

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE BEST SCHOOL STORY—IT'S INSIDE!

The GEM

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PONGO'S TUCK-IN! A HUMOROUS INCIDENT FROM "GUSSY'S CRICKET PARTY!"—INSIDE.

THERE'S NOT A DULL MOMENT IN THIS TIP-TOP LONG TALE—

GUSSY'S CRICKET



When Gussy gets permission to take (one or two) friends home for the cricket week at Eastwood House, he has no difficulty in choosing the companions to go with him—they choose themselves—all ten of them!

CHAPTER 1. Gussy as Usual!

"YAAS, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark with considerable emphasis.

Now, Arthur Augustus was seldom emphatic. Emphasis did not accord with that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. Naturally, therefore, the other fellows in Study No. 6 glanced at D'Arcy as he spoke.

Besides, D'Arcy's observation was not made in reply to anyone; no one had spoken. That emphatic remark broke the silence of the Fourth Form study.

Hence there was reason for the surprised stares which Blake, Herries, and Digby proceeded to fasten upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yaas, wathah!" repeated Arthur Augustus, more emphatic than before, and apparently unconscious of the gazes that were focused upon him.

Jack Blake tapped his forehead significantly.

"Off—at last!" he murmured.

"Clean off!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's unexpected confirmation of Digby's remark tickled the chums, and a gust of laughter went through the study.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and regarded the chums of the Fourth inquiringly.

"What's the joke, deah boys?" he inquired.

"Same old joke!" replied Blake.

"What's that?"

"Yourself, old chap!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Will you condescend to enlighten us as to what you happen to be jabbering about?" asked Blake, with elaborate politeness.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, change the record!" said Digby. "We've heard that one already."

"Weally, Dig—"

"We can't have you cultivating the habit of talking to yourself, Gussy," said Blake, with a serious shake of the head. "That way madness lies."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Of course, we know it must come sooner or later, but as good chums we want to keep you out of Colney Hatch as long as possible, and—"

"I wegard your wemarks as merely wibald, Blake. I—"

"We'd rather subscribe out of our own pockets for a strait-waistcoat and keep him in the study," said Digby generously.

"I wegard you as an ass, Dig!"

"By the way," said Blake, "talking about cricket—"

"We weren't talking about cricket."

"No, but we're going to. Things aren't looking very lively in that line at St. Jim's. Since we beat the Grammarians—"

"Blake, deah boy—"

"And whopped the village—"

"Blake—"

"And licked the New House—why, we haven't—"

"Blake, I insist—"

"Hallo! Are you still talking, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, eyeing his chum, with

—OF ROLLYING FUN AND ADVENTURE AT ST. JIM'S!

PARTY!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

considerable indignation. "You know vewy well that I am still talkin', Blake."

"Well, you generally are," said Blake resignedly. "Are you bound to go on talking at the present moment?"

"Weally——"
"Because if you wouldn't mind going out into the passage and closing the door, and coming in after you've finished——"

"Weally——"
"You could talk without disturbing anybody," concluded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you chaps wefuse to listen with pwopah wespect I shall have no wresource but to go and ask Tom Mewwy instead of you."

"Ask him what?"

"To come."

"Come?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come where? Are you wandering again?"

"To come with me, I mean."

"Ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. While you chaps have been chattevin' I have been thinkin' it ovah——"

"Thinking what over?"

"The ideah, you know. I think it's a wippin' one. That was what caused me to make that wemark. It is awfully wippin'!"

"What is?"

"The ideah. I think I shall take one or two of you fellows——"

"He's off again," said Digby.

"Right off!" said Herries, with a nod.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Look here, Gussy——" began Blake.

"Pway don't intewwupt me, deah boy. I wegard the ideah as bein' simply wippin', and I was goin' to ask you fellows. But if you don't want to join in it, I'll go to Tom Mewwy's study and speak to him and Mannahs and Lowthah. I dare say they will be glad enough of a holiday."

"A holiday?"

"Yaas, wathah, with plenty of good cwicket thwown in!"

"Cwicket?"

"Certainly, deah boys! The suggestion comes just in the nick of time, when it's just what we want, and I must say it's awfully thoughtful of my governah."

"Your governor?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What are you talking about?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ass!"

"Weally——"

"Chump——"

"Blake——"

"Fathead——"

D'Arcy rose to his feet.

"I wefuse to wemain here and listen to these oppwobwious expressions," he said. "I will go to Tom Mewwy's study——"

"Frabjous fathead!"

"Vewy well; I will wetiah——"

"Collar him!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Now, then——"

"Ow!"

Arthur Augustus was promptly collared as he made for the door. Three strong pairs of hands seized him, and he was jammed against the study wall with a force that took his breath away.

"Ow! Yow!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Now then, ass——"

"I—I wefuse to be called an ass! If you do not wesease me instantly I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Chump!"

"You howwid, wuff wottahs——"

"Now, explain——"

"Weally——"

"What were you going to ask us? What are you going to ask Tom Merry? What's the game? What's the wheeze? Explain!"

"Weally!"

"Go ahead!"

"I wefuse! You have tweated me with gwoss diswespect, and wefused to considah the wippin' ideah——"

"But we don't know what the idea is yet!" roared Blake.

"You haven't told us that!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We don't know anything about it, chump! We're quite in the dark, fathead! We——"

"Bai Jove! You know, I nevah thought of that!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway wesease me, and don't be a set of wuff asses, and I will explain, deah boys."

The chums of Study No. 6 released him.

But they stood round him, with their hands ready to grasp him again in case of necessity, and bending extremely exasperated looks upon him.

"Now, go ahead!" growled Blake. "Explain!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus seemed in no hurry to begin. He set his collar straight and adjusted his necktie and smoothed out his sleeves, repairing all the damage that had been done to his elegance by the rough attack of the juniors.

The chums watched him with growing exasperation.

He had roused their curiosity, and his deliberate and leisurely manner would have tried a greater patience than the chums of the Fourth possessed.

"Will you go ahead?" roared Blake at last.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Digby. "Let's bump it out of him!"

"Good egg!"

D'Arcy ceased his rearrangement of his necktie at once.

"Hold on, deah boys—I'll explain!"

CHAPTER 2.

No Exit!

JACK BLAKE glared at his elegant chum.

"I'll give you one second to start," he said.

D'Arcy stayed only to jam his monocle into his eye, and started in a great hurry.

"You see, deah boys, it's a splendid ideah——"

"What is it?"

"And it will give us a bit of a holiday——"

"What will?"

"But I shall only be able to take good cwicketahs—of course, my patah makes a point of that. Pway don't get excited, Blake, I'm comin' to the point. In short, I have had a lettah fwom my governah."

"Well?"

"He's holdin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"A what?"

"Weally, Blake, I pwesume you know what a cwicket week is. The governah's filled Eastwood House with guests, you see, and he's got a lot of cwicketahs among them, and they're goin' to play a sewies of cwicket matches. If you are goin' to make me explain what a cwicket week is——"

"Ass! Get ahead!"

"Well, my eldah bwothah, Conway, is there, of course, and he's skippahin' the house team. They're meetin' all sorts of teams—or they're goin' to, I mean. And the governah has suggested that I might like to go down, and, of course, I'm goin'. You see, he knows we play good cwicket here, and he has an idea that I might be put into the Eastwood eleven."

"My hat!"

"It is extwemely pwob that Conway only intends to put me down as a weserve," said D'Arcy. "I shall, howevah, argue that mattah out with him when I get there. Of course, I should absolutely wefuse to be put down as a weserve."

"Rats!"

"Although the cwicketahs there are quite gwown up, of course, it's all wot to suppose that I'm not fit to play in the house team."

"More rats!"

"Some of them are membahs of the M.C.C., and the house team will be wathah stwong. I believe the governah

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has a pprofessional there as well. But, of course, I shall expect to play."

"Of course," said Blake sarcastically. "I can see them playing a Fourth Form junior in a team made up of first-class cricketers."

"Weally, Blake—"

"But it will be a holiday, anyway," said Blake.

"Yaas; and the governah suggests that I might take a fwiend or two."

"Hurrah!"

"Of course, I thought of you chaps immediately—to say nothin' of Wally."

"Good old Gussy!"

"But if you don't like the ideah, I'll go and ask Tom Mewwy—"

"Rats!"

D'Arcy polished his eyeglass and replaced it in his eye.

"Well, I shall be glad to have you chaps, as you play decent cricket. You may be wanted to play, you know, but, of course, that's not a ppromise."

Blake chuckled.

"You ass! We shan't be wanted to play, but we can see some good cricket, and have a good holiday, and that's enough! Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwwah!"

"A friend or two," said Digby thoughtfully. "Jolly good idea! But will a friend or two cover three?"

"Oh, yes," said Blake. "It was probably a misprint in Lord Eastwood's letter, and he meant a friend or three."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all wight, deah boys! A fwiend or two is a wathah broad expression, and will covah—"

"A multitude of sins, like charity," said Blake. "We're all going, of course. I suppose Lord Eastwood has asked the Head?"

"Yaas; he says so."

"And the Head consents?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good old Head! He's a brick! That comes of being a governor of the school," said Blake. "Now, if my pater were on the governing board—"

"I've got to see the Head about it, but that's only formal," said D'Arcy. "Of course, you can all come. I wish we could take Tom Mewwy, too, and the New House chaps. However, it is wathah good for us four to be able to go."

"Yes, rather!"

"When shall we start?"

"To-morrow mornin'."

"Jolly good!" said Herries. "Towser will be pleased."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass suddenly upon Herries.

"Towsah!" he said.

"Yes. Towser likes a change of air as well as anybody," said Herries affably. "He will thoroughly enjoy a run down to Eastwood."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Of course, you want Towser to come?"

"Weally, that wotten bulldog has no wespect for a fellow's twousahs, and—"

"Oh, if you dont want Towser," said Herries huffily.

"I—I will have him with pleasure," said D'Arcy, remembering that he was host now, and that he was bound to concede anything to a guest. "But—"

"But we jolly well won't have him," said Blake, with emphasis. "You're not going to inflict that bulldog on us, Herries, old man. Like to see Lord Eastwood's face when you walked in with a beastly bulldog."

"He's not a beastly bulldog!" exclaimed Herries indignantly. "He's a jolly fine bulldog, and—"

"Well, he can stop at St. Jim's. If he comes in the train with us, there will be a mysterious death of a bulldog on the railway line," said Blake darkly.

"Look here—"

"Pewwaps I had bettah go and see the Head now," said Arthur Augustus, turning to the door. "Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"The door won't open."

"Rats! Let me try," said Blake.

Arthur Augustus was tugging in vain at the handle of the door. The door did not budge. He stepped aside to allow Blake to get a grip on the handle.

"It's not locked," said Blake.

"Yaas, but—"

"Here you are!"

Blake gave a tug at the door, and turned a little pink when it did not budge.

He had caught hold of the handle with the air of a fellow who was going to solve the difficulty off-hand; but the door baffled him as much as it had D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's smiled sweetly.

"Well, why don't you open it, deah boy?" he asked.

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"It—it seems to be stuck, somehow!" stammered Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries.

Blake turned a freezing glare upon him.

"What are you making that blessed row for, Herries?"

"Eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the cackle about?"

"Ha, ha! I'm waiting to see you open the door. Ha, ha!"

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

"Oh, cheese it! The door's fastened somehow."

"Go hon!"

"Here, let me try," said Digby.

Blake grunted.

"You can jolly well try, if you like," he said; "but you jolly well won't get it open."

And Blake was right.

Digby tugged at the door with both hands, but it did not budge. It seemed to yield a fraction, and then held fast.

"My word," said Dig. "Somebody's holding it on the other side."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course!" exclaimed Blake. "I knew it couldn't get stuck."

"Why, you just said—"

"Oh, don't jaw. Lemme get at the beastly thing again. I'll show 'em!"

"Leave it to me—"

"Rats! Gimme the handle!"

"But—"

"Don't argue, Dig, old chap. Blessed if you wouldn't argue the pendulum off a clock. Lemme get at it."

"Oh, all right!"

Blake grasped the door-handle again, and tugged with all his might. But the door did not open. The Fourth Formers grinned serenely, and Jack Blake's face gradually grew redder and redder.

He let go the handle abruptly, and rapped on the door.

"Open this door!" he roared.

There was the sound of a faint chuckle outside in the passage.

"That's Tom Merry," said Digby.

Blake rapped again.

"Let go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know it's you, Tom Merry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll wipe up the passage with you when we get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake breathed hard.

He grasped the handle of the door again with both hands quietly, and turned it, and gave a tremendous tug.

"Oh!"

The door flew open, and Blake staggered back. His hands went sailing out wildly, and one caught Digby on the nose, and the other caught Herries in the eye. The back of Blake's head bumped on D'Arcy's waistcoat, and the swell of St. Jim's sat down with a gasp and a bump. Blake staggered, and sat on his legs.

There was a chorus of gasps.

"Oh!"

"Yarooogh!"

"Ow-ow!"

CHAPTER 3.

An Attack in Force!

FROM the passage came a sound of chuckling, and then footsteps. The practical jokers were gone, after playing that little jape upon the occupants of Study No. 6.

The four juniors gasped and grunted.

Digby was holding his nose with both hands, and Herries had knuckles to his eye.

D'Arcy was trying to extricate his legs from under Blake, and Blake was staring dazedly at the open door.

A cord was trailing from the handle on the outside of the door.

That explained how the enemy had succeeded in holding it shut so tightly.

They had tied the cord across the passage to the handle of the door of the room opposite, and naturally enough Blake had been unable to pull the door open, as the cord was too strong to break.

The release of the cord had caused the door to fly open as soon as Blake pulled it, hence the disaster in Study No. 6.

"Ow!" said Digby. "My nose is broken, you ass!"

"M-m-m-m!" said Herries. "I shall have a black eye to take down to Eastwood. Yah!"

"Bai Jove! My twousahs will be ruined!"

"Oh!" grunted Blake.

"You ass! What did you punch my nose for?"

"What did you bung me in the eye for?"

"What did you biff my waistcoat for?"

"Oh!"



As Blake gave a tremendous tug at the door, it suddenly flew open, and he staggered back. He flung out his hands wildly, and one caught Digby on the nose, the other landed in Herries' eye, and Blake's head bumped into D'Arcy's waistcoat. There was a chorus of yells. "Oh! Yarroogh! Ow-ow!"

"Pway get off my legs, deah boy! You are causin' me considerable inconvenience, and wumplin' my twousahs feahfully."

Blake staggered to his feet.

Arthur Augustus followed his example, and began to dust his trousers.

"M-my hat!" said Blake.

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You've busted my boko!"

"You've bunged up my eye!"

"Yaas, wathah! And my twousahs—"

"How could I help it?" snorted Blake. "How was I to know that the door wasn't fastened. It was a jape!"

"Ass!"

"Cheerful idiot!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah you an ass, Blake!"

"Oh, don't go on cackling like a blessed lot of old hens!" said Blake wrathfully. "Get hold of something and follow me, and we'll make those Shell bounders sit up."

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake seized a cricket stump, and D'Arcy took up his bat. Digby took the poker, and Herries a dog whip. Thus armed, they went down the passage in search of the Terrible Three.

As they turned into the Shell passage, they heard the sounds of laughter, and it proceeded from Tom Merry's study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake frowned.

"My hat! They're gurgling over it now!" he exclaimed.

"The feahful wottahs!"

"Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of the Fourth rushed on.

The door of Tom Merry's study was open.

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—could be seen inside, sitting on the table and shouting with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Did you see D'Arcy spread himself on the floor?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And Blake spread himself on D'Arcy!" chirped Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go for 'em!" roared Blake.

"Hallo!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The four Fourth Formers rushed into the study. In a moment the Terrible Three were off the table and ready for battle.

"Here, keep off!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Give 'em socks!"

Three basket-hilted foils lay on the table, with which the Terrible Three had been fighting a three-cornered contest shortly before. The Shell fellows snatched them up, and stood on the defensive.

The wooden foils clashed against the bat, the stump, the poker, and the dog-whip. There was a terrific din in Tom Merry's study.

D'Arcy staggered back as the end of Tom Merry's foil pinked him on the chest.

"Ow!" he gasped.

But he recovered himself and rushed to the attack. The end of the bat collided with a vase on Tom Merry's mantelpiece, and brought it in fragments to the floor.

Crash!

"Here, look out!" roared Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

Crash!

The end of the bat went into the looking-glass.

"You dangerous ass—"

"You wottahs!"

"Go for 'em!"

The Fourth Formers attacked hotly.

But the Terrible Three, standing shoulder to shoulder,

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with the long wooden foils well to the front, stood their ground well.

Blake & Co. could not get past their defence.

There had been no casualties so far, with the exception of the smashing of the vase and the mirror.

But the din was terrific.

The clashing and crashing of the weapons, and the tramping of feet, rang through the study and along the Shell passage.

Fellows came out of the other studies to see what the matter was, and the doorway of Tom Merry's study was soon crowded.

"Go it!" shouted Gore. "Ripping! Keep it up!"

"Faith, and ye're winning, Blake!" exclaimed Reilly.

"Go for their topknots!"

"Give 'em socks!"

Clash! Crash!

"Hurrah!"

"Buck up, Shell!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

"Cave!" yelled a voice in the passage.

"Phew! It's Railton!"

"Cut!"

The crowd of juniors in the passage vanished, hurling themselves into various studies, or into the box-room, or on the upper stairs. The passage was cleared in a twinkling. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, strode along to Tom Merry's study, and found not a single junior in his path.

CHAPTER 4.

A Slight Mistake!

MR. RAILTON stood at the open study door, and looked in.

The crash of weapons had ceased.

It was time!

The excited juniors had done a considerable amount of damage—more to the study than to each other.

The room looked a great deal as if a hurricane had struck it.

Chairs were overturned, the looking-glass and the book-case glass was smashed, broken vase and inkpot and papers

lay on the floor. Tom Merry's foil had been broken in the middle, and Digby's poker was bent.

The Housemaster looked in grimly.

The juniors, looking very sheepish, faced him.

"What is this disturbance about?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry.

"You see, sir—" began Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It—it was only fun, sir," said Jack Blake.

"Somewhat noisy fun, I think, Blake."

"Ye-es, sir!"

"We didn't mean you to hear, sir," ventured Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton smiled. He had no doubt whatever of the exact truthfulness of that statement. But as a matter of fact the whole School House had heard the terrific uproar.

"It—it was a—a celebration, sir," said D'Arcy, struck by an inspiration.

"A what?"

"We—we were feeling elated, sir, because—because—"

"Well!"

