a short retrograde movement. At the conclusion of this the edge had caught Arthur Augustus on the last buttoned button of his elaborate waistcoat, and had

By Martin Clifford.

caused the swell of St. Jim's to jab his pen violently through the letter he was writing.

"You wottah, Mannahs! You wank outsidah! Blake, I must wequest you as a fwien to second me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus had risen to his feet, a wrathful expression on his face. Manners stood by himself near the window, his knees knocking against one another in pretended fear. The others yelled with laughter—that is, with the exception of Skimpole. The freak of St. Jim's had also risen to his feet.

"Control yourself, D'Arcy!" he exclaimed, laying a hand on the other's shoulder. "Please control yourself! I am convinced that the affair was an accident."

"I intend to thrash him," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I intend to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"I shall prevent you from doing anything so brutal, D'Arcy. I shall use force, if necessary, much as I dislike that method of carrying a point."

"Weally, Skimmy, I can't see what this has to do with you, deah boy. If I wish to thrash Mannahs——"

"Oh, sit down, Gus, and let's get on with the washing!" laughed Tom Merry. "For a silly ass you have your funny moods; but we're out for ideas, not an epidemic of thick ears."

Arthur Augustus was inclined to argue the point, but Manners rose to the occasion.

"I am sorry, Gus! Of course, you are a silly ass, but you can't help it. I'm sorry!"

"There, Gus," grinned Tom Merry, "what more can you want than that? Get on with your letter, and don't talk."

"Yaas, wathah! I must get on with the lettah, because it's wathah important!"

Tom Merry turned to Skimpole.

"Can't you think of something, Skimpy?" he asked. "These other fellows seem to have come in here without their brains. We want a cup or something to play for, or an original way of challenging the New House cads—anything to make a stir and get the chaps to come and watch the first game of water polo played at St. Jim's."

"Couldn't a deputation wait upon Dr. Holmes——"

"What for?"

"I was coming to that. Wait upon Dr. Holmes with a politely worded request for a cup? Really, you know, the Head would have no right to refuse the request, because it is for the common good. As Professor Balmyscrumpet says——"

"Does he? Well, why doesn't he go in a home?" said Tom Merry. "We have about as much chance of getting a pot from Dr. Holmes as we have sense from Skimpy. No offence, Skimpy. No, Blake, I'm afraid there's nothing for it. We must just have the game known as a friendly, and try to work the fellows up as best we can. Oh, do ring off, Gussy!"

"I have finished my lettah, deah boys!"

"Write another, then, only for goodness' sake dry up! We're in a muddle without you; with you chaos would be reigning again. Dry up, ass!"

"I wefuse to dwy up, Tom Mewwy, and undah the cires I considah it wude of you in the extweme to wequest my doin' so. I will wead you the lettah I have witten to the patah."

"My hat! What for?"

"I will wead parts of it, that is——"

"Blake," exclaimed Merry, "has it been out in the sun much? I mean——"

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"Ahem! 'Dear patah, not long ago a wepresentative match was played at Wayland by two well-known watah-polo teams, and a good many of the St. Jim's juniahs watched the game. It was wippin', and we have decided to twy and start the game heah. Tom Mewwy thinks the first game ought to be between the School House and the New House, but to make the mattah a success we wathah think there ought to be a cup to play for. We should considah it a gweat honah if you will pwesent it."

"Twustin' this will weach you in time for you to get a

cup and send it by passengah twain to-mowwow, believe me, your affectionate son——" The west of it is pwivate, deah boys."

At first Tom Merry was inclined to shout with laughter at the wording of the letter; then he wanted to bang Arthur Augustus on the shoulder and call him by endearing names. Evidently the swell of the School House expected something of this, for he got up; but the Shell fellow appeared to have changed his mind again.

"I wathah think the patah will wise to the occasion all wight," Arthur Augustus said. "I shall pwobably wiah him in the mornin' to wemind him. Don't you think the ideah is wathah wippin', deah boys?"

"In a way, it is tremendous," said Tom Merry quietly. "I don't like subbing on your pater, though, Gussy."

"Wats, deah boy! The patah will be delighted."

"Humph! I don't know so much about that. In any case, I think that letter might be worded better—made less abrupt, you know."

"Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "I wespsect your fwieniship, and I wespsect you for othah weasons, but you must admit that I know in what stwain to wite to my patah."

"Yes; but——"

"Thea the mattah is settled," said D'Arcy airily. "I wefuse to listen to anythin' you have to say. Personally, I considah that lettah is wemarkably clear, and if there is one thing more than anothah my patah likes, it is clearness in lettah witin'. I am goin' to express the lettah, so that it will be delivahed to-night."

"Well, it's jolly decent of you, Gussy, and Manners ought to have his head punched for shaking the table. Yes, you ought, Manners!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! But undah the cires I have decided to let him off the feahful thwashin' he deserves. You are safe fwom me, Mannahs, deah boy!"

Manners did his best to look relieved; then Jack Blake chipped in.

"I've got it, you chaps! The very thing!"

"Fiah ahead, deah boy!"

"Nothing dud, mind!"

"Nothing dud ever comes out of Study No. 6, Merry, my son, except when you happen to be leaving it," said Jack Blake. "I propose that we spread the news that the first of the annual cup matches between the two Houses comes off next Saturday, but, in the meantime, a water-polo match is to be played between Figgins' team and Blake's seven——"

"Merry's seven, you mean, Blake!"

"No, I don't!"

"Yes, you do!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "Don't be so silly! Of course it will be Merry's team!"

"I don't think! It was my idea!"

"You'd better be careful, Blake. Sit down, Skimpole!"

"No, Merry, I must refuse to sit down," said the Determinist of St. Jim's, blinking through his huge spectacles at the heated juniors. "As the interested listener to the foregoing argument, I should like to propose that neither of you captain the School House team."

"Eh?"

"What's that?"

"I should like to propose, in addition," went on Skimpole, "that, in recognition of D'Arcy's magnanimous offer to provide the school with a cup, that he be asked, out of courtesy, to captain us. I put it to the meeting, gentlemen!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Humph!"

"Ahem!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake looked at one another, and nodded instantly.

"Good idea, Skimpy!" said the Shell fellow quietly. "I should like to second Skimpy's proposal. If you are all agreeable, we'll ask the one and only to captain us."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, blushing a beautiful scarlet. "Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's was a very popular fellow with almost everyone, but, somehow, it was not often that honour was thrust upon him in that way. It was not his way to take a back seat in matters of importance, but it was also not his luck very often to find himself in a front one. Arthur Augustus was a little overcome.

"Yes, rather!" sang out the fellows, grinning good-naturedly.

"You're skipper, Gus!"

"We aren't going to take a refusal!"

Arthur Augustus felt that the occasion required some slight speech, and he rose to his feet. He was a little too surprised to collect his thoughts, and started somewhat at

random. He had used the phrase "deah boys," had audibly mumbled something about an auspicious occasion, then everyone said "Hear, hear!" and refused to let him go on.

"That's all right, Gus!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You save your breath for polo; you'll need it, I can tell you. I take it, Blake, your idea of a trial game is to aid both sides getting out the best seven for the cup game?"

"That's the ticket. None of us have ever played water polo—unless you can call throwing a footer about at each other in the river, polo—and what we want to do is to get hold of the dark horses who aren't going in for the transformation act and pan out rabbits. If I were Gussy I'd just pick the best swimmers, and watch 'em in the water."

"Yaas, wathah! I'll think the mattah ovah carefully," said Arthur Augustus faintly, for he was only in the recovering stage. "I shall take some time in considewin' the—"

"That's the style," said Tom Merry, blinking at the others. "Don't be rash, you know."

"Bai Jove, wathah not! I shall make a point of not bein' wash—"

"Then we can get on with the next biz. Of course, we shall want a referee—it's the sort of game when one is jolly well needed, I can tell you. I wonder if it would be a cheek to ask Kildare?"

"Kildare knows nothing about water polo, Merry," said Skimpole.

"Monteith, then—"

"Monteith asked me about the rules himself, when we were at the Wayland Baths watching the exhibition game," went on the brainy man of the Shell. "I have a proposal to make, but—"

"Fire it off, kid."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I would be willing to accept the responsible post myself," ventured Skimpole, glancing from one to another to see how his proposal would be taken.

"You?"

"Yes, Blake—"

"But you don't know hockey from noughts and crosses, or a leg break from a goalpost—you don't know anything about games!"

"Excuse me, Blake, I have studied water polo considerably during the last few days," corrected Skimpole. "My reason for doing so was that I was completely astounded at the very exhausted condition the players were in after the game at Wayland. When you consider that they were only in the water eighteen minutes, taking the time allowed for fouls, it really was surprising. I should like to study the game at close quarters, and note the stages this curious exhaustion advances in. In my book on the degeneration of mankind, I have a chapter devoted to an Englishman's worship of games, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of all the funny asses!" chortled Tom Merry. "Never mind, Skimmy, I don't suppose you can help it. Shall we let him ref, you chaps?"

"Might as well," laughed Blake. "Only look up the rules, and all that, Skimmy!"

"Yes, Blake—yes, I will, indeed!" said Skimpole. "I am very pleased that my proposal has been accepted. In fact—"

"Don't mention it," said Tom Merry, glancing at the other curiously.

Herbert Skimpole was one of the puzzles of St. Jim's. He was really clever in his way—that is, he was brilliant in grasping and expounding a wild, new theory. On the other hand, any thesis with a suspicion of sanity and reasonableness about it was below him, and he took no notice of it. Still, he seemed very keen about the water polo.

"The ref part of the business being settled," said Tom Merry, making for the door, "the next thing is to get out a challenge to stir up Figgins and the other New House people. That is your part, Gussy."

"Wight-ho, deah boys! Thank you, Skimmay, for offewin' to wef for us. I considah it wippin' of you!"

But it was really that offer of Skimpole's which caused all the subsequent trouble.

CHAPTER 2.

The Firmness of Arthur Augustus!

"SEEN D'Arcy, Blake?"

"Is Gussy anywhere about?"

Inquiries as to the whereabouts of Arthur Augustus were innumerable that evening, and kindly solicitations as to the state of his health and spirits uncountable.

Jack Blake listened to each fresh inquirer and grinned.

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"Gussy is non est, Reilly, my son," he said, as the time for bed approached. "But if you will leave word as to which place, bar centre-forward, you would like to play in to-morrow's match, I will pass it along to the one and only when I meet him."

"Water polo? Sure, and how did you know it was about that I wanted to speak to him, Merry?" asked the junior from Belfast.

"I was struck by a brain-wave, and guessed, kid," laughed the Fourth-Former. "Twenty-eight people have been asking for Gussy since it got out that he was to be captain. You're the twenty-ninth."

"Well, and where is he, old man?"

"Non est!" said Blake. "If you don't find him there have a hunt round the college."

"You are a rotter, Blake! Look here! Tell Gussy I play goal when I play."

"When you play! Have you ever played?"

"Sure, and I have not!" said Reilly hastily. "But I intend to play goal when I start."

"Which won't be for some time yet," chuckled Blake. "The goalkeeping job is booked. Gussy is going to play there himself, and you can't expect him to stand himself down for someone else who has never played, can he, Skimmy?"

"Yes, Blake, he can," said Skimpole. "It is what D'Arcy ought to do if he is convinced."

"It's what D'Arcy won't do, I'll wager my old age pension, and chance it."

"Of course," went on Skimpole, speaking absently, "human nature is yet in its primitive state when one considers how perfect that nature can become, must become, when selfishness is eliminated from all human motives, when the great ego no longer rules man's action, and—"

"There, Reilly," said Blake gravely, "what did I tell you? You see Skimmy's point?"

"Faith, no! I'm blessed if I do, because I wasn't listening."

"Neither was I; but there was a point, wasn't there, Skimmy?"

"Of course there was, and—"

"Then why not hang your hat on it? Hallo, there goes the bell! Good-night, Reilly!"

"Look here, tell Gussy I can play forward or half just as well as I play goal."

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll tell him, kid, though he'll have too much sense to believe that you can play anywhere. No offence, you know."

Reilly looked as if there had been an offence, and as if it had been taken, but before he could say anything more, Blake wandered away. He tried to enter Study No. 6, but found the door securely locked.

"Who is there, deah boy?"

"I—Blake!"

"Anybody with you? Any wottah who wants to play wathah polo, I mean?"

"No, ass—old chap! No, I'm a solo, as it were! Good! My hat!"

Arthur Augustus had opened the door cautiously, and once his chum was inside had locked it again. The spectacle which had called forth Blake's exclamation of surprise was a collection of twisted notes lying on the floor.

"Yaas, bai Jove! They were all pushed undah the door," explained Arthur Augustus. "I wufused to open the door, and so the fellows wote notes, and pushed them into the woom. They are wequests for places in to-morrow's wathah-polo team."

"Jingo! You must be having a time, kid."

"Yaas, wathah! I've six centre-forwards to choose fwom, and—"

"That won't give you any trouble, though."

"No, Tom Mewwy—"

"Merry!" exclaimed Blake in indignant surprise. "You promised to play me there!"

"Yaas, wathah! Only Mewwy says I pwomised him before!"

"Rot! Piffle! Just as if you would. Tom Merry has made a mistake."

"Yaas, wathah! I will point that out to him. Bothah! There goes the wretched bell."

The pair left the study, Jack Blake affectionately linking his arm in that of Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather! Don't forget, Gussy, rub it in if Merry tries any old rot on with you. Be firm, and tell him you'd like to play him centre-forward, only you have the good of the House to consider, and must choose the better man. Don't let him soft-soap you, or anything like that."

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! I'd like to meet the fellow who could get wound me with soft-soap, bai Jove!"

"That's the style," said Jack Blake. "Hallo, there's Merry himself hanging about at the bottom of the stairs. Ten to half a one he's looking for you, Gussy!"

"No, Figgy, and you haven't licked us yet!"

The referee started the game briskly, and this time Tom Merry gained the ball. It was a near thing, but it was his hand which scooped the ball out of the water, and it meant a good deal to his team that it was.

"Wing it, Lowther!" he panted, back-flipping wildly. But Lowther did not wing the ball. He held it until Tom Merry had swum past his man, then neatly dropped the ball before him.

"Pass, Merry!"

"Wing it, man!"

But Tom Merry knew better than that. Blake and his other forwards were being marked like shadows, while he had just a few inches of rope, and he had the ball. To pass was not the game in those circumstances. He just went on instead.

Fatty Wynn made a grand effort to knock the ball from his hand, and even succeeded in touching it with the tips of his fingers, but it was too late. Tom Merry had got his throw-in, and the next thing he saw as he came up was that of the School House partisans on the river-bank hurling their caps in the air and yelling at the top of their voices.

"Oh, it's all very well for you to talk, Gussy!" laughed Tom Merry, as they scrambled out of the water to take their macintoshes from the fellows who had been minding them. "You've been treading water all the afternoon, not floundering about. There's Cousin Ethel, by Jove!"

"Yaas, wathah! But I weally can't speak to her with my hair wet and wumped. I pwopose we wave, and—"

But Cousin Ethel ordained it otherwise. As the polo teams moved to where Dr. Holmes was standing, she stopped her cousin with a laugh.

"Well played, Arthur!" she exclaimed. "You did awfully well! And I am so glad the School House won."

But the fellows were collecting round Dr. Holmes by now, for the Head meant to present the D'Arcy cup in the open, and not in the Hall.

Arthur Augustus saw what was to happen, and was struck by a point.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy!" he exclaimed, catching his chums up. "I wathah think it is impos for me to take the cup, seem' my patah pwesented it."

"Rot, ass!"

"Well, weally—"

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JIM'S!



JACK BLAKE.

Jack Blake, leader of the Fourth Form in the School House, is also the head of Study No. 6, in the Fourth passage, which he shares with his three chums, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby. He asserts that he is also the leader of the School House Juniors and even of the whole Junior School, but Tom Merry and Figgins do not quite agree with him on those points! Despite this friction, Blake is on the very best terms with Merry and Figgy—except, of course, when Form or House rows are in progress! A sound man at all games, Blake plays in all junior teams for both the School and his House. Blake is a Yorkshireman and proud of it—he even feels a bit sorry for those chaps who happen to have had the misfortune to be born elsewhere! Hard-headed, good-natured, and a great sportsman, Blake is popular on all sides.

The scores were equal once more.

Then they waited for the restart. None of them knew whether there was half a minute or two minutes to go, but there could not be much more of it. Then there was a splash, and the ball was in the centre again.

Wildly the two rivals swam for it, and Figgins just got there, half a stroke ahead, but this time it was not enough. Tom Merry seemed to fling himself upon the ball, and brushed it out of the New House fellow's hand as he swam furiously past him.

Wynn did not mean to let Tom Merry get away again, and was on him like a flash, when Tom Merry passed to Jack Blake.

Blake had been watching the referee, and had seen him finger his whistle, as if it were only a matter of seconds now, and that decided the wing man.

"Now for it!" he muttered; and he let fly.

It was a very long shot, but it was beautifully judged.

With a great effort the New House goalkeeper tried to get his hand to the ball, but it was beyond his reach, and an instant later it was in the corner of the net.

Pheep!

"All out!" called the referee; and the fellows swam for the side, confident now that the excitement was over that they could not have kept afloat another minute.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's over at last, and I can't say I'm sorry. I thought I was going to sink for good that last time."

"But we've won, deah boys. We've beaten them, and, that's all that mattahs."

"Oh, you dream again, old kid! Blake?"

"Cheerio!"

"Keep near Gussy, will you?" said Tom Merry.

And, somewhat to the Head's surprise, Jack Blake took the advice in a literal sense, for when Arthur Augustus stepped forward to receive the cup, Jack Blake went with him, holding his arm. Then as soon as the swell of the School House had received the cup, his chum gently, but firmly, took it from him.

"You may look at it, Gussy," he said; "you may even touch it, but only when someone older and wiser has hold of it. Are you trying to say something?"

"Yaas, wathah! Tea will be weady at five, bai Jove!"

"Tea! What tea?"

"The spweed I am givin' in honah of the gweat polo match, deah boy. The fivah awwirid by expwess all wight, and Figgins and his team have accepted invites. Bai Jove, I wathah think it ought to become a custom at St. Jim's that the winnin' team at watah polo stands a feed to the othahs."

"Ah, there's wisdom in that, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus had very wisely left all arrangements in the experienced hands of Fatty Wynn once again, and, without saying much, Fatty Wynn had surpassed himself.

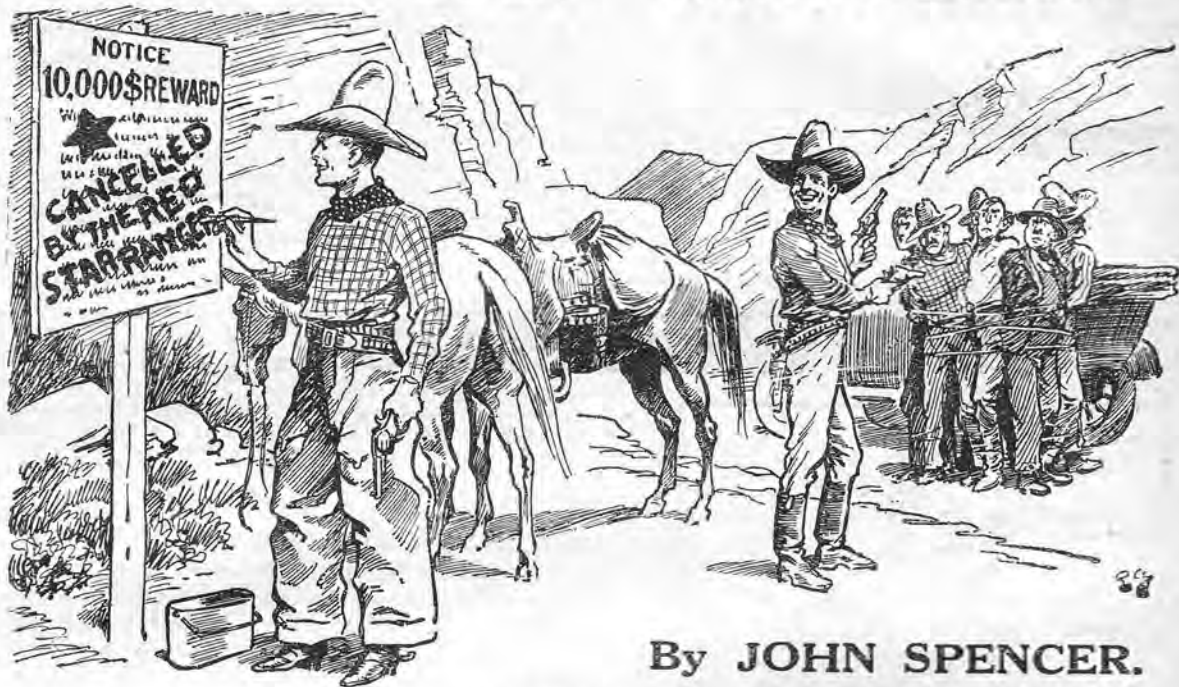
THE END.

