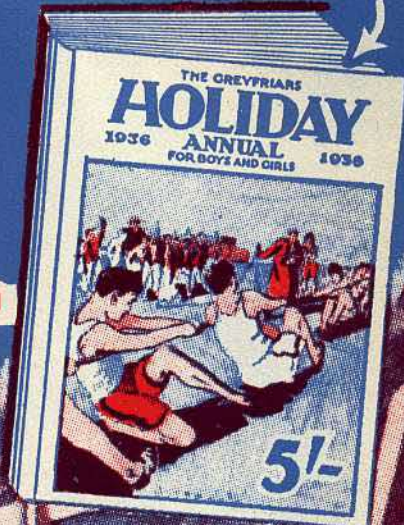


"THE UNSEEN HAND!" GRIPPING MYSTERY YARN OF **INSIDE.**
ROOKWOOD SCHOOL

A GRAND GIFT BOOK

The **GEM**

2^d



*Can this be
Gussy?*

A Humorous Incident from "ST. JIM'S ON THE WARPATH!" The Lively Long St. Jim's Story Within.

No. 1,451. Vol. XLVIII.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending December 7th, 1935.

THE SCENE WAS UNREHEARSED, BUT IT BROUGHT THE HOUSE DOWN!

ST. JIM'S ON THE



Wootton minor was seized and a Redskin dragged at his wig. It came off in his dusky hand, and the audience shrieked. "Ugh!" said Sitting Bull. "Twas as I suspected. Her hair is false!" Tom Merry & Co., disguised as the Redskins, were making very unexpected changes in the Grammarian play!

CHAPTER 1.

Very Mysterious!

JACK BLAKE came along the Fourth Form passage in the School House at St. Jim's, and turned the handle of the door of Study No. 6.

To his surprise, the door did not open. Blake jerked at the handle again, and then kicked vigorously at the lower panels.

"Hallo! Who is there?" he called out.

"Weally, Blake—" came the gentle voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form from within the study.

"Open the door, Gussy!"

"I'm sowwy!"

"I want my footer!" roared Blake through the keyhole. "Herries and Dig are waiting for me. Open the door!"

"Sowwy!"

Blake kicked at the door again.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, who shared the famous apartment with Blake, Herries, and Digby, evidently did not want to be disturbed. He had locked himself in Study No. 6, and Blake guessed that he was trying on new ties. He hammered at the door.

"Let me in, you fathead!"

"Sowwy!"

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"I'll sowwy you!" exclaimed Blake. "If you don't open the door, you fathead, I'll bump you bald-headed! Let me in!"

"Sowwy, but—"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would go away. You are thowvin' me into quite a fluttah with that feahful wow!"

"Will you open the door?" said Blake, breathing hard through his nose.

"Imposs!"

"Why, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Why can't you open the door?" shrieked Jack Blake.

"I am twyin' an expewiment."

"Rats! The neckties can go and eat coke! Open the door at once, you burblin' jabberwock!"

"I decline to be chawawtewised as a burblin' jabberwock, and I wefuse to open the door. I am twyin' an expewiment, and I cannot be bothahed by you youngstahs!"

Blake snorted.

"If you don't open this door at once—" he said in measured tones.

"Pway go away!"

"What experiment are you trying, you ass?"

"It's a jape on the Gwammawians. I am goin' to make them sit up, deah boy, and give Gordon Gay & Co. the giddy kybosh!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Are you coming, Blake?" roared the powerful voice of Herries up the stairs.

"The silly ass won't let me into the study!" shouted Jack Blake. "Come and help me bash the door in!"

"Right-ho!"

Herries and Digby came up the stairs three at a time.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came along the passage from their study at the same moment, and paused outside Study No. 6 as they beheld Blake's red and wrathful countenance. "Wherefore this thushness?" asked Monty Lowther, in surprise.

Blake delivered a terrific kick on the door.

Gussy's locked himself in, and won't open the door!" he gasped. "I'm going to bust the lock and then bust Gussy!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"I should uttaly wefuse to be busted, Blake, deah boy," came the voice of Arthur Augustus from within; "and I wegard 'busted' as a vulgah expewision."

"Open the door!" bawled Blake, Herries, and Digby together.

"Sowwy!"

"You're not so sorry as you'll be presently!" roared Blake.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"What on earth is he up to?" asked Tom Merry, laughing. "Blake, old

WARPATH!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy's Great Jape!

TOM MERRY & CO. stared blankly round Study No. 6.

The gentleman in tinted glasses stared at them, and they stared at him.

D'Arcy was not to be seen.

His elegant Etons, his collar and his necktie were lying on the table, his beautiful boots were on the rug. He had vanished, apparently, leaving his clothes behind him.

For a moment the juniors fancied they were dreaming.

"Where's Gussy?" gasped Blake.

"Gussy!"

"D'Arcy, old man——"

"You uttah asses!"

Then the juniors jumped.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, and it proceeded from the middle-aged gentleman in glasses.

They understood.

"You—you ass!" said Blake, in great relief. "Blessed if I didn't think there was some giddy magio in it! You fathead!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

The juniors regarded D'Arcy in amazement. They observed now that there were many signs in the study that D'Arcy had been "making-up." A box in which supplies for the junior dramatic society were kept was open, and there was a box of grease-paint on the table and several wigs and beards.

The middle-aged gentleman before them was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and now that they looked at him more carefully they could recognise his features, disguised as he was by the beard and the tinted glasses and by dabs of grease-paint.

The grey beard, too, was a little sideways, and its fastenings were distinctly to be seen.

"You—you unutterable ass!" said Blake. "So that is the experiment you were trying?"

"Yas, wathah!"

It was ludicrous to hear the junior's boyish voice, with its beautiful accent, proceeding from the grave-looking gentleman of middle-age.

The juniors could not help grinning.

"I wogard you as twonblesome asses for intewwuptin' me in this way!"

"What is it—a new character in amateur theatricals?" asked Tom Merry.

"Somethin' like that, deah boy. I don't mind tellin' you—but keep that wotlah Levison out!"

Levison of the Fourth was promptly bundled out of the study. Blake jammed the door shut.

"Now, explain, you image, before we scalp you!" he said.

"I wefuse to be scalped."

"Explain!" roared Blake.

"It's a jape," said D'Arcy condescendingly—"the jape of the season! I have made the discovery that Mr. Adams of the Fourth Form at the Gwammah School has left."

"What on earth——"

"They are expectin' a new mastah at Wylcombe Gwammah School."

"Well?"

"I had it fwom one of the Gwammawian chaps," D'Arcy explained. "They are expectin' a new Form-mastah—a Mr. Fowlah."

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man, you'd better go easy with that row, or you'll have a prefect up here."

"I'll—I'll—I'll——" Words failed Jack Blake, and he could not fully express all the things he would do when the door was once opened.

Levison of the Fourth came along the passage. He was grinning.

"Hallo! Trying to get in?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Blake.

"Who's Gussy got in there with him?" asked Levison.

"Nobody."

"Yes, he has. I saw him at the window," said Levison; "chap with a grey beard and tinted glasses."

"What!"

"It's a fact!"

Blake stooped to the keyhole.

"Gussy, you ass, have you got anybody in there?"

"No, deah boy."

"Oh, what a whopper!" exclaimed Levison, in amazement. "I saw an old chap in there only two minutes ago. He passed the window, and I was looking up."

There was a chuckle from within the study, and that was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's only rejoinder to Levison's remark.

Blake put his eye to the keyhole and looked into the study. The keyhole commanded a view of about a third part of the room, and Blake gave a jump as he caught sight of a figure in a frock-coat, with a grey beard and tinted glasses, exactly as Levison had described it. The figure moved out of the line of vision the next moment.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"What have you seen?" asked Manners.

"Chap in there with a beard and glasses."

"What!"

Levison chuckled his disagreeable chuckle. The cad of the Fourth was always pleased in finding anybody out in anything not quite above-board.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a reputation for truthfulness that completely put in the shade that of the late George Washington. And yet D'Arcy had stated that there was absolutely nobody in the study with him, and Blake had seen a man evidently of middle-age.

Blake was so astonished that he was silent for a full minute.

"Blessed if I understand this," said Tom Merry, equally amazed. "Gussy said distinctly that there was no one in the study with him."

"Quite distinctly," said Manners.

"Must be off his rocker," said Herries.

Levison sniggered.

"Oh, it's something fishy, of course," he said. "Perhaps he's been borrowing money. That old chap in there looks a bit like old Benson, the moneylender of Wayland. Anyway, he's lying."

"Levison, you uttah wotlah," came D'Arcy's voice from within, "if I were out there I should give you a fearful thrashin' for that wotten remark!"

"Open the door," said Digby.

"Sowwy, deah boy!"

"Gussy, old man," said Blake with

an unaccustomed gentleness, "open the door, there's a good chap, and we won't bump you." And Blake tapped his forehead as a hint to the others of what he suspected.

Prevarication was so foreign to the nature of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that Blake could only imagine that there was something temporarily wrong with him mentally.

"I should wefuse to be bumped, Blake."

"Will you open the door?"

"Sowwy! It's impos!"

"Must be balmy," said Monty Lowther. "Better bust in the door, I think; he ought to be taken care of."

"Pway go away, deah boys!"

"Who's that in there with you, Gussy?"

"There is nobody here, deah boys."

"Look here, Gussy, I saw him through the keyhole," said Blake.

A chuckle was the only reply.

"It isn't like you to tell whoppers, Gussy. You must be off your rocker. Now, open the door, like a good chap."

Rag and counter-rag follow fast on each other when Tom Merry & Co. and their Grammar School rivals get to grips again. But Gordon Gay & Co. meet their match when the St. Jim's "Redskins" get on the warpath!

"Sowwy! It's impos! I cannot be bothahed just now."

"I want my footer."

"I will throw it out of the window to you if you like."

"I want to come in, Gussy, I'm afraid there's something wrong with you."

Another chuckle.

"Open the door, old fellow!"

"Wats!"

"Well, I'm coming in!" said Blake determinedly. "We'll bust the lock and make Gussy pay for a new one."

"Good egg!"

Blake strode along the passage and dragged back a heavy form. Two or three of the juniors grasped it, to use it as a battering-ram.

The heavy oaken form crashed against the lock of the door. The lock was a stout one, but it was not intended to resist attacks of this kind.

It flew into pieces, and the door flew open. The juniors dropped the form and rushed into the study.

"Bai Jove! You wotlahs!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, but D'Arcy was not to be seen.

In the study a gentleman in frock coat and beard and tinted glasses stood and stared at the intruders, but of the swell of St. Jim's there was no sign in the study. He had vanished apparently into thin air.

"M-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Where's Gussy?"

"What—what—"

"Don't you tumble?"

"I'll tumble you if you don't make yourself clear!" growled Blake. "What on earth has a new master at Rylcombe Grammar School got to do with this rot?"

"Oh, he's balm!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's a jape, is it?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathiah!"

"And what's the jape?"

"A wegular sell for the Gwammah School cads!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "I have learned that the new mastah is expected to-morrow. Suppose he was to awvive to-day, instead?"

"Well, suppose he did?" said Blake.

"Don't you see?"

"See what?"

"The jape, you duffah!"

"Blessed if I do!" said Blake, in bewilderment.

"I suppose you wemembah that Gordon Gay, of the Gwammah School, made himself up as Dr. Holmes, our headmastah, once, and palmed himself off on us?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes; he's a jolly good actor," said Tom Merry. "But what—"

"Well, one good turn deserves another," said D'Arcy. "I've made myself up as Mr. Fowlah, the new Form-mastah at the Gwammah School, and I'm goin' to palm myself off on the Gwammawians, and give them a wegular high old time!"

The juniors simply gasped.

Gordon Gay, by his wonderful powers of impersonation, and his still more wonderful powers of sheer cheek, had passed himself off on the St. Jim's fellows as their headmaster on a celebrated occasion.

But that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy should dream of playing the same role was amazing.

In the study the junior had non-plussed his friends for a moment, but only for a moment. At the second or third glance they would have known him. And in the open air his disguise would not have passed muster for a second. And if it had, his unmistakable voice would have given him away immediately he began to speak.

They stared at him blankly, in dumb-founded silence. The silence was broken by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's satisfied chuckle.

"What do you think of the wheeze, deah boys?" he asked.

"Oh!" murmured Blake. "Oh, my only Uncle Peter! Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

"Phew!"

"My word!"

"I am not surprised that you're surprised," said D'Arcy loftily. "I think of these things, you know. I'm not supposed to be leadah of this study, but it wequahs a chap with some tact and judgment to think of a weally good jape!"

"Oh dear!"

"I shall give the Gwammah School cads a wegular wotten time," said D'Arcy confidently. "I shall ordah Gordon Gay & Co. to wreek their own studies, and cane them, you know, and give them lines to do, and—"

"You ass!" roared Blake, finding his voice at last.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Weally—"

"Do you think you'll take in the Grammarians for a single second?" yelled Blake. "Why, a blind man would know you at once!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!"

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"They'll spot you on the spot—"

"Imposs!"

"There isn't a chap at St. Jim's who won't know who you are as soon as you step outside this study in that rig!" gasped Tom Merry, with tears of merriment rolling down his cheeks.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's no good, Gussy!"

"Wata!"

"They'll scalp you if you go over to the Grammar School like that!"

"Wot!"

"They'll know you immediately—"

"Bosh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Let him go! It will be the joke of the season, just as he said, but it will be up against Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you all as asses!" said D'Arcy. "You youngstahs can go and play footah, and leave me to finish my bisney. You have intewwupted me!"

"But—but—but you don't really intend to go out of doors like that?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathiah, Tom Mewwy!"

"Anybody on the road will see that you're in disguise. Suppose you meet P.-c. Crump. He may take you for a disguised burglar—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will take me for a Form-mastah," said Arthur Augustus with dignity. "I twust that I am as good an actah as Gordon Gay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I shall put it to the test," said D'Arcy. "Before goin' ovah to the Gwammah School I will dwop into the New House, here, and see whethah Figgins & Co. are taken in. If they are taken in it will be all wight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

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

"Pway cleah out, you cacklin' asses, and don't intewwupt me any more!" Blake picked up his football.

"Oh, come on!" he gasped. "If he goes over to the New House in that rig it will be all right. Figgins & Co. will make an example of him, and he won't get as far as the Grammar School. Let's get down to the footer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of fealful duffahs! I considah—"

But the juniors did not wait to hear what Arthur Augustus considered. They left the study and went staggering down the passage, weak with laughter.

Arthur Augustus snorted and closed the door after them, and as the key would no longer hold it, he jammed a chair under the lock. Then he proceeded with his busy preparations for the visit to the Grammar School in the guise of a new Form-master—a visit that was to give Gordon Gay & Co. the "kybosh," and make them hide their diminished heads for ever and ever!

CHAPTER 3.

Not Deceived!

"BUCK up, Fatty!"

Figgins of the Fourth was standing at the open window of his study in New House at St. Jim's. Kerr was sitting in the arm-chair, with his feet on the table. Fatty Wynn was at the table, busily engaged in demolishing the last remnants of a pie.

Figgins and Kerr were waiting for their chum, but Fatty seemed to be in no hurry. So long as there was any of

the pie left, wild horses would not have dragged the fat Fourth Former from the study.

"Blessed if I know how you're going to walk after that lot, Fatty," said Kerr. "And it's only a couple of hours since dinner, and you did yourself very well then."

Fatty Wynn looked up from the pie.

"Rot!" he said tersely. "Dinner was very skinny—mutton cutlets and vegetables and a pudding. If I hadn't had the foresight to take in some sausages and ham sandwiches and a savéloy, I should have gone away hungry. And I haven't had anything since, excepting the cold fowl and the cake and the tarts. If we're going to walk to Wayland, it's no good starting out hungry. I've always thought it's a good idea to lay a solid foundation."

"Well, buck up and lay it," said Kerr. "We don't want to sit here all the afternoon watching you eat."

"No chance of that," said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "This is the last thing in the cupboard. But I'll tell you what—suppose we raid the School House instead of going out? Those bounders are down at the footer practice, and we—"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "If you eat any more, you won't be able to walk. We're not going to carry you."

"Well, I could do with a cake and some tarts, and I know Blake has—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins suddenly.

He was looking out of the window, and he had caught sight of an extraordinary figure approaching the New House. His amazement caused Kerr to join him at the window, but Fatty Wynn continued operations on the pie.

Figgins and Kerr stared blankly at the newcomer. They beheld a middle-aged-looking gentleman, with a grey beard and tinted glasses, dressed in a somewhat rusty frock-coat and silk hat. He was approaching the New House, however, with an elegant gait full of youthful verve. And the remarkable thing was that, in spite of the tinted glasses and the beard, the well-known aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus were plainly recognisable.

"D'Arcy!" said Kerr.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes, I know it's D'Arcy," he said. "But what on earth is he got up like that for?"

"Theatricals, perhaps," said Kerr.

"Well, chaps don't usually walk out into the quadrangle got up for amateur theatricals," said Figgins, in amazement.

"They don't, as a rule," agreed Kerr; "though there's no telling what Gussy will do at any time. He's coming here."

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite unconscious of the fact that he had been seen and recognised from Figgins' study window, disappeared into the porch of the New House.

Figgins and Kerr exchanged glances of astonishment.

"Coming to see us, I suppose," said Figgins.

"I suppose so."

"I'm ready now," said Fatty Wynn, rising from the table. "That was a jolly good pie, but I wish it had been larger. What are you fellows staring at?"

"Gussy's coming here—"

"Coming to ask us to a feed, perhaps," said Fatty Wynn hopelessly.

"Look here, let's be civil to him. I don't

believe in carrying these blessed House rows too far, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Figgins.

The door opened, and the disguised School House junior presented himself. He bowed gracefully to the New House fellows over his silk hat.

"Good-aftahnoon, deah boys!" he said.

"Good-afternoon!" said Figgins.

"I trust you will excuse this intrusion of a stwagah!" said D'Arcy.

Figgins & Co. almost choked.

It dawned upon them that the swell of the School House was under the impression that his disguise was so good

"Exactly, sir!" agreed Figgins.

"Quite lucid!" said Kerr.

"Oh, quite!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I undahstand that there have been wows and wags between you and my boys—my boys at the Gwammah School."

"Yes, I fancy there have been some little rags, sir," said Figgins. "I hope you haven't come over to report us to Dr. Holmes."

"Not at all—not at all, Fig—deah boy."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Of course," said Kerr, "we must admit that we always get the best of the Grammar School cads, sir. There's only one fellow who's always getting the

and bite, you know, but, children, you should nevah let such angwy passions wise."

"Quite right, sir."

"You speak like an oracle, sir," said Kerr. "Are you going to take charge of the Grammar School kids?"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm goin' to take up my duties there to-day."

"I'm sure Gordon Gay & Co. will give you a ripping welcome, sir. They'll be very glad to see you," said Figgins.

"I trust so." D'Arcy rose to his feet; the interview had proved that his disguise was perfect, and that the New House juniors had not the faintest suspicion of his identity. "Pway excuse my intrusion."



The door flew open under the crashing of the form and the juniors rushed into the study. "Bai Jove! You wettahs!" It was D'Arcy's voice, but he was not to be seen. In the study a gentleman with a beard and tinted glasses stared at the intruders. "M—my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Where's Qussy?"

that it had deceived them as to his identity.

The three New House juniors exchanged a rapid wink.

The same thought had occurred to them all at once—to "rot" Arthur Augustus by pretending to be taken in.

"Not at all, sir," said Figgins politely. "Will you take a seat?"