"My governah's giving a cwicket week at his house, sir, and we've got the Head's permission to go," said D'Arcy.

"Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"And so you were feeling elated?"

"Exactly, sir!"

"And that is why you have made this terrific din?"

"Well, no, sir."

"Then there is no connection between your elation and your noisy visit to a Shell study?"

"Well, no, sir."

"Then how can you advance it in excuse?"

"You see, sir—"

"Well—"

"As a mattah of fact, sir, it weally amounts to the same thing. Suppose—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir. Suppose—"

"We will suppose nothing," said Mr. Railton, frowning, "except that you ought to know better than to make so much noise. Knox has the room below, and he has complained."

"I am vewy sowwy for Knox, sir."

"You have wrecked the study."

"We—we don't mind, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Possibly not. That does not alter the case. Am I to understand that you meant to hit one another with such weapons as that?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then why were you using them?"

The juniors looked nonplussed.

They had certainly not intended to hurt one another very much; but it was equally certain that they might have been hurt, and badly, if the conflict had gone much farther.

"You will put those things away at once," said Mr. Railton, "and write a hundred lines each."

"Oh, sir!"

"And if I hear any further disturbances, I shall speak to you severely."

"Yes, sir."

And the Housemaster walked away.

The juniors looked at one another dubiously.

"This is wathah wotten," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "We shall not be able to give these wottahs the thwashin' they deserve. It's weally a pwomise to Wailton."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

The Fourth Formers glared at them.

"You can cackle!" said Blake wrathfully.

"Thanks, we will! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wastahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway let us wetire fwom the studay, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Hold on, Gussy! What's that you were saying to Railton about a cwicket week at your governor's?"

"My governah is givin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"You're going?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And these chaps?"

"Yaas. And I'm goin' to fix it for my minah, Wally, if poss."

"And you had come here to ask us?" asked Tom Merry. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass frigidly upon the hero of the Shell.

"I am hardly likely to ask you chaps, when you have tweated me with gwoss diswespect," he said. "I wegard you as wottahs! Besides, I have only the Head's permission to take a fwend or two, and thwce is the limit."

"Rats!" said Manners. "Make it six."

"Weally Mannahs—"

"We'll come," said Lowther affably. "We may be able to show some of you how to play cwicket. You owe some recompense to this study, too, for wrecking it in this way,

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and making an unprovoked attack upon three innocent youths."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wogard you as wottahs! You held the door of our study shut—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And caused us to fall ovah the floor of our study in a most undignified mannah, to say nothin' of the pain."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Undah the cires—"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's Gussy's gratitude to us for cutting the cord, and letting him out, kids!" said Tom Merry.

"Touching, ain't it?" said Lowther.

"Next time we find you tied up in your study, Gussy, we'll leave you to your doom," said Manners severely.

"Bai Jove! Wasn't it you who fastened the door?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" said Blake, starting. "Wasn't it you, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "No! I wondered why you rushed in on us like a set of maniacs. No, it wasn't us."

"Bai Jove! Who was it, then?"

"Figgins & Co.!"

"The New House bounders!"

"Yes. We came along the passage and found 'em. We couldn't help sniggering a little. Figgins & Co. bolted, and we—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "We cut the cord, and, of course, Blake had to yank the door open just then—"

"Ha, ha! And then we saw you tumbling," said Manners. "We came here to get a quiet laugh. You looked funny."

"Oh, did we?"

"Ha, ha! Yes. Awfully, fearfully funny!"

And the Terrible Three yelled with laughter.

The chums of Study No. 6 looked sheepish.

They had taken it for granted that the Terrible Three had been the cause of the disaster, and they had certainly acted a little hastily.

The damage done to Tom Merry's study, and the hundred lines apiece for all the juniors had been the result of the mistake.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

"It was all Gussy's fault, of course," said Blake crossly.

"Weally, Blake, I don't see how you make that out," the swell of St. Jim's protested mildly.

"You never see anything."

"But—"

"Oh, don't argue, Gussy! You've done enough damage as it is!" said Blake. "The worst of it is that Figgins & Co. have got clear away while we've been wasting time over these duffers!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They're in the New House by this time, cackling at us," said Digby wrathfully. "I must say you're an ass, Blake, to bungle things like this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—"

"But what price us?" demanded Tom Merry. "You've wrecked our study, and got us a hundred lines apiece, all for cutting a cord and letting you out of your study."

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I think we owe Tom Mewwy an apology!"

"You owe us more than that," said Tom Merry. "There's the mirror and the vase and the bookcase—glass costs money!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Still, it's all right, Gussy. Your idea of making it up to us by asking us down to the cricket week at Eastwood is simply splendid!"

"Weally—"

"We accept. Don't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!" said Manners and Lowther together.

"It's very kind of D'Arcy to put it in this pressing way."

The elegant Fourth Former looked bewildered.

"But—but I haven't asked—" he stammered.

"You haven't asked the Head?" said Tom Merry genially.

"No. I mean—"

"Oh, that's all right! You'll put it to the Head with your well-known tact," said the hero of the Shell. "Use the tact and judgment you are famous for, Gussy, and it will be as easy as falling off a roof."

"Well, weally, you know—"

"We shall be pleased to come—that's all right."

"Undah the cires—"

"Not a word more," said Tom Merry. "You don't owe us any thanks. It will be a pleasure."

"Quite a pleasure," said Lowther.

"A distinct pleasure!" declared Manners.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the chums of the Shell. For

the moment he thought that he must really, in some lapse of mind, have asked the Terrible Three down to Eastwood for the cricket week.

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry affably. "Now, if you fellows like, we'll come with you and have Figgins & Co. out, and punish 'em for their cheek in japing School House chaps."

"Good egg!" said Blake instantly. "We've got a hundred lines to do, and we ought to make the New House bounders sit up for it."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Come on, then!"

"But—"

"It's all right, Gussy. Come on!"

And Tom Merry led the way, and the rest of the juniors followed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy still in a state of considerable excitement.

CHAPTER 5.

Caught in the Trap!

THERE was thick dust in the quadrangle at St. Jim's, and the big elms were looming darkly. Lights gleamed from most of the lower windows in both the Houses, and from some of the upper ones, belonging to the long ranges of studies. From the window of Figgins' study in the New House a shaft of light fell upon the leaves

HOW'S THAT?



Small Bowler: "Ere, Willie, you've been caught once, bowled once, stumped once, and run out. I reckon you ought to retire now, even if it is your bat!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss O. Dukes, 194, Kingston Road, Ilford, Essex.

of the big elms, and made them glimmer and glisten. Figgins & Co. were evidently at home, after their raid on the School House.

The band of juniors, cautiously crossing the quadrangle, looked up at the lighted window, and grinned.

"They're there!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And they won't be expecting us!"

"Hallo, what's that?"

Blake suddenly swung round and glared among the shadowy trees. There was only darkness to meet his view.

"What was it like, Blake?"

"I thought I heard somebody."

"Fancy, my son. Nerves!" said Lowther.

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Lowther—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

The School House juniors hurried on.

Raids between the rival Houses of St. Jim's were common enough, though it was not common for a party to venture into the rival House so boldly as Tom Merry & Co. were now about to do.

But they hoped that the very boldness of the enterprise would lead to its success.

Figgins & Co. would not be looking for that raid, and they would be taken by surprise, and then their doom would fall upon them. To bump Figgins & Co., wreck their study, and retreat unscathed to the School House, would be a big triumph for the invaders.

And Fortune seemed to smile upon them.

Blake's suspicion that they had been seen as they came through the elms was apparently without foundation, for there was not a single New House junior waiting for them in the doorway.

They dodged quickly into the House, and ran up the stairs, and still not one of the enemy showed himself.

In the Fourth Form passage upstairs they were secure from the seniors and prefects, and apparently they were secure from the juniors, too, for there was none of them to be seen.

Tom Merry looked quickly along the lighted passage.

It was deserted.

"Coast's clear!" he whispered.

"Good egg!"

"Come on! We'll catch 'em on the hop this time, and no mistake!"

"Good!"

The juniors ran quickly and silently along to Figgins' study.

There was a light burning in the room, as they had seen from the quadrangle, and the door was ajar, allowing them to look into the room.

It was unoccupied.

The raiders looked at one another in considerable surprise. Where were Figgins & Co.? Where were all the New House juniors? It was strange that the passage should be deserted at that hour, and that Figgins & Co. should also be out of their study.

"What splendid luck!" whispered Blake. "Get in—quick; before we're seen!"

"Rather!"

They crowded into the study, and left the door ajar.

The room had evidently been vacated very lately.

A half-written imposition lay on the table, and some chestnuts were still on the bars of the grate. Figgins & Co. had certainly not been long gone.

The School House juniors grinned gleefully.

"It seems to be made for us!" murmured Tom Merry.

"This is toffee—just toffee! Figgins & Co. have gone out for something, and when they come back—"

"Ha, ha! We'll collar them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Stand just inside the door. We'll collar them as they come in, and shove something into their mouths so that they can't yell to the others."

"Bravo!"

"Then we'll give 'em a lesson about fastening chaps up in their studies!" said Digby.

"Hurrah!"

"Quiet!"

And the juniors stood in a group just inside the study, so that they would be hidden from view when the door opened. They waited.

In a minute or less there was a sound of footsteps in the passage. A subdued chuckle came from afar.

"Ready?" whispered Tom Merry.

The School House juniors nodded, and waited, with tense nerves.

The door opened. But it did not open quietly or gently. It was flung open suddenly, and it bifled heavily against the group of juniors, and they uttered surprised exclamations, and reeled one against another.

There was a roar of laughter in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of New House juniors poured in, headed by Figgins & Co.—Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. In a moment the School House raiders were assailed and collared.

They resisted furiously; but they had no chance against the odds.

"Back up!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Go it, School House!"

"Ha, ha! Down with 'em!"

"Sit on 'em!" roared Figgins.

And his orders were obeyed to the letter.

The School House juniors, overwhelmed by numbers, were dragged to the floor, and a couple of New House fellows sat upon each of them.

And the New House fellows smiled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Their smile could be heard half-way across the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins Accepts!

TOM MERRY & CO. wriggled furiously under the weight of their captors. But they wriggled in vain. They were captured, and they were helpless. Every fellow had two foemen sitting on him, and there were a crowd more foes in the passage, ready to swarm upon them if needed.

The New House fellows laughed loudly.

"Nicely caught!" said Figgins blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You New House rotters!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as feahful wottahs!"

Figgins shook his finger at them playfully.

"Mustn't lose its 'ickle temper," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrup!" gasped Monty Lowther, who was being slowly squashed under the weight of Fatty Wynn. "You're c-c-crushing me!"

"Never mind," said Fatty comfortably. "It's all in the day's work."

"You—you heavy porpoise!"

"Quiet, old chap!"

"Gerroff!"

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"Rats!"

"Come here to take us by surprise," grinned Figgins. "Catch a weasel asleep! Why, Kerr spotted you in the quad, and brought in word!"

The School House juniors bestowed appreciative looks upon Kerr, which made the Scottish junior burst into a series of explosive cackinnations.

"And we got ready for you," said Figgins. "We knew you'd walk into the trap if we left it open—that's the way of you School House chaps."

The School House chaps gasped with helpless rage.

"Will you walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly?" chanted Pratt.

And the New House fellows roared again.

"Nice of them to walk into the parlour like that," said Figgins. "Never occurred to them that some nice boys about our size were hidden in the other studies, ready to pounce on them as soon as they were safe inside."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom Merry. "Get off my chest, French!"

"Rats!"

"Get this blessed porpoise off me—I'm suffocating!" came in sepulchral tones from Monty Lowther.

"The question is, what are we going to do with them?" said Figgins. "Bumping is too much a punishment. What price ducking them in sooty water?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Figgins, I twust you will not be guilty of such an extremewly wotten action! I should wegard it as beastly!"

"Paint them red, and send them home," said Pratt. "I've got lots of red ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah, Pwatt—"

"Or whitewash them," said Fatty Wynn. "There's a pal of whitewash that Taggles left in the box-room, and—"

"Good egg!"

"Fetch it, somebody!"

"Bai Jove, Figgins—"

"Buck up with the whitewash!"

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard this as an extremewly wotten way to tweek a chap who wants to invite you to a cwicket week in the county," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Figgins stared.

So did the School House juniors. This was the first they had heard of inviting Figgins to the cricket week at Eastwood.

But D'Arcy knew what he was about.

The swell of St. Jim's could have submitted to many kinds of punishment with the stoicism of a Spartan or a Red Indian. But to have his clothes spoiled, and to be reduced to a dirty and unpleasant state, was too much for his fortitude.

In such a pass, D'Arcy's aristocratic brain worked with unusual quickness.

And the only possible way out of the difficulty occurred to him, and he acted upon the idea immediately.

"What's that?" demanded Figgins, interested at once.

"My governah is givin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"What about it?"

"I have permission to go and take a fwiend or two."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"At pwesent," said D'Arcy, "I wegard you as a fwiend—or, at least, I should do so if Kerr would kindly wemove his knee fwom my chest. He is soilin' my shirt and wumplin' my waistcoat."

"Certainly!" said Kerr politely.

A fellow whose father was giving a cricket week in the country, and who had permission to take a friend or two there, was a fellow to be treated with the utmost politeness.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet and dusted his clothes.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"Well, deah boy, unless we should happen to fall out, I wegard you as a fwiend, and I should be vevy pleased to have your company for a week at Eastwood."

Figgins grinned.

"Good! I'll come with pleasure. Only I couldn't come without Fatty Wynn and Kerr."

"I shall be vevy pleased to welcome them, too."

"Good egg!" said Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

And Fatty Wynn smacked his lips anticipatively. He had visited Eastwood before, and he knew what an excellent table was kept there. A vision of a long series of gorgeous feasts danced before the eyes of Fatty Wynn.

"Have you fixed it with the Head?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, my governah has."

"Ripping!"

"Good old Gussy!" murmured Blake. "He's saved us from a whitewashing, and from looking a set of first-class goats to the School House."

"We'll come with pleasure," said Figgins. "But—but did you really come over to ask us, Gussy?"

"Not exactly, deah boy. But—but I have asked you, so it's all wight."

"Right as rain!" said Figgins heartily.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in the Co.

"All right, is it?" exclaimed Pratt indignantly. "What about whitewashing them?"

"My dear chap, I'm not going to whitewash one of my best chums," said Figgins.

"Look here——"

"Peace is established in the wigwams of the Redskins," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "You chaps can bunk."

"Look here, Figgy——"

"Good-bye!"

Tom Merry, as he dusted himself. "We've had a slight reverse——"

"Do you reverse?" murmured Kerr.

"But as for being licked——"

"Yaas wathah! I uttably wefuse to wegard myself as bein' licked."

Figgins grinned.

"You can regard yourself as you like, Gussy; you are licked, and that's enough," he said. "Enough for us, anyway. But never mind that; we're jolly good friends now. So you want us to come down for the cricket week?"

"I ask you to come, Figgy."

"We'll come, with pleasure. It's jolly ripping of you, Gussy, and any little ups and downs we may have had will be quite forgotten, of course, on both sides," said Figgins in the frankest way in the world.



"Give 'em socks!" exclaimed Blake, as the Fourth-Formers rushed to the attack. In a moment Tom Merry & Co. had snatched up wooden foils, and their weapons clashed against those of Blake & Co. as the juniors met in conflict. Gussy's bat collided with a vase on the mantelpiece, and there was a crash as it smashed to fragments on the floor!

The juniors who had effected the capture glared.

This was a rather cavalier way to treat them after their services, and the invitation to Figgins & Co. did not compensate them for being deprived of the pleasure of whitewashing the School House juniors. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were satisfied, but the rest were very far from being so.

But Figgins was monarch of all he surveyed among the junior portion of the New House.

"My dear chaps," he said, "we've licked the School House bounders, and that's enough."

"There's such a thing as tempering justice with mercy," added Kerr.

"Yes; as Shakespeare remarks, 'it's ripping to have a giant's strength, but caddish to use it as a giant.'"

"I don't think Shakespeare puts it exactly like that, Figgy," grinned Kerr.

"Well, that's what he meant, anyway. My dear asses, as we are strong, we should be merciful. We've licked the School House, and what more do you want?"

And the juniors grumbled and went.

"Not so much about licking the School House!" exclaimed

"That is vevy decent of you, Figgy," said D'Arcy, mollified at once. "I shall have to put it wathah tactfully to the Head, that's all. Pewwaps I had better go and see the Head now."

"Good! Let's know the verdict."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the School House juniors, looking very dusty and sheepish, quitted Figgins' study.

Figgins closed the door after them, and then the New House trio grinned at one another.

"A week in the country!" chuckled Figgins. "How's that for high?"

"Ripping!" said Kerr.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, rubbing his plump hands. "Lord Eastwood's housekeeping is done on a proper scale, and a fellow need never be afraid of not having enough to eat. I——"

"Trust you to think of that, Fatty."

"Well, it's an important matter, isn't it?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

Meanwhile, the School House raiders were returning to

their own House, feeling much less important than when they set out. They were glad that there were no fellows on the steps or in the doorway to watch them come in, and that they had mentioned to no one their intention of falling upon Figgins & Co. in their own study and making an example of them. The raid had worked out so very differently from their anticipations.

When the raiders reached Study No. 6, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smartened himself and brushed his clothes, and then made for the Head's study. Arrived there, he tapped gently on the panel.

Dr. Holmes' deep voice bade him enter.

D'Arcy entered the study. Dr. Holmes glanced up at him kindly.

"Ah, I wanted to see you, D'Arcy!" he remarked. "You have doubtless come about the matter mentioned to me by Lord Eastwood."

"Yaas, sir!"

"I shall make no difficulty in granting Lord Eastwood's request," said the Head. "You are at liberty to visit your home for the cricket week, and to take a friend or two, as Lord Eastwood wishes."

"Thank you vewy much, sir!"

"The selection of the friend or two may be left to you, I suppose," said the Head. "You will let me know the names, so that I can communicate them to their Form-master."

"Thank you, sir!"

D'Arcy hesitated.

Should he tell the Head then how many fellows he had decided to take, or leave Dr. Holmes to make the discovery when he sent the list in?

The latter would probably be the safer course.

"Of course, you will not be limited to one friend or two," said the Head, with a smile. "You may take more than that."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said D'Arcy, relieved. "You are awfully good, sir!"

"The only condition I make is that their Form-master shall be sufficiently satisfied with their progress to raise no objection," said the Head.

"Very well, sir!"