(Look out for next week's ripping yarn "The Boy with Too Many Friends!" It's a wow!)

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FURTHER THRILLING CHAPTERS IN OUR WESTERN ADVENTURE YARN!

RED STAR RANGER!



By JOHN SPENCER.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED:

JERRY GARRISON and his pal FUSTY have been wrongfully outlaid by JASPER PRIVETT, the rascally Mayor of Red Rock. They know that Privett is in league with a bandit gang in the mountains and the two pals find the bandits' stronghold and blow it up. Slade, the leader, and his bandits rob the bank in Mongoose and hide the loot, but Jerry and Fusty dig it up and return it to the bank. Knowing that they are suspected of the robbery themselves they capture HUGO ENNIS, the Sheriff of Mongoose, and take him to the mountains, where they are able to show him proof of their story about Slade's bandits. Ennis agrees to help them trap Privett by sending a car load of gold to Red Rock and letting Privett know about it. But in the car will be vigilants—not gold!

(Now read on.)

The Gold Car!

SLADE and his men rode into Mongoose towards the wane of the afternoon, and from then on till late that night they hung around the sheriff's office, talking mostly to Squint Lane. Jim Rawson was with them for a little while, but later strolled away home. By that time the crescent moon was up and the stars were out. Imagine Jim Rawson's surprise when he found the sheriff seated in his snuggery with the blinds down, the curtains drawn, and only the light of the flickering wood fire to see by.

"Sheriff, what in heck——" Jim Rawson began, but Ennis interrupted him.

"I know. Slade and his boys are in town, waitin' for me," he said. "Well, they ken wait. Jim Slade and Jasper Privett, Mayor of Red Rock, are back of the two bank robberies. As far as I see it, the Red Star Ranger and Joe McKraw have got a clean sheet. The gang aim at bumping off the two outlaws. I figure to get 'em pardon, and I've got a plan. I shan't be able to show up in Mongoose, and you'll have to carry it through for me. Think you've gotta enough hoss sense to do it?"

Rawson grinned.

"I was on the premises holdin' out both hands when the grey matter was give out," he answered.

"All right. Then, listen, Jim!" For fifteen minutes on end the sheriff talked, and Rawson made mental notes. Hugo Ennis ate in his friend's house, and in the wee small hours, when the streets were deserted, he led his pony into the quiet, lonely ways, mounted there, and rode off.

By that time Slade and his gang had grown tired of waiting and decamped. They planned to comb the mountains for the Red Star Ranger and Fusty. But the Red Star Ranger, Fusty Joe McKraw, and Sheriff Hugo Ennis, before the morning broke, were safely hidden at a lone

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ranch ten miles from Mongoose, which belonged to Dave Ennis, Hugo's brother. The ponies were turned loose in a corral. Jerry Garrison and Fusty agreed not to show themselves to the cowboys employed by Ennis, and Hugo had a quick ride in to Mongoose by car waiting for him at any time he liked to make it.

When Squint Lane strolled into the sheriff's office the next morning, he was surprised to find Jim Rawson in possession. And Jim seemed to be using the telephone.

"Hallo! Whar's Ennis?" demanded Squint.

"Not showed up. Didn't kem home last night. His missus is kind of anxious."

Squint frowned suspiciously.

"Didn't I tell you I saw him ride outa town with Jerry Garrison and Joe McKraw yesterday mornin'?" he said.

"You did. I've sent the boys out scouting. Can't think what Ennis wanted with them outlaws. Mebbe he's dead 'n cold mutton by this time."

"You takin' charge?"

"Yep. The sheriff would want it."

"Better let me handle the job, Jim," said Lane eagerly.

"Naw! I'm takin' over. But I'm kinda worried, Squint."

"What about?"

"The bank's sendin' a lot of gold over to the State Bank at Red Rock. Wish the sheriff wuz hyar. With the Red Star Ranger and Fusty robbing banks, I hate the thought of this gold going by car, and no escort. Supposin' the Ranger and Fusty hold it up on the road?"

Lane slumped into a chair.

"Just wait a minit," he said. "How could the Ranger and Fusty know the gold was going by road? If the bank sends an ordinary car without escort the car would be in Red Rock, and the gold safely deposited in the bank before the news leaked out."

match on to-day—we shan't get any of the seniors to watch us, after all."

"Well, that weally doesn't mattah," said Arthur Augustus. "This is only a twial game; the weal match is next Saturday, for the cup my patah is pwesentin'."

"Yes, of course," said Figgins. "Jolly sportin' of your pater, Gussy! Seven minutes each way, isn't it, excluding fouls?"

"Yes," said Skimpole, hastily turning over the leaves of his rule-book—"yes, that is correct."

"Well, we're ready as soon as you are, Gussy," said Figgins. "And may the better team win!"

"Yaas, wathah! Heah, heah! Are you weady?"

"Yes, kid!"

"All in, then!" sang out Skimpole; and in they all dived, the School House fellows in white caps, and Figgins' team in blue.

A beautiful stretch of the Rhyl had been chosen for the match, the portion roped in with the corks looking even clearer and bluer than the rest, while each bank was lined with expectant juniors.

Under the corks the fellows dived and took up their positions in the opposite goals.

Skimpole clambered into his light boat, which was to be rowed up and down by Reilly.

"Hurry up, ass!" called out Figgins. "We don't want to get cold before we start. Here, where are you off to?"

"Dear me! I have left the whistle on the river-bank!" exclaimed Skimpole. "How careless of me! Row back as rapidly as you can, Reilly!"

Skimpole obtained his whistle, gained the course again, then remembered that the ball was also on the river-bank. Jack Blake and one or two of the others became wrathful at that, and likened the brainy man of the Shell to many things; but at last Skimpole was ready to start, and he carefully threw the ball into what he considered to be the centre of the pitch. But Skimpole was short-sighted, and he gave the New House a decided advantage.

Figgins got the ball and back-flipped it to one of his backs, and then they all swam furiously towards Arthur Augustus. Wynn, the fat junior from the New House, swam quite well, and was as buoyant as a cork, and he dribbled the ball down the centre.

Mellish went for him, and Wynn promptly swam over his opponent, causing him to swallow more water than he had ever done at one time in his life before.

Then, when Mellish came up again at last, choking and spluttering, Figgins pushed him down in the excitement of the moment.

It was a rank foul, and although Skimpole whistled loudly, Mellish could not hear him, being somewhere at the bottom of the river. He came up again at last, choking with anger.

Skimpole whistled as loudly as he could, and ordered a foul.

"Who for, ass?" panted Tom Merry.

Skimpole did not know.

He was inclined to think both sides had offended, and some humorist, who was an ardent footballer, suggested throwing the ball up.

"An excellent idea," said Skimpole, taking the advice literally. "Give me the ball, please!"

The ball was thrown to him; then Skimpole restarted the game. He did so by throwing the ball rather excitedly into Mellish's face.

"Dear me!" gasped the amateur referee. "I can't give a foul against myself for rough play, though I believe I have caused Mellish to drown. No, there he is!"

And there Mellish was. He rose to the surface in a very excited state of mind, and promptly grasped Figgins round the neck to prevent himself sinking again.

They came up locked in one another's arms, and gasping. Then Skimpole made a mistake. He gave a foul against Tom Merry, who wasn't within three yards of the spot.

A whole chorus of yells and shouts greeted the decision from the river-bank, and Skimpole hastily turned over the leaves of his book of rules.

He learnt, by means of a footnote there, that it was a sign of weakness in a referee to alter his decision, and might possibly lead to the players getting out of hand; and Skimpole refused to run the risk.

"My only aunt!" panted Tom Merry. "I never touched the ball or anyone! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole had whistled for the free throw to be taken, and as Herries happened to have the ball at the time, the School House back at once took it. As the foul had been given against his own side, there was a general outcry at the time, but Skimpole hadn't noticed anything wrong.

After that there were so many fouls that no referee living could have kept pace with them. All the fellows in

the water could swim well, but scarcely one of them had had enough practice with a polo ball to be able to throw it, and as each waited, ball in hand, endeavouring to keep his head above water, someone else would come floundering up. Then someone else always acted in exactly the same way. He first knocked the ball out of his opponent's hand, then swam over and pushed him down towards the bottom of the river.

Skimpole glanced at his page on "Hints to Referees," and became possessed of the knowledge that too much whistle often spoils a game, that minor infringements had sometimes better be left unseen. Consequently, he gave up whistling, and took to looking at his watch, to see how time was getting on. He remembered, then, that he had forgotten to take the time of the start, and would have to depend on his judgment to guess the initial seven minutes.

As things panned out, this slight discrepancy on the part of Skimpole did not matter, for the trend of the first water-polo match at St. Jim's took a sudden turn.

Figgins accidentally kicked Mellish in the ribs as he tried to dribble past him, and Mellish acted as he would not have dared to in a calmer moment. He hit out at Figgins, and caught that usually excellently tempered junior on the side of the head with his fist.

Figgins was only human. He flung the heavy, wet ball at the other's head and missed him. Just behind Mellish, Tom Merry was treading water, and before he could put up his hand to defend himself, the ball caught him in the face.

"Ow!" howled Tom Merry before he sank. "Ow!"

"Foul! Foul, you rotter!"

"Play on!" shouted Skimpole, who was still trying to work out the time question. "Play on!"

Tom Merry came to the surface then, spluttering and wrathful. Under the impression that it was Kerr who had wrought the shameful deed, he trudged furiously towards the New House fellow, flung his arms round his neck, and pushed him down.

Then Mellish succeeded in ducking Fatty Wynn, apparently because his ribs still ached where Figgins had kicked him.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" gasped Arthur Augustus, swimming away from the goal. "Stop fightin', deah boys! This is wathah-polo, not a scwap!"

"All right, Tom Merry—all right, you rotter!"

"Who threw that ball in my face?"

"All right, Figgins, you rotter!"

"You shrieking lunatic, Herries!"

"I pwotest!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "As captain of the School House, I pwotest! Skimmay, whistle them up, you uttah duffah!"

"Play on!" said Skimpole, a long, slender finger on his watch. "Only three seconds to go. Play on!"

Then he whistled loudly.

"The first half is ovah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway desist, Mellish, you wottah! Ow!"

Kerr had excitedly ducked Arthur Augustus from behind, and because he had not been expecting it, Arthur Augustus had taken in huge draughts of the Rhyl.

When Arthur Augustus had recovered, he appeared to have forgotten his recent attitude towards the combatants. He at once became one of them. It was only then that Skimpole grasped the situation.

"Dear me! What are you doing?" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Reilly. "Look at 'em! They're ducking each other in turn! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole instantly blew a series of terrific blasts on his whistle, and seemed surprised that no notice was taken of them.

"I shall order them all out of the water, Reilly," he exclaimed severely. "I have the power to do so. Row in amongst them while I lift up this rope of cork. Tom Merry, leave the water!"

"Who threw that ball at me?"

"Bai Jove, you wottah!"

"My only hat!"

"Leave the water, Blake—leave the water instantly! Row up, Reilly! Row up as hard as you can!"

Reilly obeyed. It was unwise of him, for no sooner had he shipped his sculls than Fatty Wynn grasped the side of the light boat.

The boat listed violently, and Reilly was almost shot overboard. That excited the junior from Belfast.

"Leave go!" he yelled. "Sure, and if you don't leave go, Wynn—"

Then Tom Merry also caught hold of the side of the boat. As Figgins attempted to duck him at the same moment, the boat gave a still further list, then gracefully turned turtle, and Reilly and Skimpole vanished into the depths.

At that point in the scene a figure, in a Master of Arts gown, appeared on the river-bank, an elderly figure, who appeared to be trying to make up his mind whether to be the more surprised or angry. It was Dr Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's, and a hush fell on the excited crowd of juniors lining the banks.

At first Dr. Holmes could not believe that fourteen of his pupils were fighting in the water; then, as he caught sight of Tom Merry's usually cheery face, he came to the conclusion that he must believe it.

"Boys!" he thundered. "Boys, how dare you!"

"Figgins, I wegard you as a wetch!"

"Who threw that ball at me?"

"All right, Kerr!"

"Boys—boys, come out of the water instantly!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That was Dr. Holmes' voice!"

The fight stopped now, the juniors panting; then a bumpy head and a pair of spectacles came from beneath the boat.

"Catch hold of me, someone!" panted Skimpole. "Catch hold of me, or I shall sink again!"

"There you are, ass!" growled Tom Merry. "Where's Reilly?"

"At the bottom of the wivah, I wathah think," groaned Arthur Augustus.

The Irish junior came up grinning, but he looked solemn enough when he caught sight of the Head.

"Boys," thundered Dr. Holmes, in an awful voice again—"boys, come ashore instantly!"

The juniors did not answer, but swam for the river-bank in various frames of mind.

"Merry, what is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?" demanded Dr. Holmes. "What are you doing in the river?"

"Playing water polo, sir—at least, we started playing that."

"And concluded with a fight. Each of you take two hundred lincs. Where did you obtain those goalposts and the ball?"

"From the Wayland Baths, sir!"

"Then see that they are sent back again at the earliest opportunity," went on the Head, angrier than he usually allowed himself to become. "I forbid water polo being played again by you juniors. You understand that? Now go back to the school, and show me the lincs before breakfast-to-morrow."

And he strode away in great anger.

CHAPTER 4.

In Search of an Idea!

"**B**AI Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I wegard that as wotten—wotten in the extreme!"

"Yes, ass, so do I!" growled Blake. "Pretty fine polo captain you are, and no mistake! Why didn't you keep the fellows in hand?"

"Well, weally, Blake, aftah the mannah in which you behaved—"

"Oh, go and eat coke! But I don't blame you as much as I do Skimmy. Skimmy, you ought to be boiled in oil for being such an ass."

"Dear me, I fail to see—"

"Why didn't you keep the game under control, you shrieker?" demanded Jack Blake, beginning to laugh.

"I whistled as hard as I could, and I ordered you and Tom Merry out of the water."

"Like your blessed cheek to think of it, then. Anyhow, it's done now, and it's no good locking the stable door after the horse is stolen—I mean, it's too late to chain you and Gussy up."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off! What do you think about it, Merry?"

"That you are a set of shrieking duffers!" exclaimed the hero of the Shell. "My hat, it was the most exciting time we've had for a long time. Personally, I blame no one but Gussy; he should have kept the players in hand," he added, with a grin.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What's the use of having a captain if he doesn't assert himself?"

"You wottahs wefused to listen."

"Of course we did," said Herries. "Do you think we were going to listen to a tailor's dummy like you?"

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, screwing his monocle into his left eye—"bai Jove, but you are sailing wathah close on the border line of good form. I do not wish to thwash you, but—"

"Oh, come on, let's get changed!" growled Tom Merry. "Of all the rotten games in this world, water polo is the rottenest. I shall never feel thirsty again."

The combined teams had slipped on their overcoats, and

were making for the school. They were being followed by a large crowd of chuckling juniors.

As the school gates were gained, Skimpole spoke his mind.

"One moment, please," he said, with a severe cough. "I have something to say."

"Not Determinism?" said Tom Merry uneasily. "Don't say it's a speech on Determinism."

"No, Merry, I do not wish to discuss a social question. All I wish to observe is that I have refereed my last polo match. I do not consider that I was supported in a sportsmanlike manner."

"No, ass, you were doused in the river like an eel instead."

"In fact," went on Skimpole, taking no notice of the interruption—"in fact, I was not supported at all. I distinctly ordered you and Blake out of the water, and you refused to obey. Therefore, I hand over the whistle—the—no, I cannot do that, because I have lost it in the river. But I resign. I have refereed my last polo match."

"My dear kid," chuckled Tom Merry, "don't waste your breath telling us that. We knew it before. If anyone will start a subscription for providing Skimpole with a keeper in future, I am ready to contribute half-a-crown. My opinion of the whole thing is rotten."

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, and Arthur Augustus entertained similar opinions, and retired to Study No. 6 in uncommunicative frames of mind. Arthur Augustus flung off his coat.

He looked sternly at his fellow poloists, and his fellow poloists eyed him up and down, but none of them said anything. Then they got to work with towels.

Arthur Augustus had got as far as trousers and waistcoat before his eye encountered an object which, under ordinary circumstances would have attracted attention the moment the chums had entered the study. It was a square brown-paper parcel.

"For you, too, Gussy," exclaimed Jack Blake. "Perhaps it's the collar and chain at last."

"Weally, Blake, deah boy, some of your wemarks cannot be considahed in any othah light but that of wibald and wicidulous," said Arthur Augustus, unfastening his parcel. "If you will only look at the mattah pwopahly, you will see that it was your wotten behaviour which— Bai Jove!"

"What's up?"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Herries.

"Phew! It's the polo cup!"

"Yaas, wathah, and a note frowm the patah sayin' he hopes it will meet with our approval, bai Jove. Well, if this isn't wotten in the extweme, I wathah think nothin' is."

The chums looked at one another blankly. There was the polo cup all right, a beautiful solid silver affair, which must have cost twenty guineas, and the Head had decreed that there was to be no more water polo at St. Jim's.

"What on earth is to be done?" exclaimed Blake.

"This is the limit, and no mistake. You'll have to send the pot back, Gussy!"

"No feah, bai Jove! That would wuffle the patah wathah a gweat deal, and I don't want to wuffle the patah. It is bad form; and, besides, if I return this pot, the next time I wite for anythin' in a huwwy, the patah will want to considah the mattah, and it may not be convenient to me, deah boys."

Blake laughed.

"What a head you have, Gussy," he said, "and what a kindly heart not to want to ruffle the patah. But the fact remains, you'll have to send that pot back."

"I shall flatly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Blake."

"But you must, ass! You can't keep a cup like that for yourself when it has been presented to the coll, can you?"

"Of course not, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, looking puzzled. "I wathah think we are up a twee, deah boy."

"Anyway, there is only one thing to be done, Gussy, and you'll have to do it."

"If you are wewefewin' to your pwoposal about sendin' the pot back to the patah, I must wefuse to entahtain it," said Arthur Augustus. "No, Blake, I weally mean what I say, and you know me well enough to know that I can be as firm as a wock."

"As obstinate as a mule, you mean. But listen to reason, ass."

"I wefuse to listen to weason. I wefuse to listen to anythin' about sendin' the pot back. Bai Jove, you've no ideah how watty the patah would feel. I must wefuse to make my patah feel watty, even to please you, Blake, deah boy; so the mattah is settled."

"All right, then. What are you going to do about it?"

"I wathah think I don't know. I wondah if the patah would object if we waffled it?"

"Waffled it? What's waffled? Oh, raffled! Yes, you



"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Figgins. Then he stopped laughing. Arthur Augustus, in avoiding Blake with the stream of water, caught Figgins just under the left ear. From that moment Figgins failed to see the humour of the thing!

duffer, he would object. And, besides, raffling it isn't an athletic sport."

"No, Blake, I wathah think it wouldn't come undah that headin'. You are wight; wafflin' is out of the question."

"What about going to the Head, and asking him to let us play water polo, after all?" asked Herries innocently.

"What do you think of that, Gussy?"

"Wippin'! Of course, that is what must be done, bai Jove. I pwpopose we wait heah while Hewwies intahviews the Head and wemonstwares—"

"Not too quickly, Gussy, old man," said Herries. "My proposal is that we wait here while you interview the Head. We all know your tactful ways."