"Thank you, deah boy!" "To what do we owe the honour of this visit, sir?" asked Kerr, with elaborate respect. "I suppose you are an uncle of Figgins, or a father of Fatty Wynn?"

"Not at all. As a mattah of fact, my name is Fowlah," explained Arthur Augustus. "I am the new Form-mastah at Wylcombe Gwammah School."

"Pleased to meet you, sir."

"The pleasuah is on my side," said Arthur Augustus, with another bow. "I have called in here before goin' oval— I mean before—in fact—ahem!"

kybosh from Gordon Gay & Co., and he doesn't belong to this House. As a stranger here, I suppose you've never met him—a rather silly ass named D'Arcy?"

"Oh!"

"Chap who generally goes about with an eyeglass," explained Kerr. "He's about the limit when you come to really first-rate fatheadedness."

"You iltah wottah—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, vewy good," said D'Arcy hastily. "Now, I want to make an appeal to you youngstahs," said the swell of St. Jim's, in the best manner of Dr. Holmes.

"Go ahead, sir!" murmured Figgins.

"I wegard it as wathah wotten that these wags and wows should go on, and I want you to try to live on bettah terms with my boys."

"Certainly, sir."

"In the cires, I wegard that as a wippin' ideah. Let dogs delight to bark

"Not at all, sir."

"Good-aftahnoon, deah boys!"

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with another graceful bow, retired from the study.

Figgins & Co. stared at the door as it closed after him. Then they whooped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins sank into a chair and gasped. Kerr wiped his eyes, and Fatty Wynn seemed to be on the verge of a serious attack of hysterics.

"Oh, my only Aunt Sally!" moaned Figgins. "The ass! The duffer! The clump! He thinks he's taken us in with that—that rig! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, he's given me a pain!" moaned Fatty Wynn. "He shouldn't have

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sprung that on us just after I'd eaten a pie. Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins ran to the window.

"There he goes!" he gasped.

The New House juniors looked out towards the school gates. There was the dignified Arthur Augustus, as large as life, crossing to the gates. He disappeared from view, and the three juniors of the New House gurgled hysterically.

"He's going to the Grammar School!" said Figgins faintly. "If this won't be the biggest joke of the season—up against the School House, too—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gordon Gay & Co. will be glad to see him, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins wiped his eyes.

"I think we'll take a stroll along to the Grammar School ourselves, instead of going over to Wayland. Somebody will be wanted to pick up the pieces when the Grammarians have done with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. left their study and strolled in the direction of Rylcombe Grammar School, with the benevolent intention of bringing home what remained of the swell of St. Jim's after he had worked his great jape on the Grammarians.

CHAPTER 4.

The New Form-master!

"HANDS up, or die the death of—"

It was Gordon Gay of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School who spoke. He had covered Frank Monk with a ruler in lieu of a revolver, and Frank Monk promptly held up his hands.

"Lemme see, what do I say next?" said Gay.

"I've got the drop on you," of course," said Tadpole, reading from a scribbled manuscript play.

"I've got to drop on him?" asked Gay.

"No, no! You've got the drop on him."

"Drop of what—water?"

"No, no! With the pistol."

"Oh, I'm to let the pistol drop on him?"

"No, no!" said Tadpole patiently. "Nothing of the sort. In the Rocky Mountains, when you point a pistol at a chap you've got the drop on him."

"Oh, I see! I've got the drop on you, Monkey."

"That's right," said Tadpole.

"This beats Shakespeare hollow," said Wootton major. "There's nothing of this sort in old William."

Tadpole nodded.

"Yes; I may say that this is like Bernard Shaw, a little bit better than Shakespeare," he said modestly. "Of course, Shakespeare had his good qualities as a playwright—"

"Go hon!" said Gordon Gay.

"Yes, he had," said Tadpole. "But what is wanted now is something a bit more up to date. The 'Belle of the Prairie' is more up to date. I don't say I'm a first-rate playwright—"

"Wouldn't be much good if you did, Taddy."

"My dear Gay, I don't say so, but others have said so," said Tadpole with dignity. "My Aunt Glexiana thinks my plays are splendid!"

"Queer ideas one's relations have about one," murmured Lane.

"My dear Lane—"

"Well, let's get on with the washing," said Gordon Gay. "We've got to rehearse the whole giddy thing this afternoon. Lucky there isn't any Form-master to bother us to-day. I get on very well without any Form-master at all, for one."

"Same here!"

"Let us proceed," said Tadpole.

"Allons, donc!" said Gustave Blanc, the French boy in the Fourth Form at the Grammar School, generally called Mont Blong by the Grammarians.

The Fourth Form at the Grammar School was crowded with juniors, although it was a half-holiday. It was a grand meeting of the Dramatic

Society, of which Gordon Gay, the Australian junior, was president and stage-manager, and nearly everything else.

Mr. Adams, the Fourth Form master, was gone, and his successor had not arrived, and was not expected until the following day. The Fourth Formers of the Grammar School, therefore, felt entitled to allow themselves some little additional license—and they did. The Form-room was the scene of the play, and the forms had been piled up into a form of a corral, which was to be attacked by Red Indians, the Red Indians being Frank Monk & Co.

Tadpole of the Fourth had written a play, which he was very anxious to have performed by the junior dramatists, and Gordon Gay had promised to give it a trial. It is possible that Tadpole exaggerated when he declared that it was better than Shakespeare; but it was certainly more to the taste of most of the juniors. It consisted chiefly of shouting, running about, yelling, struggling, and uttering dire threats, and the Grammarian juniors felt that it was better than long speeches.

Gordon Gay was the handsome cowboy, whose business it was to rescue the Belle of the Prairie from all sorts of deadly dangers, and to fire off a revolver incessantly. He was supposed to charge pretty often upon a fiery mustang, too, but that part of the play had to be left to the imagination. It was not feasible to introduce a steed into the Form-room; besides, fiery mustangs were not to be obtained in Rylcombe for love or money.

"Hands up!" repeated Gordon Gay, keeping the revolver steadily levelled at Frank Monk's head.

"Got 'em up!" said Monk.

"You don't say that," said Tadpole.

"You say, 'What does the pale chief want of the dusky son of the prairie?'"

"Oh, good! What does the pale thief want—"

"The pale chief, you fathead—"

"Right-ho!"

"The pale chief, you fathead—"

"You don't say, 'You fathead,' you duffer! You say—"

The Form-room door opened.

"Ahem!"

The Grammarian juniors swung round.

They stared at the newcomer.

At the first glance he appeared to be a middle-aged gentleman, with a grey beard and tinted glasses, and a very respectable if rusty black frock-coat.

At the second glance it was perfectly clear that his beard was false, and that the features belonged to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

The Grammarians glared at him.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

"My dear boy—"

"Eh?"

"I am surprised and shocked to find you actin' in this wopwahensible way!" said the newcomer severely. "Put those forms in their places at once!"

"What?"

"You may not be aware who I am, you young wascals!"

"Yes, we know jolly well!" roared Wootton major.

"I am your new Form-mastah!"

"What?"

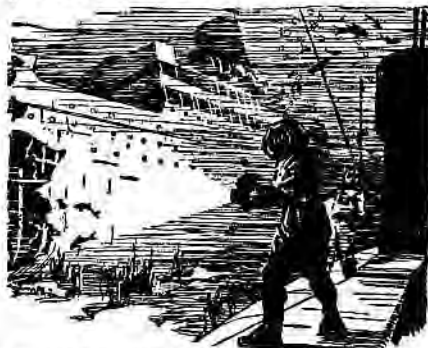
"I am Mr. Fowlah!"

Gordon Gay sank down on a form faintly.

"You're—you're which?" he gasped.

"I am Mr. Fowlah, your new mastah!" said D'Arcy severely. "I am shocked to see such conduct in my Form-room."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gordon Gay.



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Thrills
below
the Sea!



"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Great pip!"
 "Pway cease this diswespectful and wibald laughah at once!" said D'Arcy sternly. "Don't you know it is very wude to laugh in the pwesence of your Form-mastah?"
 "Our Form-master!" panted Frank Monk. "Oh, this is too rich!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I shall cane you all severely!" said Mr. Fowler.
 "Cane us?"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as an unwuly set of young wascals!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, still under the blissful impression that his disguise had not been penetrated. "I shall certainly cowweet you vewy severely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Silence!" thundered D'Arcy.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Have you any ideah wathewah of the wespsect due to a Form-mastah?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Gay, you are the winglendah. Fetch my cane fwom my desk at once!"
 "What?"
 "Fetch my cane!"
 "Your cane?"
 "Mr. Adams' cane. It is my cane now, as you are my pupils. I have already wemarked that I am your new Form-mastah."

Gordon Gay staggered to his feet. The Grammarians were in hysterics. That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy imagined that this absurd disguise deceived them for a moment seemed too rich a joke. The Form-room rang with shouts of laughter.

"He—he's rotting!" gasped Frank Monk. "It's a joke!"
 "No; he's taking us in," echoed Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You wewpewhensible young wascals!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay tottered to the Form-master's desk and fetched the cane. He handed it to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The Grammarians stood round almost weeping.

D'Arcy took the cane.
 "Now hold out your hand!" he said severely.
 "Which hand?" asked Gordon Gay demurely.

"The wight hand."
 "They're both white," said Gordon Gay, looking at his hands. "I always keep my hands nice and clean, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pway don't make any wotten jokes, Gay. I have enough of them fwom Monty Lowthah—I mean, hold out your hand at once, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Gay—"
 "Here you are, sir," said Gay.

He held out his hand, and the new Form-master made a swipe at it with the cane.

Gay stepped back, and the cane swept downwards and landed upon Arthur Augustus' own leg with a resounding thwack.

There was a yell of anguish from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ow! Yawwooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoogh! You young wottah! I'll give you a feabul thwashin'! Ow!"

The Grammarians yelled.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Gussy, you frabjous ass, do you think we don't know you? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, you chump!"

"D'Arcy, you burbler!"

"Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's realised that he was discovered. How, he did not know, but it was evident that he was discovered. He made a rush for the door.

But a crowd of the Grammarians were there before him.

"No, you don't!" said Gordon Gay genially. "You've come, and now you're going to stay. Gentlemen, I vote that we show great attention to our new Form-master."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We must show him how glad we are to see him."

"Bravo!"

"This beats 'The Belle of the Prairie,'" grinned Frank Monk. "Tadpole, old man, you can put your play in the fire. We're going to play with Gussy."

And the Grammarians formed a ring round the swell of St. Jim's, cutting off his escape on all sides.

CHAPTER 5.

In Deep Disguise!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY felt a little alarmed.

He had come to the Grammar School with the blissful conviction that his disguise would impose upon the Grammarians, and that he would jape Gordon Gay & Co. as much as he liked, and have a wondrous tale to tell when he returned to St. Jim's.

The enterprise was evidently not going to work out that way.

"You—you wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus. He took off the tinted glasses, which impeded his vision considerably, and jammed his famous monocle into his eye. "How did you guess?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pwesume that Tom Mewwy or any of the othahs did not give me away," said D'Arcy. "I have no ideah how you found me out."

The Grammarians shrieked.

"How did we guess?" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I will now wetiah—"

"Not just yet," said Gordon Gay blandly. "We've not done with our new Form-master yet."

"No fear!" said Frank Monk emphatically.

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Collar him!"

"Pway keep off!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "I shall handle you wathah wuffly if you lay hands on me!"

"He's going to lick the lot of us!" exclaimed Wootton major in alarm.

"Hide me, somebody!"

"Keep off, you boudahs! Ow—ah—yah—ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was collared by a dozen pairs of hands. They yanked him over on a form and sat upon him.

The grey beard came off, revealing the well-known features, quite as recognisable as usual, in spite of dabs of paint.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Gordon Gay sympathetically.

"Poor old innocent bird, falling into trouble this way! Gussy, old man, the next time you try to pass yourself off as somebody else, I should recommend you to have your voice amputated."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Gay—"

"Gussy has disguised himself so that we shouldn't know him," said Gordon Gay. "One good turn deserves another, so I suggest that we disguise him so that the other St. Jim's fellows won't know him when he gets back."

"Hear, hear!"

"We've got the things all handy," said Gay. "We can spare a little paint and some false hair to make Gussy really presentable."

"Yes, rather!"

"It is ze good idea," grinned Mont Blong, "zat ve stick ze wig and ze whiskers on him viz ze glue, zo zat zey not come off any more."

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus wriggled under the half-dozen Grammarians who were sitting on him and pinning him down on the form by their weight.

"I wefuse to be tweated in such a way!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I am willin' to make it pax!"

"I dare say you are," grinned Gay; "but we're not—just yet. Glue is a good thing for fastening on whiskers so that they won't come off. There's a tube of it in that box, Carboy."

"Here you are," said Carboy.

"Hold him tight while I disguise him!"

"I wefuse—Ow, ow!"

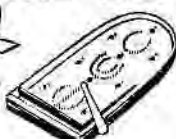
"Not much good refusing," said Gordon Gay, dabbing the sticky fluid upon the hair of the swell of St. Jim's.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Now give me his beard. He can wear it on the back of his head; it will be just as convincing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now a nice pair of sandy side-whiskers," said Frank Monk.

"And a black pointed beard for his chin."

"And a nice large red nose."

"Ow, ow, ow! Yow!" groaned D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a liberal use of glue the hair was fastened upon the swell of St. Jim's. His aspect, with a red nose, sandy whiskers, and a black beard, was so utterly ludicrous that the Grammarians simply shrieked; the grey beard stuck to his hair added to the curious effect.

"Now we must give the stuff time to dry, or he'll get it off," said Gay. "Better tie his hands behind him, I think."

"I refuse to have my hands tied! Ow!"

D'Arcy's hands were tied behind him, in spite of his refusal.

Then he was allowed to slide off the form and stand upon his feet. The Grammarians doubled up as they looked at him.

"That looks ever so much more convincing," said Gay. "You should come to us when you want to be disguised, Gussy. We knew you were D'Arcy the moment you came in, but I'll wager no one will know you now."

"Gwoogh! You wottahs!"

"I've got a pair of nigger minstrel striped bags here," went on Gay, looking into his bag of properties. "They've seen plenty of service, and I don't mind giving them away for Gussy's sake."

"Gay, you howwid beast!"

"Shove them on him!"

The striped loose trousers were drawn upon D'Arcy outside his own garments and fastened securely at the waist. The black frock-coat over striped, pink trousers had a most extraordinary effect. Then his top-hat, squashed like a concertina, was jammed on his head.

"There! Now I think he will do," said Gordon Gay, surveying the victim with great satisfaction. "Now, when he goes back to St. Jim's they can't possibly see that he's Gussy, and he can introduce himself as a new Form-master, or a new headmaster, or a new fellow escaped from a lunatic asylum."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you uttah wottahs, I can't return to St. Jim's in this state!"

"Bring him along!"

Gordon Gay threw open the door of the Form-room, and the crowd of Grammarians marched Arthur Augustus D'Arcy out, with shouts of laughter.

The unhappy swell of St. Jim's was marched into the quadrangle, and there other Grammarians gathered from all sides to see the amazing sight.

"What on earth is that?" asked Delamere, the captain of the school, as he caught sight of the fearsome figure.

"It's D'Arcy of St. Jim's," said Gordon Gay. "He came over here in disguise, but it wasn't good enough, so we've improved it for him."

Delamere laughed. The Grammarians marched Arthur Augustus down to the gates and out into the road. There they left him, with his hands still secured behind him, so that it was not possible for him to make any change in his new disguise.

"Good-bye, Gussy!" said Gordon Gay. "Give 'em our kind regards at St. Jim's!"

"You awful wottah—"

"Good-bye, Bluebell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to go in this state! I consider—"

"Shall we help him with our boots?" said Gordon Gay. "Now, then, all together."

"You wottahs!"

And Arthur Augustus started hurriedly before the boots could be applied to his person.

The Grammarians watched him down the road, yelling with laughter, till a bend in the lane hid him from sight, and then they turned back into the gateway, almost weeping.

CHAPTER 6.

The Return of the Japer!

"WH-WHAT'S that?"

Figgins jumped almost clear of the ground at the sight of the remarkable object in Rylcombe Lane.

"Somebody escaped from a lunatic asylum!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Or the wild man from Borneo!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The remarkable object uttered an exclamation of relief at the sight of the three St. Jim's fellows.

"Pway untie my hands, deah boys!" said the remarkable object.

"I know that voice," murmured Figgins. "There is only one accent like

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that in the country. Can it be a relation of the one and only Gussy?"

"I am Gussy, you ass—"

"Oh! You are Gussy, are you?"

"I have been tweated in a grossly disrespectful way by the Gwammah School cads," said a voice from the depths of whiskers and beard. "I am feelin' wotten!"

"You're looking rather rotten, too!" chuckled Kerr.

"They have stuck these wotten things on me with glue, and I'm afraid they won't come off!" said D'Arcy distressfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatever to laugh at," said D'Arcy. "I have been japed the Gwammah School cads, but—"

"Looks as if they've been japing you!"

"Yaas, that is how it turned out," said D'Arcy. "Do you wemembah a chap comin' into your study this afternoon—a new mastah from the Gwammah School?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

"Well, I was that chap!"

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, it's quite true; I got myself up like that to jape the Gwammahians, to palm myself off on them as a mastah, you know, as Gay did on us once. As I took you fellows in, I weakened I could take them in. But it didn't work. Somehow or othah they spotted me."

"Not really?" said Figgins, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys, but untie my hands! I want to get these bags off, even if I can't get the wotten hair and paint off my face!"

Figgins grinned as he untied D'Arcy's hands.

He was tempted to allow the swell of St. Jim's to return to the school in that state, but he relented. But untying D'Arcy's hands was all that he could do. The whiskers and the false hair were stuck on tightly. D'Arcy would require hot water, and plenty of it, before they came off, and the paint would not be easily removed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pulled at the whiskers, and gave a little yelp of pain.

"Ow! They won't come off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, pway shut up!" said D'Arcy crossly. "There is nothin' whatever to laugh at. I shall feel an awful ass goin' back to St. Jim's like this." He wrenched off the nigger bags and tossed them over a hedge.

"Well, you are an awful ass, you know!"

"It's all your fault, you duffahs!"

"Our fault!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah! If you had been able to penetrate my disguise, I should not have gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter from the New House trio let in a light upon D'Arcy's mind. He jammed his eyeglass into the paint round his eye, and glared at Figgins & Co.

"You uttah wottahs!" he exclaimed.

"Do you mean to say that you were wotten, and that you knew all the time?"

Figgins & Co. shrieked.

"Bai Jove! I wegard you as wotten wottahs! I refuse to speak to you! Wun off!"

And Arthur Augustus, with his aristocratic nose very high in the air, tramped away towards St. Jim's.

Figgins & Co. followed him, doubled up with merriment.

"Buzz off, you wottahs!" shouted D'Arcy.

"We're going to look after you, Gussy!" explained the hilarious Figgins. "Suppose somebody met you and had a fit? Or you might be arrested and taken back to the asylum."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy walked on haughtily, with the New House juniors following in his wake. They did meet somebody. The first was Grimes, the grocer's boy of Rylcombe. Grimes was carrying a basket on his arm, and he dropped it at sight of D'Arcy, and there was an ominous sound of cracking eggs.

"Oh, lor! I!" gasped Grimes. "Wot is it?"

"It's the wild man from Borneo," explained Kerr. "He's going to give a performance at St. Jim's."

"Oh, my 'at!" said Grimes.

"You wottah, Figg—"

"Master D'Arcy!" exclaimed Grimes, in astonishment.