And the swell of St. Jim's left the Head's study and wended his way back to Study No. 6, where his chums were awaiting him.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Blake. "What did the Head say?"

"It's all wight."

"We're going?"

"Yaas."

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 7.

Wally Wants to Go!

KANGAROO—otherwise Harry Noble—put his head into Study No. 6 as the cheer rang along the Fourth Form passage. The Cornstalk looked inquiringly at the juniors.

"What's the row?" he asked. "Wherefore Hurrah?"

"Good news, my son! Hurrah!"

"Hip, pip—"

"What is it, then, you asses?"

Gussy's governor is giving a cricket week at Eastwood, and he's got the Head's permission to take a friend or two."

"Jolly good!" said the Australian junior. "How fortunate that I chummed up with Gussy the moment I came to St. Jim's."

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"How lucky that we took to each other like ducks taking to water, and have been inseparable ever since!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You know, I have always liked and admired Gussy, and tried to—tie my necktie as he does," said Noble. "I'm so glad you've got permission to take a friend or two, Gussy. Of course, I'm the friend—the two can be anybody you please."

"Weally—"

"Nuff said, old chap. I'll come."

"Gweat Scott!"

"When are you starting?"

"To-morrow. But—"

"What train?"

"The three-thirty from Wylcombe. But—"

"All right. I'll be ready."

"Weally—"

"Any of you fellows coming?" asked Kangaroo, with an affable look at the grinning juniors.

"Yes, a few," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"The friend or two amounts to nine chaps so far," said Blake. "Blessed if I see why there shouldn't be a tenth."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it ten, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, Kangaroo is a weally wippin' cricketah. He bowls vewy neahly as well as I do—"

"Awfully nearly, if not quite," murmured Tom Merry.

"And his battin' isn't bad—"

"Thanks awfully," said Kangaroo gratefully.

"Not at all, deah boy. I am only statin' the facts," said D'Arcy. "I don't know whethah there will be twouble in the mornin' when the Head discovahs how many chaps are goin', but I suppose it will be as easy to take ten as nine."

"Yes, rather!"

"Then I shall be vewy glad to take you, Kangaroo!"

"Shake!" said the Cornstalk.

He grasped D'Arcy's hand, and gave it a squeeze that made the swell of St. Jim's jump clear of the floor with a wild howl.

"Ow, ow! Yow! Yawooh!"

"Anything the matter?"

"Yawooh! My—my—my hand!"

"Well, I'm glad it's settled nicely," said Kangaroo. "I'll go and tell Glyn and Dane."

And he went down the passage, whistling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caressed his injured hand tenderly.

"I am wathah inclined to think that Kangaroo was japin' me," he said. "I weally think I ought to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Is it a custom of yours to thrash your guests?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned an indignant glance upon the Terrible Three as they quitted the study, to return to their study for prep.

Blake glanced doubtfully at the table.

"I don't know whether it's worth while doing the prep," he remarked. "It's useless if we're going to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If anything goes wrong, it's better to have the prep done," said Digby cautiously.

"Besides, it will look as if we want to do all we can," said Herries. "After all, it isn't much, if we're going to have a week's holiday."

"Yaas, wathah! Let's get on!"

And they got on.

But that prep was fated to be interrupted. There was a sound of snapping and yapping in the passage, and the door was opened, and Wally—D'Arcy minor of the Third Form—came in with Pongo under his arm.

He closed the study door quickly.

"You don't mind my lying low in here for a few minutes, do you, you chaps?" queried the hero of the Third affably.

"Weally, Wally—"

"You see, Pongo's forbidden in the House, but, of course, I have him in the Form-room after lessons," said Wally. "Like to see the school where I couldn't have Pongo in to talk to."

"But—"

"He got out into the passage, and he's tripped up Kildare," said Wally. "I collared him and ran. I believe Kildare's looking for him."

"You young bounder, and you've brought him in here!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

Wally held up his finger cautiously.

"Hist!"

"What the—"

"I can hear Kildare coming!"

"Better bunk."

"Can't; he'd spot me. Where can I hide Pongo?"

"Shove him in the cupboard," said Blake, "or in Gussy's hatbox."

"I uttably wefuse to have that howwid animal shoved into my hatbox!"

Wally grinned, and darted towards the cupboard.

He pushed Pongo inside—Pongo going very unwillingly, apparently seeing no reason why he should hide—and closed the door. He leaned against the door in an attitude of assumed carelessness.

"Yes, Gussy," he said, in a loud voice, as the study door opened, "I shall certainly come home for the cricket week if—"

"Weally, Wally—"

Kildare of the Sixth looked into the study. Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, was generally good-tempered. He did not look good-tempered now. Perhaps stumbling over Wally's dog in the passage had not improved his temper.

"Is D'Arcy minor here? Ah, here you are! Where is that dog?"

"Dog?" said Wally.

"I fell over Pongo in the passage!"

"Did you?"

"Yes, I did!" roared Kildare.
 "Was he hurt?" asked Wally.
 Kildare glared at the cool junior.
 "I was hurt!" he exclaimed. "You know you are not allowed to have that brute in the House, D'Arcy minor. Where is he?"
 "I can't see him."
 "The brute ran upstairs."
 "Did he?"
 "And I saw you in the upper passage?"
 "Did you?"
 "Where is that dog?"
 Scratch, scratch, scratch!
 It was Pongo inside the cupboard, trying to get out. Blake & Co. grinned. Kildare uttered an exclamation.
 "Why, you young rascal, you have him in the cupboard there!"

Wally turned red.
 "Open that door!" commanded Kildare.
 Wally opened the cupboard door. Pongo frisked out in great glee, and barked. He ran between Arthur Augustus' legs, and nearly upset the swell of St. Jim's.
 "So he was here all the time!" said Kildare grimly.
 "You see—"
 "Come to my study, D'Arcy minor."
 "You're not going to whack Pongo!" said Wally, gathering his shaggy favourite up in his arms protectingly. "I brought him in. You can lick me if you like!"
 Kildare smiled grimly.
 "That's what I'm going to do. Follow me!"
 D'Arcy minor made a grimace as the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Curious thing that I'm always in hot water!" he exclaimed. "People seem to pick on me because I'm harmless and inoffensive."
 "Yes, rather!" said Blake, with a grin. "Mind, that beast is trying to get away!"
 "Quiet, Pongo! Look here, Gussy, I have heard from dad about that cricket week at home, and it seems that he hasn't made it a point to ask the Head for me to be let off."

"Vewy pwob."
 "Some rot about my not being sufficiently well reported by my Form-master to justify him in making such a request."

"Yaas, I suppose so."
 "Of course, it's all piffle. Selby never gives me good reports. He dislikes me for some reason."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Perhaps it was because you covered him with tar once."

"Well, that was really only a joke."
 "You couldn't expect Selby to have a sufficiently developed sense of humour to appreciate it as it deserved," said Blake, with a shake of his head.

"Well, it's rotten that I'm not to have leave," said Wally. "Of course, I'm going."

"I'm sorry, Wally, but it seems to me impos-"
 "Kildare told you to follow him, Wally," suggested Digby gently.

"Well, I'm going to. The governor has left it to the discretion of the Head and my Form-master whether I am allowed to go," said Wally.

"Then you had better behave yourself, dear boy."

"I was thinking of that," said Wally. "If I set up as a shining light in the Third Form, and drew all eyes upon me by my goodness and meekness, like Georgie in the story-book, it might work—only there isn't much time. Besides, it isn't in my line."

"I think I heard Kildare call," said Herries.

"Blow Kildare! You see, I must go, and I shall have to work it somehow. I should hate to have to do a bolt."

"I uttahnly wefuse my permish for you to do a bolt, Wally."

"Rats! Look here, Gussy. I want you to write a persuasive letter to the governor, and at the same time put it sweetly to the Head."

"But—"
 "I'll be on my best behaviour, and win golden opinions from all sorts of people, like that chap in Virgil—or was it Homer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "It was Shakespeare."

"Well, I knew it was one of the old bounders," said Wally irreverently. "Well, that's my little game. See?"
 "D'Arcy minor!"

It was Kildare's voice from the distance.

"Hallo, there's Kildare doing vocal exercises. I shall have to cut. But I shan't see you again before bed-time, so I must finish now," said Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Now, don't you begin, Gus! It's too bad of you to waste time talking, when there isn't a minute to spare. Remember what I want you to do, that's all. I'm going to play gentle Georgie, and win golden opinions. Then if

(Continued on the next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

COOL.

Teacher: "Now, Jackie, I don't think it was you who went into Farmer Brown's orchard, so I won't punish you."

Jackie: "Thank you, sir, but may I keep the apples?"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," Bengoe School, Hertford.

EMPTY TALK.

Old Lady: "But, my good man, your story has such a hollow ring."

Tramp: "Yes, missis. That's the natural result of speaking with an empty stummick!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Meadowcroft, 93, Crawford Street, Rochdale, Lancs.

FOOD FIRST.

Foreman: "Well, if you saw the thieves stealing all this stuff, why the dickens didn't you go after them?"

Night Watchman: "What! With my sausages beginning to brown?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Ware, 61, Marylebone Street, Southsea.

ON THE SAFE SIDE.

"You don't need to pay me in advance," said the dentist, as the Scotsman was fumbling in his trousers pocket.

"I'm not going to," was the reply. "I'm only counting me money before ye gie me gas!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Sweetman, 3/30, Alexandra Street, Ladywood, Birmingham.

ASKING FOR IT.

Visitor: "I suppose they ask a lot for the rent of this apartment?"

Tenant: "Yes, they asked seven times last week!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Kruger, 5433, Jeanne Mance, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

JUST FANCY!

Monty Lowther: "Six pork pies, six jam-tarts, and three ices—all for sixpence. Just fancy that!"

Fatty Wynn: "Where? Where?"

Monty Lowther: "Nowhere. I said, just fancy!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Becquet, La Fosse, Trinity, Jersey, C.I.

BIRDS OF ANOTHER FEATHER.

Teacher (during natural history lesson): "Now, Smith, what birds are commonly kept in captivity?"

Smith (brightly, after a moment's pause): "Please, sir, gaolbirds!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Weitz, Mount Pleasant, P.O. Emerald Hill, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

IF—

Pat: "What's for breakfast, Mike?"

Mike: "Well, if we had some bacon we'd have some eggs and bacon, if we had some eggs!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Thomas, 120, Seaforth Road, Seaforth, Liverpool.

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"I can't come with you to-morrow, I shall be able to follow a day or two later. See?"

"Yaas, but—"

"I can hear Kildare coming," said Blake.

"My only Aunt Jane! I—"

Wally made for the door just as Kildare reached it again.

The captain of St. Jim's frowned into the study.

"I think I told you to follow me, D'Arcy minor," he said.

"Just coming, Kildare. Ow!"

The St. Jim's captain took a firm grasp upon Wally's ear with his finger and thumb and led him from the study. Wally wriggled painfully, and Pongo took advantage of the diversion to skip out of his arms and dash for liberty.

"Ow!" murmured Wally. "You needn't hold me so tight, Kildare; I'm not going to bolt."

But Kildare's grip did not relax till he had led the scamp of the Third Form into his study. There he took down a cane, and the next five minutes were decidedly painful for D'Arcy minor.

CHAPTER 8.

Pongo Has a Feed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS looked very thoughtful as he sat in the armchair in the Common-room that evening and stretched out his legs so that his trousers would not bag at the knees.

The thoughtful frown upon his noble brow was caused by his reflections upon the subject of his younger brother.

It was hard on Wally that he couldn't go to Eastwood for the cricket week.

Wally was the scamp of the Form he belonged to, and there was little mischief among the fags that he did not have a hand in. His Form-master had a "down" upon him, and perhaps not without reason. Mr. Selby was an acid-tempered man and the last man in the world to get on amicably with D'Arcy minor.

There were frequently rubs, too, between major and minor, for Wally would never follow in the course Arthur Augustus prescribed for him.

He was as inky and untidy as D'Arcy was elegant and neat, and that was a constant trial to the swell of St. Jim's. He even preferred "Wally" to "Walter Adolphus" as a name to be called by—a thing D'Arcy could never understand.

Yet there was a very real affection between the brothers, though they were hardly aware of it themselves, and would have laughed to scorn any idea of a demonstrative display of it.

Wally certainly didn't deserve any relaxation of the college rules in his favour on the score of conduct.

All the same, he wanted to go to the cricket week, and Arthur Augustus wanted him to go. And this was particularly benevolent of D'Arcy, because he knew that Wally would take Pongo—and Pongo was D'Arcy's pet abomination, even more so than Herries' famous bulldog.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were playing chess with Blake, Herries, and Digby—a three-sided match—to the accompaniment of endless remarks and comparing of notes and recriminations, when D'Arcy rose from his chair.

The swell of St. Jim's glanced at them.

"I say, deah boys!" he remarked.

No one answered. They were too intent on their game.

D'Arcy smiled, and quitted the Common-room. He saw that he would not have much chance of speaking to his comrades until that fateful game of chess was decided.

The swell of St. Jim's made for the Third Form, looking very thoughtful. He was going to see Wally in the Third Form Room.

The fags were in the Form-room in great force when he arrived. They preferred that room to the Junior Common-room, which they would have to share with the Fourth and Shell. It was getting near to bed-time, but the Third were still lively. Wally was arguing hotly with Jameson and Curly Gibson, and there was a babel of tongues from the rest of the room at the same time.

"Well, I haven't seen him," said Jameson. "You should keep an eye on your mongrel."

"Keep him in the kennel," said Gibson.

"Rats!" retorted Wally. "You ought to have looked for him while I was in Kildare's study."

"Oh, he'll turn up all right!"

"Hallo, here's the giddy Aubrey!" said Jameson, jamming a penny into his right eye in rude imitation of D'Arcy's monocle and staring at the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy gave him a glance of lofty disdain.

"I came to speak to you, Wally," he said. "I twest Kildare did not hurt you much."

Wally growled and rubbed his hands once more upon his rumpled trousers.

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"He jolly well did!" he said. "He laid it on as if he were making big drives in a cricket match."

"Sowwy! Still, you deserved it, and that must be a comfort to you, deah boy."

Wally glared.

"If you've come here to be funny, Gussy, you may as well cut!" he exclaimed. "I don't feel quite up to giddy humour now."

"I was not jokin', Wally!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I should imagine that the reflection that you fully deserved your punishment would make it less disagreeable to you."

"Then you are offside!" growled Wally. "It doesn't! What else have you come for? I could have got that out of a Good Georgie book."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, cut the cackle and come to the hosses!" said Wally.

"What's the bisney?"

"It's about the cricket week."

Wally brightened up.

"Got the Head's permission?"

"No, deah boy. I have not mentioned you to the Head. But I am goin' to do my best. I shall twy my hardest to get you leave to come."

"Well, that's jolly decent of you, Gussy!" said Wally. "Look here, if you get me off for the week I won't rag you all the time we're at home."

"Hear, hear!" said Jameson. "And if you can take us, too, Gussy, we'll stand by and cheer whenever you make a good hit!"

"I'm afwaid that would be imposs, Jameson—"

"Impossible for you to make a good hit? Well, perhaps you're right."

"You young ass! I mean imposs to take you."

"We shouldn't have much cheering to do, anyway," remarked Curly Gibson.

"Weally, you young wascal—"

"What's this blessed Fourth Former doing in our room?" exclaimed Jameson, observing that there was no chance for him, at all events, to get to Eastwood for the cricket week.

"Kick him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Throw him out!"

"Hold on!" said Wally. "Gussy's my visitor, and you've got to treat him civilly, unless you want thick ears all round!"

"Yah!"

"If the chap who said 'Yah' will come out I'll talk to him!" said Wally.

The invitation was not accepted. The chap who said "Yah!" apparently did not wish to be talked to by D'Arcy minor. The fags moved off, and Wally was left alone with his major. D'Arcy glanced after them loftily through his monocle, and then his glance returned to his hopeful younger brother.

"I'm weally vewy much concerned about this, Wally," he remarked. "We must work it if we can. The governah—"

"The governor's played it rather low-down on me," said Wally. "He might have made it a point with the Head that I was to go."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Imposs, deah boy. He was bound to leave it to the Head. It depends upon the report of the Form-mastah."

"Selby always slates me."

"You must be vewy careful with Selbay."

"Not much good."

"You must be vewy careful with the othah mastahs."

"H'm!"

"Also with the pweffects, and the seniahs genewally."

"A-h-e-m!"

"It's only by keepin' on your best behaviah that you'll have a chance at all, Wally. It's wathah unfortunate that you've just had trouble with Kildare."

Wally rubbed his hand reminiscently.

"Yes, rather; it hurts when he lays it on."

"I mean, it wathah spoils your start as a good chawwaotah."

"Oh, that's all right! Kildare always forgets a chap after he's licked him. He's not a worm like Knox, for instance, always keeping it up against a chap."

"Now, will you twy to be good, Wally, and get some golden opinions? And I will do what I can with the Head. As for the governah, he's willin' for you to come home if the Head cares to let you go."

"I'm on my best behavious already," said Wally. "I've been keeping these chaps quiet. There hasn't been half the usual row in the room this evening."

(Continued on page 14.)



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! The sequel to the grand yarn in this number is just the type of story that you will all revel in. With the Australians over here, and the air, so to speak, being full of cricket, a ripping story of our great summer game will, I have no doubt, prove very popular. There is plenty of cricket in

off the cowl of Diamond Eye, and the mystery man is a mystery no longer. Who is he?

All our other popular features will figure in this tip-top programme as usual, and I shall have something to tell you about a great new St. Frank's serial which is coming shortly.

THRILLING TESTS.

"Which was the most exciting Test Match in England against Australia?" asks Tom Read, of Newcastle. There have been two or three thrilling games which have ended very closely. For instance, in 1882, at the Oval, Australia won by seven runs! At the same ground twenty years later England were victorious by the narrow margin of one wicket. But perhaps the most thrilling Test Match of all, both in Australia and England, was the one played at Manchester in 1902.

The first two Tests of that year had been drawn through rain, and the third match Australia had won by 143 runs. Then came the game at Manchester. The Australians batted first and put on 299 runs. England responded with a total of 262—37 runs behind. Then followed a big sensation which raised the hopes of the spectators to the highest point. Australia were dismissed in their second "knock" for only 86 runs! We wanted 124 runs to win. It seemed easy on the face of things, and it looked a certainty when we had 40 runs on the score board and our opening batsmen were still together. But suddenly a wicket fell, and shortly afterwards another—and then something else fell—the rain!