But Arthur Augustus was not to be persuaded. He had seen the expression on Dr. Holmes' face when the first fight in the water had been stopped, and he did not want to see a similar expression for some time. He flatly refused to visit the Head, and Herries hinted that he was selfish. This was also without avail. Arthur Augustus refused with praiseworthy firmness.

"I wegard the wpposal made by Hewwies as widiculous," he exclaimed. "I considah that no one but an uttah duffah would have thought of such a wpposal. I must wefuse to have anythin' to do with it."

"Then what on earth are you going to do, Gussy?" inquired Jack Blake. "You've told us what you won't do. Let's hear what you will do now."

"I don't know, deah boy. I haven't considahed the mattah yet, but I wathah think that some sort of a wace ought to take the place of the water polo. A crosso-country wun, for instance."

"We've had a cross-country run at St. Jim's since the flood, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! I did not mean a crosso-country wun exactly, but somethin' of that natuah."

"A cross-country walk, then?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, that's about the only form of athletics there isn't a pot for at St. Jim's," laughed Jack Blake. "No, Gussy; if you are looking for a new way of competing for this ripping cup, you'd better give up, and let someone else look for you. Still, when you come to think of it, I suppose there must be something new."

"Yaas, wathah! A wun backwards, for instance."

Blake looked at his chum sadly.

"Yes; there is that, isn't there, Gussy? And then there's also a long jump on the back of your neck—not to say cupties at draughts. But I take it we want something sensible."

"Yaas, wathah! I pwpopose we considah the mattah."

Blake looked anxiously at the fire-screen before the grate; Arthur Augustus gazed up at the ceiling, and the other pair looked out of the window. For five minutes they sat in silence, then Blake broke the pause.

"Bothered if I can think of anything!" he exclaimed. "I'd sort of set my mind on this polo, and I can't get rid of the idea. What is to-morrow?"

"Wednesday, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You don't mean to say that you have forgotten that we are to take Cousin Ethel to the quawwy to see that cave, have you?"

"Of course, I haven't, ass! I propose we put the matter before Cousin Ethel, you chaps. Cousin Ethel is ripping at helping a fellow with ideas!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that a wemarkably good ideah, Blake!"

"Of course, it is!" grinned Blake. "Then the matter is settled until to-morrow afternoon. What do you say if we go and get a little cricket practice until tea?"

This was also greeted as a good idea, and the four promptly finished dressing, and sallied forth to the magnificent playing pitches which were the pride of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy's Mistake!

"H A, ha, ha! Going to have some more water polo, Gussy?"

"Doesn't he look a freak?"

"Look at his tie," said Mellish, grinning hugely. "And his socks!"

Arthur Augustus walked on across the quad, his nose slightly in the air, and his monocle sparkling in the strong afternoon sun. He did not deign to notice Mellish, or his remarks.

Mellish, and the one or two who were with him, followed Arthur Augustus up, talking loudly.

"His bags would want some beating."

"And you couldn't beat his brand-new blazer if you tried."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned, glanced at them, and strolled on, and this time Mellish and his companions did not follow.

Standing by the gate were Blake, Tom Merry, and Figgins, all neater than usual, and all glancing impatiently up at the college clock.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Come on, you ass! We shall be late; and it's a decent walk! My hat!"

"Phew!" whistled Figgins.

Blake blinked solemnly at Arthur Augustus, then held his hands before his eyes.

"Take it away!" he moaned. "Please take it away!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see what is causin' this widdleous mirth! I twust my twousahs are cweased in the wopah place?"

"And you will not chain it up, Blake," said Figgins. "How many times have I told you to buy it a collar?"

"Weally, Figgins, undah the cirts, I wegard your we-marks as not only widdleous, but vergin' on bad form. Is anythin' the mattah with me? Is my blazah on cwooked, or my tie uneven? Do you know, I wathah think I ought to have wun to a blue wibbon on my panamah instead of this wed, on account of the colour of my socks, bai Jove!"

The other three did not answer. As a matter of fact, there was nothing to be said, for Arthur Augustus had never in his life exhibited such a striking exterior, nor yet such an original colour-scheme which included the hues violet, yellow, and a blue, but which, nevertheless, was tasteful. His socks were of shot silk, and so passed descrip-

tion, while tie and panama hat-band were of delicate red silk. And in addition to this Arthur Augustus had carefully parted his hair in the approved Continental style—that is to say, in the exact centre, and right back almost to the neck.

"Weally, though, deah boys, am I all wight?"

Tom Merry looked at his own clean flannels, and noted that he had not been as careful as he might have been in folding them up. Then he looked back at Arthur Augustus.

"You haven't your equal, Gussy."

"Thank goodness he hasn't!" grinned Blake. "But come on; we shall be late!"

"Weally, though, deah boys, am I all wight?"

"Cover up those socks, Gussy," said Figgins, turning away. "Please cover up those socks."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"There's one thing, anyway," said Tom Merry. "When Cousin Ethel sees you she'll just shriek with laughter, Gussy."

"I wathah think Cousin Ethel will do nothin' of the kind, Mewwy. Cousin Ethel would nevah shwiek with laughah at anyone—"

"She will at you, kid, and chance it. But we've wasted enough time, and the sooner we get a move on us the better. The grub's in the gym."

"Yaas, wathah—and that weminds me! I have forgotten somethin'. I won't be a moment, deah boys."

"Two minutes are all we're going to wait, Gussy. Be a second more than that, and you'll find us gone."

"I will wun like anything," said Arthur Augustus.

He was back again within the stipulated time, carrying a small leather bag of the football bag shape. The others were armed with scouting haversacks loaded with provisions, and a start was made.

It was a magnificent afternoon, and quite warm, with a cloudless sky that seemed to offer all that was needed to raise the juniors' spirits to the highest possible point.

It was the day after the fiasco on the river, and though the rival polo teams had had much to put up with that morning from the chaff of those who had not been selected to play, the prospect of a picnic spent with their girl chum, Arthur Augustus' cousin, compensated for all.

"And it will be wathah wippin' to see the cave itself apart from the picnic," said Arthur Augustus, as they swung along at a steady three and a half miles an hour. "I heah it is wathah watlin'!"

"Waitin'? What's— Oh, rattlin'!" laughed Tom Merry. "Yes, they are all that. You see, Figgy, there's been a landslide in the quarry, and it has left a ripping cave. Cousin Ethel wrote to the one and only, and said we were to take her there this afternoon—that's it, isn't it, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! Cousin Ethel is stayin' at Cleveland Lodge, you know!"

"So I hear," said Figgins, slaughtering wild flowers with his stick. "Did—did Cousin Ethel say anything about my coming with you, Gussy?"

"Of course she didn't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "She specially asked that I should be one of the party, I believe—"

"I don't think!" growled Blake. "Not much! The only name mentioned in her note to Gussy was mine, as a matter of fact, so you two kids needn't get excited with one another!"

"No, wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "And Jack Blake is wight, too! Cousin Ethel did mention his name. She said she hoped Blake hadn't got a swelled head on account of the cricket score he wun up against Figgins' team last week, and then added that I wasn't to give Blake that message. Bai Jove! And now I have given it."

"Yes," growled Blake, "you have, haven't you, you prize duffer? But suppose you chaps stop chuckling and step it out!"

There was a winding Sussex lane which led from Cleveland Lodge and joined the high road on the way to the quarry, and it was at this point of juncture, Arthur Augustus said, they were to meet Cousin Ethel. As was correct, the juniors gained the lane a few minutes before time, and they sat down on an ancient tree-trunk to wait.

Tom Merry glanced in at the mouth of his haversack.

"Hope you've got some decent provisions, Figgy," he said. "You can bet we shall all be jolly hungry by the time we've done the cave. My hat, this seems all right!"

"Oh, you can put Gussy's panama on it the grub is all right!" laughed Figgins. "I just collected the money from you fellows, handed it over to Fatty Wynn, and asked him to do his best on the commission of a seed cake. Fatty said he knew just the things Cousin Ethel likes."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that wathah a good ideah on your part, Figgy. Wynn is a wondah at gettin' p'ovisions togethah. Bai Jove, there's someone comin' up the lane!"

The swell of St. Jim's jumped to his feet, straightened his



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tie—which had never been anything but straight—and gave his panama hat a still more decided tilt in the right direction.

Tom Merry even brushed his trouser-knees, while Figgins actually blushed a little. He always did, somehow, when Cousin Ethel was approaching.

"I wondah if it would be more cowwect if we were to wandah on and meet her?" suggested Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I wathah think it would."

"No; better wait here," muttered Figgins. "I—I say, you chaps, is there a mark on my collar?"

"Yes, I should think there was," said Tom Merry without looking. "I thought at first you had got one of those spotted collars on."

"Don't be an ass, Merry!"

Jack Blake gave his coat a hasty tug, adjusted his hat for the last time, and stepped in front of the others to be the first to greet Cousin Ethel. Tom Merry pulled him back, and Arthur Augustus waved them both aside.

"As Cousin Ethel's cousin, deah boys," he remarked with dignity—"as Cousin Ethel's cousin, I must insist that I be allowed to greet her first of all. Weally, Mewwy, I am surprised—not to say astounded—that you— Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"Phew!"

The footsteps were quite close by now, then the cause of the footsteps came round the corner.

He was a big man of middle age, unshaved, unwashed, unwholesome-looking; he was quite stout, with a flabby, very unpleasant face, and he was carrying a red-spotted handkerchief—in which his change of wardrobe was packed—by means of a short stick held over the shoulder, umbrella fashion.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus again. "Bai Jove!"

Anyone less like Cousin Ethel than that tramp could not have been found in all Sussex.

"And here is anothead of them!"

"Let 'em all come!" grinned Tom Merry. "It would be a kindness to have a whip-round and stand them a bath between them! My only aunt, there's a third!"

"I wathah think there must be an epidemic of twamps!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. And because no one smiled he repeated his remark.

"Oh, ring off, ass!" muttered Tom Merry. "I say, you fellows, I hope Cousin Ethel didn't meet those roughs!"

"No, wathah not! But she couldn't have done, othahwise she would be in front by now, deah boy!"

"Humph!"

Tom Merry did not say so, but he felt relieved. There are tramps—and tramps—to be found in Sussex, and these were obviously the less desirable brand.

"Arternoon, young gentlemen!" began the first, grinning broadly. "Got anythin' to spare for a 'ard-workin' man wot's down on his luck, and worn to a shadder lookin' for a job? Anythin' nice and tasty in that bag, for instance?"

"No, I haven't," said Tom Merry sharply.

"Don't be 'asty, Charles," said the tramp sadly, rubbing the back of his grimy hand across his eyes. "Remember, we was brothers once!"

The other tramps roared with laughter, and the chums turned away and began to saunter down the lane.

Figgins gritted his teeth.

"I don't like Cousin Ethel passing that gang, even with us, Gussy!" he whispered. "Isn't there another way round?"

"No, deah boys, I am afwaid there isn't. But it will be quite all wight. I shall glance at the twamps as we pass, and I don't think they will say anythin' aftah that. Bai Jove! Heah she is!"

The chums hurried forward to meet a wonderfully pretty girl of about their own age. She was dressed in some sort of a white summery attire, which the juniors would have found difficult to describe, but which one and all were ready to admit was ripping—and, to cap it all, she was Cousin Ethel herself.

At that moment she was trying to look severe, and at the same time she could not help laughing.

"Arthur," she exclaimed, shaking hands with him, "what do you mean by it?"

"Mean by what, Cousin Ethel?"

"By not meeting me where I told you to!" went on the girl very severely. "I particularly asked you to meet me at the bottom of this lane—"

"Bai Jove! And we have been waitin' at the top."

"But why?"

"I thought you said in your lettah that we were to meet you at the top of the lane. I did weally, Cousin Ethel."

"Which proves you do not read my letters," said the girl.

"Yes, it does! I won't listen to any excuses. 'Top of the

(Continued on next page.)



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SOME SENTRY!

Officer: "If anything moves, shoot."

Sambo: "Yes, sah; an' if anythin' shoots, Ah move!"

P. DAVEY, 261, Barkly Street, Footscray, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

SHE DIDN'T MEAN THAT!

Bertie: "Mother, all the boys call me 'big head' at school!"

Mother: "Don't worry, Bertie, there's nothing in it!"

F. BOSWORTH, 427, Bromford Lane, Ward End, Birmingham.

TWO IN ONE!

Passenger: "Thanks for my two flights!"

Pilot: "But I only gave you one."

Passenger: "No; my first and my last!"

LEN BOWER, 48, Charles Street, Launceston, Tasmania.

A TALL STORY!

Boaster: "Every morning before breakfast I get a bucket and pull up ninety gallons of water from the well."

Friend: "That's nothing. Every morning I get a boat and pull up the river!"

JAMES SMITH, 11, Culross Street, Shettleston, Glasgow, E.2.

STRANGE!

Old Lady: "And what was it that struck you most in the battle?"

Old Soldier: "Sure, and what struck me most was the number of bullets that missed me!"

A. S. EVIN, 27, Osborne Road, Birkenhead, Cheshire.

COOL!

Scoutmaster: "What would you do if you were on fire?"

Scout: "Keep cool, sir!"

RONALD WINCKLES, 17, Devon Street, Gipsyville, Hull.

INFORMATION!

Jeweller (to assistant, after a smash and grab raid): "This was your fault! What do you mean by putting a notice up in the window: 'Diamond Rings Within the Reach of All'?"

B. F. NORWOOD, 9, Clay Lane, Bushey Heath, Herts.

HE DIDN'T LIKE IT!

Stationmaster (to passenger who has just raced after departing train, but failed to catch it): "Missed your train, sir?"

Passenger: "No, not at all. I just didn't like the look of it, so I chased it out of town!"

P. OPENSHAW, 78, Hill Top Avenue, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire.

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lane? cannot look like 'bottom of the lane,' even when I write it. And a lot of horrid tramps passed me. Fancy not reading my letters!"

"Yes, fancy not reading her letters!"

"You are an awful ass, Gussy!" muttered Figgins under his breath.

"Bai Jove, deah boy—"

"Bothered if I can understand it! Catch me not reading any of Cousin Ethel's letters!"

"But I have never written you any," smiled the girl.

"No, of course not!" floundered Figgins. "I mean, fancy me not reading anyone's letters, except Tom Merry's when he's away on a holiday. I mean—"

"Yes," said Cousin Ethel sweetly, "we are all relieved to learn you read your letters. Suppose we walk on—shall we?"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

At that moment Cousin Ethel looked round with a start, for seated on a pile of stones already cracked for road repairing, were the three tramps, smoking thoughtfully. The chums walked on, and, much to Figgins' relief, nothing was said. That was while they were within hearing. The moment they had rounded the bend the tramp the juniors had seen first turned to the others.

"Wot about follerin' 'em up, mates?"

"What's the use, 'Enery'?"

"Ow do I know but they might drop somethin'—and they might choose a lonely road."

The other two looked at one another, then one of them rose to his feet.

"I'm hon, 'Enery," he said firmly. "I'm hon to hanythin' in reason; but if it's a walkin' tour them youngsters have in their mind, I aren't hon. I feel a bit worn-down to-day."

"Yes," said 'Enery sympathetically. "But you do go the pace with the work, you do! 'Eld a 'orse's 'ead last Easter, didn't you?"

And they chuckled again, but they took the same road the St. Jim's juniors and their girl chum had taken, all the same.

CHAPTER 6.

The Picnic!

"NICE place this," said Cousin Ethel, looking down from the heights of the hill to the silver streak the river formed as it wound its tortuous way through the hills and woods. "I think it is awfully nice of you all to take me to the quarry when I am sure you would much rather be playing cricket."

Of course, they all hastened to assure her that that was was not the case, Figgins being loudest of them all—so loud, in fact, as to cause the other juniors to stop and stare. Figgins blushed then, and before he spoke again they had gained the brink of the quarry.

"I do hope you have brought some tea and a kettle and things!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel. "It would be simply splendid to light our own fire! Have you?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Figgins gleefully. "I left all arrangements of that nature to Fatty Wynn, and in matters of grub—provisions—Wynn can be relied upon. What shall we do first?"

"See the cave, of course. That is what we are here for."

"Yaas, wathah! I pwopose we explore it at once."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's leave the haversacks where we are going to have tea—I mean, it's no use carrying them about with us."

The party walked over to a spot agreed upon, and, with a sigh of relief, Jack Blake dropped his haversack on the grass.

"Thank goodness I've got rid of that at last," he said. "Put your bag down in the same place, Gussy."

"No, deah boy. Undah the cires, I wathah think I will conceal it behind this wock."

"What on earth for? What's in the bag, by the way?"

"Somethin' I want to show Cousin Ethel, deah boy. No, Cousin Ethel, I must wefuse to explain now—I weally must wefuse—"

"But—"

"Then we will proceed to explore the cave," decided the girl.

Figgins had brought his bicycle lamp, and once this was lighted the party made their way into the darkness. Almost at the moment the last of them disappeared, three grimy faces came in view at the brink of the quarry above, as if the owners of the faces were lying down, and were just as anxious to see as they were not to be seen.

The faces in the distance looked remarkably like those of the tramps the chums had passed on their way from the lane.

"You—you'll have to be pretty careful, Cousin Ethel," said Figgins, as they made their way into the cave; "there are an awful lot of loose stones about."

"Oh, I am all right, thank you!"

"Yes, but—Ow!"

Figgins had trodden on one of the loose stones he had mentioned, with one foot, and had then thoughtlessly put the other foot into a deep hole. It was some time before he was able to extricate himself, and it was also some time before he cautioned Cousin Ethel to be careful again. Arthur Augustus seemed to think there was humour in the incident, and chuckled until Figgins wanted to slay him.

"Dry up, ass!" he whispered fiercely in D'Arcy's ear.

"Dry up, or there'll be trouble."

"Ha, ha, ha! But it was wemarkably funny, deah boy!"

"Dry up, I tell you!"

"Certainly, Figgy; but, undah the cires, you must admit—Wow!"

Arthur Augustus had also trodden in an unsuspected hole, and the accident caused him to knock the bicycle lamp out of Figgins' hand and drop his own panama hat.

The others were some little way ahead by now, for Jack Blake's voice sounded quite distant.

"Hurry up, Figgy, with the lamp! Cousin Ethel is surrounded by yawning chasms."

"Right-ho, old man! You are a shrieking lunatic, Gussy!" he added, under his breath. "Where's the rotten lamp?"

"Heah, deah boy!"

Figgins lighted it hastily, and hurried forward, while Arthur Augustus called loudly to him.

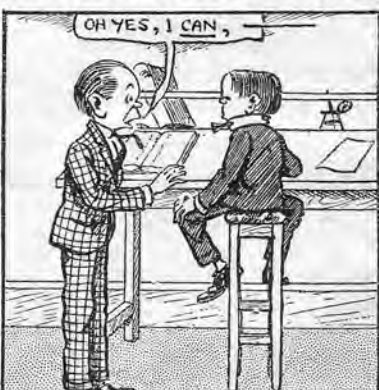
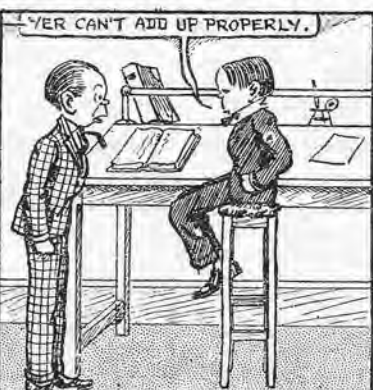
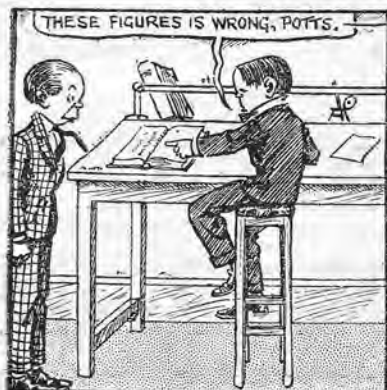
"Stop, Figgy! Stop, you uttah ass! I can't find my panama!"

"Put out a reward!" growled Figgins.

"But, weally—"

"Don't put out a reward, then. I don't care what you do so long as you don't walk near me. I'm coming, Blake!"