"I have been tweated in a grossly disrespectful way, Gwimes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grimes. "Ho, ho, ho!"

"Weally, Gwimes—"

Grimes sat down on the bank and roared. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a withering glance and stalked on. He met some village boys farther along the lane, and they greeted him with a yell and began to pelt him. Then he discovered that the escort of Figgins & Co. was valuable after all.

Figgins & Co. charged the villagers, and rolled them into the ditch, and marched triumphantly on.

It seemed an age to D'Arcy before he reached the gates of the school; but when he reached them he began to wish he hadn't. For he was spotted at once, and fellows gathered on all sides to greet him and stare.

"It can't be Gussy!" gasped Tom Merry.

"More disguised than ever!" remarked Jack Blake.

"Did they spot you, Gussy?"

"How did they guess?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The champion ass really went, after all, then!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Well, this takes the cake! Gussy, old man—"

"Pway allow me to pass!" said the swell of St. Jim's frigidly. "I regard you as wottahs!"

"Oh, Gussy, Gussy!" said D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third. "Is this the way you set an example to your minor, as Aunt Adelina told you to do?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

D'Arcy marched on and escaped into the School House. He rushed upstairs to a bath-room, and was soon under steaming water, scrubbing away at the paint and the glue. He left the juniors yelling.

"Oh, the awful ass, to go over there in that rig!" said Tom Merry, wiping his eyes. "He was going to show himself to Figgins first, or I—"

"He did!" said Figgins.

"Didn't you spot him?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course we did! But we wouldn't interfere with a School House jape; that wouldn't be playing the game!" grinned Figgins.

"So we let him rip!" said Kerr.

"You bounders!" said Blake wrathfully. "You ought to have stopped him. I've a jolly good mind to dot you on the nose, Figgins!"

"Well, here's my nose!" said Figgins, with a warlike look.

Blake promptly dotted him upon it, and then there was a rush and a tow. School House and New House boys mingled in a wild scramble, which lasted till Kildare of the Sixth came out with a cane and laid it about him impartially. Then the combatants separated.

Tom Merry & Co. followed D'Arcy into the School House and discovered him in the bath-room, mopping his head under steaming water. Most of the paint had come off, and some of the hair, but tufts of it were still clinging lovingly to the head and face of the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy turned towards them a face that looked like a freshly boiled beet-root.

"Ow!" he said breathlessly. "Is it all off?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not quite!"

"The howwid boundahs stuck it on with glue—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway give my head a wub, Blake. I'm exhausted."

"Certainly!" said Blake.

He took the brush and began to scrub. Arthur Augustus gave a wild yell.

"Oh, you silly ass! I didn't tell you to wub my scalp off!" he roared.

"Well, it will want some rubbing, you know—"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Well, I call that ungrateful," said Blake, releasing his clum's head. "I was doing my best—really putting my beef into it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Get out, you wottahs! You are as wotten as the Gwammawians! Ow! Cewwout!"

And Arthur Augustus finished his ablutions unaided. He was a long time in the bath-room, but he came down at last with a crimson countenance, and with little tufts of hair still sticking to him, and wherever he went that day he was greeted with prolonged chuckles. And in Study No. 6 that evening he announced that he was not going to waste any more time in putting the Grammar School cads in their places, and that he intended to leave Gordon Gay & Co. severely alone, and his chums agreed that he had better.

CHAPTER 7.

A Warm Discussion!

"DEAR ME! I am very, very pleased to see this!"

Thus Mr. Lathom.

Little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth at St. Jim's, was standing before the notice-board in the Hall, blinking through his glasses at a paper pinned there. The paper was in the handwriting of Tom Merry of the Shell, and it ran:

NOTICE.

A meeting will be held in the woodshed at five-thirty precisely to discuss the war.

(Signed) T. MERRY.

Mr. Lathom blinked approvingly.

"Very good—very good!" he said.

"Ah, is that Mr. Railton?" Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was passing, and he paused as the Fourth Form master spoke to him.

"Do you see that, Mr. Railton?"

Mr. Railton read the notice and smiled.

"Remarkably intelligent of the juniors. I must say, to take an interest in the Italo-Abyssinian problem," said Mr. Lathom. "Don't you think so?"

"The—Italo-Abyssinian problem!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yes. They are holding a meeting to discuss the war," said Mr. Lathom. "I have noticed that Merry of the Shell is an unusually intelligent lad. I am very pleased to see the boys taking an interest in world problems."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton.

"Their knowledge of the subject must necessarily be limited," went on Mr. Lathom. "But knowledge grows by discussion. And I must say that I am pleased to see the boys taking an interest in such questions instead of devoting their thoughts wholly to football and games."

"Ahem!"

"Do you not agree with me?"

"Well, yes," said Mr. Railton, smiling. "If this notice refers to the war—certainly!"

"There is a war going on," said Mr. Lathom.

"Ahem! No; but—"

"I think it shows a thoughtfulness beyond their years," said Mr. Lathom. "I really think that I might attend the meeting myself and enlarge their knowledge of the subject with a short address."

Mr. Railton smiled and passed on. He had a suspicion that the war referred to was nearer home than East Africa.

But Mr. Lathom was feeling very pleased. He repaired to his study and began to look out information on the subject. He was distinctly pleased at the unusual thoughtfulness of junior schoolboys in taking an interest in such

(Continued on the next page.)



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TOO GENEROUS.

Lady: "Here's a penny, my man. How did you become so poor?"

Tramp: "I was like you, lady—always giving plenty to the poor and needy!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Vaudrey, 124, Norwood Road,ulse Hill, London, S.E.24.

FORCE OF HABIT.

"I suppose you have a story to tell us, as usual?" said the magistrate.

"Yes, I have!" replied the old offender. "But stop me if you've heard this one!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Deacon, 25, Woodcroft Avenue, White hall, Bristol 5.

WAITING FOR IT!

The new boarder paused with his second boot in his hand, after throwing down the first with a resounding thump. Twice he had been warned by the jumpy old gentleman in the room below. Remembering now, he slowly lowered the boot to the floor, and was soon undressed and asleep.

After about an hour he was rudely awakened by a bang on his door.

"What is it?" asked the new boarder.

"Throw down the other boot, will you," came the old gentleman's angry voice, "and let me get to sleep!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss J. Biddell, 26, Sherbourne Street, Downham Road, Islington, London, N.1.

NON-STOP SOCCER.

John had taken his sister to see her first football match, and she had enjoyed it up to the interval. But as the teams lined up for the second half she rose.

"Come on, John!" she said. "Let's go! This is where we came in at!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Smith, The Rosary, Spilsby Road, Horncastle, Lincs.

PRISONERS OF THE DINNER.

A newly promoted colonel gave a dinner to his regiment. Addressing the men, he said jovially:

"Now fall upon the food without pity! Treat it as if it were an enemy!"

At the end of the dinner he saw a sergeant sneaking away with two bottles of wine.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Obeying orders, sir," was the reply. "When you don't kill the enemy, you take them prisoners!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Murray, 78, 3rd Avenue, Northmead, Denon, Transvaal, South Africa.

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a subject. And he thought it an excellent idea to help them get a more thorough grasp on it.

Meanwhile, afternoon lessons being over, a good many fellows might have been seen, as they say in the novels, making their way towards the woodshed.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were the first, but the chums of Study No. 6 soon followed them, and they were joined by Reilly, Kerruish, and Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, and Kangaroo and Buck Finn of the Shell. Then came Figgins & Co. of the New House, and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, also of the New House. Five or six other juniors dropped in, so that the woodshed was pretty full by five-thirty precisely.

"Well, we're here, or nearly all," Tom Merry remarked, glancing over the meeting. "Gentlemen, the meeting is now open!"

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins.

"As chairman of the meeting——"

"Hallo! Who made you chairman?" Redfern of the Fourth wanted to know.

"Ass! I called the meeting, didn't I? As chairman of the meeting I rise to remark that things are getting into a rotten state. The subject of discussion is the war now raging between St. Jim's and Rylcombe Grammar School——"

"Hear, hear!"

"As a rule we have had the better of it all along the line; we've given the Grammarians the kybosh generally——"

"Hear, hear!"

"But Gordon Gay & Co. never seem to know when they are beaten. And it must be confessed that the grin is up against us now on account of a rotten wheeze of a Fourth Form kid——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"A rotten School House wheeze, you mean!" said Figgins waimly.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Therefore," said Tom Merry, "it's up to us to come down heavy on the Grammar School cads, and let them know what's what!"

"And who's who?" said Blake.

"And which is which!" said Monty Lowther.

"I rise on a point of order," said Redfern, getting up from a heap of fagots. "If Monty Lowther is going to be funny, I move that this meeting be adjourned, or else that the said Monty Lowther goes out on his neck!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why, you ass——" began Monty Lowther.

"Order!"

"Gentlemen——"

"I say——"

"Look here——"

"Gentlemen, this is no time for re-priminations!" said Tom Merry severely. "The honour of the school is at stake. It's up to us to give the Grammarians the kybosh!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I suggest, therefore, that we put our heads together and plan a regular campaign. In the first place, the Fourth Form kids must be prepared to back us up, as a Fourth Former has made such a mess of things——"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Yaas, wathah—wats!"

Figgins stepped forward.

"I suggest that, as the School House makes such a mess of this and everything else, a New House chap be elected as leader and backed up by all the fellows present," he said.

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"Go home!"

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"Hear, hear!" roared Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

"I second Figgy's motion," said Redfern promptly. "A New House leader is wanted, and I am quite willing to give my services——"

"Why, you ass!" exclaimed Figgins. "Who's talking about you? I mean——"

"Now look here, Figgins——"

"Look here, Redfern——"

"I move that Figgins and Redfern go outside to settle their family quarrels!" bawled Blake of the Fourth. "Let's get on with the washing!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What I suggest is——" said Figgins.

"Order!"

"Silence for the chairman!"

"Oh, blow the chairman!" said Figgins crossly. "Who made him chairman, anyway? A New House chap ought to be chairman, as representing the Cock House of St. Jim's——"

"Rats!"

"Gentlemen," roared Tom Merry, "I appeal to this meeting to keep order, and to the New House kids to shut up and behave themselves——"

"Oh, don't ask impossibilities!" said Monty Lowther.

"Shut up, Lowther!"

"If Lowther's going to be funny——"

"Yaas, wathah; it's weally too thick. Lowthah, we have enough of it in the comic column in the 'Weekly,' you know——"

"Gentlemen——"

"Bosh!"

"Things are in a rotten state!" pursued Tom Merry.

"We've had that!" said Lawrence.

"Put on a new record!"

"Things are in a rotten state. The Grammarians are cackling at us. Gussy has made an ass of himself, and given them the laugh against our side."

"Well, I agree to that," said Figgins.

"Gussy has played the giddy goat, and I do agree that, if there's a bigger ass at St. Jim's than Gussy, I should like to know where to find him!"

"Hear, hear!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fatty Wynn's answered your question, Figgins!" said Lowther.

"Gentlemen, I move that Fatty Wynn be thanked for the information given!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fathead!" said Fatty Wynn.

"What I meant was——"

"Order!"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Rot!" said Figgins. "I came to this meeting to talk business! What I mean by business is, arranging for a New House chap to take the lead. But if you're not going to talk sense, I move that this meeting adjourn!"

"Now, Figgins, you know that that's rot——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gentlemen, I move that all New House duffers be turned out of the meeting!" bawled Herries.

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins pushed back his cuffs.

"Come on, then!" he roared.

"Order!"

"Rats!"

"Dry up!"

"Piffle!"

There was a wild scramble in the woodshed. The meeting was growing very excited. Three or four School House fellows grasped Figgins and helped him towards the door. The Co. rushed to the rescue. In a moment the meeting had turned itself unanimously into a free fight. The din was terrific, and it was at its height when the door of the woodshed opened and a well-known cough was heard.

"Ahem!"

"Cave!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's Lathom!"

In a moment the struggle ceased. The juniors made instantaneous attempts to appear quite innocent and orderly in their manner; not with much success, but, fortunately, Mr. Lathom was very short-sighted. He came into the woodshed with an agreeable smile on his face, and nodded very genially to the juniors.

"Ah, quite a numerous meeting!" he remarked.

"Ye-es, sir," said Tom Merry.

"I have read your notice on the board," explained Mr. Lathom. "I fully approve of the object of this meeting, and I may say that I am very pleased to see such a discussion held among the juniors. I wish to contribute my little mite towards the discussion. Pray let the discussion proceed, and pray treat me, my dear lads, as if I were one of yourselves."

And Mr. Lathom blinked round at the astounded juniors through his spectacles in the most genial manner.

CHAPTER 8.

A Slight Misapprehension!

A PIN might have been heard to drop in the woodshed.

The juniors had supposed that the Form-master had heard the din in the woodshed, and had come to inquire into its cause; and they had seen lines, if not canings, looming ahead.

But the Form-master was evidently not on the warpath.

He had come to the meeting.

He had read Tom Merry's notice on the board, and was attending the meeting, and fully approved of its object.

No wonder the juniors were astounded.

The warfare with the Grammar School was certainly an important matter—from the juniors' point of view. The alarms and excursions against the Grammarians occupied a great deal of the thoughts of the St. Jim's juniors. But hitherto interest in the matter had been confined to the juniors. The senior boys regarded the matter with lofty eyes, and did not take part in it.

As for the masters, they were supposed to know hardly anything about it, and care less. That a Form-master should enter into the struggles between Tom Merry & Co. on one side, and Gordon Gay & Co. on the other, was almost incredible. True, it was just as it should be, but it was extraordinary and unexpected, all the same. No wonder the juniors could hardly believe their ears, and stared at Mr. Lathom as if they fancied they were dreaming.

"My word," murmured Digby, furtively dabbing his nose with his handkerchief, "this must be a giddy dream!"

"There's a mistake somewhere," murmured Lowther.

Mr. Lathom was smiling most genially. He did not seem to see anything extraordinary in his statement.

"You have read my notice, sir?" stammered Tom Merry at last.

"Yes, Merry."

"And—and you approve of the object of the meeting, sir?"

"Most decidedly!"

"You are very kind, sir."

"Not at all," said Mr. Lathom. "I consider it most gratifying to see junior schoolboys taking an intelligent interest in such things."

"Oh!"



"Put those forms in their places at once!" ordered the newcomer severely. "I am your new Form-master, you young wascals!" "Oh, my hat!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Ha, ha, ha!" The Grammarians roared with laughter. That D'Arcy imagined that his absurd disguise deceived them for a moment seemed too rich a joke!

"I think that such a discussion is likely to enlarge the bonds of knowledge," said the Fourth Form master. "With your permission, I shall make a few remarks."

"P-p-please do, sir," murmured Manners.

"In the first place, to take the matter at the root, and begin at the beginning, which is always a judicious method, let us take the cause of the trouble," said Mr. Lathom.

"Ye-es, sir."

"The question arises—was this struggle inevitable?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"We see two rival forces placed in juxtaposition," said Mr. Lathom. "One party may be described as the original inhabitants, the others as practical newcomers."

Mr. Lathom was referring to the Abyssinians and the Italians. The juniors, not unnaturally, supposed that he was referring to St. Jim's and the Grammar School.

"Quite so, sir," said Figgins. "And it was a check of the newcomers to stick themselves where they are at all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That is a boyish way of describing it," said Mr. Lathom benevolently; "but undoubtedly there is something in what you say, Figgins. With these rival parties established close to one another, was an outbreak of hostilities inevitable?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

Mr. Lathom smiled.

"Yes; I think we may agree that it was inevitable," he said. "Sooner or later this struggle was certain to commence."

"Exactly, sir!" said Tom Merry, in great wonder.

He had rather expected the Form-master to expatiate upon the necessity of keeping the peace. And it was very gratifying to hear him express the opinion that the rows between the Grammar School and St. Jim's could not possibly have been avoided.

"It's jolly good of you to say so, sir!" said Blake. "We never expected a Form-master to back us up like this."

"Wathah not!"

"My dear Blake, I am always willing to back up my boys in holding a useful and informative discussion. Now to take the actual state of affairs, matters at present are in something of an impasse, the successful party finding their enemy too strongly entrenched to be reached."

"Oh, there are ways of getting at the wothahs, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I myself—"

"It's a question of getting at them in their own quarters, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, that is it, exactly, Merry."

"That's what I think ought to be done, sir."

"Yes, indeed, if possible."

"That's what we were discussing, sir," said Tom Merry. "Ways and means of getting at the bounders in their own place, and making them sit up."

Mr. Lathom smiled.

"Ah, you are discussing a plan of campaign!" he remarked.

"Yes, sir."

"Very interesting," said Mr. Lathom—"very interesting and instructive. I shall be very pleased to contribute any little knowledge I possess to such a discussion."

"You—you're very good, sir."

"Not at all, Merry. Now, in the

first place, it is evident that matters cannot go on as they are."

"Quite so, sir."

"And as it appears to me difficult to establish peace—"

"Oh, that's out of the question, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The question arises—what form the struggle will now assume?" said Mr. Lathom.

"Ye-es, sir."

"What are your views, Merry?"

"Well, I think that a good leader should be chosen, sir," said Tom Merry. "A chap who is really qualified to take the lead."

"I agree to that," said Figgins. "I think—"

"Yaas, wathah; but—"

Mr. Lathom looked puzzled.

"But the Abyssinians already have a very efficient leader," he remarked. The juniors jumped.

"The—the what, sir?"

"The which?"

"The Abyssinians, sir?"

"Yes," said Mr. Lathom, surprised.

"We were discussing the attacking force at present encamped at Adowa."

"A-A-Adowa, sir," said Tom Merry feebly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors understood at last. Mr. Lathom had evidently drawn a wrong impression from the notice Tom Merry had posted on the board.

The juniors looked at one another. Figgins stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth, and Monty Lowther was taken with a violent fit of coughing. Several suppressed gurgles were heard in different parts of the woodshed.

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"The present military situation—" went on Mr. Lathom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Digby," said Mr. Lathom, turning a severe eye upon the Fourth-Former, who had burst out quite involuntarily. "I see no cause for merriment at this discussion."

Digby turned crimson.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," he stammered.

A bell rang in the distance.

"Hallo! That's the tea-bell!" exclaimed Fatty Wym.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "If you juniors wish to go to tea, perhaps the discussion had better be postponed. I—"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Very well; we will resume this most interesting and instructive discussion at another time," said Mr. Lathom benevolently.

And, with a genial nod to the juniors, he departed.

They waited till he was gone. Then a shriek of laughter rang through the woodshed, and the meeting collapsed in helpless merriment.

CHAPTER 9.

A Polite Invitation!

"**B**AI Jove! That is vewy polite." Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing in Study No. 6 with a letter in his hand.

The letter was in Gordon Gay's handwriting, and the swell of St. Jim's had opened it rather suspiciously; but the contents evidently pleased him.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "What has Gay got to say to you? Something about your visit there the other day?"

"Not at all, dear boy."

"Some new jape, I suppose!" growled Herries.

"Nothin' of the sort, Hewwies. Wead it."

Blake, Herries, and Digby read the letter. They looked puzzled. It was certainly very polite; but the politeness of the Grammarians made them distrustful. They were like the gentlemen of olden time who feared the Greeks when they came with gifts in their hands.

The letter ran:

"Dear D'Arcy,—We are having a rehearsal of our new play this afternoon, and as it's

he goes on an invitation. That wouldn't be playing the game. But what do they want him for?"

"Weally, Blake, Gay expresses himself plainly enough. They're havin' a wehearsal, as it's a half-holiday. I wemenbah they were wehearsin' some Wed Indian wubbish when I went ova there in disguise. They want to have some of my knowledge of stage managin', and so forth, and I shall be vewy pleased to place it at their service."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"It's a lark, but I don't quite catch on to it," said Blake. "Better not go."