England still needed over 60 runs when the match could be continued. But wickets began to fall fast on the wet pitch, and eight batsmen were out for

109 runs! Fifteen wanted to win and two wickets to fall! Could England do it? Seven more runs were added, and then a wonderful catch on the boundary dismissed another of our batsmen. Then the rain began to fall again, and it was over an hour before the game restarted, with England's last man at the wicket. The first ball he received went to the boundary for four—four more wanted! Down came the ball again and—crack!—the wicket was shattered. England had lost the match by 3 runs, and Australia had won the Ashes for that year.

THE CANINE FIRE-FIGHTER.

The mascot of a New York fire brigade is Jack, a three-year-old Dalmatian, and what Jack doesn't know about the business of fighting fires is not worth knowing. He attends all the fires to which his brigade is called, and he knows all the alarm signals off pat. Jack will enter a burning building with unflinching courage, and he can climb a fire escape and shift a hose into position with his strong jaws.

But Jack had a narrow escape from death recently—and it was not at a fire. He was on the "spree" with other dogs when he was hauled in by the police as a stray. Jack was about to be "put to sleep" when the fire brigade badge on his collar was noticed, and a brave canine fire-fighter was saved from the lethal chamber.

NEW RECORDS.

"What is the record depth a diver has descended into the water?" asks John Murray, of Aberdeen. A new record was set up fairly recently by a diver in Australia. In a new type of diving suit he descended into the sea off Sydney to a depth of 270 feet.

Could you eat sixty eggs? I should think not. Even Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of St. Jim's, would probably jib at the fifty-ninth! But an American did it for a wager the other day. He ate 32 boiled eggs and 28 scrambled ones—and did it in thirty minutes!

TAILPIECE.

"I am sorry," said the prison governor to the convict whose sentence had ended, "but you were kept here a week longer than you ought to have been."

"That's O.K. with me," returned the convict. "Knock it off next time!"

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

E. W. Neal, Haycroft Avenue, off Cromwell Road, Grimsby, Lincs., would like to hear from readers who have made a hobby of old "Nelson Lees."

George Colin Cross, 1, New Quebec Street, Marble Arch, London, W.1, wants to hear from stamp collectors and snap enthusiasts in the Dominions, India, China, and Persia; age 11-13.

J. Crettaz, 119a, Jute Street, Wanderer's View, Johannesburg, South Africa, wants a pen pal in China, Japan, or America, who is interested in radio, television, and electricity; age 16-20.

Miss Joan Henderson, Northam Ridge, 222, Chapel Street, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa, wants girl correspondents interested in sports; out-of-the-way places preferred.

C. J. Cox, Court Cottages, Nunney, near Frome, Somerset, wants correspondents interested in sports, ancient history;

geography, natural history, aviation, also old "Magnets"; age 14-19.

Miss Edna F. Dean, 3, Chestnut Road, Quinton, Birmingham, wants girl correspondents in France, Germany, China, and Japan; age 14-15.

Leslie Regan, New Ward, Royal Sea Bathing Hospital, Margate, Kent, wants a correspondent in Australia; age 17-18; hockey, cricket, and football.

B. F. Morton, 300, Abbeydale Road, Sheffield 7, wants to correspond with an English-speaking Scout overseas.

Bennett H. Morris, 59, Cricketfield Road, Lower Clapton, London, E.5, wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of the first copies of the GEM.

Miss E. A. Timms, 1008, Karamoe Road, Hastings, N. B. North Island, New Zealand, wants to hear from girl readers. Interested in Navy.

J. Capstick, Tiverton Street, Palmerston South, Otago, New Zealand, wants a pen pal in England or France; interested in French; age 13-15.

Vernon Loft, 470, Colombo Street, Sydenham, Christchurch, New Zealand, wants correspondents who collect match brands.

P. D. Levers, The Fridgate, Sea Avenue, Rustington, Sussex, wants a correspondent at Weybridge; age 13-15; interested in racing cars and aeroplanes.

E. Hill, 13, North Parade, Bootham, York, wants pen pals in France, India, Italy, Canada, Egypt, Ireland and Scotland; age 20-25.

Gussy's Cricket Party!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Vewy good!"
"If there's much noise I'm going to fight the chap who starts it. That's understood. Now, if I—"

"Bai Jove, wh't's that?"
The door was flung suddenly open, and an excited fag put his head in.

"Wally! Where's young D'Arcy?"

"Here I am!" said Wally. "Who are you calling young D'Arcy?"

"I say, it's Pongo!"

"Pongo!"

"Yes, Pongo!"

"Have you found him?"

"Found him? No; he's found Herr Schneider!"

"What?"

"He's in Schneider's room, and—"

"My hat!"

"Schneider's yelling like one o'clock!"

grinned the fag. "He's in an awful rage!"

He found Pongo eating his supper, which had been laid in his room because he's got a cold, you know."

"Phew!"

"I fancy he'll smash Pongo!"

"Will he?" roared Wally.

And he dashed from the room.

"Wally!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Wally!"

But the scamp of the Third did not hear, or heed, at all events.

He rushed away, with a troop of fags at his heels, in the direction of the German master's room.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "What wotten luck! That beastly mongrel will spoil evewythin—just when Wally was going to be good!"

Bai Jove!"

Wally had already forgotten that he was going to be good. He was thinking only of Pongo at that moment.

There was the sound of an uproar in Herr Schneider's room.

The door was wide open, and a group of fellows stood in the passage, staring in and chuckling.

The scene within was curious.

On the table lay the remains of Herr Schneider's supper, mostly dragged off the plate and distributed over the cloth.

Herr Schneider, with a face red with rage, was grasping an umbrella and trying to get at Pongo. Pongo was determined not to be got at. He was dodging round the table, and the stout herr pursued him breathlessly.

"Mein goodness! It is tat mein supper has been eaten mit te dog after mit itself, ain't it? I smashes tat tog!"

"Here, lemme through!" muttered Wally.

"Who are you shoving, young D'Arcy?"

"Lemme get in! That's my dog!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally elbowed his way to the open doorway.

Pongo was chasing wildly round the room, escaping the swipes of the herr's umbrella by a series of miracles.

Every now and then he made a rush for the door, but the crowd there would not let him pass. They were enjoying the scene too much. The sight of the fat German gentleman taking so much unaccustomed exercise was very entertaining.

"Go it, sir!" said Gore. "Very nearly had him that time, sir!"

"Ach! Don't let tat tog get away, ain't it?"

"We won't let him pass!"

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No. 18. Vol. 1 (New Series).

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

Dr. RICHARD HOLMES SPEAKING



I have been asked on this very pleasant occasion to say a few words regarding the traditions of the fine old school of which I have the honour to be headmaster.

I should like to say at once that though there are larger Public Schools in the country, you would find nowhere a school with a finer record or a more promising roll of pupils than at St. Jim's!

Sometimes—frequently, in fact—I am called upon to be rather severe in my capacity as headmaster, and juniors especially are apt to receive the impression that I am something of an ogre, to be feared and obeyed, but not to be looked upon as a human being. I must remind you that I am at heart just as human as the rest of you. I am just as elated when a scholastic or athletic triumph is brought home to St. Jim's as any of my boys can be; and although naturally I am bound to insist on the attainment of a certain scholastic standard in the school, I am not the sort of headmaster who takes no interest in the purely athletic type of boy. Of course, the best type of boy is one who combines both sport and study in equal proportions, and I can think of many good examples in the school at this moment.

When I look back, I often think of certain "Old Boys" of St. Jim's who went out to Flanders during the Great War, 1914-1918, and some of whom did not return. I remember Feltham, who was captain of games. He won the Victoria Cross.

St. Jim's has always had a fine record, at home and abroad. The old school has sent out representatives to all corners of the earth, and they have acquitted themselves well. The spirit of adventure is just as much alive to-day in the present generation. I have heard that Merry of the Shell is keenly interested in flying, and it is certain that whatever career he chooses for himself, he will make his mark! Perhaps I should mention Kildare, the captain of the school, in this connection, too. Kildare has I know a strong penchant for exploring out-of-the-way spots, and he is just the sort of man required by the administrative authorities for the work of governing foreign peoples wisely and well. He is a born leader.

I am so often asked by boys to choose a career for them, that I have formulated what I consider the best advice I can give them. Before starting out on a particular career, you must have it so much at heart that you are prepared to make sacrifices for it, and to work for it with might and main. It is useless to begin in a half-hearted spirit. And what that career shall be, you alone can decide.

Stop Press

Grand "Second Test Match"
Number Next Week.

ROOKWOOD'S CRICKE SAINTS TAKE IT UP

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone.

This match is the result of a challenge. Jimmy Silver, champion bowler of Rookwood, applied the title of Cock of the South to his school, and offered to perform the hat-trick against any junior eleven to prove Rookwood's right to the title! Silver had already made good his claim by taking three wickets in succession against Redcliffe and Bagshot when Tom Merry accepted the challenge!

Here they are—Silver and Tommy Dodd opening the batting for Rookwood. Fireworks at the very start—a "six" from Silver which whizzes clean through the pavilion window, narrowly missing the scorer! Saints are fielding keenly, running like deer to retrieve the smashing drives of the Rookwooders. Sweat pours off Fatty Wynn as the Falstaff slaves to lower those three stumps! Crash! He's done it at last—Dodd packs up with 22 opposite his name! Mornington sticks. Elegant, dexterous, is Mornington—his long reach is a big asset to his batting. Now Silver goes—a leap in mid-air by Lowther and a well-held catch. Silver has 24. Now stolid Lovell partners Mornington, holding the fort while Mornery does the damage! But dogged bowling at last sends Lovell back, stumped. Seventy is passed—but batsmen are scraping now. Mornington smashes everything to the boundary, but Fatty Wynn skittles his partners one by one. Last wicket falls at 81—Mornington not out 24.

Saints open strongly, Merry and Blake laying about them right heartily. Merry skies one at 7, though—and Mornington's hands cup neatly to hold the ball! Figgins of the fail-like bat saunters to the wicket—but there's nothing slow about his batting; he's a whirlwind batsman. Fieldsmen are forced nearer and nearer the boundary—

Flying Squad Report

SQUAD'S TATTOO

School House Flying Squad decided to hold Tattoo. Torchlight Parade and Massed Bands, latter including Herries' cornet, advertised. Villagers crowded round Little Side to witness display. Tattoo opened with Swedish Drill, well executed under Tom Merry. Highland Wrestling followed, George Herries "throwing" George Gore, a heavier fellow, to win title. Trick riding by A. A. D'Arcy on hired mount delighted onlookers. D'Arcy a really accomplished horseman. Grand Finale, a Torchlight Procession with Massed Bands had barely commenced when wild whoops from direction of New House startled all present. New House squadron, disguised as Fuzzy Wuzzies in leopard skins and flourishing spears, hurtled into midst of School House Torchlight Parade! In a trice, Tattoo forgotten, but spectators thought it was staged affair. School House and New House squadrons engaged in desperate affray. New House planes had advantage in surprise; with Figgins at their head they

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Merry's Weekly



Week Ending June 16th, 1934.

CRICKET CHALLENGE MAKE IT UP—AND HOW!

every one of Figgins' hits is a "four"! Batsmen come and go, but Figgins remains. Silver toils in vain for his "hat-trick." He dismisses two batsmen in succession—but Lowther breaks the run and Silver's boast is unfulfilled when Saints are all out for 62, Figgins carrying his bat for 35.

Rookwood fare badly at second venture. Fatty Wynn has found a length, and even Mornington cannot hit him. Mornington out for 2, Dodd for 4, Silver himself for a mere 8. Conroy hits out for a brief spell, but the side is dismissed for 35. Saints set 55 to win! What of Jimmy Silver's boast? Will he get a "hat-trick" against St. Jim's?

Merry and Blake play themselves in cautiously. Blake goes with 10—smartly mapped behind the wicket. Conroy "keeps" like an Australian should! Figgins fails for once—D'Arcy glides 15 by means of his celebrated late cut! Saints' total creeps up and up—but batsmen come and go. Three wickets to fall, still a dozen wanted. Lowther plays forward to Silver—out for a "duck"! Kert falls into the same trap—clean bowled, also a "duck"! Silver, with the last man at the wicket, wants only one wicket to complete his vaunted "hat-trick"! Last man is Fatty Wynn, not a brilliant bat, but dodged.

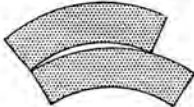
Complete silence as Silver takes his run—down comes the ball. Fatty Wynn's blocked it! Great stuff, Fatty! Silver's last chance is gone. Fatty scores a single off the next ball. Now Merry has the bowling. He leaps out of the crease—crack! The leather sails away into space—gone for a "six"! The last ball of the over Merry treats the same way—to bring a gallant victory to St. Jim's in the challenge match against the school which called itself Cock of the South! Whoopie, St. Jim's!

(Continued from previous column.)

drove clean through the School House squadron, causing severe casualties. School House squadron disorganised, but flew gallantly to counter-attack. Planes crashing on every side, struggle continuing hand-to-hand on ground. Thrilling solo duel between Merry and Figgins watched by cheering crowd; Chief Air Marshal Merry finally sent Figgins down with magnificent flying hit on top of machine! Tattoo ended triumphantly for School House Flying Squad in complete rout of rivals.

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

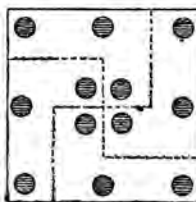
Wally D'Arcy had two pieces of melon, as shown. He offered his chum Jameson whichever piece he liked, and Jameson took quite a long time deciding which was the bigger—and he was wrong in the end! Which piece do YOU think is the bigger?



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, everybody! Cricket is in the air—a ball has just come through the study window, and there is a cricket chirping on the hearth! Did you hear how the famous cricketer, Dr. W. G. Grace, called to the toss of a coin, in the days when Queen Victoria was on the coinage? He said: "It's a lady!" He went in to bat—before the rival captain realised that with Queen Victoria on one side and Britannia on the other, it was bound to be a "lady"! A few flashes from the Third Form Room: "Here is an equation," said Mr. Selby. "Now find X, the unknown quantity." He was astounded when D'Arcy minor handed in a list of the Australian Test team. "Is this X?" demanded Mr. Selby. "Oh, sir!" gasped D'Arcy minor. "I thought you meant XI!" Old Selby then asked D'Arcy to describe a caterpillar. "It's an upholstered worm, sir!" responded the fag. Selby gave him one more chance. "What is the difference between 'goose' and 'geese'?" he demanded. D'Arcy answered brightly: "Please, sir, one geese is a goose, but a lot of geeses are geese!" I will draw a veil over the further proceedings. Like to answer this advert from a Wayland paper? "For Sale: Gent's cycle; good as new; 3-speed; 27 wheels." Who's afraid of a few punctures? I hear the Burmese natives play a variety of cricket peculiarly their own. So do some of the teams we've come up against! Skimpole pokes his head in to say: Scientific experiments with high explosives are sure to raise many new questions. Well, so long as they only raise questions, they'll be O.K. The other day the "Wayland Courier" announced: "A trial flight was carried out successfully with a crew of none." Robot control, we presume! A new invention enables you to hear your voice exactly as others hear it. We like to imagine Gore, who fancies himself as a crooner, getting it right back in the teeth as it were! Blake is rather keen on parrots, and calling on a villager he did his best to make one answer by repeating time after time: "Hallo!" At length, opening one eye, the parrot snapped back: "Line's engaged!" This caps all: A Wayland resident whose goods had been seized was caught by P.-o. Crump getting away with a piano on a truck. "What—trying to sneak off?" demanded Crump. "No," answered the unblushing Waylandite. "I'm off for my first lesson on the piano! Eat and sleep well, chums!"

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle



"Not much, sir."
"He has eaten mein supper mit himself. It is tat I smashes him, ain't it? I kills tat peastly tog before—"

"Go it, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The herr was wildly excited, too much excited to realise what an absurd figure he was making. He made another breathless rush after the lively mongrel, and Pongo whipped out of the way just in time.

Swipe went the umbrella, and there was a crash.

Herr Schneider had missed Pongo, but he had caught a vase on the mantelpiece, and it came down in a hundred pieces.

"Bravo!" roared Kerruish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The herr gasped for breath.

"Ach! Mein himmel!"

"Make way, you bounders!" grunted Wally.

"Keep back!"

"Shan't!"

Wally's elbows forced the crowd in the doorway to open. Pongo saw his opportunity, and whisked out through the struggling legs and dashed along the passage. Herr Schneider gave a yell:

"Ach! It is tat he gets away!"

"He's gone, sir!"

"Ach! Tat is D'Arcy minor! D'Arcy minor, let you comes in here!"

Wally unwillingly entered the room. He would gladly have followed Pongo at top speed down the passage; but the herr's eye was upon him.

He assumed the meekest possible expression as he stepped into the room.

Herr Schneider adjusted his spectacles, mopped his perspiring brow, and fixed a stern glance upon the scamp of the Third.

"D'Arcy minor, tat is your tog?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"He has eaten my supper, ain't it?"

"He—he's fond of good food, sir. He—he knew you would be bound to have a nice supper, sir," murmured Wally.

"Tat tog is not allowed in te House, ain't it?"

"Well, sir—"

"But you have him in te House."

"He got loose, sir."

"But you have him in te House before tat he got loose."

"Well, yes, sir!"

"You have proke te rules, D'Arcy minor."

"If you please, sir—"

"Also and to you have caused to be proke mein vase, and to be eaten mit itself mein supper before," said the herr. "I tink tat I send you to te Head to be caned, ain't it?"

Wally gave a gasp of dismay.

To be sent in to the Head, then to be caned, would be ruin to his plans for getting extra leave by good behaviour, and impressing upon Dr. Holmes what a nice, well-behaved boy he was.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Wally.

The German master smiled grimly.

"It is too late for tat you go to bodder te Head to-night," he said. "But you goes in at first ting after te prayers in te morning, ain't it, and you have to caume mit yourself."

"Oh, sir! I—I'd rather you caned me, sir!" faltered Wally.

"You goes to te Head in te morning," said Herr Schneider. "I gives you a note. You leave mein room now, you pad poy—"

"But, sir—"

"That you goes at vunce!"

"But—"

The German master made a step towards Wally, and the hero of the Third quitted the room in rather a hurried way.

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manner. It was not often that Wally was dismayed; but his face was very grim now as he went to look for Pongo. With the best intentions in the world, he was having the cruellest kind of luck.

CHAPTER 9.

A Mutiny in the Third

WALLY had entered the Third Form Room with a frowning brow; but he had found little sympathy among his Form-fellows.