Potts, the Office Boy!



"About time, too! Cousin Ethel is fairly hedged in with yawning chasms. There, you can come this way, Cousin Ethel."

"Thank you!" smiled the girl to Figgins; and in the pale circle cast by the bicycle lamp, that smile was so effective that Figgins forgot all about Arthur Augustus and his panama.

They went on without the swell of the School House.

The cave came up to everyone's expectations, and an exciting quarter of an hour passed rapidly. Figgins hadn't fallen more than six times, and once the lamp burnt for three consecutive minutes, but, apart from that, nothing unexpected happened. Then they all began to think of returning to the quarry itself.

"We've explored about all there is to be explored," said Tom Merry, "and hunger is overtaking Blake. Consequently I propose a return to earth."

"Don't be an ass," said Blake. "I'm not a bit hungry. It's Figgins who keeps sighing with hunger."

"No, it isn't. I couldn't touch anything. I'll punch your head for that, Blake, when I get you home!" added Figgins, in what he took to be a whisper. "You just see if I don't."

"Don't whisper," said Cousin Ethel coolly. "There is an echo, and I can hear every word you are saying. Aren't any of you hungry?"

"Rather not!"

"I should think not!"

"What a pity," said Cousin Ethel, scrambling over some loose boulders, "because I don't think I was ever so hungry in my life, and I shan't like to eat the ripping things Wynn will have provided for us if all you others haven't any appetite. But it doesn't matter. I shall be able to have another tea when I get back to Cleveland Lodge!"

Blake and Figgins glared at one another in the semi-darkness. Tom Merry glared at both of them.

"And if I were to say I was starving, it wouldn't be an exaggeration," he mused. "It's that ass Blake's fault."

"Are we going in the right direction?" asked Cousin Ethel, and from her tone of voice no one would have ever thought that she knew what was passing through her chums' minds. "We don't want to get lost, you know."

"Yes, this is all right!" sang out Merry. "There's the hole Figgins tumbled in as we came down. No, it isn't, though! Anyway, there's a light ahead, so it must be all right."

The lamp was not needed now, for there was a faint gleam of daylight ahead, and the party made for this as quickly as they could. A few moments later they found themselves in the quarry again, but not at the spot they had left it.

They had accidentally discovered a new outlet, which necessitated a walk of some hundred yards or so round the boulders to the place where the haversacks had been left.

Cousin Ethel led the way.

"I am sorry you are not hungry," she said again. "Of course, if you like, we will not wait for tea, but go back at once. I mean, there is nothing more tiring for boys than to have to sit down for a picnic when they are not hungry, and watch a girl who is—"

"What is that?" said Blake warily. "I thought I heard some voices!"

Cousin Ethel was about ten yards ahead by this time, having made her way between two huge boulders, and she had now turned sharply at right angles.

The St. Jim's fellows could not see what it was that attracted their girl chum's attention, but they could distinctly see her pretty face.

There was such an expression of indignant amazement upon it that Tom Merry opened his mouth and forgot to close it again.

CHAPTER 7.

The D'Arcy Cup!

"WHAT'S the matter, Cousin Ethel?"

"What's happened?"

"Look!" exclaimed the girl, in amazement.

"Oh, just look at them!"

Tom Merry recovered himself, and clambered up beside Cousin Ethel. The next moment he was looking down upon the scene which would have raised wrath in a saint.

On the grass lay three haversacks, practically empty now, and a few yards from them sat the three tramps they had encountered earlier that afternoon. That was startling enough, but what was considerably more startling was that the three tramps were eating at express speed, and their meal consisted of dainty iced cakes—selected after much careful thought by Fatty Wynn, especially for Cousin Ethel's enjoyment—fascinating looking puffs and jam tarts and sausage rolls, which had made Wynn sigh as he had packed them up in the haversack.

Figgins glared, his eyes starting from his head.

"Of all the cheek!"

Then the horror of the thing dawned upon all the juniors. Their tea—the climax of the whole outing—was being wolfed by three stout and dirty ruffians.

"Let me pass, Merry!" cried Blake. "Come on!"

"You are not to do anything of the kind!"

The juniors stopped, glanced at their girl chum, and then at one another. Cousin Ethel's face was quite white.

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "A scrap is out of the question, Figgy."

Figgins nodded.

Anything of the nature of a fight most certainly was out of the question with Cousin Ethel present. But what was to be done?

At that moment a yell went up from the other side of the feasting tramps.

"Bai Jove! Of all the cheek——"

"Gussy has turned up!" exclaimed Figgins. "He must have found his way back to the main opening. Hallo, Gussy!"

"You wank outsiders!" came back an excited yell as the form of Arthur Augustus, much dishevelled and travel-stained, dashed up to the tramps. "Ye wetches! Stop! Stop eatin', I tell you!"

Arthur Augustus had been through much since he had knocked the bicycle lamp from Figgins' hand, and the spectacle of three tramps eating his prospective tea, proved the last straw.

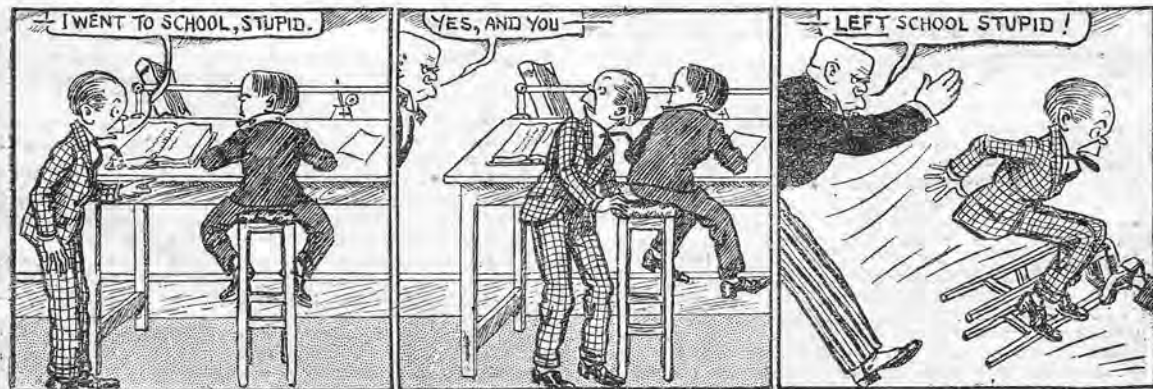
"Stop eatin' or I shall administrah a feahful thwashin'! Stop, I ordah you!"

By this time the other three St. Jim's fellows had scrambled down from the higher ground, leaving Cousin Ethel up above.

"Lie down, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to lie down, Tom Merry, and undah the cires, I am surprised at you suggestin' that I should lie down. That wotah is eatin' Cousin Ethel's tea!"

STILL THE SAME!



"Look here, you ruffians!" exclaimed Blake. "I suppose you know you have stolen those provisions, and that you'll get landed in a police court?"

"Allo, Charles! How goes it, my pippin? What was that remark about stealin'?"

"So you have—you've stolen our things, and, by Jingo, we'll make you sit up for it, you dirty loafers!"

"You 'ear that, 'Enery? 'E called us dirty loafers, 'e did."

"Wot language!" murmured 'Enery, turning his eyes up to the sky, then lowering them again to attend to a sausage-roll. "Remarkable wot these youngsters do pick up, to be sure!"

The other two tramps sighed loudly, and it was as much as Blake could do to prevent himself flying at 'Enery and rolling him off the rock he was seated upon.

"And as for stealing," went on one of the loafers, "tell it to your grandmother! We found these things, we did, and it is against human nature to let good grub go bad. Anyhow, the young lady kin join us if she will, and what's left over you youngsters can divide. I can't say fairer, can I, 'Enery?"

'Enery said he couldn't, then Arthur Augustus put a word in.

"You are wottahs of the first watah, and if my cousin weren't pwesent, I should thwash you as you deserve."

"But that doesn't help, Gussy," muttered Tom Merry. "The point is, what is to be done? I'm not going to touch anything those dirty brutes have handled, and there's no need to ask Cousin Ethel. We are fairly dished."

"Let's see what Cousin Ethel says about it," said Figgins. "My hat, though, if ever I get a chance to make those cads sit up, I shan't miss it!"

Cousin Ethel took a very sporting view of the matter.

"Of course, it is regrettable," she said pleasantly, "but it really does not matter in the least."

"Doesn't matter?" gasped Tom Merry. "It doesn't matter that a gang of tramps have sneaked our tea?"

"No, of course it doesn't matter. You are not hungry, any of you! You told me so yourself."

"But you," began Figgins faintly, "you said—"

"Oh, it does not matter about me!" smiled their girl chum. "I can easily wait for tea until I get home."

Then the juniors rammed their hands in their pockets, and glared at the happy tramps.

Figgins repeated his previous remark, and so voiced the sentiments of all.

"If only I get a chance of paying that lot out," he muttered wrathfully, "my hat, there'll be some earthquakes then. I—I say, Cousin Ethel, as a matter of fact, when we said we weren't hungry—"

"Yes," agreed Tom Merry, "when we said we weren't hungry—"

"When we said we weren't hungry—" murmured Blake, conscious that he was exhibiting a decided weakness in repeating what others had said instead of thinking for himself.

"You meant," said Cousin Ethel, "you meant that you were on the verge of starving, and told fibs about it. That is rather like a boy, you know, and I think it serves you right. But it does not serve me right, and so we'll have our tea, after all."

"Baj Jove how can we, seein' those wetches are wolvin' it against time?"

"By foraging for ourselves, Arthur. Let me see, have they touched our kettle and the packet of tea?"

Tom Merry peered round the rock again.

"No, they haven't touched that," he said. "And the sugar and bottle of milk are all right. They are in Figgins' haversack."

"That is good. Please go and ask them if we may have it."

"Ask them?" gasped Tom Merry. "Ask—"

But his indignation overcame him, and he sprang down to the lower ground.

"Look here, you hulking loafers," he said, in a low voice, "we're going to have those haversacks. If you kick up a shindy—well, some of us'll join in. See?"

"Charles, you can 'ave the 'aversacks, if you don't make a fuss about the grub to the police. Me and these gentlemen are on a tour—a walking tour, and we don't want to be detained to explain matters. Take the 'aversacks, and make it quits, an' I'll shake 'ands."

Tom Merry took the haversacks, but he did not shake hands. He shook his fist instead.

"Don't you worry," he said. "We shan't trouble the police. But we shall trouble you one of these days, you see if we don't, you rotten thieves."

It went fearfully against the grain with the Shell fellow to have to take this set-back lying down, as it were, but there really was nothing else to do about it. With the exception of Arthur Augustus, the chums did not much trouble about what was considered "the thing," but a fight

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which would necessarily have been a stirring one with Ethel present, was something so very much not the thing, that none of them would have thought of starting it. The St. Jim's juniors liked to stand well in the eyes of their girl chum, which was as it ought to be.

Tom Merry came back with the three haversacks, and Cousin Ethel opened them.

"It might have been worse," she said pleasantly. "All the things for making tea are here, and there is one cake and some biscuits. It really is rather fun."

The juniors looked at the one small cake and the biscuits, and failed to note the humour. Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye and looked at the others.



Figgins' long arm served him well. He sent in a stinging shot. Well played, D'Arcy! Arthur

"I pwopose that we adjourn to the top of the quawwy, deah boys," he said. "I must wufuse to allow my cousin to have tea in the same quawwy as those twamps."

"Right-ho, if Cousin Ethel is willing."

The girl was, and by the time they had gained the quarry brink again, Tom Merry suddenly remembered that there was a farmhouse near by. He was off like a flash for it, and as Arthur Augustus had a pound-note in his pocket, the tea was augmented with simple country fare.

The fire was kindled, the kettle of pure spring water boiled, and because she was a girl with a girl's love for beauty, Cousin Ethel spent a few minutes decorating the tablecloth with wild flowers from the hedge. It made a great difference in the look of the thing.

And as the party had had to work for their tea, it came with all the greater welcome; and it was not until they had

practically finished that Jack Blake remembered the business of the afternoon.

"My hat, I was nearly forgetting!" he exclaimed. "Cousin Ethel, we want you to help us out of a difficulty. Gussy's pater very kindly presented us with a silver—"

"Bai Jove!" suddenly yelled Arthur Augustus. "I have left it behind a wock!"

"What?"

"You've left what?"

"Behind a wock!"

"Phew!" whistled Tom Merry, staring. "You've left a wock—a rock behind a wock—rock—"

"No, you uttah duffah!" shouted Arthur Augustus, even



he was pushed down. "Goal!!" "No!!" "Good old Gussy! He had saved like a veteran!"

forgetting the presence of Cousin Ethel in his excitement. "I tell you, deah boy, I have left it behind a wock."

He was on his feet in a flash, and was pelting off towards the point at which the descent to the quarry was the easiest, as hard as he could go.

Tom Merry watched him in blank amazement.

"What ever as he gone for?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"I don't know. Have you any idea, Blake?"

"Not the ghost of a one. There he goes!"

The four watched Arthur Augustus scramble quickly down the quarry side, and could see that the tramps were also watching him. Arthur Augustus also appeared to notice this, for he began to saunter as soon as he had gained level ground again, and he was making directly for the three tramps.

"Look here, Blake, we ought to have gone with him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I believe—"

"What's he doing now?"

"Rummaging behind that rock for something. My hat! Of course, he's gone for the bag he hid behind the rocks!"

Cousin Ethel laughed and nodded.

"How silly of us not to think of it before!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, he has the bag in his hand now. But—but what is he running for?"

The others could not say. Arthur Augustus certainly was running at top speed, glancing over his shoulder every few yards at the tramps. The tramps had risen to their feet in surprise, but were showing no signs of following, and as Arthur Augustus had about fifty yards start by now, he ought to have been satisfied.

But the swell of St. Jim's appeared to be in a cautious frame of mind for once. He ran all the way back to his chums above him, and dropped panting on the grass.

"But I have wecovahed it, deah boys—I have wecovahed it at a great wisk."

"My hat, Gussy! What's it all about?"

"Those twamps—if they had seen it they would have wun off with it, bai Jove! They would weally; I could wead it in their eyes!"

"Oh, they would have run off with anything if they had thought it worth their while!" laughed Tom Merry. "I could read that in their eyes, too. But what is in that bag—provisions?"

"No, deah boy; the silvah cup my patah pwesented to St. Jim's for the watah polo—yaas, weally."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry gasped with astonishment, and Jack Blake thoughtfully wiped his brow.

Cousin Ethel looked from one to the other.

"Please explain!" she exclaimed. "What silver cup?"

"Why, the one we were speaking about—or just going to speak about, when Gussy started on his Marathon," said Tom Merry.

"Gussy's pater gave a ripping cup for water polo, but, owing—owing to a slight difference we had in a trial match yesterday, water polo is barred for ever and ever. What did you want to lug the cup all the way here for, Gussy?"

"To show Cousin Ethel, of course, deah boy," explained Arthur Augustus, opening his football bag. "There!"

Cousin Ethel duly admired the beautiful piece of silver, then told Arthur Augustus to put it away again.

"It was very kind of you to bring it to show me, but please don't show it to the tramps," she said. "I can see you want me to do something for you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Read that last letter I wrote to you, for instance?" asked Cousin Ethel.

And it was only by all talking together that Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins succeeded in preventing Arthur Augustus indulging in another apology.

"Yes, Cousin Ethel," said Tom Merry hastily, "we want some of your ripping ideas. What can we do for the cup? There are pots for every possible race at St. Jim's, and Gussy flatly refuses to send it back to his pater. I believe he wants to keep the thing for himself."

"No, weally, such an ideah nevah entahed my head. I give you my word of honah it didn't. I can't send the cup back, because it would wuffle the patah."

"I agree with Arthur in that," said Cousin Ethel decidedly. "It wouldn't be quite nice to send the cup back after it had been so kindly presented, saying that it wasn't wanted, would it? And you would have to explain that—that you had a slight difference in the river, too."

"Yaas, bai Jove! It would be remarkably unpleasant."

"No, you must keep the cup, and you must think of some novel way of competing for it," went on their girl chum, looking down into the quarry depths, her chin on her hands. "I think it ought to be some swimming race—don't you?"

"But there are pots for swimming," objected Tom Merry. "Both for long and short distance."

"What is the long-distance race—how long, I mean?"

"Only half a mile, I think, for juniors; but—"

"Then why not have a really long-distance race?" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, looking up. "Isn't there a race in the Thames each year—the swim through London? Well, then, why not have a swim through Rylocombe for the cup?"

"My hat!"

"Wippin'—"

"Yes," continued Cousin Ethel, "you could all start from somewhere up the river, then swim as best you could right through the little town, and finish, say, by the mill. Would three miles be too much?"

"No, wathah not. I considah thwee miles as nothin', deah boy—Cousin Ethel, I mean."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's just the sort of idea we've been trying for since the water polo"

was barred. A swim through Rylcombe is the very thing to stir the fellows up. Cousin Ethel, you're wonderful at ideas!"

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins.

"Well," laughed the girl, jumping up, "we can talk over the details as we go along, because we really must think about getting back now. And those horrid tramps are leaving the quarry, too, and we don't want to pass them again."

"No," said Jack Blake darkly. "But I rather think we shall meet again one of these days, and then 'Enery and I are going to square accounts. But that's absolutely a ripping idea of yours about the swim, Cousin Ethel. I don't believe I could have thought of a better one myself—ahem!"

They all laughed, not because the wit was of very high order, but because the sun was getting low in the western heavens, and the shadows were lengthening, and the beautiful hues a setting sun gives to an evening sky were theirs to enjoy. The difficulty arising from Arthur Augustus' cup, too, had been settled by Cousin Ethel in a way which appealed to all, and the spirits ran high as they turned towards the grey old walls of St. Jim's once more.

So enthusiastic did the juniors wax over the plans for the swim through Rylcombe, that they all talked at once, Arthur Augustus louder than them all. And there was one other thing Arthur Augustus did which had far-reaching effects.

He walked away from the quarry brink with both his hands in his blazer pockets.

CHAPTER 8.

Qualms of Conscience!

"MY hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Mind you, I don't like admitting it, but Cousin Ethel fairly did us."

"In the mattah of ideas, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! A swim through Rylcombe will look jolly warm on the notice-board, and I can see the whole school getting excited about it. I vote we spread the news broadcast at once!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors had said good-bye to their girl-chum at Cleveland Lodge, and were almost in the college grounds. Before Tom Merry could speak again Skimpole appeared in sight.

"Skimmy! Cheer-ho, Skimmy!"

"No, Merry, I must refuse to referee in the next water-polo match," said the brainy man of the Shell firmly. "I have made up my mind to take no part in games in the future. Wynn has been quite personal on several occasions about my refereeing yesterday, and I must refuse to make any enemies of my fellow-beings. That is not in accordance with my doctrines—"

"Heah, heah, Skimmy!"

"Only ring off for a bit," finished Tom Merry. "We don't want you to ref, ass, not being insane. All we want you to do is to tell the fellows that there is to be a swim of three miles through Rylcombe on Saturday afternoon, open to juniors—"

"Yaas, wathah! And the pwize is a twenty-guinea pot pwesented by my patah."

"Twenty guineas?"

"Yaas, wathah—"

"Then I shall enter for the race. Oh, but I can't swim—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Swimming is almost necessary, kid, when you come to think of it, too. But spread the news, will you? I say Wynn—"

"Hallo!"

"There's to be a swim of three miles through Rylcombe on Saturday. Twenty-guinea cup first prize, and a prize thick ear for any slacker who gives up."

"A twenty-guinea— You're rotting!"

"No! It's a fact. Gussy's pater presented the pot, didn't he, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! Lowthah—Lowthah, deah boy!"

"What-ho, Gussy, old ass!"

"Weally, Lowthah—but I will let your wudeness pass, undah the cires. There's to be a wippin' swim through Wylcombe on Saturday afternoon—"

Lowther expressed first his incredulity, then his amazement and joy, and so did every junior the four met. By the time the four had gained the college itself practically all the juniors of St. Jim's had heard the news, and enthusiasm rose instantly. Even Jack Blake was surprised at the excitement Cousin Ethel's plan was greeted with.