"I shall hardly refuse so polite a request," said the swell of St. Jim's loftily. "I wegard it as my duty to stand by the youngstahs in such a mattah. They are bound to want some chap to advise them in actin' a play."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I decline to have my remarks weceived with wibald laughtah," said D'Arcy; and he retired from Study No. 6 with his nose in the air.

"What on earth is the little game?" said Blake in perplexity. "It's some lark up against us, I expect, and they want to get Gussy out of the way. But what for?"

"Ask me another," said Herries.

"Blessed if I know!" said Digby.

And the juniors gave it up. They were playing football that afternoon, and, naturally, soon forgot about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his invitation to the Grammar School. While they were preparing for the match, Arthur Augustus donned his most elegant Etons and his sliniest silk topper, and walked elegantly over to the Grammar School.

Gordon Gay & Co. received him most graciously.

"So jolly glad you came," said Gordon Gay, shaking hands with the swell of St. Jim's. "This way—we're having the rehearsal in the gym. We're going to give the performance of the 'Belle of the Prairie' in the gym next Wednesday. We shall be glad if you'll come and bring the fellows."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus walked into the gym. A crowd of the Grammarian juniors were gathered there. Frank Monk and half a dozen other fellows were already in Red Indian costume.

It was to be a dress rehearsal, and certainly the Red Indians looked effective. Perhaps they would not have been mistaken for Red Indians; but certainly they would never have been recognised as Frank Monk, Lane, Carboy, and the rest.

They wore leggings and blankets, and headresses of feathers, and their faces were covered with red ochre.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the Red Indians. "Who are those howid-looking boundahs?"

"They're Sitting Bull & Co., the fiery Sioux," said Gordon Gay.

"Bai Jove!"

"They have to capture the Belle of the Prairie, and I rescue her," said Gordon Gay. "It's a ripping play, I can tell you. Tadpole says it's better than Shakespeare. He ought to know, as he wrote it."

"More lively, you know," explained Tadpole.

"Young Woolton is going to be the Belle of the Prairie," went on Gordon Gay. "He will have to make up as a girl."

"Ugh!" said Frank Monk, waving a puzzled. "They can't jape him if



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D'Arcy jumped back.
"Pway be careful, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

"Wah! What seeks the white dog in the lodges of the Sioux?"

"Weally, Monk—"

"Scalp the white dog!" said Carboy.

"Scalp his topper, at any rate."

"Weally, you ass!"

"No larks, you know," said Gordon Gay warningly. "Gussy is our guest. Honour the stranger that is within the gates."

"My mistake!" said Monk blandly. "It's awfully good of you to come over and give us some tips, Gussy!"

"Yes, rather; jolly good!"

"Not at all, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm always pleased to place my supewial knowledge at the service of you youngstahs."

"You cheeky ass—ahem!—I mean, thanks awfully!" said Monk, grinning under his red ochre. "What do you think of our make-up? Do you think anybody would know us on the spot, same as they do some fellows who go round disguised?"

"Hu, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Monk."

"Zat you do not ship our shum, Monkeys," said Mont Blong. "It is not comine il faut to ship ze guest vizzin ze gates."

"Quite right, Mont Blong," said Gordon Gay. "Now, you fellows, buck up with the rehearsal. Will you sit here, Gussy, and look on? And don't hesitate to speak when you think anything might be improved."

"Wathah! not, deah boy!"

"Put it to them quite plainly. I'm sorry that I shan't be able to attend the rehearsal. Got an important engagement," said Gay. "Wootton major is my understudy, and he's going to take my place. If you think Wootton isn't up to the mark, you tell him plainly what he ought to do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Gordon Gay strolled out of the gymnasium.

Then the rehearsal commenced.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in the place of honour, and he watched the rehearsal through his eyeglass with great attention.

He did not hesitate to pass criticisms upon the acting; some of them extremely personal, as a matter of fact.

But the Grammarians heard them all with the most profound attention and respect.

If D'Arcy had been of a more suspicious nature, he might have suspected that the Grammarians had some ulterior motive for their excessive politeness.

But D'Arcy was anything but suspicious.

He was there to place his superior knowledge at the service of his young friends, as he considered it, and he did it unreservedly.

The rehearsal lasted quite a long time, and when it was over and the costumes and the paint removed, the Grammarians took D'Arcy in to tea in Monk's study.

Arthur Augustus was the guest of honour at the tea-table.

All his remarks upon the subject of acting, and making-up, and stage-manning were listened to with great respect.

By the time tea was over the Grammarians had risen very much in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's estimation. In fact, he considered that they had been done great injustice; for a more polite, reasonable, and sensible set of fellows he had really never seen.

It was evident that they were quite

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody!

A new machine washes and dries your hands in sixty seconds. Any St. Jim's fag can beat that easily.

"Germs cling to pound notes," says a scientist. *Wish we knew the secret.*

Man told us he makes a good living travelling in refrigerators. How very uncomfortable.

Skimpole says he finds it hard to be funny about football. But he is very funny at it.

A man rescued in mid-Channel hit his rescuer on the nose. A "cross" Channel swimmer!

Oh, I am asked to deny the story that Fatty Wynn drank six bottles of ginger pop straight off, and was found later bobbing gently against the ceiling!

A million and a half people entered the Zoo last year, we read. But it doesn't say how many were kept.

A business man says the only trouble with an income is to get it to come in. Heard this? Chap rang up and asked: "Is Mike Howe there?"

"Wrong number!" came the reply.

"This is a City office, not a farm!"

Gore says he carries a hundred and twenty pounds. Weight, not money!

Then there was the American who said "Make it snappy!" once too often. The bulldog heard him.

"There's no one to touch a Scotsman," says a writer. *It's not much use trying.*

"Every gardener likes to be congratulated on producing a nice cucumber," says D'Arcy. Unless it happens to be a marrow.

Story: "Did you ever make a really serious mistake?" asked the student. "Once—I cured a millionaire in a month!" admitted the doctor.

Then there was the nervous air passenger who was devoutly thankful to be "down and out."

You heard of the millionaire who left a big sum to someone who didn't exist? He left a lot to the imagination!

Third Form flash: "Which word in the English language is always pronounced incorrectly?" asked Mr. Selby. "Incorrectly, sir!" replied Wally D'Arcy.

"Who doesn't look forward to Christmas?" demands Crooke. Turkeys!

Metal tickets have been issued by an American railroad. They scrap "tin" for "tin."

Get ready: Young Jameson wants to know if the notice in Wayland Wood, "Bird's nesting strictly forbidden," isn't a bit hard on the birds!

Chameleons can move their eyes independently, seeing all round. So can some Form-masters.

"Where is the chief cashier?" asked Mr. Raiton of the bank clerk. "He's gone away, sir." "For a rest, I suppose?" "No, to avoid arrest!"

Wait: "Isn't it rather a long distance from the dressing-room to the ring?" asked the heavyweight.

"Yes," admitted the fight promoter. "But I don't expect you'll have to walk back!" Duck, boys!

alive to his merits, and knew how to honour a really distinguished guest.

But if Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been able to guess what was going on at St. Jim's at the same time, perhaps he would not have been so satisfied in his mind, and his flattering opinion of the Grammarians might have undergone a great change.

CHAPTER 10.

A Crowded Tea-Party!

JACK BLAKE came into the School House with a ruddy glow in his cheeks, and a football under his arm.

The Fourth had been playing the Shell that afternoon, and the result had been a draw. Each side considered that it had been unlucky to lose, being the best team, and so all the footballers were satisfied with themselves.

"I wonder whether Gussy's got back?" said Blake, remembering the existence of the swell of St. Jim's now that the football was over.

"He wasn't playing for the Fourth," remarked Tom Merry. "Where is he?"

"He went over to see Gordon Gay."

"Oh! Another jape, I suppose?"

"No," said Blake. "I can't quite make it out. They say that they wanted his opinion on their acting for some rotten Red Indian play they're getting up; but that was all—"

"Piffle!" said Monty Lowther. "Exactly. I suppose they've been rotting him."

Blake threw open the door of Study

No. 6. There was a light burning in the study. The evening dusk was falling. The room was evidently occupied.

"Hallo! Got back, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What did they want you for—great Scott!"

Blake stared at the junior in the study.

"Blessed if he hasn't got into his giddy Form-master rig again—" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's the game, you ass?"

"I wessus to be called an ass."

"But, you fathead—"

"Wats!"

Tom Merry & Co. crowded in the doorway, and all of them stared at the junior in the study. He was dressed in black frock-coat and rusty trousers, and had a grey beard and tinted glasses. He was the image of the pretended Mr. Fowler, who had gone over to the Grammar School as the new Form-master; but his disguise this time was certainly better, for his features were unrecognisable. A grey moustache and grey whiskers had been added to the disguise, and a wig that quite covered up the hair.

"What's the game now, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"I am twyin' my disguise again, deah boys."

"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose you're not going to try to work the same wheeze again on the Grammarians?" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—" "Well, I'm hungry," said Blake. "I'm going to have tea. Cut down to the tuckshop and get something, Gussy. It will give Mrs. Taggles a treat to see you like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to cut down to the tuckshop, deah boy. Howevah, I am weady for tea, and you can get it if you like."

"We're in funds," said Tom Merry. "I've had a remittance from Miss Fawcett—a really stunning one. Come along to my study."

"Good!"

"I will join you in a few minutes, deah boys," said the disguised junior.

"Right-ho!"

"Not coming in that rig, are you?" asked Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, my hat! Suppose a master spots you in the passage—"

"Oh, wats!"

"I'm afraid Gussy's going off his rocker," said Monty Lowther, with a solemn shake of his head. "However, if a master meets you you can pass yourself off as the Head if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded out of the study. "May I bwing a fwient or two to tea, Tom Mewwy?" asked the disguised junior.

"Many as you like, old man."

"Vewy good."

Tom Merry & Co. lost no time in getting tea. They were hungry after the football. Tom Merry was in funds, as he had said, and he was quite lavish with that tea. The table groaned under the goodly viands, as the novelists say, and the juniors gathered round the table, prepared to do full justice to the tea.

They were just beginning, when the door opened, and the pseudo Form-master came in.

"What the ass wants to go about like that for is more than I can imagine," said Blake, puzzled. "Why don't you get into your own clobber, Gussy?"

"I wegard clobber as a vulgar expression, deah boy!"

"Well, here's a chair," said Tom Merry. "Don't shove your beard into the jam, ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, as the door reopened and Wally D'Arcy of the Third came in. "What do you want?"

"I've come," said Wally.

"Well, now you can go."

"I've come to tea."

"Rats! We don't have Third Form fags to tea," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah! I had Tom Mewwy's permish to bwing a fwient or two, and I have invited my minah—"

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Lowther. "Come in, young hopeful!"

Jameson, Gibson, and Joe Frayne of the Third followed Wally into the study. The tea-party regarded them with surprise.

"Did you ask these chaps, too, Gussy?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all right!"

The study was pretty well crowded by this time. But a few minutes later Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen of the New House presented themselves. The School House fellows jumped up, under the impression that it was a raid. But Figgins waved his hand in sign of friendship.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed.

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"Oh, is it?" said Tom Merry. "What do you want?"

"We've come to tea."

"Well, of all the cheeky bounders—"

"Gussy invited us," said Figgins. "He called out to us from his study window that you had told him to bring a few friends. We're all friends of Gussy—"

"Especially at tea-time," said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come in, deah boys! You will find woom somewhere. It's all wight!"

The Terrible Three were looking a little dismayed by this time.

They didn't want to be inhospitable; but certainly the study was crowded now to its utmost limits, and the feed, ample as it was, was not likely to go far among so many guests. And it was not over yet!

There was a trampling of feet in the passage, and Mellish, Levison, and Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth looked in cheerfully. The door was wide open now. The study was too crowded for it to be shut. Behind the newcomers appeared Reilly, Kangaroo, and Glyn, and Clifton Dane, Page, Bishop, and Kerruish.

"Hallo! You're rather crowded!" said Kangaroo.

"But we don't mind," grinned Levison.

"Not at all," said Mellish. "I can stand."

"Look here—" began Tom Merry.

"Gussy invited us," explained

Lumley-Lumley. "I guess we couldn't refuse such an invitation, as he said it was an extra-special feed."

"Come wight in, deah boys!"

"Standing room only!" grinned Reilly. "Faith, and I think you may as well hand my little whack out here in the passage."

"Same here," said Kerruish.

"Hallo, here's some more coming!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as a dozen or more fellows came crowding along the passage.

"Yaas, wathah! Quite a lot!"

The Terrible Three looked grimly at the disguised junior.

The study was crammed, the passage outside was crammed, and it looked as if it would be blocked all the way to the stairs. A crowd of Third and Second Form fags were trying to get to the study, demanding to know what they had been asked for if there wasn't any room and any feed.

"I suppose this is a little joke, Gussy?" said Tom Merry at last.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Blessed if I see the joke!" growled Manners.

"I have asked a fwient or two—"

"Two hundred, it seems to me!" grunted Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gussy's rotting this study—that's what it is!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy, old man, you are dangerously near to getting a thick ear!"

"I should wefuse to have a thick ear, Tom Mewwy."

"What on earth is Gussy in that rig still for?" asked Kangaroo.

"Oh, he's dotty!" Lowther remarked.

"Weally, Lowthah, you wottah—"

"Here, make way, there, you fags!" shouted a voice in the passage—the sharp, somewhat unpleasant voice of Cutts of the Fifth.

"That's Cutts," said Tom Merry.

"What on earth does he want?"

"I've asked him to tea, Tom Mewwy."

"What!"

"Cutts, Pwye, Gilmore, Jones, and Lefevre," explained the disguised junior. "I saw them fvwom the study window, you know, so I thought I'd ask them."

"Well, you—you ass!"

"You fathead!"

"It's a rotten jape!" roared Monty Lowther. "Bump him!"

"I wefuse to be bumped!"

"Here, hold on!" chuckled Blake.

"You gave Gussy permission to bring some friends. He's only done what you said."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make room there, you fags!" came Cutts' voice again.

There was a sound of shoving and trampling and angry voices in the passage.

"Yah! Go home!"

"Get out of the way!"

"Don't shove!"

"Gerroff my feet!"



As Blake & Co. rushed into Study No. 8 they stared in at the wall was chalked the word "Wats!" "Gussy's mad!"

"Clear out!"
 "Yah!"
 "There'll be a blessed free fight soon!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here, let me get to the door, and I'll explain to Cutts!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Oh, you dry up!"
 "I wefuse to dwy up! I considah that—"
 "Rats!"

It was not easy to get to the study door; but Tom Merry struggled through the crowd, and put a red and excited face out into the passage.

"Cutts!" he called out.
 "Hallo! Is tea ready?" demanded the Fifth Former.

"It's a mistake! Gussy was rotting you," explained Tom Merry.

Cutts snorted.
 "Oh, rotting me, was he?" he said.
 "Is he there?"

"Yes."
 "Then I'll jolly well show him that it doesn't do to rot the Fifth," said Cutts. "Now, then, you fellows, shove all together, and we'll give these cheeky cads a lesson! Rotting the Fifth, by Jove!"

There were five of the Fifth Formers, all powerful fellows, and they shoved together, and drove and wedged a way through the juniors in the passage. The juniors were squeezed helplessly to the walls and into other studies, and a good many of them rolled on the floor, and were walked over.

Cutts & Co. drove their way to the door of Tom Merry's study and glared in.

CHAPTER 11.

Quite Mad!

"GET out!" roared the juniors.
 "Buzz off!"
 "Clear!"

"Shove in!" yelled Cutts.
 "If there isn't any tea, we'll wreck the blessed study!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Got out!"
 "It's all wight, deah boys! Come wight in! Tom Mewwy gave me permission to bwing my fwiends, and he can't back out now!"

Cutts stared at the speaker.
 "Is that D'Arcy?" he gasped.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "What on earth are you got up like that for?" demanded Cutts.

"I'm twyin' this disguise for pwivate theatwicals, you know."

"Looks to me as if you're balmy!" growled Lefevre. "That's what I say—balmy!"

"Weally, you fairhead—"
 "Anyway, we've been asked to tea, and there isn't any tea!" said Pryce.

"Turn the blessed study inside out if they don't provide tea at once!"
 "Yes, rather! That's what I say!"

"Yaas. In the cires, I considah that you would be justified in waggin' those Shell boundahs, deah boys."

"And we're jolly well going to do it!" declared Cutts. "Now then, Tom Merry, is it to be tea or a rag?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said the unhappy captain of the Shell. "If you weren't a guest here, Gussy, I—I'd jump on you! You ass!"

"I wegard you as a silly fathead, Tom Mewwy! I considah—"
 "Where's the tea?" roared Gilmore.

"It's jolly well all gone!" said Tom Merry. "I didn't expect fifty chaps to tea! It's a jape of that howling ass D'Arcy!"

"If you chawactewise me as an ass, Tom Mewwy, I shall wetiah fwom the study!"

"You can retire and eat coke, you silly chump!"

The disguised junior struggled to the door and retired. But the juniors had no time to think of the personal feelings of the swell of St. Jim's.

Cutts & Co. were on the warpath. They had considered that they were honouring a junior study by coming to tea there at all, and to discover that there was no tea for them, and that it was all a rag, was a little too much.

Cutts & Co. wanted vengeance, and wanted it badly.

And most of the juniors were inclined to back Cutts & Co. up, though, as a rule, they would have been "up against" the Fifth. Three parts of the invited guests had not been able to get even into the study, let alone to obtain a share of the feed, and they were very excited about it.

"Wreck the blessed place!" shouted Gore of the Shell.

"Bump those bounders!"

"Shove the table over!"

"Rag them!"

Cutts then commenced operations by seizing the table and turning it sideways. Crockery and tray and cloth slid to the floor, amongst a forest of legs and feet. There was a roar of wrath from the Terrible Three, and they hurled themselves upon Cutts.

"Chuck him out!" panted Tom Merry.

"Wreck the blessed study!" gasped Lefevre. "That's what I say!"

"Faith, and we'll do it!"

"Hurrah!"

Crash, crash, crash!

The chums of Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. backed up the Terrible Three as best they could. But they could do little; they were overwhelmed. In a few moments pandemonium seemed to reign in Tom Merry's study.

When the din died away, the Fifth Formers and the crowd of indignant juniors took their departure, satisfied in their minds.

But the unhappy Co. were not satisfied.

Tom Merry picked himself up out of a heap of broken crockery, and gasped.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Groogh!"

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

The study was a wreck. The juniors looked like wrecks, too. Blake was breathing wrath as he dabbed a crimson stream from his nose with his handkerchief.

"Let's go and find Gussy!" he said. "We'll scalp him! We'll snatch him baldheaded! We'll jump on him and slaughter him!"

"Good egg!"

And the dusty and dishevelled juniors rushed away in search of the swell of St. Jim's. They rushed into Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus was not there; the study was empty. And it was not only empty—it was wrecked, and was not in a much better condition than Tom Merry's study. The table was overturned, books and papers and crockery and cinders were scattered about, the bookcase stood wrong end up, the carpet was hanging half-out of the window, and ink was smeared on the looking-glass and the window panes. On the wall was chalked in large letters:

"WATS!"

Blake gasped.

"He's mad!" he exclaimed. "Must be as mad as a hatter! Fancy a chap wrecking his own study! He's gone clean off his dot!"

"Great Scott!"