Usually monarch of all he surveyed in the Form-room, and a great chief among the inky-fingered fags, Wally was a little "off his perch" at present.

Jameson and Gibson openly declared that it was like his rheek to think of going down to Eastwood for the cricket week when the other fellows couldn't go.

Wally had promised to work it for them, too, if he could; but if he couldn't, what was the use of missing the cricket week himself?

But Jameson had refused to listen to reason.

The other fellows, too, were a little sore. Wally, in his determination to be good, had instituted a new orderliness in the Form-room.

A guileless stranger entering the Third Form Room at any period during that evening would not have suspected that it was less noisy than usual. He would have thought it very noisy indeed. But if he had been in the habit of looking in every evening he would have observed that there was less noise on this particular evening.

Wally was determined that there should be no complaints on that score, at all events. Prefects should have no excuse for roaring down the passage, and masters should not be caused to tap on the door and admonish the juniors.

Wally was on his best behaviour!

Now, Wally might be on his best behaviour, with good reason, because there was a cricket week at stake; but the rest of the Form had nothing at stake, and they naturally very strongly resented having to be on their best behaviour on Wally's account—especially as Wally was generally the greatest scamp among them all.

So mutiny was simmering in the Third Form Room.

When Wally came in with his frowning brow, his frown did not intimidate the fags, who had been talking together in whispers, and had decided upon a plan of action.

Jameson and Gibson, instead of backing up Wally as usual, had assumed a position of lofty neutrality.

As soon as Wally came in Stokes and Garnett seized hold of a form and heaved it over on the floor with a mighty crash.

Wally jumped.

"What noisy asses!" he exclaimed, "Stop that!"

"Yah!"

"What!"

"Yah!"

Wally stood almost petrified.

Never since he had arrived at St. Jim's, and won the respect of the Third Form by fighting in rapid succession every fag who could put up his hands, had he been treated with such derision.

"What!" he roared.

"Yah!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Booh!"

Crash!

Another form went crashing on the floor. At the same time Jones and Dodson seized the poker and tongs, and commenced a hammering on the fender, which might have awakened the Seven Sleepers themselves.

Bang, bang!

Crash!

Boom! Bang! Crash!

Wally stopped his ears.

"You duffers!" he roared, "Stop that racket! I told you to be extra quiet this evening!"

"Yah!"

"And it's nearly bed-time!"

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"I'll lick you all round if you don't shut up!" roared Wally.

"Yah!"

D'Arcy minor turned upon Jameson and Gibson, who were grinning.

"You rotters!" he yelled. "You're in this!"

Jameson gave a shrug.

"We're not in it," he said. "We're doing nothing. But it's funny. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Gibson. "It's funny!"

"Back me up, and I'll jolly soon stop them!"

"Bosh!"

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"Rubbish!"

Wally stared at them.

"You worms!" he exclaimed. "You blessed worms! Do you mean to say you're not going to back me up?"

"Why shouldn't the chaps amuse themselves if they like?" yawned Jameson. "I don't see any objection to it."

"Not a bit," said Curly Gibson.

"You chumps! We shall have the masters here soon."

"Well, let 'em come!"

"Let 'em all come."

"We shall all get gated, and I shan't have a look in for an extra exeat!" yelled Wally.

"Blessed if I care!"

"Don't see why you should have an extra exeat."

Wally wasted no more time in words.

Jameson and Gibson had evidently got their back up, and there was no help to be expected from them. But Wally was not timid. He jumped on a form.

"Chaps, stop that row!" he shouted.

"Yah!" yelled the Third Form.

Crash!

Clatter!

Bang!

"If you don't shut up, I'll start on you!" roared Wally.

There was a yell of laughter.

Wally could certainly account with ease for any single fellow in the Form, and perhaps for almost any two of them; but the idea of even Wally "starting upon" thirty fellows at once was comic.

But Wally was in deadly earnest.

"Will you chuck it?" he roared.

"Yah!"

That was the only reply he could get from the Third Form. It wasn't a particularly intelligible one, but it was emphatic, and it fully conveyed the meaning of the excited fags. They didn't mean to "chuck it."

Wally jumped down and rushed up to Stokes, who was wielding the tongs upon the fender with tremendous effect.

He got one arm round Stokes' neck, and began to pommel him. Stokes, finding his head in chancery, dropped the tongs and yelled for help.

In a moment the fags were piling on Wally.

He had to release Stokes to defend himself. Stokes staggered away with his nose streaming red. Wally fought like a Trojan. But he was overwhelmed by numbers, and hurled to the floor, and a dozen triumphant fags sat on him, and kept him there.

Wally struggled and gasped in vain under the weight of the victors.

"Lemme gerrup!" he gasped. "I—I'll lick you all!"

"Yah!"

"Keep it up, you chaps!" gasped Dodson. "Go it!"

Crash! Bang! Thud! Bump! Clatter!

The uproar was terrific.

The fags had meant to assert their independence, and to prove to Wally that they could do as they liked; but in their excitement they were probably overdoing it a little.

They had fully expected a prefect to give them a look in, but they had not intended to alarm the whole House. But in their excitement they were quite carried away.

The Form-room door was suddenly thrown open, and Mr. Railton strode in.

The Housemaster was frowning darkly.

"Cease this disturbance instantly!" he cried.

"My hat!" murmured Jameson. "It's Railton."

"There'll be a row now!"

"Yes, rather!"

The uproar ceased as if by magic.

Mr. Railton's voice was one to carry obedience with it. The fags piled off Wally and scuttled to their places. The scamp of the Third sat on the floor, very dusty and bewildered and dishevelled.

Mr. Railton glanced at him sternly.

"Ah, it is you, D'Arcy minor!"

"Ye-e-e-es, sir!" gasped Wally.

"You are the centre of disturbance, as usual."

"Oh!"

"It is disgraceful!" said Mr. Railton. "The noise you have been making is simply disgraceful. The Head has heard it. I am ashamed of you."

The fags looked sheepish.

"Every one of you will stay in for the next half-holiday," resumed the Housemaster. "I will speak to Mr. Selby. And you, D'Arcy minor, will report yourself to the Head immediately after prayers to-morrow morning."

"Oh, sir!"

"I trust this lesson will not be lost upon you."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Railton strode from the room. In the disordered quarters of the Third Form a pin might have been heard to drop.

"My hat!" murmured Stokes at last. "Railton's got his back up!"

"Gated for the next half!" grumbled Dodson.
 "Well, the rag was worth it!"
 "And Wally's got to be licked."
 "Poor old Wally!"
 Wally snorted.
 "You blessed duffers!" he said. "You see what you've done! Serves you all jolly well right! Bah!"
 And Wally stamped out of the room. He stamped into the midst of Tom Merry & Co., who were among the crowd who had come to see what the disturbance was about.

CHAPTER 10.

Digby's Idea!

TOM MERRY caught the hero of the Third by the shoulder. Wally looked at him grimly. His clothes were untidy, half the buttons gone off his waistcoat, his collar torn out, his hair like a mop.

A stranger would never have known him at that moment for a brother of the elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Well, you look a sight, young 'un," said Tom Merry, laughing.

Wally growled.

"It's all the fault of those duffers."

"But what was the row about?"

"A blessed mutiny. I was keeping extra order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at. I was keeping the Form quiet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it! I was keeping them on their best behaviour, and they cut up rusty. That's all. Now they're all gated for the next half, and serve them right."

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm gated, too; but as I'm going to Eastwood for the cricket week, it won't hurt me," said Wally.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Looks to me as if you're not going," he remarked.

"Oh, I'm going! I've got to turn up in the Head's study, too, after prayers in the morning," said Wally, with a grimace.

"Bai Jove! You've got to do that already for Herr Schneider, Wally!"

The hero of the Third chuckled softly.

"Yes, I shall kill two birds with one stone, see? I shan't mention who sent me, and the same licking will do for both."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I think it's any good trying to be on one's best behaviour!" growled Wally. "It doesn't seem to have improved matters much. You'd better think of something else, Gus."

"Weally, Wally—"

"I've got an idea," said Digby, who had been looking thoughtful. "You're out with Railton and Schneider and Kildare, but if Selby spoke up for you, it might be worked yet—"

"Selby's least likely of all."

"Not if you work it properly. I tell you I've got a wheeze."

"Go it!" said Wally, not very hopefully.

"Shove on the best behaviour thick with Selby—concentrate on him, you see. Take him a bunch of flowers in the morning to put in his study, and that sort of thing. Say good-night to him nicely when you meet him, and ask after his cough. He thinks he's got a cough."

Wally wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"Well, there might be something in that," he admitted. "I've never tried the soft sawder dodge with Selby. I don't know how it would work."

"Well, try it!"

"Yaas, wethah! It couldn't do any harm, Wally."

Wally nodded.

"Well, I'll try it," he said. "I can buzz off some flowers out of the Head's garden in the morning, and try."

"Mind you don't get caught in the Head's garden, then."

"Oh, that's all right!"

And Wally went up to the Third Form dormitory. It was close on bed-time for the Third Form, and before Wally had finished putting himself to rights, the Form came up to bed. Although they had been gated for a half-holiday, most of the Third looked cheerful enough. Most of them considered that such a gorgeous rag was worth the gating. Jameson and Gibson were a little repentant now, but Wally would not look at them. He undressed and went to bed without a word.

"I say, Wally!" sang out Jameson, after lights out.

No reply.

"Wally, old chap!"

Silence.

"Hang it, Wally, you're not ratty, are you?"

"No," growled Wally, "I'm not ratty; but I want to go to sleep. Shut up!"

"I'm sorry—"

"All right; dry up!"

"I'm sorry you're going to be licked!"

"Never mind; let's go to sleep."

"Yes, but—"

"My only Aunt Jane! Are you going to talk all night, Jameson?" exclaimed Wally, exasperated. "Can't you understand it's past bed-time?"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

"I want to say—"

"Well, don't!"

"But—"

"Ring off!"

"Look here, Wally—"

Wally snorted.

Jameson gave it up. There was evidently nothing to be got out of D'Arcy minor in his present temper.

"Cheese it, old chap," said Curly Gibson. "He'll be all right in the morning."

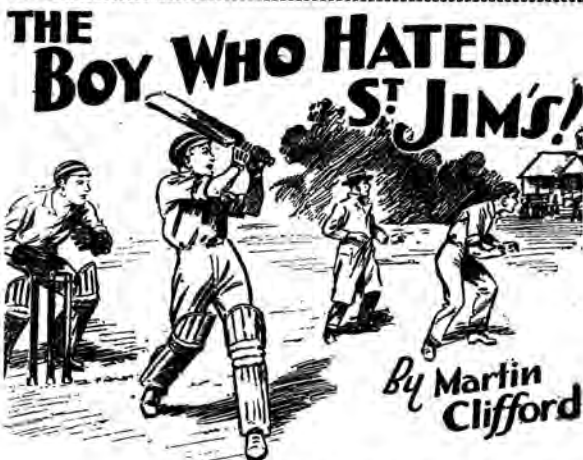
And the Third Form went to sleep.

Tom Merry & Co. went to bed shortly afterwards. They were in very cheerful spirits about the morrow and the cricket week to follow.

The prospect of a week away from school, with cricket and a house party thrown in, was extremely exhilarating.

At the same time, they felt concerned for Wally.

As D'Arcy's brother, they felt that he had a sort of right to go. At the same time, they felt that Lord Eastwood had



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acted, with proper delicacy in not making a point of it. If Wally's general behaviour did not justify the Head in giving him that holiday, it would hardly be form for the earl to use his influence in Wally's favour. But the juniors felt that it was hard. The scamp of the Third had tried to be good, but he was new to it, and it had not been a success. His efforts had deserved better results.

As a matter of fact, whatever chance Wally had had of getting leave had probably been spoiled for good by the late happenings.

Tom Merry went to sleep, and dreamed of a cricket match at Eastwood House, in which Lord Eastwood had asked him personally to play, and in which he was knocking up a century against the bowling of a M.C.C. champion.

From the delightful dream he was awakened by the rising-bell.

Clang, clang, clang!

Tom Merry sat up in bed.

The bright rays of the summer sun was streaming in at the windows. It was going to be a fine day.

Tom Merry jumped out of bed and went to the window. The quadrangle looked very fresh and green in the morning sun. Tom Merry thought of Eastwood House, with its scented woods and rolling park-land. The weather was inspiring, and gave promise of a splendid day.

Suddenly, as he was about to turn from the window, he caught sight of three forms moving in the quadrangle.

He stared at them hard.

It was an early hour for juniors to be abroad, and he saw that they were juniors, though they were too far off for him to recognise them. They must have been up before rising-bell—a most remarkable thing for the fags.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry, as the identity of one at least of the trio dawned upon him. "It's D'Arcy minor! He's going to carry out Dig's idea."

And Tom Merry smiled.

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Selby in a Rage!

MR. SELBY was a few minutes late for class that morning.

The Third Form were in their places, looking as good as gold. They had been "gated" by Mr. Railton, and Wally had been caned by the Head, and they knew that their Form-master would be annoyed at the Housemaster having interfered. He would take it as a reflection on his management of his Form. Woe was likely to betide the Third Former who roused Mr. Selby's ire that morning.

But if Wally's plans were successful, the Third Form-master would be propitiated at the start. Wally was arranging roses in a vase upon the desk. Rushden's vase was a handsome one, and the roses, taken from the Head's garden that morning, looked very well in it.

Wally stepped back to view his handiwork with a satisfied air.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated. "Doesn't it look ripping?"

"Jolly ripping!" said Jameson. "Get into your place, you ass! It's past time."

"All right, it does look well!"

"Selby's late already."

Wally went to his place.

From the forms the roses on the master's desk certainly looked very nice, and the effect was very pleasant in the plain and unadorned class-room.

If Mr. Selby wasn't pleased with the trouble the juniors had taken he must be the grumpiest and most discontented person possible, and it was no good trying to please him.

So Wally said to himself as he looked at the roses.

The big hand of the clock was crawling on, and still Selby did not come. He was five minutes late now.

The Form began to be vaguely alarmed.

Usually, being left to themselves would have meant skylarking. But Wally had set his face against that now; and besides, the fags felt in no mood for skylarking. They thought there was something amiss.

"Railton's pitching it to Selby about keeping us in better order, perhaps," whispered Curly Gibson.

"Shouldn't wonder."

"He'll come in as ratty as anything."

"Just my luck!" growled Wally. "Why couldn't you blessed hooligans behave yourselves last night?"

"Oh rats!"

"There's going to be trouble with Selby this morning," said Jameson dolefully. "Wish he'd come, and get it over!"

"Oh, rather!"

"He's six minutes late."

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"I—I say, it can't be anything about the raid in the Head's garden, can it?" muttered Gibson. "You didn't do any damage?"

"Oh, no! They wouldn't miss a few roses!"

"But did you damage anything?"

Wally reflected. He remembered the rose-tree he had grabbed at in his hurry. He hadn't stopped to look whether it was damaged or not.

But he shook his head.

"No, I'm sure not. Nothing noticeable. Did we, Jameson?"

"I don't think so."

"It can't be that."

"Besides, that's no business of Selby's," said Wally. "He wouldn't care if all the Head's rose-trees were pulled up by the roots. He's no gardener. And it's not his garden. Besides, they wouldn't tell him. The Head's gardener would just tell the Head that somebody had been there, that's all."

"H'm, I suppose so."

"Cave! Here he comes!"

There was a sound in the passage. The juniors sat up with expressionless faces, motionless as statues. Everyone was particularly anxious to avoid catching Mr. Selby's eye when he entered.

Mr. Selby came in.

He gave the Form one glance, and nodded brusquely in reply to their respectful greeting and strode to his desk, his gown rustling.

"It's all up!" muttered Jameson. "Look at his nose!"

The class looked at Mr. Selby's nose in dismay. That organ was a danger signal. When it was very red it showed that Mr. Selby was suffering from indigestion. And then the Third Formers had to walk very warily indeed.

It was very red now.

Mr. Selby marched up to his desk and suddenly stopped and stared as he caught sight of the vase of flowers.

He remained quite motionless for some moments, staring at the flowers. The juniors could not see his face now, and Wally's hope rose.

"It'll be all right," he whispered to Jameson. "He's seen the flowers, and he's pleased. It's a mark of affectionate attention, you know—respect from a pupil to his kind teacher and all that. He's going to say something nice."

Mr. Selby turned towards the class.

Wally's jaw dropped as he saw his face.

Mr. Selby was going to say something; but his expression showed that, whatever he was going to say, it was not something nice.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally in dismay.

He did not know what was wrong. But he could see that something was. His last resource had failed him, and he was apparently "in" for something, too.

"Incredible!"

That was what Mr. Selby said.

He said it in a tone that made the class thrill. Mr. Selby was celebrated for what the juniors called his "tantrums." But he was evidently in a tantrum now which cast all previous tantrums into the shade.

"Incredible! Absolutely incredible!"

"You've done it now!" murmured Jameson.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Yes, incredible!" said Mr. Selby. "I see; but I cannot believe. I doubt the evidence of my eyes. I repeat, incredible!"

The class trembled.

They did not know in the least what Mr. Selby was driving at, but they saw that there was a cyclone coming.

"If I did not see this," said Mr. Selby, apparently making up his mind to accept the evidence of his eyes after all, "if I did not see it, I could not believe it. As an instance of astounding effrontery, I think it can never have been equalled in the history of this or any other school."

Dead silence.

"I have been listening," said Mr. Selby, "to a complaint respecting a boy in this Form. A rose-tree in the Head's garden has been wilfully and outrageously damaged, and partially dragged down. A number of roses have been removed from it; but it is the damage to the tree that the gardener has especially complained of."

"Oh!" murmured Wally.

Mr. Selby took a breath.

"I was not surprised," he went on, "when the gardener told me that a rose-tree had been wilfully damaged, to learn that D'Arcy minor was the culprit."

Wally sat silent.

"I came here, however, without expecting to witness this crowning and well-nigh incredible piece of effrontery," said Mr. Selby, with a wave of the hand towards the roses on the desk. "That D'Arcy minor should venture upon such a piece of defiant impudence as putting the stolen—yes, stolen—roses on his Form-master's desk does, I confess, surprise me."

And Mr. Selby wound up dramatically. Wally's face was a study.



The uproar in the Third Form Room ceased as if by magic as the door was suddenly thrown open and Mr. Railton strode in. The fags piled off Wally and scuttled to their places, leaving the scamp of the Third sitting on the floor, very bewildered and dishevelled. "Ah! It is D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Railton. "You are the centre of disturbance as usual!"