"Almost as good as the water polo I'd set my heart on," he whispered, as they went on to the preparation-room, the four having arranged to cut tea that afternoon. "The thing

now is to arrange times, etcetera. I vote we have a jaw over it in Study No. 6 afterwards."

"Yaas, wathah! 'Tom Mewwy said he was comin', in any case, and intended bwingin' Lowthah and Mennahs."

"My hat! Never mind, we can turn Herries and Digby out to make room for them."

"I don't think!" murmured Herries and Digby.

And then they thought it as well to do some work.

Once prep was over a general sort of movement was made for Study No. 6, and Tom Merry & Co. turned up at the point of time.

Blake was just about to close the door, when it was thumped open violently.

"Sorry, kid!" called out Figgins cheerfully. "But it occurred to us you might be wanting to talk matters over, so we thought we'd give you a look-up."

"My hat!" muttered Blake. "Anyone, to hear you talk, would think this was a home for lost kids. But come in—if you can."

"But don't if you can't," said Lowther. But he was frowned upon for his effort.

Somehow, the newcomers—Figgins and his faithful lieutenants, Fatty Wynn and Kerr—found a resting-place in Study No. 6, and Jack Blake shut the door.

"We aren't having any more in!" he laughed. "It's a difficult matter to breathe, as it is. I suppose I am to take the chair, Merry?"

"No, old chap; I'm taking it myself, as it happens—"

"I don't think!" said Figgins, who had slipped into the chair at the head of the table while the others had been talking. "Silence, please, and let's get on with the business of the evening."

Tom Merry and Jack Blake were inclined to argue the point about the chairmanship, but Figgins waved them aside.

"Silence, I said, please! I shall have you turned out of the room, Blake, if you don't shut up! Gentleman, owing to the very rotten manner in which Gussy and Skimpole between them managed to muddle the water polo—"

"Well, I nevah—"

"It has been suggested that a swim through Rylcombe should take the place of the water polo arranged for next Saturday; the prize, of course, being the ripping cup Gussy's pater kindly presented to us."

"Heah, heah! I mean, don't mention it, deah boy! The wotten pot is nothin'—the wotte—"

A curious change was taking place on Arthur Augustus' expressive face, and his monocle had dropped from his eye. He looked as if he could see something uncanny which was invisible to the others.

"Jolly good idea, I call it!" said Fatty Wynn cheerily. "I think an official sort of letter ought to be written to Gussy's pater, too, thanking him for the pot, you chaps."

"Yes, rather!" urged Kerr. "And let's have a look at it, Gussy—to sort of urge us on to noble endeavours, and all that! My hat!"

Arthur Augustus looked as if he were in pain. His face was screwed up in various puckers, and he had his mouth slightly open. As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus was trying to think.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"What's up?"

"Bai—Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was on his feet by now, well advanced in the last stage of excitement.

"I have left it at the quawwy, deah boys—yaas, weally, at the wotten quawwy!"

"Left what, ass?"

"The silvah cup—on the bwink of the quawwy! Bai Jove!"

Figgins, Blake, and Tom Merry jumped up at one and the same time.

"You left the cup at the quarry?" gasped the Shell fellow.

"You mean to say you've left a twenty-guinea cup at the quarry? Oh, you utter ass, Gussy!"

"Why didn't you wemind me, Tom Mewwy? I considah that you are partly to blame in not wemindin' me!"

"Someone hit it with something, please!" groaned Jack Blake. "Gussy, are you certain you left it there?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wemembah distinctly comin' away fwom the wotten quawwy, with my hands in my blazah pockets!"

"Jingo! He did, too!" muttered Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! And the question is, what is to be done, deah boys?"

"To be done!" almost shouted Jack Blake. "Oh, Gussy, why ever were you born?"

"Don't be widiculous, please, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus coldly. "This is an important mattah—one affectin' a twenty-guinea silvah cup, and— Bai Jove, those twamps! They will have collahed the cup!"

"At first the others thought it extremely likely that such was the case; then Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, I don't think that, on second thoughts!" he exclaimed. "You see, the tramps would leave the quarry by the same way—the easiest way—and, of course, they would keep to the road. That would mean they wouldn't pass within twenty yards of the spot where that hopeless idiot left the cup."

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"Dry up, ass! You've done enough damage for one day, and no mistake! Don't upset the meeting with your cackle on top of it. What had we better do, Blake—go and tell Dr. Holmes at once?"

"Yes, My hat! What about the picnic, though?"

"Humph!"

"Yeas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. "Wathah we do, we can't tell the Head! The quawwy is out of bounds, deah boys, and that would mean a wotten wigg'in' from the doctah!"

"Yes, but we must get the cup back. I mean— I say, Blake, if the tramps didn't find the pot, it's pretty likely no one else did, because I don't suppose three people go near that spot a week."

"Yes, that's a fact! I propose we get our bicycles out and scorch over to the quarry as hard as we can."

"Imposs, deah boys! In anothah ten minutes suppah will be weady, and aftahwards we shall have to wethah to our respected dorms—and it is dark, too!"

"My only aunt!" muttered Blake. "Look here, I propose we make a clean breast of having broken bounds to the Head, and ask for leave to go and look for the cup!"

"Imposs again, deah boy! I uttably wefuse to allow a clean bwest to be made of havin' b'roken bounds!"

"Oh, you lie down! I told you before you've done enough damage for one day!"

"Undah the circs, I must wefuse to lie down!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I must ask you, as fwends, not to ask the Head for permish to go out!"

"But—"

"Please heah what I have to say, Tom Mewwy. I considah that the chances are that the silvah cup has been found and wemoved, and as I am partly to blame—though I considah Tom Mewwy ought to have weminded me as we

came away—I shall make it my biz to see that anothah cup is provided!"

"What do you mean by that, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, looking at the other curiously. "How can you see that another cup is provided?"

"By witin' anothah lettah to the patah, deah boy."

"Not much, you won't!" said the Shell fellow quietly. "I'm going to stand out against that, to the last gasp! What would your pater think of us sponging on him like that, ass?"

"But I considah it a mattah of personal dig—"

"Then catch that personal dig and wring its neck! I'm not going to agree to your asking for another cup, and I don't think any fellow in the coll would!"

"No, by Jove!"

"Rather not!"

The cries were so decided that Arthur Augustus had to submit.

"Well, I have made my offah," he said, "and I considah it wathah wippin' of you to wefuse it, though wathah widiculous! I must now wequest you not to go to the Head about the mattah!"

"But I say, what about this?" began Tom Merry. "It's dark now, and if the cup hasn't already been found it's not likely to be found during the next hour or so. What do you say if one of us slips down to the bicycle-shed, sneaks our grids, before Taggles looks up for the night, and hides them somewhere, then, when lights are out, we'll break bounds and go and have a cup-hunt? Is it an idea?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's an idea, certainly," admitted Blake, "and I don't suppose you can help it being a rotten one, Merry. I hardly like the idea of a twenty-guinea cup lying out in the open. What I want to know is, why can't we go to the Head about it, and telephone to the police station, or something?"

"Weally, Blake, I am surprised at your suggestin' such a wotten course, deah boy."

"Well, why can't we? And why is it a rotten course?"

"Because," said Arthur Augustus quietly—"because it would bwing Cousin Ethel's name into the mattah. We bwoke bounds in goin' to the quawwy at all, and, as Cousin Ethel suggested the picnic—well, bai Jove, she would feel wathah uncomfortable about the mattah."

"Phew! Never thought of that, Gussy."

"And, as for goin' to the police," went on Arthur Augustus—"well, suppose the cup has been collahed? There might be a beastly police court case ovah the mattah, and Cousin Ethel might be summoned as a witness. That is why I wemarked that the course you suggested was wotten, Blake."

They all looked at Arthur Augustus in silence for a moment or two, then Tom Merry banged him on the shoulder.

"Good for you, Gus!" was all he said. Then he turned to the others. "What do you chaps say to my plan about breaking bounds in the dead of night?"

"That's the ticket!"

"Nothing else for it, as far as I can see," agreed Blake. "How many of us had better go?"

"Oh, not the lot, of course, or we should be bound to be spotted. Say the four of us who were at the picnic?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you could take my bulldog with you, if you like," said Herries. "He's a marvel at tracking people down."

"No, thanks, kid! We shall have Gussy, and he's enough of a handful for us. Look here, Blake, will you slip down and work things about the bicycles. I had a bit of an argument with Taggles this morning."

"Right-ho!"

"And what is it, Wally?"

D'Arcy minor had opened the door at that moment, and was poking a rather inky countenance into the room.

"Cheerio, you cripples!" he said cheerfully. "Is young Merry here?"

"Look here, young 'un—"

"Oh, I thought I recognised his old face! You have my sympathy, Merry. The Head wants to see you in his room at once."

"Wants to see me?"

"Yes," grinned Wally. "Funny taste, hasn't he? I say, isn't it rotten about the water polo being barred? Oh, I've heard about the swim through Rylcombe, and it's a good wheeze, but water polo is the game for me! I call it measly of the Head myself."

"I'll give him your opinion, kid," grinned Tom Merry, making for the door. "Dr. Holmes is always ready to listen to good advice. See you fellows later!"

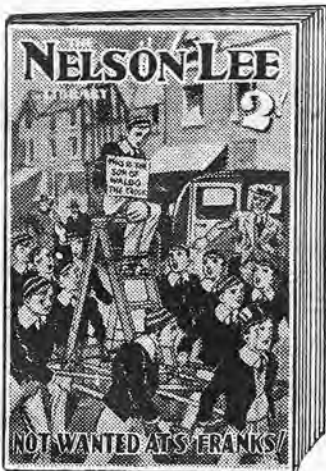
The others nodded, and Tom Merry made his way to the Head's room, not without qualms of conscience.

(Continued on page 19.)

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YOUNG Stanley Waldo, whom you see on the hurdle, might well wriggle in his bonds, for he's booked for a very warm passage. There's no room for this stout-hearted youngster at St. Frank's, for his father, Rupert Waldo, the mysterious wonder-man, is a member of a notorious gang known as the "Brotherhood of the Brave," whose ruthless activities—robbery, plunder and murder—have got Scotland Yard guessing. But there's a method in the wonder-man's actions, after all is said and done. Read and enjoy this thrill-packed yarn of the nerve-tingling adventures of the popular chums of St. Frank's in

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HALLO, chums! What do you think of Tom Merry & Co.'s efforts at water polo? Isn't it a great yarn. I've got another splendid long complete story by famous Martin Clifford waiting for you next week. It really is absolutely tip-top, but I'm not going to tell you anything more about it except that it is called

"THE BOY WITH TOO MANY FRIENDS!"

Jerry Garrison and Fusty have nearly got Jasper Privett cornered now, and there will be further thrilling chapters of our grand Western adventure yarn, "RED STAR RANGER!" in next week's GEM. Then there will be two more columns of readers' jokes, for each of which jokes I pay half-a-crown; and for those who want an extra laugh, Potts, our inimitable office boy, will be on parade once more. Finally, there will be another page from my notebook.

THE MATCHBOX KING!

When people are called a something "king" these days it usually means that they are very wealthy. But that is not the case with the Matchbox King. He is a plumber named Leslie Adams, and he wants a million matchboxes (empty ones, not full). What does he want them for, you ask? The story begins a year or two ago, when Mr. Adams wanted to build a bonfire for the children, and there was not much money about to buy suitable materials. So he built a house of empty matchboxes, cleverly glued together, and when it was set on fire it made a grand blaze. The next year he did the same thing on a larger scale, and a lot of people came to watch the flare-up. Now he is going to build a complete village of matchboxes and set it on fire. But this time people will have to pay to watch, and the proceeds will go to the local hospital. Mr. Adams has already completed the church of the village, which is 6 feet long, and he sells postcards of the church to pay for the postage on the matchboxes which are sent to him.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.

You have all probably heard of the Flying Dutchman, the phantom sailing ship, which is said to have been condemned to sail for ever round the Cape of Good Hope. That story is, of course, merely a legend; but here is the true and modern version of that legend.

The American four-masted schooner, Maurice K. Thurlow, ran ashore on the Diamond Shoals, near Cape Hatteras, in

October, 1927. The crew were rescued by coastguards, but the ship refloated and vanished. A few weeks later she was sighted by a Dutch tanker sailing against the stream in the Gulf Stream. Recently, five years and a half after she ran ashore, she has been sighted, with her tattered sails still set, off Cape Charles, Virginia.

ANOTHER OLD STORY.

Another old legend is recalled by a story which comes from Colombo. The legend is that of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, who were said to have been brought up by wolves. The story from Colombo is that a five months' old baby, left in the charge of an older brother, was carried into the jungle by a leopard. For hours the villagers combed the jungle trying to find some sign of the missing child. At last a sound of a faint cooing came to their ears from the undergrowth, and, making a careful examination, they found the baby, quite well and unafraid, being nursed by the leopard!

FREE GIFTS!

Don't forget, all you fellows who are going to the seaside this summer—or, of course, who live there already—that Messrs. Cadbury Bros. are contributing a quarter of a million of the Dairy Milk bars for the consumption of readers of the GEM who buy their paper from beach sellers, kiosks, and other places at most of our well-known seaside resorts. In addition to this, Messrs. Cadbury Bros. are contributing pound boxes of their splendid assorted chocolates as prizes at our Concert Party, Gala, and Cinema competitions.

While on the subject of free gifts let me remind you all that in a few weeks' time I am giving away a really splendid gift with every copy of the GEM. This gift will please every boy and girl who is lucky enough to get one, and so that you may not be disappointed when the time comes along, I advise you to place a regular order with your newsagent right away.

ODDS AND ENDS.

Two English boys have left Hammersmith recently on a round-the-world voyage in canvas canoes. We wish them the best of luck—and good weather!

A golfer playing near Salisbury sliced his tee shot into the rough. His caddie went to look for the ball, and found it—on top of three eggs in a yellowhammer's nest! None of the eggs was in any way damaged!

A FOUR MILES DROP!

Reg. Cavanagh, speedway rider and film stunt merchant, has laid his plans for

making the world's record parachute jump. He is to have three parachutes on his back, and the first thing he plans to do is to drop four miles like a stone before he opens the first chute. When the first chute has checked his drop he will cut it adrift and again fall like a stone. Then he will open the second chute, and again this will be cut adrift when his speed has checked. Then, when he is as near the ground as he dare go, he will open the third parachute and drift slowly to the ground. Some people have strange ideas of amusement!

THE WEEK'S BEST STORY.

The week's best story is the story of a negro who took a pill. That doesn't seem anything very strange, but just you wait! This negro, whose name is much too complicated to reproduce here, suffered from asthma, and all sorts of doctors had tried to cure it, but without success. Then one day the negro heard that there was a Voodoo doctor near at hand, and he went to see him. The Voodoo doctor gave him some red, white, and green pills to take, and the negro duly took them according to instructions. The result was the most awful, agonising pain, which lasted for two months, by which time the unhappy man was almost in a state of coma. Then one morning he woke up to find the pain entirely gone, his asthma cured—and his skin turned completely white! No one knows how it happened, and doctors all over the world are interested in this man, who still has the features of a negro, but has a pink-white skin!

"WALDO, THE GANG-BUSTER!"

Not wanted at St. Frank's! Such is the unenviable and unhappy position of Stanley Waldo, of the Remove Form, when his school fellows discover that his father, Rupert Waldo, the wonder man and Robin Hood crook, is a member of the notorious "Brotherhood of the Brave," whose ruthless criminal activities have got Scotland Yard guessing! But what most of the juniors don't know is that Waldo senior has vowed to smash the brotherhood—in his own way! So Stanley has to suffer for the "sins" of his father, being ignominiously turned from St. Frank's, until the wonder man can achieve his object, and in doing so, save the honour of his son. What happens? Read the full-of-thrills extra-long yarn of the chums of St. Frank's, introducing also the famous detective, Nelson Lee, which appears in to-day's splendid issue of the "Nelson Lee."

LEG THEORY!

Harold Kemp, of Nottingham, has written to me on the above subject. He says that he does not think there is any harm whatsoever in leg theory, for it is merely a matter of placing your field in a certain way and then trying to induce the batsman to put up a catch in the required direction. On the other hand, Harold says, body-line bowling, if by that it is meant bowling definitely at the batsman's body with the idea of intimidating him, is all wrong. In fact it just isn't cricket in any sense of the word. I think I agree with Harold entirely, for surely there can be no harm in bowling leg theory. I think that the whole trouble is that the two ideas, leg theory and body-line bowling, have got somewhat mixed up.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE D'ARCY CUP!

(Continued from page 17.)

CHAPTER 9.

Meeting Old Friends Again!

"IN the beginning of time," said Tom Merry, sitting on the bed—"in the beginning of time we had permission to play as much water polo as we wanted to, but nothing to play for. Then Gussy—that freak there—got us a cup, and we were not allowed to play water polo for it. And now," he added wearily—"now we have permission to play water polo for a cup generously presented by Gussy's pater, to quote the Head, and the cup is lost."

"What do you mean, kid?" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Drop playing the ass, and speak sensibly!"

"I have. Dr. Holmes has heard about the cup, and so has given us permission to play water polo under proper supervision, and is himself coming to watch the game. It was to tell me that, that he wanted me in his room after prep this evening."

"My hat!"

"Well, I nevah! You didn't explain that the cup was missin', Mewwy?"

"No, ass, I did not! I was half a mind to, but I didn't. I just said nothing, and tried to think."

"Then the Head believes that we still have the cup?"

"Of course he does, Blake," said Tom Merry. "And that's the beastly point. When you come to think of it, Gussy, the howling lunatic there didn't lose his own cup, but a cup which had been presented to the college. It doesn't matter an atom that his pater was the presenter—it was the property of the coll the moment it had been given. And now tell me Gussy oughtn't to be in a padded-room! There is one other point—the Head has told the Sixth-Formers all about the cup."

"Phew!"

Jack Blake rammed his hands in his pockets, and looked serious. None of them had had a chance to speak to Tom Merry since his visit to Dr. Holmes' room until now, and so they were the last almost to hear the news.

There was a moment's painful silence. Then Tom Merry moved towards the door.

"There'll be a fair old shindy about this, you see if there isn't," he said. "I expect the Head will flay Gussy alive."

"Don't be widiculous!" said Arthur Augustus. "It can do no mannah of good to be widiculous; and we may we-covah the pot to-night."

"Oh, we may; and there may be an earthquake! Did you see about the grids, Blake?"

"Yes; I worked that all right. All four are hidden under the bushes in the Head's private garden."

"Good! Then all we can do is to hope for the best. If there is no best, and the cup has gone for good, I'd run away from school if I were you, Gussy—I would really."

"I shall wefuse to wun away from school! I shall wefuse to do anythin' of the kind! I shall face the wotten music!"

"Humph! Yes, it will be rotten music—a sort of cake-walk on your neck. Eleven o'clock, Blake in the Head's front garden."

"Right-ho! So-long for the present! If you can find time to slay Gussy, you have my permission to do so."

"Weally, deah boy—"

But the "deah boy" had gone.

Fortunately for Arthur Augustus it was deemed policy to keep the affair of the lost cup a secret, and so nothing further was said about the matter when the other fellows came in. Then the four chums of Study No. 6 began to undress for bed.

A prefect looked into the dormitory after a time to see that lights were out, and was struck by the steady snoring. But that particular prefect was a guileless fellow, and accepted all things on their surface value, so he did not notice that Jack Blake and his chums were watching out of the corners of their eyes. Then as the prefect closed the door, Blake turned to Arthur Augustus.

"Keep awake, mind, ass!" he whispered. "There's to be no more goating about."

"Weally, Blake, your remark is uncalled for! I wathah think I am not in the habit of goatin' about."

"Well, keep awake, then!"

"Of course, I shall keep awake!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am wathah surprised at your suggestin' such—"

"That's all right, kid; don't even shut your eyes."

The indignation which stirred in the breast of Arthur

Augustus kept him awake for about twenty minutes; then he began to doze, and a few moments later to sleep soundly.

Jack Blake found no difficulty in keeping awake; and when he heard the school clock strike a quarter to eleven, he scrambled out of bed.

"Asleep, of course," he muttered, looking at Arthur Augustus. "Hard cheese for Gussy!"