"Must be balmy!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"We must find him!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

They rushed out of the study. There was a yell from Reilly, who had just looked into his own room. It was almost in the same state as Study No. 6. Yells from the others fellows announced that they had found their quarters wrecked. The word ran from one to another that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had become insane; there seemed to be no other way of accounting for it. And he had disappeared.

The juniors trooped breathlessly
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amazement. The room had been wrecked, and on the
 named Blake. "Fancy a chap wrecking his own study!"

downstairs. Kildare of the Sixth was in the lower passage, and they rushed up to him breathlessly.

"Have you seen D'Arcy?" asked Tom Merry.

"No," said Kildare.

"He was got up in a queer way," explained Tom Merry. "Theatricals, you know. He had on a frock-coat and a beard and glasses."

"Oh!" said Kildare. "Was that merchant D'Arcy? I wondered who he was when he passed out."

"Has he gone out?"

"Yes; he went over to the New House, I think."

Figgins gave a yell.

"The New House—my study—"

He did not finish, but tore away across the quadrangle towards the New House.

The whole crowd followed him; they rushed into the New House, and up the stairs, and into Figgins' study. A scene of devastation met their gaze. The state of Study No. 6 was as nothing to the state of Figgins' study.

Figgins collapsed in a chair and gasped.

"Oh, my hat! He must be raving!"

"Fairly off his dot!"

"But—but where is he?"

"Must find him!" said Tom Merry.

And the amazed and excited juniors rushed out once more in search of the elusive swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 12.

Poor Old Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY walked cheerfully in at the school gates in the dusk.

He was feeling very pleased and contented with himself and the Grammarians. The latter had given him a very good time, and he was anxious to explain to Study No. 6 that Gordon Gay & Co. had not been "japing" when they invited him over to the Grammar School to witness the rehearsal of the "Belle of the Prairie." There was a sudden yell as D'Arcy came into the radius of light from the School House.

"There he is!"

There was a rush of excited juniors at once.

D'Arcy was surrounded.

"Yaas, here I am, deah boys!" he said, adjusting his eyeglass, and looking in considerable surprise at the excited faces round him. "It anythin' the mattah?"

"Matter!" said Tom Merry. "I should say so!"

"You're dotty, that's what's the matter!"

"Potty, you ass!"

"We're going to get you a strait jacket!"

"You've been changing your clobber again, have you, you fathead?"

"Collar him before he gets away!"

Arthur Augustus struggled as hands closed upon him on all sides. His silk hat was knocked off, and his collar came away from its stud, and his eyeglass floated at the end of its cord.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah? Are you all potty?" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "What are you up to?"

"Got him now!"

"Yank him in!"

"Mind he doesn't get away again!"

"But I haven't the least intention of getting away!" protested D'Arcy. "I have only just returned from the Gwammah School."

"What!"

"Only just returned?" said Blake.

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"Yaas!"

"You—you ass! It isn't ten minutes since you wrecked our study!"

"Since I wh-what?"

"Since you wrecked our study, and Figgins' study in the New House!" yelled Blake. "If you're not potty, what did you do it for?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gently!" said Tom Merry. "Don't bump him. If he's potty, he can't help it, and he'll have to be taken care of."

"That's so," said Blake. "But mind he doesn't get away. Something might happen if he goes wandering about in that state of mind."

"You frightful ass—"

"Lost his memory," said Figgins. "Mad people do that sometimes, you know."

"I wefuse to be regarded as a mad people—I mean person! I shall give you a feahful thwashin', Figgins!"

"Quite!" said Figgins soothingly. "Take it calmly. Don't get excited."

"You frightful ass—"

"We're not going to hurt you, Gussy," said Tom Merry reassuringly. "Only going to take care of you, you know, and see that you don't come to any harm."

"You burblin' duffah—"

"Let him run on," said Manners; "it may ease his mind. I read somewhere that it's dangerous to contradict lunatics."

"Mannahs, you beast!"

"Only don't let him escape."

"What does all this mean, you silly asses?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I do not comprehend in the least. Has anythin' happened while I've been away?"

"It's all right, old chap," said Kerr. "You haven't been away, you know; you only imagined that. But it's all right."

"Haven't been away!" ejaculated D'Arcy, almost staggering in astonishment. "I have been ovah to the Gwammah School, and have only weturned this minute."

"Let him run on," murmured Tom Merry. "Don't contradict him. He might begin raving."

"Speak to him gently."

"So you've been over to the Grammar School, have you, Gussy?" said Blake, in a tone of gentle humouring.

"Yaas, wathah, to see a dvesse wehearsal of a Wed Indian play," said D'Arcy. "You wemembah Gordon Gay's lettah, I suppose? I went."

"Yes. But don't you remember coming back?"

"I've only just got back."

"Don't you remember being in Study No. 6, got up in your disguise as Mr. Fowler, the new Form-master?" said Blake gently.

"You uttah ass! I have not tried on that disguise again. I have not put it on since the othah day, when the jape proved to be no good."

The juniors exchanged sympathetic glances. It was evident that the swell of St. Jim's had totally lost his memory. "Poor old Gussy!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"I suppose it was the ragging did it," said Redfern. "Poor old Gussy! We shall have to be very gentle with him after this."

"Yes, rather!"

"And you don't remember having tea in my study, and inviting all the fags and Cutts of the Fifth, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass! I had tea with Fwank Monk and his fiwends in their study at the Gwammah School."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Simply potty!" said Monty Lowther. "It's awful!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"If you wfer to me as poor old Gussy again, Figgins, I shall punch your silly head! I do not undahstand what you are gettin' at. I have had a vewy good time at the Gwammah School, and the fellows tweeked me with gweat wespsect. It was not a jape at all."

"Then you've really been to the Grammar School?" asked Digby.

"Of course I have, you ass!"

"When did you leave?"

"About twenty minutes ago."

"Go easy, Gussy!" said Harries. "Twenty minutes ago you were in Tom Merry's study, got up as Fowler!"

"I begin to think you are all wavin' mad," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps somebody else has been puttin' on that disguise and pwetendin' that he was me."

"Oh!"

"He couldn't put on your voice," said Tom Merry.

"I don't know," said Blake, with a start. "I've heard Gordon Gay imitate Gussy's voice to a T, so that you'd think it was Gussy speaking. But Gordon Gay's over at the Grammar School. I suppose you saw him there, Gussy?"

"Yaas, he was there when I awwived, but he wasn't at the wehearsal; he had an engagemment somewhere else," said D'Arcy.

Tom Merry started.

"An engagemment somewhere else!" he exclaimed. "How long since you met him, Gussy?"

"Two or three hours since I met him ovah there," said D'Arcy. "But I met him in the lane ten minutes ago as I was comin' back, and he gave me a note for you."

"In the lane—coming from St. Jim's?"

"Yaas."

"Oh crumbs! How was he dressed?"

"He was dvessed as usual, I believe," said D'Arcy. "He was cawwyin' a parcel, and he said that he had just come from St. Jim's."

"Just came from St. Jim's?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! And he gave me a note. He said he had left in too gweat a hurry to give it to you himself, and he scribbled it in pencil and gave it to me to bring to you."

"Hand it over!"

"Pway welsease me, then, you asses! I cannot get it out of my pocket while a set of blithewin' duffahs are holdin' my hands!"

D'Arcy was released. The truth was beginning to dawn upon the St. Jim's fellows; they realised that D'Arcy was not insane, after all, and that they had been hoaxed by the Australian junior of the Grammar School.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt in his pocket and found the pencilled note and handed it to Tom Merry.

Tom Merry unfolded it and read it—with a score of fellows crowding round him to read it, too.

It ran:

"Dear Merry,—One good turn deserves another!"

"Always yours,
"GORDON GAY."

The St. Jim's fellows stared at the note and stared at one another. They understood. The fellow in disguise as Mr. Fowler had not been, as they had supposed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy trying on his disguise again.

The Grammarians had asked D'Arcy

(Continued on page 13.)



**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! As I mentioned last week, our grand Christmas Number, the twenty-ninth in the long and successful run of the GEM, makes its appearance next Wednesday. In this special issue, which is always a great favourite, there is a magnificent COVER-TO-COVER story of the chums of St. Jim's. This means that the Rookwood series will be broken for one week. But another great yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co. will be found as usual in the following number, dated December 21st. The grand double-length story of St. Jim's is entitled:

"THE MYSTERY OF NOBODY'S STUDY!"

and you will all be thrilled by it! Martin Clifford's superb, seasonable yarn gets my vote for being the best one of the year, bar none, and I think all readers will agree with me when they read it.

There is a legend at St. Jim's, dating from the days when it was a monastic establishment, that on the first fall of snow an old monk haunts the punishment-room, known as Nobody's Study. The story goes that his cowl and robe were found on the floor one morning; he had vanished, and was never seen again. After that it became a legend that whoever slept in Nobody's Study on the first fall of snow shared the fate of the old monk.

Tom Merry & Co. have no fear of the supernatural, and they laugh at the legend—but they change their tune when eerie things start to happen in the punishment-room—and after the first fall of snow, too! The swishing of robes is heard, the gas-light goes out, apparently of its own accord, and weird moans sound in the darkness! Can it be true that the legend is being borne out, that the spectral presence of the old monk has visited St. Jim's? First Tom Merry and then Lavison, who displays a courage no one has ever suspected him of possessing, try to lay the ghost—with what result you will see in this nerve-tingling, extra-long Yuletide yarn.

Besides this special St. Jim's story our Christmas Number contains an exciting short feature entitled "Haunted" written by Tom Merry. Then there's another column of readers' prize laughs selected by the GEM jester, and Monty

Lowther has some Christmas wisecracks to get off his chest. Look out for this great number, chums. It's the usual price, 2d. Order early is my advice.

THE BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS!

At this time of the year there is a big variety of annuals on sale, and it is very often difficult to choose between them—unless you know the quality of the contents. That's where I can help. You can make no mistake if either "The Holiday Annual" or "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories" is chosen. The "H. A." I have already recommended to readers. It is the world's finest school story annual. "The Popular Book" is of a different type, but it is just as good in its way. It contains a wonderful collection of thrilling stories of all phases of adventure. Tales of flying, the circus, mystery, the Wild West, motor-racing, etc., are all featured in this fascinating book, which only costs 2s. 6d. It's a value-for-money annual that you couldn't better anywhere. So if any of you, chums, know of an aunt or uncle or brother or sister who is intending to buy you a book, you might discreetly mention that it would be quite safe to get either "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories," or "The Holiday Annual."

A NIGHT RAINBOW!

An unusual phenomenon happened a little while ago over Canvey Island, Essex. This was the appearance in the sky at four o'clock in the morning of a rainbow! It appeared when slight rain was falling, with a bright moon shining in the sky, and the rainbow lasted for about ten minutes. As you probably know, a rainbow is formed by the sun's rays being refracted from falling rain and reflected in the sky. The intensity of the colours depends upon the size of the raindrops. But the presence of rain in the air would cause a rainbow to form whether it was the sun's rays or the moon's which were refracted.

A rainbow at night usually means fine weather the next day, but one in

the morning indicates rain. In favourable conditions, it is possible to see a completely round rainbow from a mountain-top or an aeroplane.

PRACTICAL EVIDENCE!

An American doctor caused some surprise in a court in Virginia recently when giving evidence in a case. To support his claim that a small quantity of glass can be eaten without danger, he gave a practical demonstration to judge and jurors by crunching and swallowing a small piece. He was none the worse for it, and by his evidence had the satisfaction of winning the case.

It is generally believed that ground glass is a potent poison, but modern science has proved that it will not kill. However, unlike the doctor, I shouldn't like to demonstrate that this is the case!

AN OUTSIDE CABBAGE!

Fourteen years ago cabbage seeds were taken from Spain to Buenos Aires, and some of them were planted in a back garden. The result now is that what must be the largest cabbage ever has grown in that garden. It is over ten feet tall, and the owner has to climb a ladder to take a look at the heart to see how it's growing!

This monster cabbage reminds me of the story of the American who boasted about the large cabbages grown in U.S.A. His English friend bore it in silence until the pair came to a gasometer. "What is that for?" asked the American. "Ah!" exclaimed the Englishman, "that's a saucepan to cook your cabbages in!"

FOOTBALL ADVENTURES!

In their travels professional footballers meet with all sorts of experiences, but there is one adventure which the Preston players of seven years ago will not soon forget. The team was on its way to Manchester to play a match. They were seated in the train, talking, when a bullet suddenly shattered the window, whizzed between the players, and smashed through the opposite window. Except for the broken windows, no damage was done; but who fired the bullet and why was never discovered.

An exciting adventure is also told of the Newcastle team, when they were once playing on the Continent. The crowd hadn't liked their tactics in the match, and when they drove away in their motor-coach they were pelted with stones. On reaching the hotel where they were staying, it was discovered that one of their number was missing. While a search was being made for him, he turned up at the hotel. He had been left behind when the coach departed, and so as not to be suspected of being a player, he had joined the mob and pelted his fellow-players!

TAILPIECE.

Tommy: "I wish you'd give me another piece of cake."

Mother: "I told you to ask for no more cake."

Tommy: "I'm not asking, mum—I'm only wishing!"

THE EDITOR.

Lawrence Longhurst, 4, Grove Terrace, Grove Road, King's Heath, Birmingham 14; age 12-14; writing, railway, cigarette cards.

Harold Nuttall, 67, Sandywell Street, Hr. Openshaw, Manchester 11; age 12-14; British Empire; railways, engineering.

Miss Elsie Hammond, 34a, Matilda Street, Bethnal Green Road, London, E.2; girl correspondents; overseas; age 19 up.

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PEN PALS COUPON

7-12-35

PEN PALS.

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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Miss P. Upton, 1, Ripple Hall Cottages, Rippledale, Dagenham, Essex; girl correspondents; age 20-25; cage birds, stamps.

J. Doodie, 133, Park Road, Aston, Birmingham 6; age 18 up; British Empire, France, Germany.

over to the Grammar School to get him out of the way; and while Frank Monk & Co. were keeping him there Gordon Gay had calmly penetrated into the School House at St. Jim's in the exact imitation of D'Arcy's wondrous disguise as Mr. Fowler.

The St. Jim's fellows had not had the faintest suspicion; indeed, how could they have had? Mr. Fowler had been quite unrecognisable, and his imitation of D'Arcy's voice had been exact. The invitation to Arthur Augustus to attend the dress rehearsal was now explained.

"Done!" was all that Tom Merry said.

"Spoofed!" said Figgins.

"Diddled!" said Lowther.

"Dished!"

"Taken in!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Pewwaps you will kindly explain what has happened now," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sarcastically. "I am quite in the dark. Do you mean to say that Gordon Gay has been ovah here japin' you while I was at the Gwammah School?"

"Yes," said Blake. "He came here in the same disguise you went there in, and we thought it was you playing the giddy ov again."

"Weally, Blake—"

"He's wrecked Study No. 6 and Figg's study, and brought about a free fight in Tom Merry's quarters—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And it's all your fault, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hollo! What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled D'Arcy.

"The blessed imago thinks it's amusing now!" said Monty Lowther. "What is there to cackle at, you dummy?"

"Ha, ha, ha! This is what comes of my leavin' you youngsters alone for an afternoon," said D'Arcy. "Somethin' was bound to happen. You have been spoofed. Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors glared at the swell of St. Jim's. They had certainly been spoofed, and badly spoofed; but it was too much to see the cause of it all laughing at their misfortune. They closed round D'Arcy with grim looks.

"So you think it's funny, do you?" said Tom Merry.

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

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "we've been spoofed by the Grammar School cads, and it's all Gussy's fault! I think it will be agreed that it's all Gussy's fault!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then I suggest that we bump Gussy."

"Hold on! I wefuse to be bumped—I uttably decline to—Ow, ow, ow!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Yawwooooh!"

CHAPTER 13.

Tom Merry's Idea!

TOM MERRY came into Study No. 6 a couple of days later with a letter in his hand.

It was evening, and the four chums of Study No. 6 were doing their preparation.

"I've got a letter," said Tom Merry.

"Well, run away and read it," said Blake, without looking up.

"It's from Gordon Gay."

Blake looked up then.

"Oh, those blessed Grammarians again!" he exclaimed. "Is Gay trying to spoof you this time, instead of Gussy?"

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"Weally, Blake—"

"No," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"It's a polite invitation—"

"So it was in Gussy's case!"

"Well, I'll read it out to you," said the captain of the Shell. "It's an invitation for all of us to go over on Wednesday evening and watch them playing the giddy goat!"

"Yaas, they mentioned it to me," said D'Arcy. "They're givin' a Wed Indian play in the gym, and Fwank Monk said they were goin' to invite us ovah."

Jack Blake grunted.

"Catch me going over to see their rotten Red Indian play!" he said.

"Especially after they've been japing us," said Digby. "We should have to be on our good behaviour. It wouldn't be etiquette to throw things, I suppose."

"Wathah not!"

"Frightful bore!" said Herries. "I wouldn't go!"

"Well, let's hear the letter," said Blake.

Tom Merry read out the letter:

"Dear Merry,—We are giving a dramatic performance on Wednesday evening in the gym. Title of the piece, 'The Belle of the Prairie,' written by Tadpole, and acted by the Junior Dramatic Society of Rylcombe Grammar School. We shall be glad if you will come over and bring as many friends as you like. Seats free. The performance begins at seven sharp.

"Yours.

"GORDON GAY."

"Well, it's civil enough," yawned Blake. "But it would be a rotten bore. The Grammarians don't come over to see our amateur theatricals, and one good turn deserves another, as Gay says himself."

"Quite twue, deah boy."

"Tell 'em to go and eat coke!" said Herries.

"I've got an idea," said Tom Merry.

"Where did you borrow it?" asked Blake politely.

"I think it's a jolly good idea," said Tom Merry modestly. "Now, they're going to give a rotten play, and they want us to swell the audience. Some of us can go and do that, out of politeness."

"Better send Shell chaps, then!" grunted Blake. "You won't dig up anybody in this study to be bored to death out of politeness."

"No fear!"

"There may be some fun going that's worth seeing," said Tom Merry. "My idea is that a crowd of us might go and join the audience, and some others—"

"Well?"

"Some others might go and join the actors."

"But they don't say that they want any extra supers!"

"They may get 'em without wanting 'em."

"How do you mean?"

"It's a Red Indian play," said Tom Merry. "As Gussy has seen the dress rehearsal he can tell us all about it. I suppose a lot of them are made up as Red Indians, Gussy?"

"Yaas; Fwank Monk is Sitting Bull, and a crowd of fellows will be made up as Wed Indians," said D'Arcy.

"What do they do?"

"They attack the camp and cawwy off the Belle of the Pwaiwie. Wootton minor is made up as a gal, as the Belle of the Pwaiwie. Then Gordon Gay comes in as a cowboy, with a crowd of chaps, and defeats the Wedskins, fighting against odds, you know,

and dwivin' them before him, and he wescues the Belle of the Pwaiwie."

"When the kids are made-up as Red Indians, I suppose they're not easy to recognise?"

"Imposs, deah boy. I didn't know them till they spoke."

"And it wouldn't be necessary to speak," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"What on earth are you driving at?" asked Blake.

"A wheeze, my son—a real, ripping wheeze for getting at grips with the Grammarians and giving them the giddy kybosh!"

"Now you're talking!" said Blake.

"Go ahead!"

"They're giving this rotten show in the gym, Gussy?"

"Yaas."

"Where is their dressing-room?"