There was a moment's silence. Then Mr. Selby's voice rapped out so suddenly that it made the terrified fags jump.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Stand out before the class!"

Wally slowly left his place. He advanced towards Mr. Selby, the latter keeping an eye on him all the time—an eye that seemed to pierce like a gimlet.

"D'Arcy minor, you placed those roses upon my desk!"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"I must conclude, therefore, that you raided the Head's garden?"

"Ye-es."

"You damaged the rose-tree?"

"I didn't mean—"

"Yes or no?"

"I suppose so, sir. But—"

"And you were guilty of the crowning, the incredible effrontery, of placing these roses here?" thundered Mr. Selby.

"I—I thought—I—"

"Enough, D'Arcy minor. Follow me!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word. Whatever you have to say, you can say to the Head. I leave the matter entirely in his hands," said Mr. Selby. "I confess myself incapable of dealing adequately with such an example of juvenile depravity. To enter the Head's garden was wrong—but that might be excused as a boyish freak. To take the roses was wrong—but I should be willing to believe that you acted thoughtlessly. To damage the rose-tree was bad—but I could believe that it was accidental.

"But to place the roses here, on my desk—to flaunt them, as it were, in the face of your master—that, D'Arcy minor, shows a depravity of nature which shocks and astonishes me. I can only conclude that your nature has been warped and poisoned by reading depraved literature for the young—that literature which I am glad to say I have never read, or even seen, but which I have always thoroughly and unhesitatingly condemned. Follow me, D'Arcy minor."

And Mr. Selby rustled from the room.

Wally followed.

"The next time I try to please a Form-master," he murmured, "I hope somebody will use my head for a football! This is a go!"

Two minutes later they were in Dr. Holmes' study, and Mr. Selby was making the long-looked-for report to the Head.

CHAPTER 12.

Unlucky for Wally!

"WHERE'S Wally?"

Tom Merry asked the question.

The Shell and the Fourth Form had come out after morning lessons, and Tom Merry & Co. had gathered together in the highest spirits.

It was a glorious day, and they were to have a glorious week, and what more could they desire to make them happy?

"Where's Wally?"

"I weally don't know," said D'Arcy. "The Third Form are out, but Wally doesn't appear to be with them."

"I don't think he's gone out," said Kangaroo.

"Where is the young duffer, then?"

"I tust he is all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose the Head has spoken to Mr. Selby about him by this time. If Dig's ideah worked out all wight, Mr. Selby has probably made a favouable weport."

"We'd better find Wally. It was a good idea, but—"

"The idea was all right," said Digby. "But Wally may have had his usual luck in carrying it out. Here's young Jameson. Jameson, where's Wally?"

"In the Form-room."

"Bai Jove! What is he doin' there?"

"Rubbing his hands."

"Wubbin' his hands! What for?"

"Better ask him."

And Jameson went out. D'Arcy turned his monocle on his chums in great surprise.

"I hardly compwehend this," he remarked. "Why on earth should Wally stay in the class-woom to wub his hands?"

"Let's go and see, anyway."

They hurried to the Third Form Room. Sure enough, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,374.

Wally was there. He was sitting on a form engaged as Jameson had said, rubbing his hands together slowly and ruefully. He grunted as he looked up at Tom Merry & Co.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," replied Wally, with equal brevity.

"Badly?"

"Yes."

"How did the wheeze work?" asked Digby.

"As well as I could have expected a rotten Fourth Form wheeze to work!" said Wally, rather ungratefully. "Everything's gone wrong. Selby's slated me awfully to the Head, and I've been licked, and I'm gated for a fortnight, and there's not the ghost of a chance of getting leave to go home for the cricket week."

"Phew!"

"What a giddy chapter of misfortunes!" said Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, it's wathah wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I should say it is!" said Wally. "This is what comes of trying to be good. It's the first time I've ever tried it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it doesn't pay. I'm jolly well never going to be beastly good again! The next time I gather flowers for a Form-master, you're welcome to kick me as hard as you like!"

"But—"

A CLEVER CAR.



"Jones," said the teacher, "just take this sentence: 'The car was travelling at sixty miles an hour.' Can you parse it?"

"No, sir," responded Jones, "but my dad's bus could!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Richards, 77, Springfield Road, Tottenham, N.15.

"Next time I use a Fourth Form wheeze, you can use my napper for a footer!"

"It was a jolly good idea," said Digby warmly. "It wanted carrying out, that's all."

"Rats!"

"It's wathah unfortunate," said Arthur Augustus distressfully. "You won't be able to come home for the cwicket week now, Wally."

Wally snorted.

"Won't I!" he said. "That's all you know, Gussy. I'm going to work it somehow."

"I hope you are not thinkin' of boltin'?" said Arthur Augustus. "The patah would only send you stwaight back, Wally."

"I shall work it somehow, I tell you!"

"I hope you will, deah boy. I twust your hands do not hurt."

Wally sniffed.

"No. I'm rubbing them for fun," he remarked.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, scat!"

Wally was evidently not in a mood to be condoled with. The juniors left him rubbing his hands.

They were sorry for Wally; but there was no doubt that it was his own past delinquencies that caused his bad luck.

If he had been more accustomed to trying to be good, probably it would have come easier to him, and would not have led to such an unfortunate series of catastrophes.

"It's wotten!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I'm sowwy now I didn't bwing my mind to bear on the mattah, instead of twustin' Dig to think of a wheeze."

"Well, you champion ass!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Kangaroo, "you'd better cut in and see the Head, and let's have the verdict about that list you've got for him."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I'll send in the list by Toby," he said. "It will save a personal interview, which might be awkward undah the cirms."

"Leave it till after dinner," said Tom Merry. "Better to catch the Head in the best possible temper."

"Yaas, wathah! That is weally vewy thoughtful of you."

And the juniors did what packing they had to do, and persuaded Arthur Augustus that a couple of large bags would answer his purpose, instead of burdening the party with a trunk.

As he was going home, he did not need a hatbox, which THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,374.

was a great relief, for it appeared that he had a reserve of toppers under the parental roof.

After the juniors' dinner, D'Arcy made out the list of the "friend or two" who were to go with him to Eastwood.

There were ten names on the list, and when it was written out, D'Arcy looked at it with a thoughtful eye.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "The Head may think it is wathah cool of me, you know."

"So it is!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Weally—"

"But that's all right. If there's any objection, you must pile it on that your pater will be awfully pleased, and that you expected to take your dearest friends—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Toby, come here, old man! Give him a tanner, Gussy, and let him take the paper."

The School House page took the paper and the sixpence with a grin.

"Take that to the Head, Toby," said D'Arcy anxiously, "and bwing me back his answer, if there is one. But don't tell him I expect an answer."

Toby grinned.

"Werry well, Master D'Arcy."

And he vanished.

The juniors waited patiently in the School House Hall for his return. Figgins & Co., who were just as anxious as the School House fellows, came in and joined them. It was three minutes before Toby returned.

"Any answer?" demanded eleven voices in unison.

"The 'Ead wants to see Master D'Arcy in his study," said Toby.

Arthur Augustus sighed.

"Now for the tug-of-war!" he murmured.

"Pitch it to him tactfully, Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely upon my usin' the pwopah amount of tact and judgment, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus took his way to the Head's study.

He tapped rather timidly, and entered. Dr. Holmes was sitting with the paper in his hand. He glanced at D'Arcy over his spectacles.

"Ahem, D'Arcy! Is this the—the list you promised me?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Is it not rather a long one?"

"Weally, sir—"

"Have you put down the names of all the juniors you would like to take with you?" asked the Head, with a slight tinge of sarcasm, which was quite lost upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Oh!"

"I should like to take Weilly, sir, and Kewwuish and Evans and Hancock and Pwatt and young Jones, sir, but—but I thought I ought to be modewate, sir."

The Head coughed.

"I should like to take Clifton Dane, sir, and Glyn and Goah and Skimpole and—"

"Ahem! You need not continue, D'Arcy. I have no doubt you would like to take the whole junior portion of the School House."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"I suppose, therefore, I may look upon this list as really moderate?" he said.

"I am glad you look upon it in that light, sir," said D'Arcy, looking greatly relieved. "Thank you vewy much, sir."

"But—but I did not say—"

"I should not like you to think I was imposin' upon your great kindness, sir," said D'Arcy. "I am glad you wegard the list as modewate."

"D'Arcy!"

"I can only thank you vewy much, sir, in the name of my fwiends and myself."

The Head looked hard at the elegant junior. He was quite serious. Dr. Holmes hesitated a few moments, turning the paper over in his hands.

"Very well, D'Arcy," he said. "The number you were to take was not specified either by your father or myself. Perhaps I should have been a little more precise. I consent—and I hope you will have a most enjoyable week."

"Thank you vewy much, sir. I—"

"Well?"

"If you would allow me to say a word for Wally, sir—my minah—"

Dr. Holmes shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible, D'Arcy! His record for the last twenty-four hours is worse than it has ever been, and he has greatly incensed his Form-master. He has been in trouble with his Housemaster, his German master, his head prefect, and his Form-master, and really he is much more deserving of punishment than of a holiday. Good-bye, D'Arcy!"

"Good-bye, sir! And thank you vewy much!"
 And D'Arcy left the Head's study.
 He returned to his chums.
 "It's all wight, deah boys!"
 "List passed unanimously?" asked Kangaroo.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Good!"
 "Hip-pip—!"
 "Hurrah!"
 "I'm only sowwy about Wally," said D'Arcy, and he went in search of his minor.
 Wally heard of his major's last appeal for him with a grin.
 "It's all right, Gussy," he said. "You've done your best, and you're a good little ass!"
 "Wally!"
 "But I shall manage it somehow."
 "Well, I hope you will," said Arthur Augustus, after quite a long pause. "And if you do come home, Wally, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' for that diswepctful wemark you have just made."
 Whereat Wally chuckled.

CHAPTER 13. Fatty Loses a Feed!

THE rest of St. Jim's was busy with afternoon lessons when Arthur Augustus and his friend or two—numbering eleven in all—made their way to the gates of St. Jim's, each of them carrying one or more bags.
 Tom Merry & Co. tramped down to the station in a merry party.
 Arthur Augustus was still thinking of his minor, but he could not help admitting that it was a comfort not to have Pongo attached to the party.
 "Of course, I'm awfly fond of dogs," he remarked; "but Pongo is like Towzah, and he has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."
 "Towser would have liked to come," said Herries. "I don't feel half safe about him, leaving him to Taggles to feed."
 "Towser wouldn't have liked the result if he had come," said Blake. "He would have been found drowned in the lake at Eastwood."
 "Look here—"
 "Yaas, wathah! I must say that the partay is wathah improved by the absence of Pongo and Towzah."
 Herries grunted.
 "Bless Towser and Pongo!" said Fatty Wynn. "I hope you fellows have brought some sandwiches."
 "I thought I saw you laying in a supply of grub at the tuckshop," said Tom Merry.
 Fatty Wynn looked alarmed.
 "Oh, no! That was only a little snack for myself," he said, and he glanced down at a somewhat bulky parcel that swung on his arm. "Of course, I'd share out with you fellows like a shot if you want any, but I got only enough for myself, as a matter of fact. In fact, I didn't get quite enough, because the funds wouldn't run to it."
 Figgins looked at the bulky parcel.
 "You must have a good bit there," he remarked.
 "No," said Fatty Wynn innocently. "Only three pork pies, some baked potatoes, a beefsteak pudding, half a dozen hard-boiled eggs, a currant cake, a pound of doughnuts, and a pound of mixed biscuits, and some nuts."
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You'll be famished before we get to Eastwood, if that's all you've got," said Monty Lowther sympathetically.
 "Yes, I hope you chaps have some sandwiches," said Fatty.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 They reached the station and boarded the local train for Wayland. At Wayland Junction they had to change, and as there was ten minutes to wait Fatty Wynn paid a visit to the buffet.
 "Mind you don't lose the train," said Tom Merry.
 "What the dickens do you want to go to the buffet for when you've got provisions enough for ten in that blessed parcel under your arm?"
 "Well, that's barely enough for the journey," said Fatty.
 "No good breaking into it now. I'd better get a snack at the buffet."
 And he rolled off.
 Fatty Wynn said that he would have a snack, but when he started eating he did not usually leave off till his money was gone. He had just borrowed half-a-crown of Figgins, and so his snack was likely to come to exactly two shillings and sixpence. He had not reappeared when the train came into the station.
 The juniors entered the train, securing a carriage to

themselves—which was pretty well crowded by them—and Figgins and Kerr looked anxiously for Fatty.
 "The ass!" exclaimed Figgins. "He'll lose the train!"
 "Yell for him!"
 "Fatty!"
 "Fatty Wynn!"
 "Coo-ee!" roared Kangaroo.
 "This way, Fatty!"
 "Buck up!"
 "Next man in!"
 "On the ball!"
 And still Fatty did not appear. He was evidently too deeply and seriously occupied at the buffet to hear or heed the call.
 Figgins jumped out of the train and beckoned to Kerr.
 "We shall have to fetch him!" he exclaimed. "Come on! Mind you don't let them start without us, Tom Merry!"
 "I'll do my best! Buck up!"
 Figgins and Kerr rushed off to the buffet. It was a considerable distance down the platform, and the porters were slamming the doors of the train as they rushed in.
 Fatty Wynn was standing at the counter. He had just paid his half-crown, and there was a penny change, and Fatty Wynn was debating in his mind whether he would have a jam tart or a scone for that penny. It never occurred to him to put the penny in his pocket.
 "Come on!" roared Figgins.
 Fatty Wynn started.
 "Eh?"
 "Come on!"
 "But—"
 "Train's starting!" roared Figgins.
 Still Fatty seemed only imperfectly to comprehend. His mind was still wavering between the scone and the tart.
 "All right," he said. "I'm coming! I—"
 "Collar him, Kerr!"
 "I—Oh! Ow! Leggo!"
 Kerr and Figgins seized him one by each arm. They rushed him violently out of the refreshment-room at a speed which took his breath away. Fatty Wynn, at the last moment, had snatched up a jam tart, deciding upon that, but in doing so he had let fall his parcel of provisions, which rolled upon the floor.
 Figgins and Kerr whisked him out of the buffet too quickly for him to recover it.
 Fatty struggled as they whirled him along,
 "Hold on—"
 "Ass! Buck up!"
 "But my grub—"
 "Shove him along!"
 "The parcel—"
 "Train's just starting."
 "But—"
 "Buck up!" roared Tom Merry, from the open carriage door.
 "Buck up! Put it on!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 Fatty Wynn, still breathlessly resisting, was whirled on by his chums towards the train. A porter ran along, shouting:
 "Stand back, there! Stand back!"
 "Quick!" muttered Tom Merry.
 "Wun like anythin', deah boys!"
 Figgins gasped as he whirled Fatty Wynn to the carriage door. Fatty was grasped from within, and shoved from without, and went headlong into the carriage, and collapsed breathlessly among a forest of legs.
 Figgins and Kerr bundled in after him, just as the train began to move.
 The guard slammed the door.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "That was a narrow squeak!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You asses!" roared Fatty Wynn. "You chumps! You frabjous cuckoos!"

"Eh?"

"You ass! You've left the parcel behind!"

"The what?"

"The parcel!"

"Oh!"

"The parcel of grub! My grub! Now I haven't any!"

The juniors looked at the wildly excited Fatty, and burst into a roar of laughter. The fat Fourth Former sat on the floor of the carriage, staring at them in withering indignation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 14.

Gussy's Party Arrives!

TOM MERRY & CO. laughed, and laughed again. They could not help it.

Fatty Wynn picked himself up with a grunt.

"You utter asses!" he said. "What the dickens am I to do for grub on the journey now? I hope you've brought a decent lot of sandwiches, that's all. I shall want them."

The train was whirling out of the old town of Wayland, gathering speed as it went. The laughter of the juniors mingled with the rolling and whirring of the express.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous asses! I shall be awfully hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And that was all the sympathy Fatty Wynn received.

The fat Fourth Former sat down in indignation and dismay. It was not long before he was hungry. Fatty Wynn had a wonderful appetite.

The juniors were talking cheerfully, discussing the prospects of the coming cricket week, and the possibility of some of them being asked to play in the house eleven.

Fatty Wynn interrupted them.

"Blow all that rot!" was his remark. "I suppose you chaps have some sandwiches?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, hand 'em over!"

"Here you are, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, opening one of his bags. "Pway leave me a couple—two will be enough for me. We shall have a jolly good early suppah at Eastwood."

"Right-ho!"

Fatty Wynn started on the sandwiches. Two minutes later his voice was heard again.

"Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"I suppose a couple of Figgy's sandwiches will do for you instead of your own?"

"Certainly!"

"That's lucky, as I've finished the lot. I forgot!"

"Gweat Scott! Nevah mind, Wynn, you won't be hungry again before we get to Eastwood, that's one comfort."

But Arthur Augustus was wrong. Fatty Wynn was ready for a meal by the time the juniors were ready to sample the provisions they had brought. They shared out with him, of course, and Fatty took the lion's share.

"What time do we get into Eastwood?" he asked.

"Well, there will be a conveyance at the station to meet us," said D'Arcy. "We shall get in pretty early in the evening."

"Supper ready, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I shall be ready for it!"

Through the dusk of the summer evening the train rushed

on. It was dark when they stopped at last and changed for the local line which took them to Easthorpe, the station for Eastwood. Fatty Wynn made a rush for the buffet the moment he was out of the train, but Figgins and Kerr fastened upon him at once.

"Leggo!" growled Fatty. "There's three minutes to wait, and—"

"And you're going to wait with us!" grined Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—"

"You can talk till you're black in the face, my son!" chuckled Figgins. "But you're not going to leave us for the tenth part of a tick."

"But—"

"This way!"

And Fatty Wynn was bundled into the local train, and it started. He cast a pathetic glance round the carriage.

"Any of you got a stick of toffee, or anything?" he asked.

Monty Lowther felt in his pocket.

"Milk chocolate do?" he asked.

"Yes—yes! Hand it over!"

Monty Lowther handed over a cake of milk chocolate. Fatty Wynn seized it and jammed it straight into his mouth.

Fatty Wynn grinned; he could afford to grin so long as the milk chocolate lasted. But it was gone in a minute or two.

Then Fatty Wynn counted the minutes. The train stopped at last. The crowd of juniors bundled out, and found a large car waiting for them.