And without wasting time Jack Blake coolly yanked his chum from his bed, and bumped him down on the floor.

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't make a row, ass! It's a quarter to eleven!"

"I shall thwash you, Blake! I shall thwash you what-evah beastlay wow I make! I wegard it as wotten to wake a fellow suddenly, and bump him on the beastlay floor!"

"Dry up, ass!"

"I wefuse to dwy up! I wefuse—I am all in a fluttah!"

"Well, get in some togs as well, Gussy, and don't wake the others. We haven't any too much time."

Arthur Augustus was inclined to argue the point at first, but as he gradually recovered from the "fluttah" his sudden awakening had put him in, he agreed to listen to reason.

"But how are we to leave the coll, deah boy?" he whispered. "By the staircase window?"

"Of course!"

"Wight-ho! But I wathah think we are goin' wound the sun to meet the moon, you know. I doubt whethah we shall find that cup, but I feel certain that if I were to wite to the patah pointin' out that the cup was lost, he would wite to the occasion."

"Yes; only we aren't going to have any of that, Gussy, as I told you before. You get dressed, and leave the thinking to someone more used to it. I'm going to shove on tennis shoes, so as not to make a noise in the corridors."

"Bai Jove, that is wathah a wippin' ideah!"

"Well, dry up, and don't go to sleep again."

It did not take them long to dress, nor was much time lost in creeping along the corridor to the staircase window; and once that was gained, the chance of being seen was not great. They had gained the college grounds just as the clock struck the hour.

"Pelt along for all you're worth, Gussy," whispered Blake. "Figgins and Merry will be on time to a minute. What's up now?"

"Wow! I've kicked a wetched bwick!"

"Never mind. Perhaps you didn't hurt it. Cheer-ho, young Merry!"

"Hail, young Blake! Is Figgins with you?"

"No, kid," said Figgins' voice from behind, "he's with himself. Lead the way to the bicycles, Blake, and be prepared for the scorch of your lives."

Blake led them to where he had concealed the bicycles, and a few moments later lamps were lighted, and they were bowling along the high road across the quarry at a fine pace. They took the main road because the going was better, although it was a trifle farther than the other way, and this decision prevented their evening run from being without incident.

They were nearing Rylcombe, when voices raised in happy song fell on their ears.

"Jump off!" whispered Tom Merry, jamming on his brakes. "Ten to one they are farm hands coming from the inn down there. We don't want to be seen, kids."

"Bai Jove, I wathah think we shall be seen, deah boys. The wottahs are comin' this way."

"Humph! Oh, here we are!"

Spinning his machine round, Tom Merry pushed open a gate leading to a field, and so made a hurried way to the other side of the fence. The next moment the others had joined him.

"Out with the lights," whispered Jack Blake, "and don't speak. If it's any of Hodges' farm hands they'd split."

Tom Merry nodded. Anyway, it was no use running unnecessary risks.

The singers came on in a leisurely manner, warbling something about planting seeds in the garden of hearts; and, to say the least of it, the voices were untrained. They were also uncertain, as if the singers had spent much time in the inn.

"Have a look at 'em," whispered Tom Merry. "They are passing now."

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Well, I nevah!"

"Phew!"

"They are the tramps who sneaked our tea," said Figgins, under his breath, "they are, for a pension."

"Right for you, my son," said Tom Merry, thinking quickly. "It looks as if they haven't the cup. I reckon

they would have cleared out of the locality at the double if they'd found it."

"Humph! It might be bluff. Hang that song!"
 "Enery was singing at the top of his voice, and what that voice lacked in technique it made up for in volume. The chums watched them saunter past in some perplexity.

"What's to be done, deah boys?" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Personally I would wathah like to thwash the outsidahs for sneakin' our tea, bai Jove!"

"The cup must come first," said Tom Merry. "Do you or don't you think they have the cup, Blake?"

"Blessed if I know what to think. What do you say, Figgy?"

"They may and they mayn't have it, but I reckon it isn't a chance to throw away," said the New House fellow. "I vote a couple of us follow the tramps, and the other two slip off to the quarry and see if the pot is still there. We can meet again, say, at the top of the lane where we saw Cousin Ethel this afternoon."

"Good for you, kid," said Tom Merry. "Yes, that's the ticket. You come with me to the quarry, Gussy, and Figgins and Blake track the tramps down. I expect they are making for somewhere to sleep for the night. It'll most likely be a ditch, or something. You'll be able to keep up with them all right."

"Yes, it won't be a difficult job to track idiots singing at the top of their voices," laughed Blake. "But come on, Figgy! Wheel the grids, or we shall come to grief unless we light the lamps, and that wouldn't do. So-long, you chaps!"

The chums separated hastily. Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus lighting their bicycle lamps and pedalling up towards the quarry as hard as they could go.

CHAPTER 10.

In Farmer Hodges' Barn!

"**B**AI JOVE, there they are, Tom Merry!"

"Yes, here we are, all right," sang out Figgins excitedly, "and here we've been for the last ten minutes. Any luck?"

"No feah, deah boy; the wotten cup wasn't there."

"Pshaw!"
 "Yes," said Tom Merry quietly, "the cup has been found, right enough, but not by us. We've scoured the place where we had tea over and over again."

"Yaas, wathah; but about the twamps? Have they got it, Figgy?"

"How do I know, ass? I don't think they have. We followed them quite easily without being seen, and somehow I don't think they know any more about the cup than we do; but, of course, there's no saying."

"Bai Jove!"
 "Dry up, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Where did you leave the rotters?"

"Snoring peacefully in a barn belonging to Farmer Hodges," grinned Figgins. "Weren't they just making a noise, too—eh, Blake?"

"My hat, yes. He had a good look in at them; then, to make sure they wouldn't sneak off before we could find you fellows, we secured the door. The question is now, what on earth are we to do?"

"Yes, that is the question."
 "Yaas, wathah; I considah that is the question myself," said Arthur Augustus. "And undah the circs—"

"Yes, old Gus, undah the circs you'd better lie down, as it were," laughed Tom Merry. "I propose we all slip back and have a look at those tramps. We'll find out whether they have the cup or not somehow, and we'll make it warm for them in any case. I haven't forgotten about that tea. I say, though, Gussy, your goating about has let us in for something this time, and no mistake."

"You should have weminded me about the cup when we came away," said Arthur Augustus coolly. "I blame you entirely, Tom Merry, for not wemindin' me; but I have offahed to wite to the patah."

"Oh, do ring off!" growled Blake. "We told you we aren't going to let you sub on the pater for us, not by long chalks, kid."

"Of course not!" agreed Figgins, mounting his bicycle. "You can put that idea out of your head, Gussy."

It was an easy run down to Farmer Hodges' place, and at Blake's suggestion they left their bicycles just inside the field. As they neared the barn gentle snores met their ears, and Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"They did us out of our tea," he muttered; "we'll do 'em out of their beauty-sleep now. You are sure the door is secure, Figgins?"

"As secure as a bank."
 "Good! My hat, what's that there?"

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"A hosepipe," said Figgins, looking surprised. "Nothing to get excited about in a hosepipe. Did you take it for a snake or something?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I considah that wathah humowous, deah boy."

"You would, Gussy," said Tom Merry, catching up the end of the hosepipe. "My hat, if only we could find a tap somewhere, Blake!"

"You mean— Good egg! There's wisdom in the idea if only we can find a tap!"

"Well, I wathah think there is a tap ovah there by the stable door, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "though what good a beastlay tap can do in gettin' back the cup, I don't know."

Tom Merry was not listening. He was dragging the hosepipe across to the stable as quietly as he could instead; then they all could see him kneeling down, engaged in tying the hosepipe to the tap.

"Bai Jove, I gwasp the ideah now!" murmured Arthur Augustus, picking up his end of the hosepipe. "And a watin' good ideah it is, I considah. It is our intention to squirt watah on the wetchid twamps through the window, bai Jove!"

"It is, Gussy."

"Wippin'! I wegard it is simplay wippin'!"

Then something happened which Arthur Augustus could not at first account for. Jack Blake's cap shot off his head as if a gust of wind had caught it, his face puckered up, and he uttered a gasp.

"Oh! You ass! Oh!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, there's watah comin' fwom somewah!"

"Stop!" choked Blake. "Turn the hosepipe away, ass! Oh, you uttah duffah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Figgins. "Ho, ho, ho!"

Then he stopped laughing. Arthur Augustus, in attempting to escape Jack Blake with the stream of water, caught Figgins just under the left ear. From that moment Figgins failed to see the humour of the thing.

"Take it away from him!" he growled. "Take it away from him! Phew! You ought to be boiled in oil, you utter ass!"

"Weally, Figgins, deah boy, the whole mattah was an accident, and I will expwess my wegwets," said Arthur Augustus; "but I must wufuse to be boiled in—"

"So you ought to be! Ha, ha, ha! Look at him now!"

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I am ddownin' myself! Tom Mewwy, I wegard you as an uttah duffah! Why didn't you tell me you were goin' to turn on the beastlay watah?"

"Because I didn't want to have old Hodges on our track, Gussy," said the Shell fellow. "I wasn't going to yell half across the farmyard to please you or anybody. And you'll wake those tramps in a minute with that row."

"I don't care who I wake. I considah it wank bad form on your part, Tom Mewwy, not to have warned me. I considah—"

"Well, consider to yourself, then," said Tom pleasantly. "I say, Blake, there is a decent pressure of water here, and no mistake. It ought to startle 'Enery and his chums. The point is, how to get the window open."

"No need," said Figgins. "One of the panes of glass is broken."

"Listen a moment."

They listened, and caught the sounds of the steady snoring again. It was not quite as loud as it had been, but it was very steady. Tom Merry climbed on a wheelbarrow, and the others crowded up after him; then, with a quick movement, the hero of the Shell got the hosepipe through the broken window.

"Enery, the humorist, happened to be the sleeper nearest the door, and by the smile on his face was evidently dreaming of some happy land where work is unknown. Then 'Enery, the humorist, awoke."

Full in the face the stream of water caught him, and Tom Merry kept him neatly covered, much as the limelight operator manipulates his apparatus. 'Enery tried to shout. A stream of water went down his throat, and if there was one thing 'Enery disliked more than another it was water, whether for external or internal use.

"Stop it!" he managed to gasp at last. "For 'Eaven's sake, stop it!"

"Wot's the matter, 'Enery? Ow, ow!"

"Let 'em have it!" chuckled Blake. "Douse 'em for all you're worth, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah we have a perfect wight to douse them, seein' the vewy wotten mannah in which they sneaked our tea! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors' eyes had become accustomed to the dark by now, and it happened that a young moon had just risen, and was shining in through the window, so they had a good view of what was taking place in the barn.

The tramps sprang to their feet, and, after the manner of

their kind, tried to retreat from the unpleasantness. They failed. Tom Merry followed them up in fine style, and it was not long before 'Enery began to have wild theories about the barn gradually filling with water until they were drowned.

"The door!" he gasped. "Try the door, for 'Eaven's sake!"

One of them did, under difficulties, and amidst much water, and had to give it up.

"We're caught, 'Enery—caught like rats in a trap!"

Then Tom Merry turned the water to a blank wall.

"I want to talk to you roughs," he said briskly, "and you'd better answer truthfully for once in your lives, because, as you said, you are fairly caught this time. Did you find anything at the quarry this afternoon?"

"Bless me 'at, it's the lads whose grub we stole—found!" muttered one of the tramps.

"Oh, we know you stole our tea," said Tom Merry, "and we've paid you out for that with this hosepipe. What we want to know now is, did you take anything else—a brown leather bag, for instance?"

"Yaas, wathah, with a silvah cup in it!"

"Dry up! Oh, you are an ass, Gussy!"

"Well, so there was a silvah cup in the beastly bag. I know that, because I put it there myself, deah boy. I don't see what there is to get watty about, and I must wefuse to be chawactewised as an ass, Mewwy!"

"So you are? Did any of you three loafers find the cup, then? You'd better own up if you did, and I dare say you'll get a bit of a roward; if you don't own up—well, there'll be trouble, I can tell you!"

"Selp me—"

"No; there's no need to start that. Just give a plain answer. Did you find the cup?"

"No, we didn't; an' it's libel 'intin' that we did!"

"Where did you go after we'd left?"

"To the inn, of course, and—"

"Which one?"

"The one near the town, and look you 'ere—"

Tom Merry turned to Blake.

"I believe he's speaking the truth," he said. "None of them would ever think of going to the spot where we had tea, because it would be right out of their way. It's no sort of use making that row. You'll only have Farmer Hodges out of bed, and that'll mean more trouble for sleeping in his barn."

The tramps were inclined to rave, but they were sensible enough to see that there was a lot in what Tom Merry said, and so they tried to bluff the matter.

"Let us out, an' we won't say nothin' about the water," whined one of them. "Undo the door."

Tom Merry grinned.

'Enery might be a man of his word, but he did not look it, and none of them felt in the mood for a free fight with three tramps at that time of night. Still, they were no further in their efforts to recover the lost cup.

"Anyway," said Tom Merry quietly, "I feel certain these rotters haven't the thing, so I don't see the use of staying here any longer. Are you there, 'Enery?"

"Of course I'm 'ere!"

"Then stay there!" said the Shell fellow. "If you wait long enough, the door might come unfastened, only I wouldn't make a noise if I were you. Farmer Hodges is a big man, and has a dog or two. Don't sleep on your backs, it makes you snore."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I considah that remarkably funny! Bai Jove, where are you goin', deah boy?"

"To turn off the water, of course! Walk towards the bicycles," he added, in a whisper. "Get them out in the road, then I'll let the tramps loose. I may have to make a run for it, so get ready to mount in double-quick time."

The others nodded; but there was no need for the caution. 'Enery and his companions were too wet and unhappy to show fight, and they accepted their liberation in the same spirit they had taken their wetting. They each threatened a lot, but did nothing.

Tom Merry did not wait to hear their remarks, but cut off towards the others, and a few seconds later they were pedalling for St. Jim's again.

There was silence for some time, then Arthur Augustus broke it.

"Wathah a case of misfiah, I considah," he said. "We are no newah gettin' the cup back than we were before we started, bai Jove!"

"No, Gussy," said Tom Merry; "and we never shall be any nearer unless we go to the Head and let him put the police to work!"

"Wot—wank wot! And, besides, it's settled that we can't go to the police on account of Cousin Ethel."

"Then it's also settled that we've seen the last of the D'Arcy cup!"

"I don't agwee. I watah think we shall wecovah the pot all wight; and if not, a lettah to the patah—"

"If you are branching out again on that tack, Gussy, you may as well dry up before you begin," said Figgins. "You know our opinion on that score. There's the coll, by Jove. I say, Blake, shall Merry and I look you up in Study No. 6 to-morrow morning?"

"If you like."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We'll talk the mattah ovah coolly!"

"Humph!" grunted Tom Merry. "In my opinion we've been doing nothing but talk matters over since you were ass enough to lose the blessed cup. I suppose we shall have to hide the grids where Blake hid them in the first place, and trust to luck it doesn't rain. See you in your room after brekker, then, Blake?"

"Right-ho! Good-night, kid!"

And they parted, at least three of the four more than a little exercised as to what ought to be done.

CHAPTER 11.

The D'Arcy Cup Turns Up!

"FOR goodness' sake, D'Arcy, don't keep harping on one string! Why can't we tell the Head about the picnic, and say nothing at all about Cousin Ethel?"

"Because I considah it would not be the thing, Blake, deah boy."

"Hang what you considah!"

"Hang Gussy, too, if you have time!" said Tom Merry. "Bless'd if I know what is to be done. The whole coll is talking about nothing except this water-polo match to-morrow, and the Head and Kildare were speaking about your pater's generosity only just now, as I came along the passage, Gussy. I tell you we shall look small over this, and no mistake."

"Yaas, I wathah think we shall," admitted Arthur Augustus. "But that does not alter the case. You gave me your pwomise not to go the Head, and— Come in, deah boy!"

The "deah boy" came in. He happened to be Dr. Holmes, the respected headmaster of St. Jim's.

"Good-morning, boys!" he said, smiling at Arthur Augustus' expression of concern. "You haven't shown me the D'Arcy cup yet."

Tom Merry was standing up at the time, but he sat down at that—sat down limply, as if overtaken by faintness. Jack Blake took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead, and Figgins tried to convince himself that it was a dream, and that he would wake up soon.

"You have it here, D'Arcy?"

"Have what here, sir?"

"The cup, of course. I understand it arrived the other day."

"Yaas, wathah—yaas, it awwived all wight. It came by passengah twain, bai Jove!"

"Yes, by passenger train—" said Tom Merry.

Jack Blake thought it unnecessary to repeat the remark, so merely nodded, and Figgins looked fixedly out of the window.

"Well, please let me see it," went on Dr. Holmes. "It is extremely generous of your father, D'Arcy—extremely generous. I— Where is the cup, Blake?"

"Well, as a mattah of fact, sir—"

"As a matter of fact—"

"Please answer me instantly, Blake!" said Dr. Holmes, who had been a headmaster too long not to have suspicions which were easily raised. "Where is the cup?"

Blake tried to say something, then sighed with relief. Someone was tapping at the door. The shortest respite was better than none at all.

"Come in!" he said. "What shall I say, Merry?" he added, in a gaspy sort of whisper. "Please tell me what to say."

"The only thing I can think of," returned the Shell fellow, wearily, "is to pretend to be dumb, or have a fit."

"Silly ass!"

Then a series of the most astonishing expressions that ever appeared on a human face flickered across the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus. He was looking across the room at the doorway, in which stood Taggles, the porter; but it was not at Taggles Arthur Augustus was glaring. It was at a leather bag he was carrying.

"Bai Jove!"

"For Master D'Arcy, sir!" sniffled Taggles.

Arthur Augustus was across the room in a flash.

"Bai Jove!" he shouted. "It's turned up—the wotten pot—I mean— Bai Jove!"

He wrenched open the bag, and lifted out the beautiful cup his father had presented for the water polo games.

Arthur Augustus seemed so amazed that Tom Merry thought the Head would demand an explanation, and so acted promptly.

"Yes, sir, this is the cup," he said hurriedly. "Isn't it a grand one?"

"It is, indeed, Merry. The winning team ought to be proud of a trophy such as this is. But I think it will be the wiser course if I take it into my room with me. It is the property of the school now, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah! Taggles, where on earth—"

"Lie down, ass!" muttered Jack Blake, almost fiercely, as Dr. Holmes removed the cup from the bag and left the room. "My hat, Gussy, if I hadn't yanked you down in your chair, you'd have given the whole show away, after all!"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, nothin' of the sort!"

"Wait a minute, Taggles!" sang out Tom Merry.

"Where did this bag come from?"

"Cleveland Lodge, and there's a note tied on to the handles."

Tom Merry seized the bag, and snatched off the note, which was twisted up in an artistic fashion.

"It's for you, Gussy!"

"For me, bai Jove! Well, I nevah!"

"Read it out, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Dear Arthur,—I am weturnin' the D'Arcy cup, and I twust you will wead this lettah more carefully than you wead my last one. I considah boys should not be careless, and so took the opportunity of wepovvin' you for misweadin' my vewy nicely worded lettah. Hopin' you have all been vewy severely fwightend about the loss of the cup,—Believe me, yours vewy sincerely,

"COUSIN ETHEL."

"My—my hat!" said Blake faintly; then, without further remark, they all burst into roars of laughter.

It was just the thing Cousin Ethel would delight in doing, and not one of the quartette of juniors was void of a sense of humour.

They could enjoy a joke they were playing on other people, but then they could also laugh heartily when someone was turning the tables on them.

"Bai Jove, though, I wondah how she managed to cawwy the bag home?" remarked Arthur Augustus, after a bit.

"It wasn't a small bag, you know."

"Oh, trust Cousin Ethel," said Figgins quietly. "She had a coat which she wouldn't let me carry for her, I remember, so I suppose the bag was under that."

"Yes, you can trust Cousin Ethel to work a wheeze properly!" laughed Tom Merry. "But her time will come. We must remember this in the future."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I have been in a beastlay fwight about that cup, because I am wiwin' to the patah to-day for a fivah, in ordah to stand a spewad to both polo teams attah the game, and if I had to wiah for a cup at the same time, he might have cut up wuff."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I suppose he might. Kids, if we don't massacre those New House rotters to-morrow after this—"

"Eh?" exclaimed Figgins. "What's that?"