"There's a woom openin' off the gym, where they keep dumbbells and Indian clubs and things," said D'Arcy. "That's bein' used as a dwessin'-woom, and the stage is awwanged so that it's behind the scenes. There's a back door into it fwyom the quad, you see. They've weally got everythin' awwanged vewy well, considewin'. I was able to give them a few tips about the awwangements—"

"Yes; I've no doubt you were. When Monk and the rest are making up as Redskins, where are Gordon Gay and his giddy cowboys?"

"They're on the stage, hidden by the fowest fwyom view. They come burstin' through the twees when the Wedskins attack the camp at the othah end of the stage. The twees are made of cardboard, you know."

"Good!"

"Blessed if I see what the wheeze is!" said Blake. "It's no good thinking of rushing them on the stage; we should have the whole Grammar School on our necks in a jiffy. And there will be prefects present, you can bet your hat, and perhaps the Head, as Dr. Monk is young Monkey's pater."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know that. I'm not thinking of a raid. Of course, the chaps who accept Gordon Gay's invitation will have to keep order in the audience—honour bound, you know. Can't accept a chap's invitation and then rag him!"

"Wathah not! But—"

"But chaps who don't accept the invitation to join the audience can do as they like," said Tom Merry, with a glimmer of fun in his blue eyes; "and they can turn up, all the same, but not in the audience."

"But what—"

"Half a dozen of us might drop in at the stage door, when the Red Indians are going on the scene," Tom Merry remarked. "It will be after dark, and as there will be a lot of St. Jim's fellows about, we shouldn't be noticed."

"Yes; but—"

"If Gordon Gay can plant himself on us disguised as a silly ass—"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Then I don't see why we can't plant ourselves on him, disguised as Red Indians—"

"Oh!"

"And introduce a new and unexpected variation into the scene, when the Redskins come on the stage," said Tom Merry.

Blake gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! What a wheeze if it will work!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I think it will work," said Tom Merry, grinning. "Anyway, there's no

harm in trying. Some of the fellows can reply to this letter, accepting the invitation, and join the audience. And the rest of us can excuse ourselves, as we've got something else on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Wippin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I will take charge of the party to go to the stage door with pleasuah."

"I dare say you would, old chap; but we're not looking for a leader," said Tom Merry affably. "I can do that quite well."

"Weally, deah boy, what is wequiahed for a thing of this sort is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"We'll take Figgins & Co. into it," said Tom Merry. "This is a school affair, and we're going to line up, shoulder to shoulder, to give the Grammarians the kybosh."

"Yes, rather!"
"Mind you—mum's the word!"
"You bet!"

And Figgins & Co. were promptly called into council, and the St. Jim's juniors elaborated their scheme with many chuckles.

CHAPTER 14.

"The Belle of the Prairie!"

"I THINK that's about all," said Gordon Gay.

It was Wednesday evening.
The Junior Dramatic Society of Rylcombe Grammar School had done yeoman work that afternoon.

The gymnasium, the use of which for the dramatic performance had been kindly granted by the Head, had been prepared as an auditorium.

Forms and seats were arranged for a numerous audience.
At one end there was the stage, with a curtain that would really go up and down when required to do so.

This, as Gay remarked, was a great advantage, not always to be met with in amateur theatrical performances.

The company had been through a final rehearsal, and all was ready. Every fellow knew his part to a "T." They were all word perfect, or at least they were satisfied that they were.

"Yes, I think it's all right now," said Frank Monk, with a sigh of relief. "The great white chief has spoken!"

"The cowboy part will go off all right, anyway," Wootton major remarked.

"Wah! My brother is talking out of his hat," said Frank Monk. "It is the Red Indian part that will really knock the audience."

"What price the belle of the giddy prairie?" grinned Wootton minor. "I think my lines are jolly good, considering that Tadpole wrote them."

"My dear Wootton—" said Tadpole.

"Spare my life, O great chief!" spouted Wootton minor. "Slay not the paleface maiden who kneels at your feet!"

"The paleface maiden shall come with Sitting Bull to dwell as a squaw in the lodges of the Sioux!" said Monk.

"Never! Never!" wailed Wootton minor. "Oh, where is my brave and noble Cowboy Jim in this dreadful hour?"

"Oh, where and oh where can he be?" sang Carboy.

"Shut up, Carboy, you ass!"

"Those are not the lines," said Tadpole, who could never see anything in the nature of a joke. "You do not speak to Carboy at all, Wootton. Carboy comes in later as a Red Indian. You say: 'Never will I be a squaw in the lodges of the Sioux!'"

"Never will I squawk in the lodges of the Sioux!"

"No; 'Never will I be a squaw in the lodges of the Sioux,'" said Tadpole. "'Death, a thousand deaths were preferable! Oh, where is my noble Cowboy Jim?' Then Gordon Gay comes through the trees with his cowboys, and says—"

"Let's go and have something to eat," said Lane.

"Not at all, Lane. He says—"

"I'm hungry."

"No, no; he doesn't say that—"

"But I say that, fathead!" said Lane. "I'm hungry, and I'm jolly well going to have tea, or we shan't have time before the performance. The audience are going in already."

And the dramatic company, satisfied with their preparations, went in to tea.

The audience were already taking their places. Most of the Grammar School fellows were going; even the seniors were turning up in honour of the performance. Some of the masters had promised to look in. And fellows from St. Jim's were already arriving. The Grammarians were very keen to have St. Jim's fellows in the audience. They were not above wishing to show the Saints how things

(Continued on the next page.)



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should be done in the amateur theatrical line, and, letting them see that the Grammar School could handle such matters a little better than they were handled at St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay was in his cowboy costume—and very handsome he looked in it—when he received the first arrivals from St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Fatty Wynn were first to arrive, and the cowboy chief showed them to their places reserved for the St. Jim's fellows.

"I hope Tom Merry and the rest will be able to come," said Gordon Gay genially.

Fatty Wynn grinned and D'Arcy coughed.

"They may drop in in the course of the evening," Fatty Wynn explained. "Figgy may drop in; so may Kerr and Reddy. But they've got something on for this evening, so I can't answer for them."

"Well, I hope you'll enjoy the show," said Gay.

"Oh, we shall enjoy it."

"Yas, wathah!"

"In fact, we're looking forward to a jolly good time," said Fatty Wynn. "It isn't often that we get an entertainment like this for nothing."

"Wathah not!"

Gordon Gay glanced rather sharply at Fatty Wynn; but the Fourth Former's face was quite placid and innocent.

"No larks, you know," said Gay.

"Larks!" said Fatty Wynn, as if he did not comprehend. "What kind of larks?"

"No ragging!"

"Weally, Gay—I twust you do not think that, aftah takin' places in the audience, we should think of waggin the show," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most stately manner.

"No, no; of course not," said Gay.

"But—"

"But we're supposed to laugh in the funny places, ain't we?" asked Wynn.

"There aren't any funny places," said Tadpole. "This is a tragedy of the Far West—a thrilling drama of the Rocky Mountains, you know."

"But some of it may be funny without your meaning it—accidentally, you know."

"My dear Wynn—"

"The drama may be a little rocky, as well as the mountains, and—"

"Look here, if you're going to be funny—" said Wootton major, a little aggressively.

Fatty Wynn looked surprised.

"I'm not going to be funny," he said. "I was only suggesting that perhaps you fellows were going to be funny."

"Oh, rats!"

"Yas, wathah! Wats, Wynn, deah boy! Don't make jokes about a fellow's play; it's liable to be misundahstood, you know. If it's a twagedy, we're called upon as orderly chaps to suppress our mewmiment."

"Oh, good!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'll do my best."

"I dare say we shall be more inclined to cwy than to laugh," said D'Arcy.

"Look here—" began Gay warmly.

"Pway don't misundahstand me, Gay, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Chaps are supposed to cwy at a twagedy, aren't they?"

"Yes; but—"

"Well, I want to do ewewythin' in ordah."

"There are some very touching parts," said Tadpole. "Where the Belle of the Prairie receives the ring from the cowboy chief—"

"Bai Jovel! Does the cowboy wing a bell?"

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"No, I mean the Belle of the Prairie—Wootton minor, you know."

"How can the cowboy chief wing Wootton minah?"

"He doesn't ring him, fathead! He gives him a ring."

"Isn't that the same thing?"

"An engagement-ring, you ass!"

D'Arcy nodded.

"Oh, I see. The cowboy chief is engaged—"

"Yes; that's it."

"Engaged to wing a bell on the pwaiwie," said D'Arcy, with an air of complete comprehension. "Good! Who engages him?"

"You don't understand. You see—"

"Oh, chuck it, Taddy!" said Gordon Gay, laughing. "You won't make him understand. Let's get back to the green room."

"But I'd like D'Arcy to understand."

"Impossible! He hasn't got anything to understand with."

"Weally, Gay—"

"Come on, Taddy. We want the curtain up soon, and we've got to get ready."

And the Grammarians walked away.

Arthur Augustus and Fatty Wynn sat down, smiling. They were joined by Lawrence, Owen, Gore, Skimpole, Brooke, Reilly, and Kerruish, and a crowd more of St. Jim's fellows came in by twos and threes. But the St. Jim's leaders were conspicuous by their absence. Tom Merry was not to be seen, or Monty Lowther, Manners, Blake, or Herries, Digby, Figgins, Kerr, or Redfern. But in the crowd their absence was not specially noticed by Gordon Gay & Co., who had plenty of other matters to think about at that moment.

Dr. Monk, the Head of the Grammar School, took his place with several other masters, and Delamere, the captain of the school, came in with a crowd of seniors.

Gordon Gay, from behind the scenes, watched the gym filling with a great deal of satisfaction.

"We shall have a jolly good audience," he remarked.

"And the audience will have a jolly good play," said Tadpole.

"Blessed is he who bloweth his own trumpet," grinned Wootton minor, who was already made up as Mustang Mudge, the Belle of the Prairie. "The acting will be all right, at any rate."

"Yes, rather!"

"Especially the title role," said Wootton minor modestly.

"Blessed is he who bloweth—"

"Better get into your Redskin rig, Monkey," said Gordon Gay. "The first scenes will last nearly half an hour before you're wanted, but you may as well be ready."

"Right-ho!" said Monk.

"You go on first, Gay," said Tadpole. "You meet Buckskin Bill—that's Wootton major—by accident in the forest, and he tells you the Sioux are on the warpath."

"We know our parts, fathead! Are you ready, Buckskin Bill?"

"I guess so!" grinned Wootton major.

"Got your hair on safe, kid?" asked Gay, surveying Wootton minor's golden wig. "You don't want it to come off and fall on the Redskin chief's moccasins, as it did in the last rehearsal."

"Quite safe this time."

"All serene! May as well have the curtain up now; we're ten minutes late already."

And the curtain was rung up.

The scene disclosed a forest in the Far West, and Buckskin Bill lighting his pipe under the trees. Then Cowboy Jim appeared with a rifle under his

arm. The rifles of the Grammar School corps had been requisitioned for the play. Gordon Gay promptly covered Buckskin Bill with his rifle, amid a thrill from the younger members of the audience.

"Hands up!"

Up went Buckskin Bill's hands.

"Waal, I swow!" said Buckskin Bill.

"If it isn't my old pard, Cowboy Jim!"

Cowboy Jim lowered his rifle.

"Buckskin Bill!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"The very identical article!" said Buckskin Bill.

"Shake!"

And they shook.

"Is this where we laugh or where we cry?" murmured Fatty Wynn to the swell of St. Jim's.

"I don't weally know, deah boy."

They settled the point by laughing.

CHAPTER 15.

Capturing the Redskins!

"MY feathers on all right?" asked Frank Monk.

"Right as rain!"

"You want some more red ochre on your chivvy, Lane."

"Give us a dab, then. Ow! Not in my eye, fathead!"

"I zink zat I look ze Indian brave all right, n'est-ce pas?" grinned Mont Blong, surveying himself with much pride in a glass.

Frank Monk grinned horribly under his warpaint.

"You look the part all right," he said. "But you don't talk it—don't open your mouth on the stage."

"My dear shum—"

"Mum's the word for you, Mont Blong," said Carboy. "We don't want to have braves talking with a Mont-martre accent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How are they going on?" asked Monk. "Take a look on the stage, Lane; you're done."

"Right!"

Lane pulled back the curtain which covered the doorway leading into the wings. He had a view of the forest in the Far West and Gordon Gay and Buckskin Bill engaged in a talk on the subject of the Sioux, who, it appeared, were on the warpath with the wicked intention of capturing the Belle of the Prairie.

"Going strong," said Lane.

"How do the audience look?"

"No casualties yet, as far as I can see."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

Tadpole looked into the dressing-room.

"Ready, Wootton minor?" he asked anxiously. "They are going off to the left now, and you enter on this side."

"Quite ready," said the Belle of the Prairie.

"Then get into the wings."

Wootton minor followed Tadpole out. The Redskins put the finishing touches to their warpaint and waited for their cue.

The door into the room from the quad opened, and a well-known face looked in. It was the face of Tom Merry of St. Jim's.

The Redskins stared at him.

"Hallo!" said Monk. "Is that you, Merry? You don't come in here. This is the stage door. The audience go round to the front."

"Just wanted to have a look at the Redskins on their native heath, you know," said Tom Merry blandly. "I



"Open the door, you fellows!" called Tadpole. "It's your cue to go on in a minute." Tom Merry suddenly pulled the door open, and Tadpole was promptly seized and hauled into the room. The Grammarian junior had not expected to find St. Jim's Redskins in the dressing-room!

don't belong to the audience; I didn't accept the invitation."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"Looking at Sitting Bull. I suppose you're Sitting Bull?"

"Or Standing Donkey?" said Monty Lowther over Tom Merry's shoulder.

Tom Merry & Co. came in. Blake, Herries, and Dig, and Figgins, Kerr, Redfern, Kangaroo, and Bernard Glyn followed the St. Jim's leader into the room.

The Grammarians stared at them.

"Look here, to be quite plain, you're not wanted here!" said Frank Monk gruffly.

"My dear chap—"

"Outsiders aren't allowed in this part. Clear out!"

"Where's Gordon Gay?" asked Tom Merry.

"He's on the other side of the stage, lying low in the wings with his cowboys. The Belle of the Prairie is on the stage now, and we're going in to capture her in five minutes," said Monk, consulting his watch.

"Everybody busy excepting yourselves, I see."

"We're too busy to talk to duffers," said Lane. "Get out! You're bothering us!"

"Oh, quite!" said Carboy.

"Yes, travel along, do!"

Tom Merry made a sign to his followers.

Figgins, Kerr, Kangaroo and Lowther planted themselves before the door leading to the stage. Herries and Dig guarded the other door.

The Redskins looked surprised and alarmed.

"Look here, what are you up to?" demanded Frank Monk.

"You were going to capture the Belle of the Prairie?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"Well, you won't be able to do it."

"Why not?"

"Because you're going to be captured yourselves."

"What?"

"We can't allow ferocious Redskins to go round loose in a civilised country," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

"Look here—"

"Collar them—"

"Why—what—look out! Oh!"

There was a rush.

The half-dozen Grammarians were simply overwhelmed.

They struggled valiantly, but, taken by surprise as they were, and outnumbered, they did not have the ghost of a chance.

In a twinkling they were on their backs on the floor, and the St. Jim's juniors were sitting on them.

"Lock the doors!" said Tom Merry hurriedly.

Both the doors were promptly locked. Frank Monk tried to yell, but the handle of his own tomahawk was poked into his open mouth in time, and he only gurgled.

The other Redskins were reduced to silence by means equally efficacious.

"Groogh!"

"Ow-w-w-w!"

"Captured!" said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction. "Now, Monkey says there are only five minutes to go before the cue, so we shall have to hurry. Strip them!"

Monk gurgled.

"Lemme up—groogh—oh!"

"Sit on his head if he won't keep quiet!"

"Groo-oo!"

"Now off with those Redskin things, and tie them up!"

"Groo-oo!"

"Sharp's the word!"

The Redskins were stripped of blankets and feathers almost in the twinkling of an eye.

Then they were tied hand and foot with cord that the raiders had thoughtfully brought in their pockets for the purpose. Their own handkerchiefs were stuck into their mouths and tied there with string.

They glared at the St. Jim's juniors as they lay on their backs, looking fully as ferocious as real Redskins.

"Don't mind us, Monkey," said Tom Merry blandly. "It's all in the game, you know."

"Groogh!"

"I know the audience are expecting Redskins in a few minutes, but we're not going to disappoint them. Get into these things quick, you chaps!"

The Grammarians writhed and struggled with their bonds.

But in vain.

The victors had not left anything to chance, and the Grammarian juniors had not the slightest prospect of getting loose, or calling out to their comrades.

"It's all right, Monkey," said Tom Merry reassuringly. "We're not going to disappoint the audience. We're going on in your place."

"Groogh!"

"Is that a Sioux word?" asked Monty Lowther. "Sorry I don't speak the language, Monkey, I'll try if you like. Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Duck up!" said Tom Merry. "No time for jokes!"

The raiders clothed themselves rapidly in blankets and leggings and feathers.

Then they daubed their faces with thick layers of ochre.

Their identity completely disappeared under the war paint.

No one could possibly have told that they were St. Jim's juniors, or that they were not Frank Monk & Co. They might have been anybody.

The door leading into the wings rattled as someone tried to open it on the other side.

"Hallo!" came Tadpole's voice. "What have you got the door locked for?"

"Stage-manager, I suppose," murmured Figgins. "Let him in, and tie him up with the rest."

"Good! The more the merrier!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Open the door, you fellows!" called out Tadpole. "It's your cue in a minute!"

Tom Merry threw the door open.

Tadpole was promptly seized and hauled into the room. Before he had time for anything but an amazed gasp, he was on the floor, a handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, and a cord was being knotted round his wrists and ankles.

Tadpole, gasping and gurgling, was laid along with the plundered Redskins on the floor, too astonished to do anything but blink dazedly.

"All serene," said Tom Merry. "Now, as it's our cue, we'd better go on. Turn out the lights here, in case anybody should look in."

"Good!"

The light was switched off, and the dressing-room was plunged into darkness.

In the darkness the bound Grammarians lay and wriggled and gurgled.

Tom Merry & Co.—changed into Sitting Bull and his ferocious braves—calmly stepped into the wings.

The audience were expecting Redskins, and the audience were not to be disappointed. But the Redskins who arrived were very different from the Redskins that had been expected.

CHAPTER 16.

Unrehearsed!

"HERE come the giddy Redskins!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Faith, and I'm blessed if I know them!" said Reilly.

The St. Jim's juniors in the audience stared hard at the new arrivals. Whether Tom Merry & Co. had succeeded in their raid they could not tell yet. The Redskins presented exactly the appearance that Frank Monk & Co. would have presented if they had come on as arranged.

The Saints could only wait for developments. If the Redskins were Monk & Co., the play would go on as per programme. If they were Tom Merry & Co., there would be changes in the programme—decided changes.

The audience could only wait and see. As for the Grammarian crowd, they had not the slightest suspicion.

Wootton minor, alias the Belle of the Prairie, was standing alone on the stage, the cowboys being off the scene to the right, watching for the moment to rush on to the rescue.

The Redskins came creeping on in a stealthy Redskin manner, and the Belle

of the Prairie did not seem to be aware of their approach. She was making her speech, and had no eyes for Redskins.

"Alone—alone on the vast prairie!" cried the heroine of Tadpole's thrilling drama. "Oh, where is my brave Cowboy Jim? Who knows but that Indians may be lurking in these fatal woods, and—"

"Sure! And I should think she'd see the giddy Indians! They're not a yard off," murmured Reilly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Whoop!"

It was a sudden, terrific yell from the Redskins, and they rushed at the Belle of the Prairie and surrounded her.