It was the car used for station work, and all the juniors succeeded in crowding in with their bags. It was a tight squeeze, but as it was only a short journey they didn't mind. The vehicle rolled off in the darkness of the scented country lanes towards the great house of Eastwood.

"Here we are, Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins encouragingly, as they rolled in at the lodge gates. "Cheer up!"

And Fatty Wynn brightened as the lights of Eastwood burst upon his sight. He thought of the supper waiting within those hospitable walls and smiled.

The sound of wheels was evidently heard in the house, for the great door was opened and a handsome old gentleman with a white moustache appeared in the wide, lighted hall to welcome the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! It's the governor!"

The juniors alighted.

Lord Eastwood was wearing a welcoming smile. It slowly changed to a look of amazement as the crowd of juniors came into view.

"Dear me!" murmured his lordship.

"How are you, patah?" said D'Arcy affectionately. "I've awwived all wight, you see, and I've brough a fwend or two!"

His lordship recovered in a moment.

"I see you have, Arthur," he replied. "I am glad to see you—and your friend or two. Please come in, my boys—all friends of my son are welcome here, and I am heartily glad to see you all."

And Lord Eastwood shook hands cordially with Tom Merry & Co.

"Your pater's a brick," said Tom Merry, as they went in to supper; to which remark the swell of St. Jim's replied cheerfully:

"Yaas, wathah!"

A few minutes more and Fatty Wynn was happy. He smiled sweetly over the well-spread board, and did not leave off eating till it was time to go to bed; and then Figgins and Kerr had to use almost force to detach him from the supper-table.

"Well," said Tom Merry, as he kicked off his boots that night, "this is ripping! You're a brick, Gussy, and your governor's a brick! And I rather think we're going to have a jolly cricket week!"

And Tom Merry was right.

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GHOST RIVER RANCH!



By E. S. BROOKS

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Justin B. Farman, of St. Frank's, learns that strange things are happening on the ranch he has inherited, he goes out to Arizona to investigate, taking with him Nipper, Handforth & Co., Willy, and Archie Glen-thorne. He discovers that a band of mysterious horse-men known as the Black Riders are terrorising Ghost River Valley, in which his ranch lies. After several adventures against the Riders, Nipper and Willy are captured. The five remaining schoolboys pay a visit to Mesa Matt, an eccentric old gold prospector, who they are surprised to discover is Nelson Lee. The famous detective forms a band of White Riders to fight the Black Riders, and then makes his plans to rescue Nipper and Willy.

Into the Hornets' Nest!

HANDFORTH was thrilled by the exciting events of the night; thrilled more by the promise of further adventures. For Nelson Lee had just said that the enemy's camp, back in the hills, was to be raided at once.

"By George! There's no doubt about it, you chaps! Mr. Lee is dynamite when he gets going!" said the burly Removite. "Ever since he's started operations it's been red-hot action."

Archie Glen-thorne adjusted his monocle, and nodded.

"I'm allowing, old cheese, that you have spilled a bibful," he observed. "And by that I don't mean perhaps."

"Gee! We sure gave Fortune City an eyeful," grinned Justin B. Farman. "I guess the folks in town are wondering what's going to hit 'em next."

Big Jim Farman was as delighted as any of the school-boys.

"It was a swell notion, Lee," he declared. "Say, I guess you must have been making your plans for quite a while. Where did you get these dandy bullet-proof White Riders' suits from, else?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Yes; I've made a few preparations, Jim," he replied. "The object of the stunt was to get Fortune City talking, and to get Diamond Eye and his gang 'rattled'."

"I'm figgerin' them coyotes is plumb scared right now," said Square-Deal Reeve contentedly.

"The ride was safe enough," continued Lee. "For we were protected from head to foot; and our horses were protected, too. But we can't repeat the ride very often.

What we must do now is to strike another blow—a more direct blow."

"It's up to you, pardner," said Square-Deal. "I guess you're boss of this outfit now." He turned to Big Jim Farman. "Meanin' no disrespect to you, boss."

"You don't need to talk that way, Square-Deal," replied the millionaire. "Mr. Lee sure gives orders from now on."

Having cached the White Riders' suits in a cunningly hidden crevice of the rocks, the whole party mounted. Nelson Lee himself was silent, and there was a grim, hard look on his face. He was thinking of Nipper and Willy. For he knew that they were both prisoners in the hands of Diamond Eye, and that meant they were in grave danger. The first consideration, then, was to rescue them.

"We can take it as a certainty that when Diamond Eye hears to-night's news he will start guessing," said Lee, almost as though speaking to himself. "Being a shrewd, clever man he'll guess right. There aren't many people in this valley who can be identified with the White Riders."

"You mean, he'll figure we folks of the ranch are at back of it?" asked Mr. Farman.

"Yes."

"Does it matter? Whatever the skunk thinks, he can't prove anything."

"But he might take drastic action," replied Lee. "That's why I have a fancy to get my own blow in first. I'm worried about Nipper and young Willy. Until we get them out of Diamond Eye's clutches, I shan't be able to go 'all out' to get this gang."

"Well, anyway, Diamond Eye knows nothing of your presence in the valley," said Mr. Farman. "Not a word has leaked out. Folks in Fortune City believe that you are still in New York."