"If we don't massacre the New House bounders, may I be boiled in oil!"

"You'll probably be drowned before half-time, my son, so don't trouble. We shall just walk over you—"

"Weally, Figgins, that is wickidulous. Bothah, there goes the bell for first school, and I have my team to pick for the match!"

For the rest of that day, and all the following Saturday morning, there was only one subject of conversation at St. Jim's, and that one subject was water polo. There was no half measures about the fellows' keenness, but it was kept within bounds this time. Arthur Augustus and Figgins were allowed to select their respective teams in peace.

CHAPTER 12.

The Second Water Polo Match!

ANOTHER perfect day that Saturday proved to be, with cloudless skies, from which a summer sun shone, making the fellows who were not to play still more envious of those who were.

Skimpole had relented, and had offered his services as referee again, but they were declined, a tried man from Wayland being preferred; and punctually to time his boat was rowed in mid-stream.

Arthur Augustus glanced round his men, a flush of excitement on his face.

"I wathah think we are stwongah than last time, deah

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boy," he said to Blake. "Lowthah, half, in place of Mellish, is an impvovement—"

"Yes, old chap. Only don't tell Mellish so. He's behind us."

"Is he, bai Jove? I must apologise."

But there was no time, for the referee gave the signal at that moment.

"All in!"

The polo teams entered the water, to the accompaniment of the cheers of nearly all the fellows at St. Jim's, for this time there was no cricket match to prevent the seniors from watching.

Figgins had won the toss, and placed his opponents with the sun in their faces; then the referee glanced from one goalful of anxious juniors to the other.

"Ready!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes!"

Pheep!

Splash!

The ball was in play, right in the centre of the river, and an exciting race between Tom Merry and Figgins instantly took place. Figgins' long arms gained him the opening advantage, and he threw the ball backwards just as the Shell fellow was upon him. Then on he swam, ready for the forward throw.

Kerr was the man who had the ball, and, being a Scotsman, he knew how to keep his head. He dribbled the ball until there was a chance of his losing it, then neatly threw it a foot or so before the trudging Figgins.

Digby was marking his man like a shadow, but once again Figgins' long arm served him well. He sent in a stinging shot just as he was pushed down.

"Goal!"

"No!"

"Good old Gussy! Well played, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus had saved like a veteran, and, being wise in his generation, was content to stop the ball just in front of Herries.

Herries promptly swung it out to Blake on the wing, and, beating his man well, the leader of the Fourth Form juniors tried a shot.

It was well saved, and so the game swayed, first in favour of one side, and then in favour of the other.

Of course, the polo match was not of a very high order, compared with the game most of the fellows had seen at Wayland, but it was definitely more interesting to the Saints, and when the teams changed over after the first seven minutes with the score sheet blank, the cheering was terrific.

But, exciting as the first half had been, the second half caused it to be forgotten, for almost from the first shot Tom Merry scored. Then, before the cheers had died away, Figgins equalised, beating Arthur Augustus with a shot the Fourth-Former never saw. That seemed to be all that was needed to make the fellows play as if life itself depended on their efforts.

Time after time the rival sets of forwards made for goal, but the defence of both sides was sound enough for anything, and five of the seven minutes of the second half had gone before the score of one all was altered, then it was Figgins who again brought about the downfall of the School House.

Suddenly he found himself with the ball, and a clear swim of ten yards or so before him. Quick as lightning, he got away, intending to do what he had often done before, swing the ball out to his wing man. But almost as he had the ball in his hand, Figgins caught sight of a pretty, girlish figure in a pale blue anslin frock, standing on the river-bank. It was Cousin Ethel, as keenly interested as the wildest young fag of the Third Form.

Figgins unconsciously gritted his teeth, and, instead of passing out, swam on. This was unexpected by Lowther, and the Shell fellow found himself beaten, as Figgins trudged furiously towards Digby.

Digby hesitated. He knew enough about water polo to know that it was fatal for a back to leave his man; but, then, the leader of the New House juniors was getting perilously near D'Arcy's charge.

"Go for him!" shouted Herries.

But it was too late. Figgins had the ball in the air, and the next instant he had slammed it past Arthur Augustus, with a force which would have beaten a much better goalie than the chum from Study No. 6.

The New House fellows cheered to the echo, and a thrill of pleasure passed through Figgins' wiry form as he turned in the water.

Cousin Ethel was clapping her hands with the rest.

"Good shot, kid!" breathed Tom Merry, in a sort of gasp as they swam past each other on their way to their respected goals. "Quite of the mustard brand!"

"On the play, we don't deserve to lick you, Tom—"

"No, Figgy, and you haven't licked us yet!"

The referee started the game briskly, and this time Tom Merry gained the ball. It was a near thing, but it was his hand which scooped the ball out of the water, and it meant a good deal to his team that it was.

"Wing it, Lowther!" he panted, back-flipping wildly.

But Lowther did not wing the ball. He held it until Tom Merry had swum past his man, then neatly dropped the ball before him.

"Pass, Merry!"

"Wing it, man!"

But Tom Merry knew better than that. Blake and his other forwards were being marked like shadows, while he had just a few inches of rope, and he had the ball. To pass was not the game in those circumstances. He just went on instead.

Fatty Wynn made a grand effort to knock the ball from his hand, and even succeeded in touching it with the tips of his fingers, but it was too late. Tom Merry had got his throw-in, and the next thing he saw as he came up was that of the School House partisans on the river-bank hurling their caps in the air and yelling at the top of their voices.

"Oh, it's all very well for you to talk, Gussy!" laughed Tom Merry, as they scrambled out of the water to take their macintoshes from the fellows who had been minding them. "You've been treading water all the afternoon, not floundering about. There's Cousin Ethel, by Jove!"

"Yaas, wathah! But I weally can't speak to her with my hair wet and wumpled. I pwopose we wave, and—"

But Cousin Ethel ordained it otherwise. As the polo teams moved to where Dr. Holmes was standing, she stopped her cousin with a laugh.

"Well played, Arthur!" she exclaimed. "You did awfully well! And I am so glad the School House won."

But the fellows were collecting round Dr. Holmes by now, for the Head meant to present the D'Arcy cup in the open, and not in the Hall.

Arthur Augustus saw what was to happen, and was struck by a point.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy!" he exclaimed, catching his chums up. "I wathah think it is imposs for me to take the cup, seem' my patah pwesented it."

"Rot, ass!"

"Well, weally—"

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JIM'S!



JACK BLAKE.

Jack Blake, leader of the Fourth Form in the School House, is also the head of Study No. 6, in the Fourth passage, which he shares with his three chums, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby. He asserts that he is also the leader of the School House Juniors and even of the whole Junior School, but Tom Merry and Figgins do not quite agree with him on those points! Despite this friction, Blake is on the very best terms with Merry and Figgy—except, of course, when Form or House rows are in progress! A sound man at all games, Blake plays in all junior teams for both the School and his House. Blake is a Yorkshireman and proud of it—he even feels a bit sorry for those chaps who happen to have had the misfortune to be born elsewhere! Hard-headed, good-natured, and a great sportsman, Blake is popular on all sides.

The scores were equal once more.

Then they waited for the restart. None of them knew whether there was half a minute or two minutes to go, but there could not be much more of it. Then there was a splash, and the ball was in the centre again.

Wildly the two rivals swam for it, and Figgins just got there, half a stroke ahead, but this time it was not enough. Tom Merry seemed to fling himself upon the ball, and brushed it out of the New House fellow's hand as he swam furiously past him.

Wynn did not mean to let Tom Merry get away again, and was on him like a flash, when Tom Merry passed to Jack Blake.

Blake had been watching the referee, and had seen him finger his whistle, as if it were only a matter of seconds now, and that decided the wing man.

"Now for it!" he muttered; and he let fly.

It was a very long shot, but it was beautifully judged.

With a great effort the New House goalkeeper tried to get his hand to the ball, but it was beyond his reach, and an instant later it was in the corner of the net.

Phoop!

"All out!" called the referee; and the fellows swam for the side, confident now that the excitement was over that they could not have kept afloat another minute.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's over at last, and I can't say I'm sorry. I thought I was going to sink for good that last time."

"But we've won, deah boys. We've beaten them, and that's all that mattabs."

"Oh, you dream again, old kid! Blake?"

"Cheerio!"

"Keep near Gussy, will you?" said Tom Merry.

And, somewhat to the Head's surprise, Jack Blake took the advice in a literal sense, for when Arthur Augustus stepped forward to receive the cup, Jack Blake went with him, holding his arm. Then as soon as the swell of the School House had received the cup, his chum gently, but firmly, took it from him.

"You may look at it, Gussy," he said; "you may even touch it, but only when someone older and wiser has hold of it. Are you trying to say something?"

"Yaas, wathah! Tea will be weady at five, bai Jove!"

"Tea! What tea?"

"The spwead I am givin' in honah of the gweat polo match, deah boy. The fivah awwived by expwess all wight, and Figgins and his team have accepted invites. Bai Jove, I wathah think it ought to become a custom at St. Jim's that the winnin' team at watah polo stands a feed to the othabs."

"Ah, there's wisdom in that, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus had very wisely left all arrangements in the experienced hands of Fatty Wynn once again, and, without saying much, Fatty Wynn had surpassed himself.

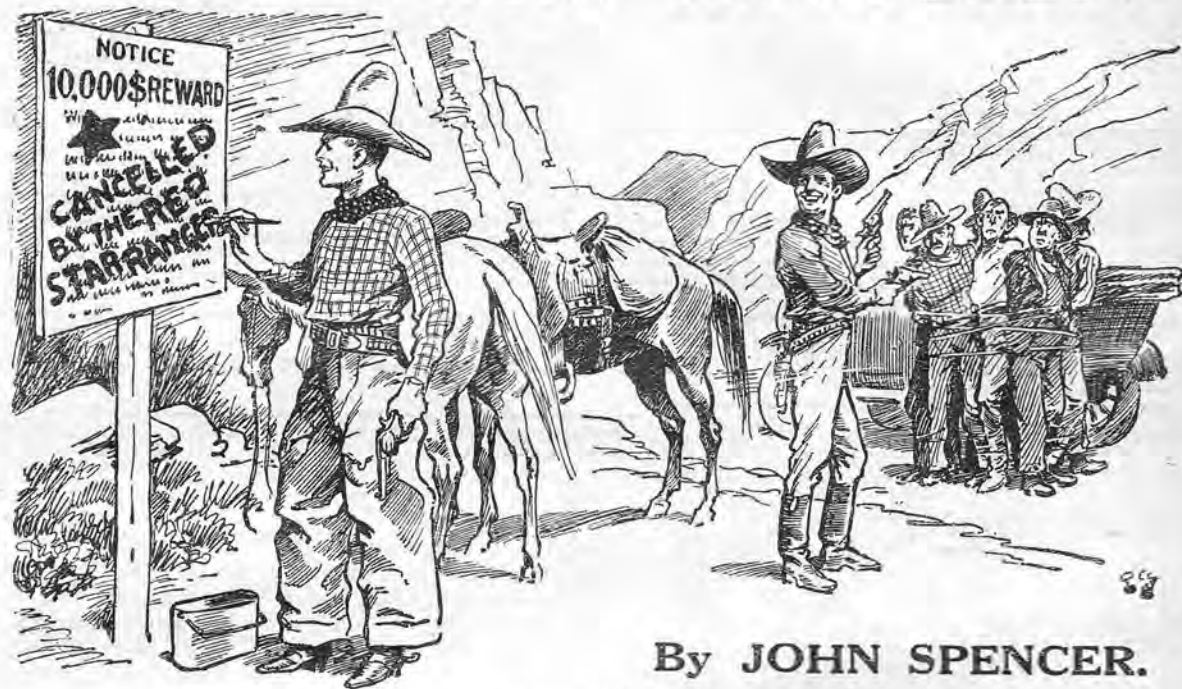
THE END.

(Look out for next week's ripping yarn "The Boy with Too Many Friends!" It's a wow!)

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FURTHER THRILLING CHAPTERS IN OUR WESTERN ADVENTURE YARN!

RED STAR RANGER!



By JOHN SPENCER.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED:

JERRY GARRISON and his pal **FUSTY** have been wrongfully outlawed by **JASPER PRIVETT**, the rascally Mayor of Red Rock. They know that Privett is in league with a bandit gang in the mountains and the two pals find the bandits' stronghold and blow it up. Slade, the leader, and his bandits rob the bank in Mongoose and hide the loot, but Jerry and Fusty dig it up and return it to the bank. Knowing that they are suspected of the robbery themselves they capture **HUGO ENNIS**, the Sheriff of Mongoose, and take him to the mountains, where they are able to show him proof of their story about Slade's bandits. Ennis agrees to help them trap Privett by sending a car load of gold to Red Rock and letting Privett know about it. But in the car will be vigilants—not gold!

(Now read on.)

The Gold Car!

SLADE and his men rode into Mongoose towards the wane of the afternoon, and from then on till late that night they hung around the sheriff's office, talking mostly to Squint Lane. Jim Rawson was with them for a little while, but later strolled away home. By that time the crescent moon was up and the stars were out. Imagine Jim Rawson's surprise when he found the sheriff seated in his snugery with the blinds down, the curtains drawn, and only the light of the flickering wood fire to see by.

"Sheriff, what in heck—" Jim Rawson began, but Ennis interrupted him.

"I know. Slade and his boys are in town. waitin' for me," he said. "Well, they ken wait. Jim Slade and Jasper Privett, Mayor of Red Rock, are back of the two bank robberies. As far as I see it, the Red Star Ranger and Joe McKraw have got a clean sheet. The gang aim at bumping off the two outlaws. I figure to get 'em pardon, and I've got a plan. I shan't be able to show up in Mongoose, and you'll have to carry it through for me. Think you've gotta enough hoss sense to do it?"

Rawson grinned.

"I was on the premises holdin' out both hands when the grey matter was give out," he answered.

"All right. Then, listen, Jim!" For fifteen minutes on end the sheriff talked, and Rawson made mental notes. Hugo Ennis ate in his friend's house, and in the wee small hours, when the streets were deserted, he led his pony into the quiet, lonely ways, mounted there, and rode off.

By that time Slade and his gang had grown tired of waiting and decamped. They planned to comb the mountains for the Red Star Ranger and Fusty. But the Red Star Ranger, Fusty Joe McKraw, and Sheriff Hugo Ennis, before the morning broke, were safely hidden at a lone

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ranch ten miles from Mongoose, which belonged to Dave Ennis, Hugo's brother. The ponies were turned loose in a corral. Jerry Garrison and Fusty agreed not to show themselves to the cowboys employed by Ennis, and Hugo had a quick ride in to Mongoose by car waiting for him at any time he liked to make it.

When Squint Lane strolled into the sheriff's office the next morning, he was surprised to find Jim Rawson in possession. And Jim seemed to be using the telephone.

"Hallo! Whar's Ennis?" demanded Squint.

"Not showed up. Didn't kem home last night. His missus is kind of anxious."

Squint frowned suspiciously.

"Didn't I tell you I saw him ride outa town with Jerry Garrison and Joe McKraw yesterday mornin'?" he said.

"You did. I've sent the boys out scouting. Can't think whar Ennis wanted with them outlaws. Mebbe he's dead 'n cold mutton by this time."

"You takin' charge?"

"Yep. The sheriff would want it."

"Better let me handle the job, Jim," said Lane eagerly.

"Naw! I'm takin' over. But I'm kinda worried, Squint."

"Whar about?"

"The bank's sendin' a lot of gold over to the State Bank at Red Rock. Wish the sheriff wuz hyar. With the Red Star Ranger and Fusty robbing banks, I hate the thought of this gold going by car, and no escort. Supposin' the Ranger and Fusty hold it up on the road?"

Lane slumped into a chair.

"Just wait a minit," he said. "How could the Ranger and Fusty know the gold was going by road? If the bank sends an ordinary car without escort the car would be in Red Rock, and the gold safely deposited in the bank before the news leaked out."

"You think so, eh?"

"Shore of it. No need for an escort, Jim."

"That's what they said at the Red Rock Bank, funny enough," said Jim cheerfully. "I'll have another word with 'em."

He called a number, and presently Squint heard a voice at the other end of the wire.

"That the bank?" Jim Rawson asked. "Waal, this is Rawson speakin'. I've changed my mind. Agree with you it will be best to send the gold bars and the dough by car without escort. That's what the manager of the bank here thinks, too. I was the one who thought the risk too great. That's why I rang you up. I'll hop along and see the manager now, and you'll phone him, will you? O.K."

Jim rose from the desk chair and sauntered out of the front door.

"I'm hoppin' along to see the bank manager, Squint," he said, in the friendliest possible way.

"When's the bank aim to send that gold?" Squint asked casually.

"On Thursday, half an hour after the bank shuts," said Rawson.

But he did not go along to the State Bank, passing through the house next door, hopping over the fence between, and entering the back room, and crouching down with his eye to a chink of the locked door instead.

He saw Squint busy with the telephone, and he heard Lane say:

"Yes, boss. The gold goes by car on Thursday, after the bank's closed. No escort. It ought to be pie easy. An', say—Sheriff Hugo Ennis ain't kem back yet. The boys in town say he's been lead-drilled by Fusty and the Red Star Ranger."

Jim Rawson had heard enough. Back over the fence he climbed, and, making for the street, headed for the bank. He met Squint Lane when he came out of the bank some minutes later.

"It's all right, Squint," he said, with a nod and a grin. "The bank is sendin' that gold consignment by car, without an escort."

Back in his office he rang up the operator, and asked what was the latest call put through from the sheriff's office.

"Red Rock 1001," was the prompt reply.

Nobody would have recognised Sheriff Hugo Ennis when he drove into Mongoose in his brother's car that night, so completely was he disguised. Jim Rawson was waiting for the car in Congress Street.

"Sheriff," he said, when the car stopped, "I did everything you told me, an' Squint Lane bit. He phoned up Red Rock 1001, and said the gold was going by car, without escort, on Thursday, after the banks are shut."

"Fine, Jim," said Ennis, rubbing together his hands. "Send a posse out Red Rock way Wednesday night. Let 'em hide. Post another posse east of Mongoose. Then pack the biggest saloon you can find bung full of armed vigilants, and let it follow a minute after the decoy car. That clear?"

"Clear'n mud!" grinned Jim.

On Thursday afternoon, after the Mongoose bank had shut, a car drove up to the back door. Squint Lane, lurking to make sure, saw some sacks and cases carried out and dumped into it. Chuckling to himself, he hurried away, mounted a horse, and streaked out of town.

Within an hour that car might have been seen tearing along the road which skirts the foothills and runs direct into Red Rock.

The driver was muffled. So, too, was the man who sat next him. They looked like two ordinary citizens, and were, seemingly, unarmed; but two six-guns lay on the seat beside each man.

They had covered half the journey, and were speeding at about 40 m.p.h. through wild country, with the mountains towering on the right, when, from the bush-covered rocks, a shot rang out.

Zip!

The near-side front tyre popped, riddled by a bullet.

Suuuuuup! Pop! Szzzzzz! Bullets rained down at the tyres from the slopes, and the car came to a dead stand, its radiator riddled and spouting water, its petrol-tank perforated like a colander, and all its tyres down.

The two men held their hands up high, as, with shouts and yells, a cloud of horsemen poured out of the bushes and came slithering down the slopes to the car, each man's face hidden to the eyes by a draped silk handkerchief.

As the gunmen came swarming towards the car, the driver said to his pal:

"Fusty, old hoss, see that big man in front—that's Slade. Want me to get him, or shall you?"

"You take him, Red," answered Fusty. "I'm aimin' to

get that other guy, with the dark complexion, next him. He's Sam Paulo, the buzzard who double-crossed poor Sim Ross!"

"Okay! Then you get Sam, old-timer!"

The horsemen crowded towards the car, guns ready and pointing.

But they checked their gallop when they heard the whine of a car, back along the road, that seemed to be coming along at racing speed.

As they hesitated, Fusty reached for a gun, and, swinging it, shot at first sight. Out of the saddle toppled Sam Paulo, to hit the dust with a dull thud.