Wootton minor shrieked.

"Alas! The Redskins!"

"Ugh!" grunted Sitting Bull.

"Help!"

"Cry not for help to the detested palefaces!" said Sitting Bull, in a deep and husky voice. "The paleface maiden must elope with me to the lodges of the Sioux."

"You ass!" murmured the paleface maiden, under her breath. "You've got the lines all wrong."

"Speak not to the chief of the Sioux!" said Sitting Bull. "Seize her!"

"Look here, you fathead! This is

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where I go down on my knees," whispered Wootton minor, dismayed at the "bloomers" Monk was making.

"Rats!" said Sitting Bull.

"What!"

"Seize the paleface maiden!" said the deep voice of Sitting Bull. "I suspect that her hair is false! Ugh!"

"You—you frabjous ass!" said Wootton minor, forgetting to subdue his voice in his excitement. "Don't touch my hair! It will come off!"

There was a yell from the audience.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wootton minor was seized.

A Redskin dragged at his wig, and it came off in his dusky hand, and the audience shrieked.

"Ugh! 'Twas as I suspected," said Sitting Bull. "Her hair is false!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, where is Cowboy Jim?" shrieked Wootton minor. "Rescue!"

Gordon Gay & Co. had been surveying the unexpected scene from the wings, with amazement and alarm.

"Monkey's gone off his dot!" gasped Wootton major.

"He's messing up the whole thing."

"Come on!" said Gordon Gay hurriedly. "We'll hurry on the rescue scene a bit; and you needn't be too gentle in handling that silly ass."

"What-ho!"

And the cowboys rushed to the rescue.

There were only five of the cowboys, but, according to the programme, several of the Redskins should have been slain on the spot, and the rest

should have taken to flight, leaving the rescued damsel with the gallant cowboys.

But the scene did not go according to programme.

The Redskins put up an unexpectedly good fight.

They met the rush of the cowboys and closed with them, and a wild and whirling combat took place on the stage.

The audience yelled with delight. The younger members of the audience, especially, were overjoyed to see a real fight going on, and they jumped up in their places, and yelled and clapped and cheered frantically.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience. "Go it!"

The Indians were undoubtedly getting the best of it.

They were two to one, and they were fighting hard.

Cowboy Jim was on his back on the stage, with two Redskins sitting on him. The other cowboys were very hard pressed, and one by one they were brought down and sat upon.

Then the Redskins proceeded to tie them hand and foot.

"You idiots!" bawled Gordon Gay. "Leggo! We beat you; you don't beat us! You are mucking up the whole thing."

"I rather fancy we beat you this time, Gay, old man!" said Sitting Bull, in his natural voice.

Gordon Gay gasped.

"Tom Merry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue!" bawled Gordon Gay.

"Rescue! It's—it's— Oh—oh—

Ooooh!"

A fragment of a torn blanket was stuffed in Cowboy Jim's mouth, effectually stopping his utterance.

"Bind the paleface dogs!" shouted Sitting Bull. "Bind and gag them, ere we convey them to the lodges of the Sioux."

And the paleface dogs were bound and gagged, the Belle of the Prairie sharing their hapless fate.

"Bring hence the paleface prisoners," said Sitting Bull.

The cowboys were dragged off the stage into the dressing-room.

There Gordon Gay & Co., as soon as the light was turned on, saw the original Redskins on the floor. They were added to the collection.

"Quite a surprise, isn't it?" grinned Tom Merry. "This is where St. Jim's comes out on top." He removed the gag from Gay's mouth. "Do you want to speak?"

"You beast!"

"Is that all?"

"Yah!"

"Anything more?"

"Groogh! I'll make you smart for this! Ow!"

"My dear chap, you said yourself that one good turn deserves another," grinned Figgins. "You can't complain of the fortune of war."

"Oh, you rotters! I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue!" yelled Gordon Gay.

"Res— Ow—ow! Groogh!"

The handkerchief was promptly stuffed in his mouth again.

"Can't allow you to make a row," said Tom Merry, with a gentle shake of the head. "Now, you chaps, as we've done our little bit towards amusing the audience, we may as well get this stuff off and clear. Don't want to meet a crowd."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors washed off the warpaint

(Continued on page 28.)

THE FORM-MASTER WHO WAS "SACKED" BY AN UNKNOWN!



Out of the shadows a strange figure appeared, lurching drunkenly towards the House. Jimmy Silver & Co., staring down in astonishment, saw it was a man with a sack over his head. "What blithering ass has got himself up like that?" asked Vane. "Must be as mad as a hatter!" exclaimed Raby.

By OWEN CONQUEST

GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY!

"**H**ERE is the boy, sir!" Richard Dalton, master of the Rookwood Fourth, opened the door of the Head's study, and signed to Lovell to enter.

Lovell of the Fourth paused a moment on the august threshold, to dab his nose with a red-spotted handkerchief.

Lovell's nose had a damaged aspect. A fellow whose "claret" had been tapped was really hardly in a state to appear before his headmaster. Arthur Edward Lovell's face was almost as red as the spots on his handkerchief as he stopped in.

Dr. Chisholm adjusted his glasses, and looked at Lovell with cold disapproval. The Head of Rookwood School was a severe old gentleman. Lovell's damaged aspect was not likely to diminish his severity. With the stained handkerchief crumpled in one hand, Lovell stood before him, hoping that his nose wouldn't begin to bleed again. That hope proved ill-founded! It did!

Mr. Dalton closed the door and stood near it in silence, his eyes on that member of his Form and on the headmaster. There was a doubtful and uncertain expression on the young master's face. He had brought Lovell there for stern judgment, but he was assailed by a lingering doubt of his guilt!

"Have you been fighting, Lovell?" asked Dr. Chisholm icily.

Really, it was a superfluous question. Judging by appearances, at least, Lovell had!

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Lovell. He gave his nose a hurried dab. "I'm sorry, sir, but it was a Modern chap—"

The Head's frown deepened.

"You were under orders to appear before me, Lovell, to hear your sentence! Yet this is the moment you choose to indulge in a renewal of the disorderly disputes between the Classical and Modern sides in the school!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Lovell. "Only, you see, sir, that Modern chap made out that it was I who ragged Mr. Dalton's study last night, so I jolly well punched him!"

Dr. Chisholm stared at him blankly.

He glanced at Mr. Dalton, and then stared at Lovell again.

"I fail to understand you, Lovell!" he rapped. "You are here to be judged for the outrage in your Form-master's study, of which you were guilty. Do you mean to say that you have assailed a boy for saying what is well known to the whole school?"

"You see, sir, I never did it!" said Lovell. "I'm not going to have a Modern cad making out I did, either!"

"Upon my word! Is there any doubt of this boy's guilt, Mr. Dalton?" asked the Head. "I understood from you that you were alarmed by a noise in the night, that you came down and found Lovell in your study, and that the study had been wrecked."

"That is certainly the case, sir!" said Mr. Dalton. "I had no doubt whatever

"It's the truth, sir!" said Lovell. "I know what it looks like! But I never touched a thing in the study—except falling over some of the furniture. It was all upside-down and chucked about when I got there."

"Then, for what purpose," said the Head, in a deep voice, "did you visit your Form-master's study at all in the middle of the night?"

Lovell's face, already red, grew redder.

"I—I was going to chalk a message on the glass, sir! You see, sir, Mr. Dalton's given us detention for Saturday afternoon, which means washing out the House match, and—and I was rather—rather excited about it. I—I know I was an ass, sir! But—but I was only going to put a chalk message on the glass for Mr. Dalton to see in the morning, about the detention—"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Chisholm. "You—you see, sir, I—I thought Dicky—I mean Mr. Dalton—might take a hint and wash out the detention," stammered Lovell. "As for ragging the study, I never dreamed of it. It was a rotten thing to do!"

Dr. Chisholm peered at Lovell over his glasses. Mr. Dalton's look was growing more and more uncertain. If ever a fellow had been convicted on overwhelming evidence, Arthur Edward Lovell had. Yet doubt was growing in the minds of both the masters.

"I know another fellow had been there, sir," went on Lovell. "I heard a sound in the study when I got there. When I went in, somebody rushed from behind the door, barged me over, and scooted—"

"And—and what?"

"I mean, bunked, sir—that is, buzzed off. I mean to say, he dodged out of the study and beat it!"

"And who was it?" demanded the Head.

"I couldn't see in the dark, sir. I never knew he was there till he knocked me over. He was gone in a jiffy—"

"In a what?"

"I mean, in a tick—that is, in an instant!" gasped Lovell. "I was left sprawling on the floor, all over ink, and when I got up, I fell over a lot of things thrown about the room. That is how

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THE STUDY-WRECKER AT WORK AGAIN.

ASSAULTS A FORM- MASTER AT NIGHT!

WHO IS HE?

that Lovell had done the damage, and so I reported to you this morning."

"I didn't, sir!" exclaimed Lovell, with another dab at his nose, which persisted in dripping crimson. "I never did anything of the kind! I wouldn't! I don't believe any fellow in the Classical Fourth did it! I jolly well know I didn't!"

"You do not deny that Mr. Dalton found you there, Lovell, after midnight?" asked Dr. Chisholm.

"Oh, no, sir! Dicky—I mean, Mr. Dalton—found me there!"

"You admit that you broke dormitory bounds after midnight, and went down to your Form-master's study?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Yet you have the effrontery to deny that you did the damage there?"

Mr. Dalton came to see me there, sir. I hadn't time to cut!"

"Is it known, Mr. Dalton, whether any other boy was out of his dormitory last night?"

"Not so far as I am aware, sir!"

"Do you attach any importance whatever to this extraordinary story?"

Mr. Dalton hesitated a moment.

"I hardly know what to say, sir. I had no doubt that Lovell had done the damage in the study! But, foolish, reckless, and obtuse as this boy is, I have always found him truthful; nor should I, before this occasion, have dreamed for a moment that he could be guilty of such an outrage. I am bound to say, sir, that I feel that there is now an element of doubt in the matter."

"You can take my word, sir, that I never did it," said Lovell. "Why, sir, the clock was smashed and the bookcase broken! It was what a rotten brute of a hooligan would do! It wasn't a rag—it was a beastly bit of blackguardism! I'd like to punch the rotter's head for it!"

The two masters gazed at Lovell of the Classical Fourth. Arthur Edward Lovell was not, perhaps, brilliant in the intellectual line. But it was difficult to doubt that he was sincere. And yet—

"If you would decide to reserve judgment until further inquiry can be made, sir," suggested Mr. Dalton, "it may possibly be ascertained whether any other boy left his dormitory during the night."

"Quite!" said the Head. "Lovell will be caned severely for having broken dormitory bounds after lights-out. If it shall prove that he was guilty of the damage to the study, he will be expelled from Rookwood. Until the matter has been decided, he will be confined to the punishment-room. Take him away, Mr. Dalton!"

"Follow me, Lovell!" said the Fourth Form master quietly.

And Arthur Edward—with his handkerchief to his nose again—followed his Form-master from the Head's study.

In "Clink"!

JIMMY SILVER wore a worried look in the Fourth Form Room. His chums, Raby and Newcome, looked worried also, and their feelings seemed to be shared by Dudley Vane, the new fellow who, as a member of the end study, consorted a good deal with the Fistical Four.

Other fellows in the Fourth looked excited or concerned. Peele and Gower were exchanging grins, apparently amused by the fact that Lovell was up before the Big Beak. Mornington had a sarcastic smile on his face, but his chum, Erroll, looked very serious. Tubby Muffin was full of excitement. Tubby's voice was heard in eager tones:

"Of course, it's the sack! They're bound to sack him! But, I say, are they going to boot him while we're in Form? It ought to be done in Hall, you know! I say, Vane, you've never seen a fellow sacked, I suppose, being a new chap? If they have it in Hall—"

"You silly ass!" said Dudley Vane. "Shut up!"

"Well, we don't often get an expulsion," said Tubby, "and I don't think we ought to be done out of it. What do you think, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver did not explain, in words, what he thought. He reached over with a ruler, and gave the cheery Tubby a crack that elicited a wild howl from Cecil Adolphus Muffin.

"Yoo—hoo—ow—whoop!" yelled

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Tubby. "Ow! Wow! You rotter! Wharrer you banging me with that ruler for? Wow!"

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" said Oswald.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

"Here comes Dicky!" exclaimed

Raby.

Mr. Dalton entered the Form-room. He was, for once, late for his class. All eyes were turned on him as he came in. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome watched his grave face almost in anguish.

They believed Lovell's denial of the ragging. They believed that their chum had, as usual, only been a silly ass—nothing more. But they did not expect that view to be taken by the beaks.

If Lovell was guiltless, he had taken no end of trouble to make himself look guilty, that was certain. And the headmaster could only go on the evidence, in this case overwhelming. They had to know what the verdict was.

"If you please, sir!" said Jimmy Silver, with a tremor in his voice. "What's happened to Lovell, sir?"

"Lovell is in the punishment-room, Silver," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "He is to remain there until the matter has been further investigated. He denies having been guilty of the damage to my study, and it is the headmaster's intention to sift the matter thoroughly before a Rookwood boy is expelled."

Jimmy almost gasped with relief. It was not the "sack" yet, at all events, little hope as there seemed for Lovell.

Mr. Dalton looked over the Form. His keen eyes seemed to linger for a moment or two on Peele and Gower. The two black sheep of the Form were the fellows he would have suspected in the absence of evidence.

"There is to be an inquiry," went on Mr. Dalton, "as to whether any other boy was out of dormitory bounds during the night. If any such boy is here, I command him to stand forward."

There was no movement in the Fourth. Mornington closed one eye at Erroll, who frowned and looked away. Morny was rather amused at the idea of a fellow being asked to stand forward to take the sentence of the "sack."

"There can be no doubt," resumed Mr. Dalton, after a pause, "that what happened last night was an act of revenge, whether for the sentence of detention passed on the Form, or for some other reason." His glance lingered again on Peele and Gower. "Peele! Did you leave the dormitory during the night?"

"No, sir, I didn't!" said Cyril Peele, between his teeth. "I don't think I ought to be suspected, sir, for what everybody knows that Lovell did."

"You have been punished before, Peele, for breaking bounds after lights out," said Mr. Dalton. "That is why I have questioned you." He paused. "Did any boy here wake during the night, and notice that anyone was absent from the dormitory?"

No answer.

"Very well," said Mr. Dalton, "the matter is under investigation, and there it will rest for the present. We shall now proceed."

It was not easy for the Classical Fourth to fix their thoughts on Latin. Classics as they were, with a lofty scorn for Moderns and all their works, that classical language never seemed to have any great attraction for most of them. Now it had less than ever.

Every fellow was thinking of that tremendous "rag" in Dalton's study overnight and of Arthur Edward Lovell, segregated from the rest of Rookwood,

shut up in the punishment-room on his lonely own.

Class, in the thrilling circumstances, was a bore—though no doubt Arthur Edward Lovell would have preferred it to the solitude of "clink."

When a fellow was put into "clink," as the juniors called the punishment-room, it was a preliminary to the "sack," and few doubted that when Arthur Edward came out of "clink," it would be to catch the train at Latcham for home.

They were glad and relieved to be dismissed in break, when break came at last. Jimmy Silver & Co. went out with glum faces. Every fellow was discussing the mystery of Dalton's study—but only to the few fellows who believed in Lovell was it a mystery. Most of Rookwood had no doubt whatever that the right man was in "clink."

"Of course it was Lovell," Mornington said to Kit Erroll. "Can't understand the man's cheek in denyin' it."

Erroll shook his head.

"Lovell's not a liar," he said.

"Oh, rot! Any fellow would stretch a point when he's up for the sack. I jolly well know I would—and have!" grinned Morny.

"Lovell wouldn't. Besides, that yarn of his sounds steep—but Lovell hasn't sense enough to make it up."

"Oh!" said Morny. He laughed. "Somethin' in that, by gad! But look here, old scout, if it wasn't Lovell, it was somebody else. If he really saw another chap there in the dark, who was the chap?"

"Ask me another!" Erroll's eyes dwelt uneasily on his chum. "Morny, if you played the fool last night, you're not the fellow to leave another chap to take your gruel!"

"You silly ass!" howled Mornington. "I never opened my eyes last night—after I shut them."

"I'm glad! But who the dickens could it have been? You're the only man in the Fourth reckless enough—and I know you'd see Lovell through if it was you. It beats me hollow."

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome had gone round the school buildings to stare up at the high barred window of the punishment-room. Their chum was there—a prisoner. Apparently Lovell anticipated that his friends might come round in break to look up at the window, for a hand came out between the bars, and was waved.

"Keep smiling, old man!" called out Jimmy Silver. His voice carried to the high window, and reached Lovell's ears. Unluckily, it reached others.

Cartbew of the Sixth came round the corner with his ashplant under his arm, and an unpleasant grin on his face.

"I fancied I should find you here," he remarked. "Don't you know that this is against rules, Silver?"

Jimmy made no answer to that. He did not need telling that it was against rules—very strict rules—to communicate with a fellow in "clink."

"You were calling up to Lovell," said Cartbew.

"I didn't know you were listening round the corner, Cartbew!" answered Jimmy. "Is eavesdropping part of a prefect's duty?"

Cartbew set his lips and slid the ashplant down into his hand.

"Touch your toes, Silver!" he said briefly.

Jimmy drew a deep breath. It was for ragging that unpopular prefect that the junior footballers had detention on

Saturday. Never had Jimmy felt so strongly inclined to give the bully of the Sixth some more of the same.

From the barred window above came Lovell's bawling voice:

"You there, Jimmy? I can't get my head through these beastly bars! I say, listen to me! I've been thinking it over, and I think very likely it was Carthew did it."

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome jumped. So did Carthew of the Sixth. Arthur Edward, unaware that the prefect was there, bawled on:

"Can you hear me, Jimmy? I say, I fancy it was that cad Carthew. He never liked Dicky Dalton—I've seen Dicky look at him, you know, as if he was dirt! So he is, if you come to that! I say, what about giving Dicky a hint that it was Carthew who ragged his study? Thinking it over, I believe he's the only fellow at Rookwood who's absolute rotter enough to do it."

By Whose Hand?

DUDLEY VANE stood before the school notice-board after class that day, and bit his lip as he read a paper in Jimmy Silver's handwriting. It was the list for the House match, which Jimmy had posted up—and it included the new fellow's name in the forward line. The date of that match was to have been Saturday, but the detention of the Classical footballers for that date left it "in the air," as it were.

Jimmy had posted his list, all the same, perhaps with a lingering hope that it might touch Dicky Dalton's heart when he saw it. Dicky was far from a hard man, as a rule, and Jimmy nourished a hope that he might yet relent, and cancel the detention for that awfully important date.

It was pleasant enough to Vane to see his name there. Although he was said to have had an illness shortly before

clink, I'm not worrying about it a lot," answered Jimmy. "In fact, unless old Lovell's free to play on Saturday, I'd rather postpone it."

"Lovell's not indispensable."

"No; but he's as good a half as we've got, and I should hate to play and leave him out—especially in clink. Of course, they'll let him out immediately they find out who mucked up Dicky's study—not that there seems much chance. I've gone over fifty fellows in my mind, and can't say one of them is likely to have done it."

Dudley Vane laughed.

"You needn't go over fifty fellows," he remarked. "Dalton only detained the footballers for ragging Carthew on Little Side the other day. It's one of the detained fellows, of course, sore about the game being put off."