"Let's be going," said Nelson Lee abruptly.

~~~~~

It was an hour later.

Six Black Riders sat motionless on their horses. Below them, in the hollow, lay the ranch buildings, with a gleaming yellow light showing here and there. In every other direction lay blackness. The six horsemen were like shadows of the night.

"Waal, boys, all set?" asked the leader, in a low, coarsed voice. "Guess we'll beat it."

A chuckle came from another Black Rider.

"You sound like the real thing, Lee," said the voice of Mr. Farman.

"One of us must do the talking," replied Lee, in his

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natural voice. "I want you to leave everything to me. This is a dangerous mission, and we are taking big chances. Not one of you must say a word. One false step, and we shall find ourselves trapped, in spite of all our precautions."

"Gee! You can trust us, sir," said Justin B. Farman. "We won't make any false step."

"Not even me, sir," came the eager voice of Handforth. And never had Edward Oswald Handforth been more sincere. Ordinarily, Nelson Lee would not have trusted the reckless Removite on such a mission as this; but the circumstances were exceptional. Handforth's own brother was a prisoner in the hands of the bandits, and Handforth would be grimly on his guard. He and Justin had been included in the party because they were just the right size. Six Black Riders were imprisoned in the cellar beneath the ranch-house, and two of them were small men.

The others in this party were Nelson Lee, Big Jim Farman, Square-Deal Reeve, and Two-Gun Milligan. The horses they rode were the genuine Black Riders' horses.

"There is one point which puzzles me," said Mr. Farman. "We are riding out into the night, Lee. How do we know which direction to take? You're not telling me, are you, that you know how to find your way to Diamond Eye's hide-out?"

"No," replied Lee. "I am as much in the dark as you are as regards that. But Diamond Eye has scouts out in various directions during the night; and we shall be unlucky if we do not encounter one of them. After that the rest should be comparatively easy. Are we ready? Then let's go."

Mr. Farman marvelled at the detective's serene confidence. Comparatively easy! And they were deliberately setting out with the intention of entering a hornet's nest!

They went riding off across the dark range, and no word was spoken. Every member of the party kept a sharp look-out. In all directions the plain lay peaceful under the starlight, and in the distance the mighty hills raised their summits to the skyline. The filmy clouds had passed, and the night was no longer intensely black.

Although Nelson Lee had no definite information as to the whereabouts of the gang's headquarters, he evidently had a general idea, for he led his companions, roughly, in the direction of Red Rock Gully. For in the character of Mesa Matt Lee for some nights past had been active—and those keen eyes of his had missed nothing.

With dramatic suddenness a lone horseman rode out from behind a mass of rock, close at hand. From head to foot he was in black. In a flash Lee reined in, and a gun leapt into his gloved hand.

"Reach, brother, and reach high!" he snarled. "Jumpin' lizards! Is that you, Jake?" asked the Black Rider, as he came nearer. "Cut it out, won't you?"

"Take it easy," replied Lee, in Jake Liskard's voice. "After what's happened to us we're aimin' to take no chances. I didn't mean to put a skeer into you."

He lowered his gun, and the other members of his party were quivering with inward excitement. Just as Lee had predicted, they had encountered a genuine Black Rider—and the man had no suspicion.

"Gee, I'm mighty glad to see you boys!" said this man. "What hit you, Jake? We sure thought them White Riders had got you!"

Lee gave vent to a lurid curse.

"White Riders!" he shouted thickly. "Goshdurn their hides! You said something, boy! But I ain't figgerin' to hand out any story to you. Whar's the chief?"

"Waitin' for you, I guess!" said the other.

"Then get going!" snapped Lee. "You might as well come along in with us."

Everything depended upon the man's compliance; if he refused, the daring raiders would have no guide into that secret recess in the hills where Diamond Eye lurked. But the dodge succeeded. The lone Black Rider was eager enough to accompany the "lost" gunmen in.

Thus, quite unconsciously, he acted as guide.

Being convinced that he had spoken with Jake Liskard, he naturally took it for granted that the other masked riders were genuine; he believed, too, that his companions knew the route just as well as himself. Nelson Lee took care to ride side by side with the man, so the latter had no suspicion that he was guiding his deadliest enemies into the "hide-out."

Thus, as they went, one of Nelson Lee's earliest suspicions was confirmed. The secret lay somewhere within Red Rock Gully.

"The chief'll be mighty pleased to see you boys," said the Black Rider. "Whar hev you been all this durned time, anyway?"

"Do I have to spill it to you?" retorted Lee harshly.

"No need to get sore, Jake—"

"I am sore," interrupted Lee. "Say, boy, ther's trouble comin' in this valley—trouble for us. Me and the boys right

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hyar managed to get quit of it. But I'm tellin' you we ain't safe like we was. No, sirree! We're up against a mighty tough crowd. Seems like Ghost River Valley ain't gonna be so healthy for us guys."

"Guess that's bad talk, Jake," said the other. "You ain't aimin' to quit on Diamond Eye, are you? He's sure got a quick way of dealing with quitters!"

"Aw, heck!" snarled Lee. "I'm tellin' you, ther's bad trouble on the way. What do you say, boys?"

Assorted growls of assent came from the other supposed Black Riders. Inwardly Big Jim Farman was admiring the wiliness of Nelson Lee's move. He was sowing the seed of doubt, of alarm, in the mind of the genuine Black Rider. It was certain that this man would talk amongst his fellows.

By this time they had penetrated deeply into the gully, and their horses were already splashing through the shallow waters of the creek. On either side the precipitous cliffs of rock were closing in, and ahead towered more rocks. The roaring sound of falling waters came to their ears.

Square-Deal Reeve and Two-Gun Milligan, who knew every inch of this country, were puzzled. To the best of their knowledge there was no second outlet of Red Rock Gully. It narrowed down as it penetrated deeply into the mountain, and at the "dead" end there was a waterfall.

They rode on, splashing through the stream; and it was obvious that the horses could have found their way blindfold. The animals were in no way alarmed by the increasing sound of the rushing waters. Presently, indeed, the horses broke into a canter without word or spur. They were heading straight for the waterfall—behind which, apparently, there was nothing but a mass of solid rock.

It was just as well that the daring raiders were using the horses which had been captured with the six Black Riders, for other horses would have jibbed.

"Let 'em have it, boys!" shouted the guide suddenly.

He galloped forward. In a moment Lee had spurred his own horse, and he continued to ride alongside. The others, in the rear, followed the example of their leader—in spite of their misgivings.

For it seemed absolute madness to ride head on into the mass of falling water. The next moment they were aware of a smother of foam, a great splashing, and they were through.

For the waterfall was deceptive. It looked solid, but the falling sheet was actually thin, and they were through almost before they knew it.

The all-enveloping black suits, apparently, were waterproof, for they felt no dampness. And through their eyeslits they saw flares burning; they saw the wet rock floor of a great cavern. The man who had guided them in was speaking.

"It's Jake and the boys," he was saying. "Whar's the chief? Is he around?"

"Sure thing!" said a lean, evil-faced man who was standing in the cavern. "Gee-whiz! Whar've you been, Jake?"

"I'm saving it for the chief," replied the supposed Jake Liskard.

Nelson Lee's keen eyes were taking in every detail. Just against the waterfall there was a certain amount of foaming water, but it was shallow, and the floor of the cavern shelved upwards, so that none of the river actually came within. There was a big tunnel.

"Your plugs ain't winded any," said the lean-faced man, as he critically inspected the horses. "You ain't been doin' no hard ridin', boys."

It was satisfactory. The man recognised the animals in a moment, which made it all the more certain that the raiders would not be suspected.

They dismounted, and Lee was quick to take the arm of the man who had guided them in.

"You'd best come along," he said shortly. "Mebbe the chief will want to question you."

"O.K., Jake!" said the other.

And again, all unconsciously, he acted as guide.

They went into the wide tunnel—into the heart of Diamond Eye's mountain retreat.

### The Hold-up!

**B**EFORE they were well into the tunnel Nelson Lee paused, and turned.

"Say, boys, hold them plugs," he called. "After I've seen the chief I'll be figgerin' to ride out again."

"Say, Jake, that ain't usual," said the man with the lean face. "I'd best take the hosses in—"

"Leave 'em right there—saddled!" snapped Lee. "I know things that you don't, boy—and they ain't pretty. We'll be needin' the plugs soon."

"O.K., Jake, if you say so!" said the man, with a shrug. Nelson Lee was satisfied. He had deliberately left that order as an "after thought" so that no suspicion should be aroused. Yet it was highly necessary that the horses should be ready—for an emergency getaway.

"You sure fancy yourself to-night, Jake," said the Black Rider guide, as they penetrated the tunnel. "Anybody might think you was the chief, the way you're slingin' orders around."

"You don't know the ha'f of it!" retorted Lee briefly.

He and his companions walked on, with their hands on their guns. They were ready for instant action, for at any moment exposure might come. Lee took note of every turn in the tunnel; he memorised every side opening.

Presently the guide halted. He reached up and pulled at a projecting crag of rock. But nothing happened. The man just waited. Whilst doing so, he fumbled with his garb, and then removed his headgear.

"Ain't you boys gonna peel?" he asked. "The chief's kinder fussy."

"Oh, yeah?" sneered Lee. "I guess we'll be riding out again pronto, so ther's no need—"

He broke off as a section of the rock wall swung outwards. An opening was revealed, and Lee strode boldly through. Things were working out even better than he had anticipated, for he was right within the "office" of Diamond Eye himself.

It was a rock cavern, with a powerful lamp shedding its light down upon a luxurious desk. Underfoot there was

The chromium "eye" seemed to glare balefully.

"Aw, cut it out, chief!" protested Lee. "How was we to know? We wasn't lookin' out for no White Riders. Guess this valley has been ours until now—"

"Mebbe you wasn't to blame," interrupted Diamond Eye, with a gesture. "Waal, what then?"

"It was a hold-up, chief," replied Lee. "Their guns was on us, and I guess we had to reach for the sky good and quick. They closed in on us, took our guns, and roped us good. Then we was toted along to a cleft in the hills. We was kept prisoners after that—until to-night."

"What happened to-night?"

"I guess these White Rider guys went out on a big job," replied Lee. "Anyways, they left us without a guard. I got rid of my ropes, freed the others, and we found our plugs near by. So we did some hard ridin'—and I guess that's all ther' is to it!"

It was a straightforward story and logical. The captured Black Riders had been missing for some time, and since their disappearance the mysterious White Riders had shown themselves. It was a clear case of two and two making four; and Diamond Eye had no reason to suspect that the six black figures in front of him were substitutes.

"Guess you ain't speakin' clear enough, Jake Liskard,"



As Big Jim Farman flashed on the powerful torch the beam revealed Diamond Eye standing behind the desk, gun in hand, the muzzle still smoking. Crack! Crack! On the instant Lee's guns spoke, and Diamond Eye screamed as his own weapon was torn from his grasp!

a rich carpet. Diamond Eye himself sat in his swivel chair, just beyond the range of the light.

"Jake and the boys just blew in, chief."

"Waal, that's sure good to hear, Slim!" came the calm, deadly voice of Diamond Eye. "Step right up, boys, and spill everything."

But Lee, when he stepped up, took care to keep just outside the flood of light. His companions remained in the background.

"Guess we're lucky to be right here, chief," said Lee, in Jake Liskard's voice. "We've sure had a heck of a time. Ever heard of the White Riders? Them guys grabbed us, sure, and we was figgerin'—"

"The White Riders!" muttered Diamond Eye. "Gosh! I reckoned it was that way, too. What happened?"

"Waal, chief, me and the boys figgered on grabbin' a bunch o' them doggone kids," replied Lee. "They was trailin' along, near dusk, just by themselves, in one of the passes back of Whispering Canyon. We closed in on the young mutts, and as we did so the White Riders jest happened. One minute they was not there, and the next minute they was. Shucks! We was sure trapped!"

"Gettin' careless, ain't you, Jake?" demanded the harsh voice.

said Diamond Eye abruptly. "What's the blamed idea of keepin' that durned headgear fixed in my presence?"

"Gee, chief, I didn't think it mattered—"

"You ain't paid to think!" interrupted Diamond Eye harshly. "Slip off that headgear!"

It was a moment of tension. Was Diamond Eye suspicious? Big Jim Farman, Handforth, and the others took a firmer grip on their guns, and they had a feeling that the show-down was imminent.

Nelson Lee fumbled with the fastenings of his headgear, and a moment later he pulled it away—to reveal the shock hair and evil, villainous face of Jake Liskard.

"That's a heap better," said Diamond Eye briefly.

And Lee took a silent breath of relief. The bandit chief suspected nothing. Lee, always thorough, had spent a considerable time on the make-up—with the real Jake Liskard right in front of him. But even now he dared not show himself in the full glare of the lamp. Strong light was his greatest enemy.

"I'll sure allow it's good to get that durned thing off, chief," he said, grinning. "Say, we'll need to get movin' against these White Riders, won't we?" he added,

becoming serious. "Seems like them guys is gonna be troublesome. I hear they've been around town to-night."

"See here, Jake, you've lamped the White Riders close up," said Diamond Eye. "Who do you reckon they are?"

"Search me, chief," replied Lee, with a helpless shrug.

"You heard their voices—"

"Muffled voices—and kind of disguised," interrupted Lee. "Gee, chief, I don't know a thing. Me and the boys is sure mystified. Guess we're lucky to be right here at this minute."

"Maybe the White Riders is connected with that bunch at the Farman Ranch?"

"I think you're wrong, chief," said Lee, shaking his head. "These boys are sure tough, and I guess they come from outside."

"Ever heard of a guy named Lee?"

"Can't say as I did, boss."

"Waal, you'll be hearin' soon," said Diamond Eye grimly. "Lee's a British detective—and he's poison."

"You ain't tryin' to kid me, chief?" asked Lee incredulously, whilst his fellow-conspirators appreciated the grim humour of the situation. "You ain't sittin' there and tellin' me you're skeered of a dood Englishman?"

"There's Britishers and Britishers!" retorted Diamond Eye. "Say, Jake, you'd best rid yourself of them notions that Britishers is soft. Them blamed kids up at the ranch hev given me more trouble than all the tough hombres in this valley! And this Lee proposition is sure strong meat. I gotta hunch he's around."

"Say, mebbe them two kids we grabbed might spill something, chief," said Lee eagerly. "Hev you questioned them? Why not bring 'em right in—"

"Just what I'm aimin' to do!" interrupted the mystery man. "I reckoned to question the kids to-night, anyway. Get busy, Slim!"

"O.K., chief," said the man who had come in with the daring raiders.

He passed through the rock opening; and Nelson Lee inwardly thrilled. His one object was to get into close contact with Nipper and Willy Handforth. Their rescue was the sole object of this mission. And, so far, everything had gone splendidly.

"One o' these kids is Lee's own son, or ward, or something," said Diamond Eye. "I tried to get him to speak earlier, but the young rat kept his trap shut. Mebbe we could force him to spill something now."

"Leave it to me, chief," said the supposed Jake Liskard, in an evil voice.

And before the unknown could reply, Nipper and Willy were pushed into the chamber. They were both heavy-eyed, having been aroused, evidently, from sleep. Just behind them came Slim, gun in hand.

"Step forward, kids!" said Diamond Eye grimly.

Nipper and Willy glared their defiance.

"Hustle, darn you!" snarled Lee, giving them a push.

At the same second he whipped out a gun, and this was a signal for which Big Jim Farman had been waiting.

Crash!

With one well-aimed right-hander, the disguised ranchman laid Slim low. The punch caught the man on the point of the chin, and he crashed headlong, definitely "out." And in that same second Big Jim reached the rock door, and held it so that it could not automatically close and trap them.

"Say, what the—" began Diamond Eye.

"Reach, my friend!" rapped out Lee. "I'm aimin' to take these boys away right now."

Two wicked gun muzzles stared into Diamond Eye's unseen face. Like lightning, Lee and his companions acted. Nipper and Willy, utterly dumbfounded, found themselves grabbed by the supposed Black Riders.

"Take it easy, Nipper," whispered a familiar voice. "It's us—and everything's O.K.!"

Nipper understood in a flash, and so did the quick-witted Willy. As though by magic they were hustled out of the chamber into the tunnel, surrounded by their rescuers. Everything now depended upon speed. Only Big Jim Farman remained behind.

"You yeller skunk!" snarled Diamond Eye, his voice vibrating with fury. "So it's a double-cross, is it?"

Even in that dramatic moment he still believed that the man facing him was the genuine Jake Liskard! So much the better!

"Stick 'em up, Diamond Eye, or, by heck, I'll drill you!" snapped Lee. "The door, pardner—and make it snappy!"

But before Big Jim could obey, the powerful light overhead snapped out. By some hidden contrivance the unknown had extinguished it, and as darkness plunged down a vivid flash stabbed, and a bullet screamed past Lee's head.

But the detective was prepared. The period of darkness lasted only for a split second; then Big Jim Farman flashed a powerful torch; the concentrated beam revealed

Diamond Eye standing behind the desk, gun in hand, the muzzle still smoking.

Crack, crack!

This time it was Lee's two guns which spoke. Diamond Eye screamed as his own weapon was torn from his grip.

"Not so fast, brother!" growled Nelson Lee. "We're figgerin' to tote you along with us."

It was a bluff, for Lee knew that he could never escape from this hornets' nest encumbered by Diamond Eye. Even as matters stood there was no guarantee that Nipper and Willy could be rescued. It would be touch-and-go, at the best.

As the detective spoke he leapt forward—taking Diamond Eye completely by surprise. Thud! The butt of a gun hammered hard upon the unknown's head, and he crumpled back into his chair, sagging drunkenly.

"Get goin', brother!" hissed Lee.

They leapt through the rock doorway, and with one heavy swing Lee slammed the door into place, but as he did so he inserted a six-inch length of spruce wood between the door edge and the rock wall—thus causing the door to jam tight. Anything to cause a minute's further delay.

"Now!" muttered Lee.

They raced down the tunnel, and ahead of them they heard confused noises. Arriving in the big outer cavern, they found the other supposed Black Riders mounting the horses which had been left ready. Several evil-faced men were roughly demanding to know what was going on.

"Chief's orders!" yelled Lee, as he ran in. "Got them young guys fixed, boys? Let's go!"

"Say, Jake, you're crazy!" shouted one of the men. "The chief needs these kids—"

"Go to blazes!" interrupted Lee harshly.

He leapt into an empty saddle. Nipper was already mounted in front of Square-Deal Reeve and Willy was on Mr. Farman's horse. Lee gave the order, and a second later the hooded figures went charging out through the waterfall—out into the glorious open air, leaving Diamond Eye's men in a welter of alarm and mystification.

### The White Rider!

THUD, thud, thud! Thud, thud, thud!

The rhythmic beat of the horses' hoofs was like music to the ears of Nipper and Willy Handforth as they went galloping across the dark, open spaces of the range.

There had been no time for questions. Once through the waterfall the daring raiders had plunged recklessly through the black recesses of Red Rock Gully. Nelson Lee had not only expected instant pursuit, but there had been the chance of enemies lurking in the gully itself.

But they had managed to get out unchallenged, and now, with open country ahead of them, they galloped on at full speed. They were away—free! And one reason for the clean get-away was the jamming of the rock door. Nelson Lee did not doubt that Diamond Eye's men had rushed to the "office," and it was certain that there had been a long delay in getting in.

At first the detective took a roundabout route, in case there were watchful eyes. He made a pretence of making for the foothills; then he and his companions doubled back after they had swung round the protection of a fir-clad hillside.

Then on—straight for Ghost River Ranch.

They arrived with horses steaming. They flung themselves out of the saddles as one of the watchful cowboys left on guard came up.

"All quiet here, Jack?" asked Big Jim Farman.

"Sure, boss," replied Loco Jack. "Nothin' ain't happened. Gee! You got the kids! Guess you didn't see nothin' of Twirly Sam or Slick Ed?"

"No; we'll rescue them later," replied the rancher. "Guess we did well to get the two youngsters."

Five minutes later they were indoors, under the glowing lights, and they had shed their ugly garb.

"It's you, guv'nor—I know it's you!" panted Nipper, grabbing at the supposed Jake Liskard. "I haven't had a chance to say anything yet. But the way you brought off that rescue—"

"You've hit it, Nipper," said Nelson Lee, in his natural voice, as he made haste to remove his make-up. "But I'm not staying to talk now. The enemy will be out on the trail, and we must cover up our tracks."

"Haven't we done that, Mr. Lee?" asked Willy breathlessly. "Oh, my only hat! What an adventure! And you were in it, Ted!"

"You bet I was in it!" grinned Handforth. "By George, it was a hot minute while we were in that giddy cavern! We got you out through sheer daring!"

"The odds were with us, boys, because of the surprise element," said Nelson Lee, as he rapidly worked. "Everything, of course, depended upon our quick getaway. Well, we achieved our object. We went there with one purpose



Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers.  
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House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**A**S promised last week, here goes to answer the very interesting letters of S. S. B. and Cyril A., and Elsie G. Don't be cross with me for keeping you waiting a bit. While I'm on this subject, I would like to warn any readers who write me letters that they cannot expect to see a reply in this chat for quite a few weeks. So please do not get impatient and think you are being neglected. I read all your letters with great interest, and I mark any points which call for comments. So, if you don't get any answer here, don't imagine that I am ignoring you, but take my word for it that you have raised no points which require answering.

Ladies first, so I'll answer you, Elsie. It is difficult to introduce Irene Manners and the Moor View girls into such stories as "Ghost River Ranch" and the other serials which have appeared in this paper. In the present story, for example,

only—to rescue you. We succeeded. It means that from this minute onwards there's going to be open warfare."

"Guv'nor, I'm all bewildered," confessed Nipper. "I didn't even know you were out West. Won't somebody tell me? Scarcely an hour ago I had no hope of being rescued, and now—What the dickens are you doing, guv'nor?"

"I'm getting back to my own character," replied Nelson Lee.

He was making up as Mesa Matt—for it was his intention to return straight away to Whispering Canyon, so that he would be there, in the character of the old prospector, if the Black Riders should pass through. Never would they suspect the apparently harmless old man—and Lee would be safe to watch and wait for the next opportunity of action.

"You'd better get to bed, all of you," said the detective. "Jim, I'm leaving the details to you. Get the boys to bed, and have the ranch quiet within ten minutes, if you can. If any of the Black Riders come scouting round, they must be led to believe that there has been no activity here. Nipper and Willy must tell the story that they were rescued by unknown men and dropped on the open plain. After that they made their way to the ranch-house and woke you up. Is that clear?"

"I've got it all," said Big Jim admiringly. "Gee! You're some fast worker, Lee!"

"Remember your other task, Jim," said the detective. "Get busy on it without a second's delay."

He turned to Nipper, and pressed the lad's arm.

"Everything's going to be all right, young 'un," he said contentedly. "I don't mind telling you that I'm enjoying this enterprise—it's something new in the way of thrills. But we're up against a tough bunch, and we must go warily."

"Pity you couldn't grab Diamond Eye, guv'nor!"

"I didn't want to grab him—the time isn't ripe for grabbing him," replied Lee. "There are other people to rescue. Well, I must be off. Later, we'll get together again."

He was again Mesa Matt, and he went away into the night, highly satisfied with the night's work.

Nipper and Willy were overjoyed to find themselves once again free; they went to bed with Handforth & Co., Archie Glenhorne, and Justin B. Farman. The schoolboy party was once again intact.

Diamond Eye would know by this time that there had been something wrong with the Black Riders who had supposedly escaped and had returned to headquarters. They would have vanished as though into nothingness, leaving no trace. If Diamond Eye had been rattled before, there was every chance that he was now acutely alarmed.

A solitary rider went thundering through Main Street, in Fortune City, as dawn was beginning to break. Most of the citizens were asleep, for they had believed that there

only a few St. Frank's fellows are dealt with, and they are far away from the old school. When I am writing a story which actually deals with St. Frank's it is a different matter, for the Moor View girls are part and parcel of the local atmosphere, so to speak.

I'm sorry you accuse me of stretching my imagination a bit too far, S. S. B., for "inventing" such a town as Fortune City, with its abandoned office buildings, residential houses, factories, and derelict streets. As a matter of fact, Fortune City has more than one counterpart in the United States. I well remember, during a recent visit to America, passing through a "ghost" town of exactly the same type. I can assure you, it was a novel, eerie, and rather distressing experience. I saw a once great city mouldering to ruin—a place which had once been flourishing and populous was virtually denuded of its inhabitants. The source of wealth which had started the boom had unexpectedly run dry, and as the town had no industries of its own, its population naturally abandoned it. I can give you my word for it that many other "boom" cities of a similar type in the United States suffered the same fate.

Cyril A. complains that we are having too many St. Frank's stories which are not really St. Frank's stories at all. I think I get what you mean, Cyril. What you want is a serial actually dealing with the boys at St. Frank's. I may say that you are not the only one. We'll see what we can do about it. I'm going to have a long talk with our mutual friend, the Editor, and perhaps, shortly, you'll see that all-school, all-japes, all-St. Frank's serial.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

would be no further activities by the mysterious White Riders. And now came this lone figure!

At full gallop he raced down Main Street, and as he passed the sheriff's office he operated a thing which was like a catapult. Something whizzed across and thudded hard against the office door. Then on thundered the lone White Rider.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

He loosed his guns into the air, people were awakened; many caught a glimpse of that solitary figure as he went galloping away through the half-darkness.

And, needless to say, the desert township was aroused. After the earlier excitement, the inhabitants had believed that they would be left in peace for the rest of the night. But this new incident was even more dramatic, in its way, than the earlier one.

Dirk Dixon, the sheriff, was one of the first out. Aroused by the shooting, and the gathering tumult of voices, he came down half-dressed. He lived in rooms over the office, and as he opened the front door he found a number of men standing on the sidewalk, talking excitedly.

"Say, what's doing?" growled Dirk. "Can't a feller get sleep?"

"Take a peek at that there message, Dirk," said one of the men.

The sheriff stared at the open door. Adhering firmly to the woodwork was a crumpled scrap of paper, and it was fastened by means of a sharp iron spike with a large flat head.

"Holy Jehosephat!" ejaculated Dirk Dixon. "More monkey tricks, huh?"

He tore the paper down almost savagely, and somebody obligingly struck a match—for the dawn light was not yet strong enough.

"Get busy, sheriff!" ran the message, in roughly scrawled block capital letters. "The way into Diamond Eye's stronghold is through Red Rock Gully right to the waterfall. Ride straight through the water, and you'll be in. (Signed) Chief of the White Riders."

"Waal, I'm a dang-swizzled horn-toad!" ejaculated the sheriff, in a startled voice.

Little did he or the others realise the subtlety of this information. The mysterious White Riders would get the credit of having given the sheriff the straight tip.

Nelson Lee, having discovered the entry into the gang's stronghold, was reluctant to "ease up." He felt that a big raid should be made at once. Yet the cowboys and the St. Frank's fellows at the ranch were insufficient for such a task; and it was better, in any case, that they should be left out of this affair.

If Big Jim Farman or any of the boys had brought the information to Fortune City, Diamond Eye would have known at once that they were responsible for the rescue of Nipper and Willy.

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But by adopting this simple ruse, the information was passed on to the right quarters—and Diamond Eye would believe that the White Riders were responsible, which was quite true. But he would still be left in the dark as to the identity of the White Riders. The cowboys and the St. Frank's fellows, of Ghost-River-Ranch, were in no way connected with anything which had happened during the night. Diamond Eye could guess—but he would know nothing for certain.

And the story would soon be about that the two rescued boys had been dropped on the open range, and had found their way to the ranch-house alone. Thus again the phantom White Riders would get the credit.

Nelson Lee's object was to keep the crooks mystified—to "rattle" them until they were well on the jump.

"Looks like a hoax to me, sheriff," said Silas Hawkes, of the Plaza Hotel. "Say, most everybody knows that Red Rock Gully is blind. There ain't no outlet."

"Queer, all the same, Silas, that Dirk should be handed this tip," said another man. "I guess them White Rider boys know what they're doin'. Best get your posse out, sheriff, and do some ridin'."

"Mebbe I'll rope you boys in as deputies," growled Dirk Dixon. "There's libble to be some fancy shootin'!"

"Shucks! I'm going back to bed," said Hawkes hastily. "I ain't no deputy, sheriff."

"Think again!" grunted Dirk. "I want all you boys in the name of the law, and you'd best get ready to go out with my posse."

A moment later he hurried away, half-dressed as he was, to the home of Mr. Elmer C. Kyle.

"So it's you, Dirk," said Mr. Kyle, who was in pyjamas and dressing gown. "What in heck's wrong now?"

"Plenty," said Dixon. "Take a peek at this. I'm figgerin' I'll be needin' your Vigilantes. If I don't take action, the hull town will jump on me."

"You're right, at that," replied the mayor, after he had read the scrawled message. "Red Rock Gully, eh? Looks like things are beginning to move, Dirk."

"I ain't aimin' to hand these blamed White Riders no bokay," he snapped. "Pity they can't mind their own business! If it wasn't for what folks'd say, I'd ignore the hull thing."

"Guess you can't ignore it," replied Mr. Kyle, his manner becoming brisk. "Get your posse ready mounted, Dirk, and I'll send word round to my own Vigilantes. We'll ride out in force—and I guess we'll be well armed!"

After that it was all bustle and go. Dirk Dixon, much as he disliked the job, was obliged to move himself. Full daylight had come when his posse was ready—and it was a strong body of fully armed men, well mounted.

A wave of excitement had swept through Fortune City,

and men were eager to take part in this adventure. Diamond Eye's stronghold had been located! There was another body of men, too—Mayor Kyle's own Vigilantes—citizens who were eager to get into action.

"All set, sheriff?" asked Mr. Kyle, riding up. "O.K.—get going."

And as the sun was peeping over the distant hills, the strong force of mounted men rode out of Fortune City; and the people of that township were hot with excitement. At last, something definite was being done.

Out across the valley, and then towards the rugged foothills. At last, the frowning masses of Red Rock Gully were close at hand; and the horsemen rode in, hands on their guns. Kyle and the sheriff led the way, and they kept their eyes well open—for they did not lose sight of the fact that they might ride into an ambush. But the rocks on all sides were bare, and as they plunged deeper and deeper into the gully, the frowning cliffs arose sheer on either hand. Soon, the horses were plunging through the shallow waters of the creek, and right ahead was the waterfall.

But there was a difference.

The sheet of water was no longer falling squarely over the end of the gully. The main fall had changed its character: the water was hurling sideways, leaving most of the wet rocks in full view.

"Say, things ain't like what they was," said Dirk Dixon. "Something must have happened," said Mayor Kyle, pursing his lips.

On they rode—until they were close up. Then these determined men looked at one another grimly. The waterfall was there, and it hurtled onwards in a narrow body—so that it was possible to see well behind. And, behind, there was nothing but solid rock. As everybody had always believed, there was no exit, this end, from Red Rock Gully.

"A hoax," grunted Silas Hawkes in disgust. "Them White Riders sure played a trick on us!"

And so it looked. Somehow or other, Diamond Eye had succeeded in changing the face of Red Rock Gully. In desperation, no doubt, he had blasted the rock, obliterating the cavern entrance completely. Thus he had outwitted his unknown enemy—for the people of Fortune City believed that they had been brought out here on a wild goose chase.

Diamond Eye's secret remained hidden—and the sheriff's posse and the Vigilantes went back, fuming.

With brilliant cleverness, Diamond Eye had saved the situation. But old Mesa Matt, the lone prospector, was not far away; and Mesa Matt, alias Nelson Lee, had had his eyes well open during that dramatic hour before the dawn!

(Matters are drawing to a thrilling climax now in Ghost River Valley. Don't miss next week's nerve-tingling developments.)



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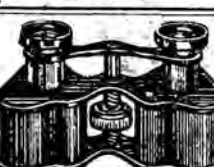
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