A volley answered the shot, and Fusty ducked behind the dashboard.

Braaang! Jerry Garrison let Slade have it, and, throwing up his hands, the big crook did a head-dive over the shoulder of his pony and lay in a crumpled heap.

Then up and out of the car leapt half a dozen men, who had been huddled most uncomfortably in the back, instead of the boxes and cases which the bank clerks had pretended to put in there.

Each man held a gun, and each gun barked.

The shooting became general. But the battle was of the briefest, for out of the car that raced to the rescue flashed spits of fire and balls of smoke.

The car braked to a skidding stand, and the men jumped out, headed by Sheriff Hugo Ennis.

"Let 'em have it hot!" said the Sheriff of Mongoose. "Lead-drill the skunks!"

But already the bandits were in full flight, scattering and heading, some along the road, some up the bush-clad hills, some diving into the trees.

And from a distance echoed the irregular plop, plop, pop, pop! of exploding rifles and six-guns, showing that the sheriff's posse, who had been waiting out all night, had also come into action.

Sheriff Hugo Ennis grinned as he saw the Red Star Ranger and Fusty jump out of the decoy-car.

"How do, boys?" he greeted. "Hurt any?"

"I've lost the top of me ear," said Fusty, putting up a hand to the bleeding place.

"Let's see who we've bumped off in the battle, Red," said Ennis, smiling at Jerry Garrison.

He pulled the scarf off the head of one still form.

"Sam Paulo, Jasper Privett's toady, for one," he said.

Then he added, as he performed the same operation to No. 2:

"Slade! Drilled through the neck! Smart shot, that! Proves your p'int, Ranger; and shot red-handed. Wonder if we've bagged Jasper Privett, the mayor?"

But Jasper Privett was not among the killed.

"Seems like as if," said Ennis. "he's left over for another time!"

Exit the Mayor!

A LONG the road to Red Rock a horseman sped as fast as his pony, goaded with quirt and spur, could carry him. Terror hung upon the pony's heels, and was reflected in the drawn and anxious face of the man. Every ounce of speed was being given by the frantic pony, and yet the man continued to rip the long spikes of his spurs into the horse's side, and to lay on with the loaded whip.

On and on, with never a glance to right or left, only an occasional hunted look behind. The man expected to see men riding after him—even the sight of a motor-car—and he believed he was doomed.

But when the scattered farms and ranches outside the town loomed up and the long, straight road behind held no pursuers, the rider at last eased the staggering horse.

The man made his way through the back streets, where the sorry condition of his pony was not likely to attract attention. He turned into a yard, swung himself down, and delivered the pony into the hands of a greasy-looking Westerner.

"Bin wager ridin' 'gainst time?" questioned the Westerner, as he took over the exhausted horse.

"Mind your own business!" snapped the rider. "Wipe the hoss down and give him a feed—if he can eat. Hide him. If anyone asks questions, you ain't seen me!"

"Okay, Squint!" growled the man; but the glance he shot after the departing horseman was shot with malice.

The horseman hurried to a huge block of modern stone buildings, which towered almost grotesquely above the timber shacks and old buildings of Congress Street. He shot up in the lift to the first floor, and, making his way through a sumptuous suite of offices, arrived at a mahogany door, on which was screwed a plate, announcing, "Jasper Privett. Private."

He turned the handle,

"You can't go in there, Squint!" said a man who was lolling against the wall, legs crossed, hands in pockets, and chewing gum. "The boss sez—"

Squint Lane turned the handle and went into the private room.

The office was magnificently appointed, the pile carpet inches thick, the floor of parquet, the hangings were made of silk. The chairs, the desk, the lighting—all were extravagant. Jasper Privett, Mayor of Red Rock, was lolling in a deep armchair, chewing at a huge cigar. As he recognised the visitor he leapt to his feet.

"Squint Lane! he barked. "What in heck—"

"Got a fast car handy, boss?" asked Squint, trying hard to steady the nervous twitching of his lips.

The blood drained out of Privett's heavy, leaden face, leaving it the hue of chalk. His coarse lips stiffened. He was scared.

"What happened?" he barked. "Haven't the boys got that gold they wuz sendin' from the bank at Mongoose?"

"No! Boss, that sending of gold from bank to bank was a bluff. The boys shot up the tyres of the gold car. But as they rode in to get it Sam Paulo was shot. Then Slade. The car was full of vigilants, not gold bricks! Then along kem another car packed with Sheriff Ennis' men, all armed with rifles. Ennis had two posesses of horsemen waiting beside the road as well, and in the battle a lot more of the boys were shot up. Them as escaped made for the woods and the mountains. But they had some hard riders on their tails, and you bet if any are caught they'll spill the beans!"

Jasper Privett stood for a moment as if paralysed. Then he snatched his hat and a light coat down from behind the door, felt in the pockets to make sure that he had his automatics there. He unlocked a safe, and stuffed great wads of notes about his clothing.

"Time we flit," he said. "Slade dead—and Sam Paulo, too. The game's up, Squint! Let's beat it while the goin's good!"

"Got a spare seat in the bus for me?" asked Squint.

"Shore! I'll drive. There'll be just you an' me, Squint. I'm trustin' nobody. We'll put all the daylight we can between us an' Red Rock before the news leaks out. I know where to git hosses. We'll hide up in the Blue Mountains. Nobody'll look for us up there, Ennis'll reckon we're up in the Charena range."

"Shall I phone for the car, boss?"

"No. We'll slip down to the garage and get it ourselves. I don't want no chauffeur mixed up in this."

"Okay! Boss."

"Yep? What is it?" Jasper Privett stopped and wheeled round at a secret door.

"The driver of that sham gold car was the Red Star Ranger. And the guy with him was Fusty—old Joe MacKraw. I think it was Fusty gave Sam Paulo the works. The Ranger seemed to get big Slade."

"Jerry Garrison? Working in with the Sheriff of Mongoose! It's more'n ever time we flit, Squint. Come on!"

Through the secret door, and down a narrow back stairway to the ground floor they went. A huge black saloon car occupied half the big garage.

Privett leapt in and started it. Squint opened the smooth, sliding doors, then hopped in, too.

And at that very moment a big open car, packed with armed men pulled up outside the main doors of the block of offices.

The men leapt out, stormed into the building, crowded the lift which ran silently to the first floor, and burst pell-mell into Jasper Privett's sumptuous suite.

Jerry Garrison, the Red Star Ranger, smiling, sun tanned, looking more of a boy than ever, his coat flung open to reveal the blood-red enamel star which was pinned to his waistcoat, was at their head, a gun in each hand.

A stride behind Jerry waddled Fusty—old Joe MacKraw, ex-Deputy Sheriff of Red Rock, as bandy as a Michaelmas goose, also with a gun in each hand.

Then came Sheriff Hugo Ennis, of Mongoose, similarly armed.

The typists and girl clerks rose screaming to their feet.

"It's all right, ladies," said Fusty, as he beamed around. "We won't hurt you. But any male guy had better reach for the roof. Whar's Jasper Privett?"

"In his private office," answered one of the girls.

"Kem on! This way, Red!" said Fusty to Jerry Garrison, the Red Star Ranger. "I know every inch of this hyar place."

They found four men in the ante-room outside Privett's private office, and all were armed. But the men dropped their six guns and held up their hands as Jerry Garrison leapt through the door.

Whilst Jerry Garrison darted into Privett's room and, finding it empty, moved to the window and looked out, to see a huge black car, with two men in it, flash along the road, Fusty menaced the men with his moving Colts.

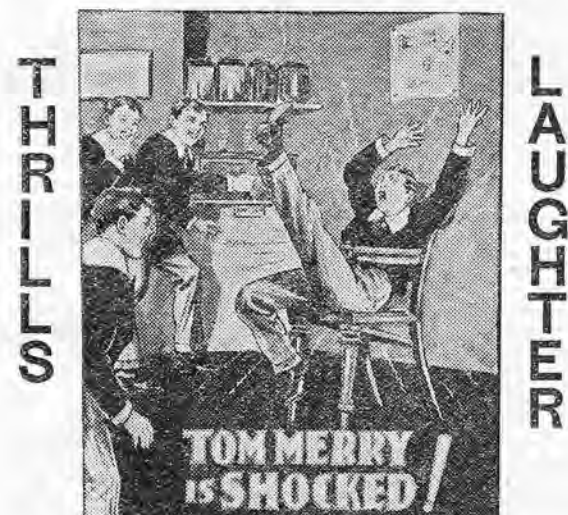
"Boys," Fusty announced, "Mayor Privett made me an outlaw, an' put a reward of ten thousand dollars on my head and the Red Star Ranger's, dead or alive, but now we've kem for the mayor, and the game is up! Yo're all going to spend the night in gaol; and if you can't find a sound defence you'll all hang! Hi, Jerry, bring Jasper Privett out here, will yah?"

"Can't, Fusty," the Red Star Ranger shouted back as he kept his eyes glued on that vanishing car. "I haven't got him. He's just flit. Got away in a big car."

Fusty ran into the inner room, and Jerry pointed to the car as it turned into a distant side street.

"The Mayor of Red Rock's in that car, hey, Jerry?" Fusty growled. "Waal, isn't that just too bad? Now we'll have to go an' hunt him."

"The Boy with Too Many Friends!" Next Week's Grand Yarn



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Cleaning the Slate!

AS the day closed in vast crowds thronged the streets of Red Rock. The Square, on the east side of which the majestic town hall stood, was so packed that traffic was impossible.

Newspaper sellers pushed their way among the crowd selling latest editions like hot cakes, and bawling out the news.

"Flight of the Mayor of Red Rock! Jasper Privett wanted for bank robbery and murder. Sensational story of the Red Star Ranger."

Hugo Ennis, the Sheriff of Mongoose, and his vigilants, assisted by Jollifer, the printer, and other prominent Red Rock townsmen, had taken possession of the town hall, and had summoned a meeting in the great hall.

Every seat in the place was occupied. Men blocked the gangways and stood in every corner of the gallery. A flag of great size, the Stars and Stripes, draped the back of the platform, and seated in front of it were Hugo Ennis himself, with the Red Star Ranger on his right, and Fusty Joe MacKraw on his left. A double row of vigilants, each man holding a rifle and carrying two six-guns in the holsters of his belt, were ranged behind. And in addition, Ennis had armed guards at all strategic points of the huge hall.

"Reckon they must be fifteen thousand people packed into the old hall, Jerry," remarked Fusty as he glanced around at the sea of pink faces and bobbing heads. "Remember the last time you wuz in Red Rock? Jasper Privett had clapped you in irons in the calaboose and tried to hang you for shootin' poor Sim Ross, the sheriff, which one of his own gang did. Now you're a free man, and Hugo Ennis is gonna put things right."

"It certainly is some difference, Fusty," answered Jerry.



The two men in the car held their hands up high as, with shouts and yells, a bunch of horsemen poured out of the bushes and came slithering down the slopes to the car, each man's face hidden to the eyes by a draped silk handkerchief.

Garrison, with a grin. "But we're wastin' time. We want to go huntin' Jasper Privett."

"Yeah!" drawled Fusty, beginning to slice an apple with a huge jack-knife and eat it. "And with us still outlaws how fur do you think we'd go 'untin' before we got slugged in the back with lead bullets? No, siree, the sheriff's right, we've got to be wiped clean, an' pussionally, I don't wanna be an outlaw any more. I got plenty o' pals in Red Rock."

Bang!

Sheriff Hugo Ennis, of Mongoose, gave the table in front of him a mighty resounding whack with a heavy gavel, and his great voice went bellowing through the crowded hall.

"Say, you boys, don't let any more inside. We've already gotta full house. Shut them doors. That's right. Now, citizens of Red Rock, vigilants, and gentlemen, including my own little party from Mongoose, I want you all to know that I bring you hyar to perform a very solemn duty." Bang! Down came the heavy gavel again. "Gentlemen, I want silence in the gallery. That's better. Jerry Garrison, stand up."

Obediently the Red Star Ranger arose. And as the swaying, excited audience saw the good-looking boy with curly hair towering over the loose-limbed, bony sheriff, they began to cheer.

Sheriff Ennis dropped a hand on Jerry's shoulder and grinned at the audience.

"Men of Red Rock," he shouted, "I have great pleasure in introducing to your notice Jerry Garrison, the Red Star Ranger—the celebrated outlaw."

Again there was a frantic outburst of cheering.

The sheriff opened out and showed a bill which offered 10,000 dollars reward for the persons of Jerry Garrison and Joe McKraw, old Fusty, dead or alive.

"Friends," the sheriff went on. "Sometime ago the bank in Red Rock was held up, and Sim Ross, yore sheriff, was killed. Jasper Privett arrested the Red Star Ranger, and would have hanged him for shootin' Sim, but old Fusty helped Jerry to escape from gaol, and then Jasper Privett, yore mayor, had this reward bill printed and made Fusty and the Ranger outlaws."

"Shame!" yelled the majority of the audience.

Jerry Garrison waved his hand to them and grinned.

"Nice guys these Red Rock pals of yours, Fusty," he said.

"Yes," the sheriff went on, "it is a shame, for the men

who staged that bank robbery and shot up Sim Ross were Slade and Sam Paulo and a gang of gunmen. And back of the gang was Jasper Privett, Mayor of Red Rock."

Another deafening and, this time, startled roar.

"Boys," barked the sheriff, giving emphasis to his words with a thud of the gavel. "To-day Privett sent a gang to hold up what he thought was a gold car. I staged the bluff with the help of Jerry Garrison and Fusty. Slade and Sam Paulo were shot. I have vigilants pursuing the rest of the robbers. I have all the evidence necessary to prove that Jasper was head of the gang of bandits who have been terrorising the State. One of my men, Squint Lane, has gone off with your late mayor, but my boys are going after him. I tell you this to prove that Jerry Garrison is not an outlaw and a bank robber and a murderer. He wears the red star poor Sim Ross, your sheriff, uster wear. Fusty is his right-hand man. Now I come to the thing we've gotta do hyar this evening."

Bang! Bang! went the gavel.

"We are gathered hyar to-night, citizens of Red Rock, to rescind the ban of outlawry passed upon Jerry Garrison and Fusty Joe McKraw by yore vanished mayor. Gents, I hereby propose that Jerry Garrison be accepted as a peaceful citizen; that this reward bill I hold be declared null and void; that Fusty Joe McKraw shall be made sheriff of Red Rock; and that a reward of ten thousand dollars shall be offered for the taking of Jasper Privett, blackmailer, bandit, bank robber, murderer of poor Sim Ross, and late mayor of this town, dead or alive."

"Hear, hear! Hurrah!" cheered the excited audience.

Jollifer, the Red Rock printer, arose.

"Boys, I have much pleasure in seconding the proposition," he bawled.

Again they cheered.

"All in agreement signify the same in the usual manner," barked the sheriff.

"All! All! All!" came in a deafening shout, and every man's right hand was raised.

"The proposal is carried unanimously," bawled the delighted sheriff. "Jerry Garrison and Fusty McKraw, I hereby declare you both to be decent citizens and no longer outlaws of this State. Fusty, I greet you as the new sheriff of Red Rock. And, Red, I hope you'll help Fusty carry out his duties in a dignified and satisfactory manner as long as you stay in this old town."

"Sure I will!" grinned Jerry Garrison. "An' I'm much obliged to you, sheriff!"

"Welcome!" said Hugo Ennis. "I dunno how I kem to propose a proposition that ought to hev bin done by a Red Rock man, but I done it, an' it stands. Boys!" Hugo Ennis slammed down the gavel for the last time. "Let's celebrate the Red Star Ranger's reinstatement to decent citizenship in the usual manner!"

The sheriff threw down the gavel and grabbed his six-guns, pointing them at the ceiling. The double line of vigilants arose and similarly held up their guns. The men on point duty in the hall did the same.

"On the word three, the vigilants' salute!" barked Hugo Ennis. "Ready, boys! One—two—three—"

BRANG!

All the guns exploded on the instant, the reports of the explosions rolling in deafening echoes through the packed hall. Smoke drifted ceilingward in aerid clouds. But only blank cartridges were used, the boys having rolled the cylinders round to the required point.

And as the smoke clouds drifted away Hugo Ennis, grinning broadly, gripped Jerry Garrison and Fusty by the hand.

"Jerry, you're no longer an outlaw!" he boomed. "Joe McKraw, you're Sheriff of Red Rock!"

"You'd better wear the red star, Fusty," said Jerry, unpinning the glittering star.

"No," growled Fusty. "It's yours for good, Jerry. You'll alius be the Red Star Ranger!"

"Okay!" said Jerry. "And now, sheriff, what's gonna be your first duty?"

"That's easy," answered Fusty, waddling to the end of the platform and beginning to descend the steps which led down into the crowded hall. "I'm goin' man-huntin'. I'm gonna get Jasper Privett and that skunk Squint Lane!"

"Ridin' after 'em?" asked Jerry.

"Shore! I'm ridin' Jenny."

"Then guess I'll have to ride Paintbox," laughed Jerry, "an' come and help you, Fusty. I don't wanna see a brand new sheriff bumped off on his first job—see?"

The Man Hunt!

JERRY GARRISON, no longer an outlaw, and Fusty Joe McKraw, wearing a bright new silver star beneath his coat, as befitted a new sheriff, rode out of Red Rock the morning after the Red Star Ranger has been reinstated a decent, honest citizen.

They made for the mountains, and explored many a lonely place known to Joe McKraw. But though they spent a week in the Charena range, and picked up more than one hot trail, they failed to find Privett and Squint Lane.

News that Privett and Squint were "wanted," had been flashed throughout the United States, towns were watched, and roads were picketed.

It soon became evident that neither of the fugitives had managed to reach any of the big towns.

The smaller towns offered dangerous refuge. Fusty reckoned it a safe bet they were not there. The big, black saloon car had been found abandoned on the open road forty miles from Red Rock. From that point all trace of the fugitives had been lost.

"Do you know what I think?" said the Red Star Ranger, one bright morning, when he and Fusty sat beside a primus oil-stove sipping coffee.

"Can you think with that curly head of yours?" growled Fusty.

"I can think better with my head than you can walk with them egg-shaped legs of yours, old-timer!" grinned Jerry Garrison. "An' this is how: I reckon Jasper Privett and Squint Lane are hidin' up in the Blue Mountains."

"Why, Red?"

"They're wild and rugged. You could ride for weeks up thar, and never meet a soul. Hiding-places are like rabbit burrows in a warren. An' the mountains are only a short ride from whar that black car was picked up, Fusty."

Fusty turned the suggestion over in his mind for a full five minutes, and then, rising, walked over to his dun pony Jenny and began to saddle up.

"Where are you aimin' to get, Fusty?" asked the Red Star Ranger.

"Blue Mountains!" growled Joe McKraw. "I reckon you figgered correct, Ranger. And I shouldn't be surprised, since Hugo Ennis and the vigilants haven't caught half the gang that held up that gold car, to find 'em up thar, too."

"Hugo'll be sending a messenger up here to see how we're farin'," said Jerry, as he began to pencil a note. "I'll just let Ennis know we're goin'."

"Have gone with Fusty Joe McKraw to the Blue Mountains, where the bent-legged new sheriff hopes to get Jasper Privett," Jerry Garrison wrote.

"Must apologise for using a salmon-tin for a letter-box, but hope you'll excuse, Hugo."

"In haste."

"JERRY GARRISON, the Red Star Ranger.
His mark."

At the foot of the big sheet of paper Jerry stuck a red star. The note he folded up and set inside a crevice in the rocks, and on a rock, with an arrow pointing down at the cache, he scrawled in bold white chalk:

"Note for Mr. Hugo Ennis, Sheriff, Mongoose, below here."

"J. G."

Then Jerry packed his things and slung them behind the saddle.

Half an hour later, in the blinding sunshine, with the wide brims of their Stetsons pulled down, Jerry Garrison and Fusty Joe McKraw said good-bye to the Charena range, and began to head towards the distant Blue Mountains.

(Jerry and Fusty are almost at the end of the trail now, so look out for final thrills next week!)

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Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, London, E.C.4. Registered for Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and abroad, 11s. per annum. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.,—Saturday, July 22nd, 1933.