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," said Jimmy. "Other fellows have grudges against Dicky Dalton. But if it's that,



Jimmy Silver stared blankly at the words on Mr. Dalton's looking-glass. "Do you know anything about that, Silver?" asked the Fourth Form master. "Nothing, sir," replied the junior. "The boy who wrote those insulting words will be flogged if discovered!" said Mr. Dalton sternly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the three juniors involuntarily. The expression on Carthew's face as he listened to the words from above was too much for them.

Carthew gasped. His face was like a freshly boiled beetroot with rage. Instead of waiting for Jimmy Silver to "touch his toes," he whacked out with the cane—catching Jimmy across the shoulders, and Raby and Newcome in swift succession.

"Hook it!" gasped Jimmy.

The three juniors scudded off, Carthew in pursuit with brandished cane. From the high barred window came Lovell's bawl.

"You hear me? That cad Carthew, you know—that rotter Carthew—everybody knows that Carthew is an absolute rank outsider—"

But Jimmy Silver & Co. were gone at high speed, and the rest of Arthur Edward Lovell's remarks were wasted on the desert air!

coming to Rookwood, he was strong and sturdy, and looked as fit as a fiddle. He was keen on Soccer, and played a good game—so good that it had caught Jimmy's watchful eye, and led to his chance.

Having been hardly more than a week in the school, it was rather a catch for Vane to be picked out to play for the junior House eleven, which made it all the more intensely irritating to him for the match to be indefinitely postponed. Good-tempered and equable as he usually seemed, the new Classical was looking glum and moody now.

"Keep smiling, old bean!" Jimmy Silver came along and joined him. "It's rotten all round; but we'll play the match later, if not sooner. Not that even a House match matters a lot now."

"I thought you were pretty keen on House matches at Rookwood," said Vane.

"So we are; but with old Lovell in

of course, it makes it all the less likely that Dicky will wash it out. It's rather like threatening him—and he's about the last man in the world to be influenced by threats."

"I don't see that," said Vane thoughtfully. "It looks to me as if the chap, whether it was Lovell or somebody else, meant to make Dalton understand that, if he kept on the high horse, he would get trouble. That might make him dismount!"

Jimmy gave a little start.

"Vane, old man, you don't mean to say you fancy there's any more to come?" he asked, alarmed at the idea.

"Well, look at it!" argued Vane. "Dalton washes out the House match—and his study is ragged, as a tip to him to chuck it. If he doesn't chuck it, the fellow, whoever he is, may hand out a second knock. I should think it jolly likely myself."

Jimmy whistled.

He had not thought of it before, but now that Vane mentioned it, he wondered.

"But who the dickens!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Have you the foggiest idea who the howling ass may have been, Vane?"

"I haven't been here long enough to know half the fellows. But I believe it was not Lovell—he says so, and his word is good enough for me. Whoever it was, I should say he was a fellow who doesn't stick at trifles when he goes off the deep-end."

"That fits Morny," said Jimmy. "But—it wasn't old Morny. He's reckless as enough—but he wouldn't let Lovell take his gruel."

"Lovell's not taken the gruel yet. He's got the benefit of the doubt, so far. And if the fellow gets going again while Lovell's in clink, that will see him clear. I shouldn't wonder."

Jimmy Silver drove his hands deep into his pockets, and walked away in a worried and troubled mood. Vane, he knew, was a clever fellow, and it looked as if he had thought of something that the other fellows had missed. Certainly Jimmy would have been glad enough of a happening which would have seen Lovell clear. But the idea of some hot-headed fellow setting out to persecute Dicky Dalton into cancelling the detention was worrying and alarming.

"Silver!"

Mr. Dalton's voice rapped out.

"Yes, sir!" Jimmy turned his head and started as he saw the dark and angry frown on his Form-master's face. "Step into my study!"

Wondering what was up, the captain of the Fourth obeyed. Mr. Dalton's study had been set to rights that day,

but it still showed a good many signs of Newcome joined him on the way up, and the savage ragging it had had overnight. The glass doors of the bookcase were still shattered, and there was a star in the centre of the looking-glass. The carpet showed many stains of spilt ink.

Jimmy's eyes fixed on the glass. It was not the starred centre that drew his gaze. It was an inscription in ink, evidently drawn by a finger dipped in an inkpot:

"BETTER WASH IT OUT."

Jimmy stared blankly at the words. Then his glance turned to Mr. Dalton's angry face.

"Do you know anything of that, Silver?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Someone must have entered my study and written those words on the glass while I was gone to see Lovell in the punishment-room," said Mr. Dalton. "I should think that it was some more of Lovell's folly, but that foolish boy is still under lock and key. Those words must refer, Silver, to the order of detention on Saturday."

"I—I suppose so, sir," stammered Jimmy. Vane's words were fresh in his mind, and he could not doubt now that the new junior was right. Someone—goodness knew who—was on the war-path against Dicky Dalton!

"I need hardly say," said Mr. Dalton grimly, "that such an attempt to influence me will have no effect. The boy who wrote those insulting words will be flogged if discovered. You may tell the others so, Silver!"

Mr. Dalton took a duster and rubbed the glass clean. Jimmy left the study, and went up slowly to the Classical Fourth passage. Vane and Raby and

"It wasn't Lovell this time, at any rate," remarked Dudley Vane.

"Yes, that's a cert!" agreed Raby. "But who—?"

He broke off. Near the end study, at the end of the passage, was a tap and a sink. One or two fellows were there, with kettles for tea in the studies. Valentine Mornington was sluicing his slim and well-kept hands under the tap. Ink ran down in the stream of water from his hands.

Raby stared at him—and so did the others. Jimmy caught his breath. An inky finger had daubed a message on the glass in Dalton's study. Morny was washing ink off his fingers!

"Morny! You—you—you ass!" gasped Jimmy. "Then it was you!"

Mornington glanced round.

"What was me, fathead?" he asked.

"You've got ink on your fingers!"

"Never had ink on yours?" asked Mornington, staring. "I upset the ink-pot in my study. What about it?"

"Have you been in Dalton's study?"

"No. Why?"

"Somebody's been there, and inked a cheeky message on the glass. There's a flogging for the man when he's spotted."

Mornington laughed.

"Not guilty, my lord!" he said lightly. He laughed again, and shrugged his shoulders. "You can believe me or not, as you like, of course! I don't give a hang for what you believe, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy made no answer. He went into his study, puzzled and perturbed. Lovell's word had to be taken, in spite of evidence. But Mornington's word was far from good as gold. Jimmy did not know what to think, and over tea in the end study that day, Uncle James of Rookwood had a worried and thoughtful brow.

Sacked!

RICHARD DALTON paced the path under the old beeches in the Rookwood quad, with his hands in his pockets, and a deep line in his brow. It was a cold, sharp, starry night, but little of the light of the stars penetrated through the old beech branches, bare of leaves as they were.

Nine o'clock had chimed from the clock-tower. Prep was over in the studies, but light gleamed from many study windows. From the open window of Smythe's study in the Shell came the sound of the radio. The House, of course, was closed—as was Manders' House, across the quad.

Dicky was pacing in the deserted quadrangle, partly for the fresh air, and partly because he wanted to be alone to think of the puzzling affair of what had happened in his study the night before.

The more he thought over that mystery, the more Dicky Dalton came to believe that Lovell had placed himself under suspicion by his usual reckless, unthinking foolhardiness, and that another hand had done the damage. But whose hand?

All investigation had drawn blank. All the evidence was against Lovell. He was still locked in "clink," and, unless something turned up in his favour, it seemed inevitable that he must be judged guilty and expelled. If he was guilty, he deserved it. But was he? Dicky could not feel satisfied on that point.

He came to a pause in his pacing, and

"When the Great Apes Came!"



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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,451.

stood under one of the old beeches, looking towards the glimmering windows of the House. A rustle caught his ears, and he looked round.

Even as he moved, something descended over his head, enveloping him in darkness.

Taken utterly by surprise, fairly dumbfounded, Mr. Dalton staggered.

It was a sack—a heavy coal-sack—that had engulfed him. It descended, completely blindfolding him, and half-suffocating him with coaldust. He dragged his hands from his pockets. But he had no time to struggle. A cord had been threaded round the neck of the sack, and it was instantly drawn tight.

He staggered to and fro helplessly, in black darkness, gurgling for breath. He made an effort to wrench away the sack. But the cord was drawn fast round the neck of it, fastening it round his legs. A slip noose had been used, and the action was instantaneous.

A violent shove in the back sent him reeling. Unable to make a motion to save himself from the fall, he crashed down on his face on the path.

The sack over his face saved his features to some extent. But his nose had a hard knock, and he felt the trickle of blood from it mingling with the coal-dust.

With all his strength—and Dicky was an athlete—he wrenched at the sack as he lay prone under the dark beeches. But the sacking was stout and strong; it was impossible to burst it.

He felt unseen hands groping over him. He knew that the cord was being knotted behind him, imprisoning him inside the sack. Ends of the cord were tied round both his knees, below the edge of the sack, so that he could not possibly push it up over his head.

He was helpless in the hands of his unseen assailant. He shouted wildly, but the thick sacking muffled his voice. And a sudden shove on the back of his head jammed his face to the earth, soft and damp from recent rain. His shouting died away in a gurgling gasp.

Alarmed and angry, he was still more amazed. Who was doing this? The same desperate young rascal who had wrecked his study. He did not need telling that. Not Lovell—Lovell was locked in clink! Was it a junior at all? There was a strength in the grasp on him that seemed unusual, almost incredible, in a schoolboy. But if his assailant was a senior, a Fifth or Sixth Form man, that was more amazing still. Was that possible—could it be possible?

He struggled wildly, but hopelessly. He was utterly at the mercy of the unknown who had headed him up in the sack! The audacity of it was amazing. His assailant must have been watching him under the dark trees—watching for a chance to take him from behind by surprise—and he had succeeded. But he had taken reckless risks.

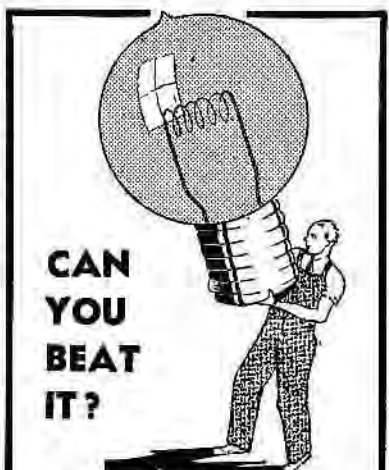
He strove again to shout for help. Again his face was jammed roughly and savagely in the damp earth. Then the unseen assailant finished knotting the cords.

Richard Dalton, gasping helplessly in the sack, heard a sound of retreating footsteps. He sat up, lurching and swaying, gasping for breath. The fellow was going—at a swift run for the House. Who was out of the House at that hour—late after lock-up, only half an hour before the juniors' bed-time? If he could have got loose the young rascal could have been spotted yet!

But he could not get loose. He struggled, and wrenched, and wrestled; but he was safely tied up in the sack. It was not easy to get on his feet; but he got up at last, and tottered away. He

could see nothing, and he bumped into a tree, and then into another.

But for the fact that the radio was still on in Smythe's study, Mr. Dalton might have lurched about helplessly in any direction. But the strains of wireless jazz were still streaming from the Shell study window, and Dalton could hear, if he could not see. The sound guided him, and he swayed and lurched towards the House—a strange and startling figure in the gleam of the stars.



The biggest electric bulb ever made is now being used in an American film studio. It is 10,000 watts—ordinary household bulbs are usually 80—and gives off so much heat when burning that to stand near it means scorched clothes. An electric fan has been built into the base to draw the heat away sufficiently to prevent the glass from melting. It is so powerful that to look at it for a moment will make you completely blind for a long period!

The smallest bulbs are called wheat-ear bulbs. They are made for the use of radiologists, who employ them when taking photographs of people's insides. The patient has to swallow the bulb!

The most powerful searchlight in existence gives off a light equal to that of 3,000,000,000 candles. It is used as a gigantic magic lantern, throwing advertisements on to clouds two miles high. Looking at this one would cause you permanent blindness, and even death.

An electric sign erected some time ago in Piccadilly Circus, London, to advertise a film, contained 20,000 separate bulbs. Can you beat that? You can't, because it is the biggest sign ever used in Europe!

Neon tubes, used in electric signs, produce no heat. If you put your hand on one when it was burning, you would find it quite cold!

The Mystery!

DUDLEY VANE gave a yell. "Great pip! What's that?" "What—?" began Jimmy Silver. "Oh, my hat! Look!" yelled Vane. There was a rush to the window. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were in the end study after prep, grinding lines. Vane, however, had declared that Smythe's wireless was more entertaining than lines—as no doubt it was—

and he had left them to it. It was near bed-time when he had strolled back into the study, humming a jazz tune, a cheery smile on his handsome face. He grinned at the three bent heads at the table and strolled to the window, where he stood looking out into the starry quad. Suddenly his gaze became fixed, and he gave the startled yell that drew his study-mates with a rush to the window.

They stared down into the quad. Out of the shadows of the buildings and the old beeches, the wintry starlight fell clear. And in that silvery light a strange figure appeared, lurching drunkenly towards the House.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed down at it, spellbound with astonishment. For a full minute they could not make out what it was. In the starlight, it looked like a very long and headless body, on very short legs.

Then they realised that it was a man, with a sack over his head that came down nearly to his knees.

"Is that some lunatic?" asked Vane. "What blithering ass could have got himself up like that?"

Goodness knows! Let's get down!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, and he ran out of the study with his chums at his heels.

They scudded down the stairs. Other eyes, it seemed, had already fallen on that strange figure lurching towards the House, for the door was open, and a score of fellows had gathered there.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, had run out into the quad, with Neville of the Sixth after him, and Hansom of the Fifth. They guided the stumbling figure into the House. Strange muffled sounds came from within the tied sack. The occupant of that sack, half-suffocated with coaldust, was trying to speak.

"One of you fellows got a penknife?" gasped Bulkeley. "It's Mr. Dalton, I think—"

"Dalton!" yelled twenty voices.

Jimmy Silver had a penknife open in a moment; Vane had one open in another moment. They gashed at the cord. Hansom of the Fifth helped with a pocket-knife. The sacked figure stood swaying, steadied by Bulkeley's hold on the coal-sack. Swiftly the knotted cords parted, and then Bulkeley and Neville grasped the sack and drew it up over the head—revealed in the glare of the electric light, black with coaldust.

"It—it—it's Dicky!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Dalton was barely recognisable, his face thickly smothered with coaldust, which was in his eyes and nose and mouth and ears. He stood gasping for breath when he was free of the sack.

"Here comes the Head!" breathed Vane.

There was a hush as Dr. Chisholm rustled up. He gazed like a man in a dream at Richard Dalton.

"Is—is—is that Mr. Dalton?" articulated the Head.

Mr. Dalton gasped.

"Yes, sir! Oooogh! Yes—woooogh—choooogh—oooogh!"

"What—what has happened? What is—"

"Urrgh! I—I—I was suddenly attacked in—the—urrgh—quadrangle, sir, and—gurrgh—that sack whipped over my head, sir—urrgh—"

"By whom?" asked the Head, in a terrifying voice.

"I cannot say, sir. I did not see my assailant—gurrgh. I was taken from behind—urrgh!"

"This is—is—is amazing—unprecedented! I can scarcely believe my eyes, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,451.

and my ears! A member of my staff —" Dr. Chisholm fairly gasped. "Bulkeley, please help Mr. Dalton to his room."

The unfortunate Form-master, still gasping and gurgling, tottered away with Bulkeley; the Head, with a thunderous frown on his brow, followed.

Arthur Edward Lovell joined the Classical Fourth when they went up to their dormitory. His chums gathered round him with bright faces. They were glad to see Arthur Edward out of clink.

"Gratters, old bean," said Mornington. "But what are you doing out of quod?"

Lovell grinned.

"I say, it seems that it's all right for me, you chaps!" he said. "The Head came and let me out!"

"Good man!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I suppose that means that they're satisfied now that I never did it," said Lovell. "The Head said there had been an attack on Mr. Dalton, and he seemed to think it was the same chap who wrecked Dalton's study. My giddy aunt! There's some fellow who's got it in for Dicky—hard! He's asked for it, of course—mucking up our football match! But it's rather thick. I say, there'll be a fearful row to-morrow—they'll go over Rookwood with a small comb to get the fellow who got Dalton in a sack!"

Lovell was right—there was a fearful "row." For a whole day, Rookwood School thrilled with the sensation of the "sacking" of the Fourth Form master—and the efforts of beaks and prefects to discover the unknown assailant. But that assailant remained unknown. Nobody doubted that it was the same fellow who had wrecked Dalton's study. But, whoever he was, he kept himself exceedingly dark—and no clue was found to him! And Rookwood could only wonder over the strange mystery.

(Another great yarn of the Rookwood chums, entitled "TUBBY MUFFIN'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING!"—appears in a fortnight's time. Next week's grand Christmas number contains a thrilling cover-to-cover St. Jim's yarn, called "THE MYSTERY OF NOBODY'S STUDY!"

St. Jim's on the Warpath!

(Continued from page 22.)

as well as they could hurriedly, and stripped off the Redskin garb. Then they appeared in their own identity, with somewhat smudgy faces, and grinning joyously.

"This is where we vanish," said Tom Merry. "Good-night, Gay! When the audience get tired of waiting for somebody to come on the stage, they may come and look for you. Good-night!"

"Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's juniors departed. They made their way round the gym, and Tom Merry looked in at the big door, and gave a whistle. It was the signal for the St. Jim's members of the audience to clear off.

It would hardly have done for any St. Jim's fellow to remain within the precincts of the Grammar School when the Grammarians became aware of what had happened.

The Saints crowded out of the gym, and Tom Merry & Co., laughing uproariously, took their way home to St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, the Grammarian audience waited in amazement, and watched the empty stage.

Ten minutes had passed—a quarter of an hour—twenty minutes.

The audience were getting very restless.

"Dear me," said Dr. Monk, "I suppose the play is over, or else something has gone very wrong with the arrangements. I'm afraid I cannot stay any longer."

And the Head retired from the gym with the other masters. Most of the seniors followed.

"Let's go and see what's become of the duffers!" exclaimed Carker at last, and his suggestion was adopted.

A crowd of Grammarians invaded the stage and the wings, and passed through into the dressing-room at the back.

There was a roar of astonishment as they saw the whole dramatic company stretched on the floor, vainly struggling with their bonds, and trying to bite their gags away.

"M-my hat!" gasped Carker. "What's happened?"

Gordon Gay made frantic signs to him.

Carker stooped and removed his gag. Gordon Gay gasped.

"Have the St. Jim's chaps gone?" he asked.

"Yes; a quarter of an hour or more ago. But what—"

"Cut me loose, you ass!" growled Gordon Gay. "It's too late! Why couldn't some of you dummies come along before?"

"But—but—what—"

"Tom Merry's been here, fathead!"

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!"

But Carker did not shut up. He roared, and so did the rest of the Grammarians, when they learned what had happened.

Gordon Gay & Co. were released; and they dashed down to the gates at once, in the hope of coming upon some straggler belonging to St. Jim's.

But the St. Jim's fellows were far enough away by that time.

The Grammarians returned, raging, while at St. Jim's Tom Merry & Co. were celebrating their victory and rejoicing exceedingly.

It was a famous victory, and there was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. had scored; but it was a long time before Gordon Gay & Co. were able to see the joke.

The next morning Gordon Gay received a postcard with a single line written upon it—a line he knew well by this time:

"One good turn deserves another."

"(Signed) TOM MERRY."

(Look out next Wednesday for our special Christmas issue containing a magnificent extra-long yarn of Tom Merry & Co. Order your GEM early.)

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