

"THE BULLDOG BREED!" EXCITING STORY STARRING TOM MERRY OF ST. JIM'S WITHIN.

The

GEM

2d



"THAT IS
THE BOY!"

THE SCHOOLBOY WHO PERFORMED A GALLANT DEED—AND HAD TO KEEP IT A SECRET!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Two shadowy forms leaped from the dark and two strong pairs of hands grasped Major Stringer and bore him to the ground. "Footpads, by gad!" gasped the major. "You scoundrels!" Tom Merry watched the scene in amazement, utterly taken aback by the startling happening.

CHAPTER 1.

Six or Seven?

"SIX!" said Tom Merry.
"Seven, deah boy!"
Tom Merry shook his head.
"Six!"

Tom Merry spoke gently but firmly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his celebrated eyeglass, and looked round the study. There were certainly seven fellows in the study—Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther of the Shell; and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth.

Tom Merry took a pair of scissors and cut a sheet of impot paper into six strips. Upon each of the strips he wrote a name.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you are labouwin' undah a misappwehension," said D'Arcy. "Your awithmetic is quite at fault. There are seven of us here; therefore you will wequiah seven slips of papah."

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"Six!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, deah boy, look wound for yourself. There are thwee Shell boundahs—that's thwee—and Blake and Hewwies—that's five—and Dig and myself—that's seven. As the young lady remarks in the wecitation, we are seven."

"Six!" said Tom Merry.

"If that is the kind of awithmetic you learn in the Shell, Tom Mewwy, I can only say that I am surprised."

Arthur Augustus was really surprised. He could not see how Tom Merry, adding three Shell fellows to four Fourth Formers, could make a total of six.

The seven juniors had been discussing a matter of some importance before they came to drawing lots.

It was for the purpose of drawing lots that the captain of the Shell was writing the names on slips of paper.

Dame Taggles was ill. Dame Taggles kept the tuckshop at St. Jim's. She

was not very ill—only laid up for a time. But the news had brought something like dismay into the Lower Forms of St. Jim's.

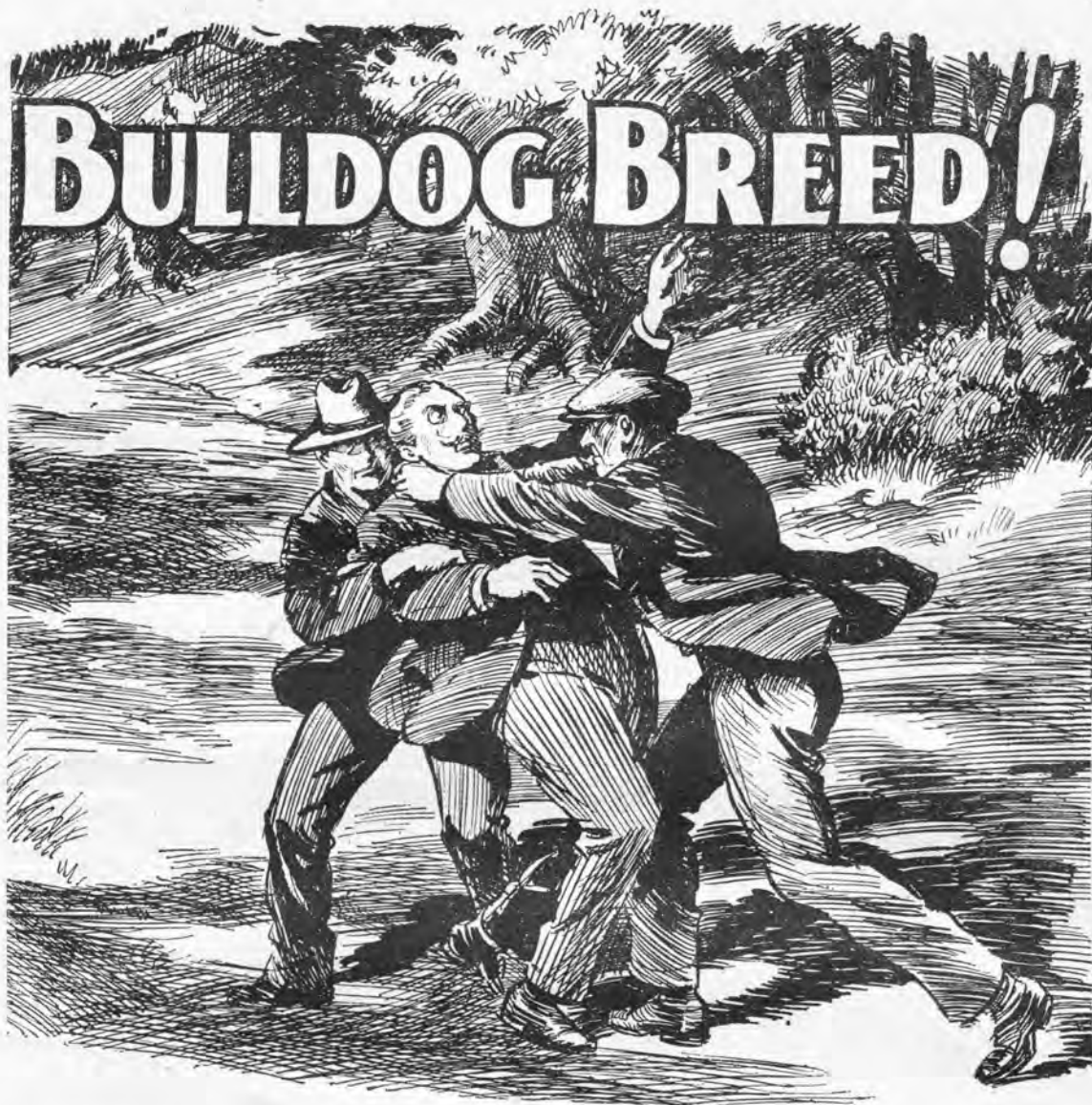
It was not that they sympathised with Dame Taggles. They did, of course; but they could have endured it with fortitude except for the fact that while Dame Taggles was laid up the school shop was closed.

That was serious.

The closing of the little shop in the corner of the quadrangle was not likely to last more than a few days. But those few days' supplies of tuck had to be fetched from Mrs. Murphy's, in the village.

True, it did not take long to run down to Rylcombe on a bike and come back with a bag. But the "money market" in the Lower School was subject to fluctuations. On this special day a state of stony impecuniosity had reigned, and tea had been very frugal in Tom

THRILLS, FUN AND ADVENTURE COMBINE TO MAKE THIS YARN ONE YOU'LL FIND IT HARD TO PUT DOWN!



Merry's study, and in Study No. 6 also.

But the evening post had brought a letter to Tom Merry from his old governess, Miss Fawcett, and that kind old lady had thoughtfully enclosed a pound note.

Money was no longer "tight," and, in ordinary circumstances, there would have been a rush to the school shop, and a handsome supper would have compensated for the deficiency of tea-time.

But the school shop was closed. The school gates were locked, and the most good-natured prefect in the School House would hardly have granted a pass-out for the purpose of fetching in "tuck."

Hence the meeting in Tom Merry's study.

There was, of course, only one thing to be done. Somebody had to scuttle out, after lights out, scud down to the village, and return with the necessary supplies for a dormitory feed. The only question was—who should go?

To decide the question, the juniors were to draw lots. Then arose the

arithmetical dispute, Tom Merry insisting that there were six fellows, and Arthur Augustus vainly seeking to demonstrate that there were seven.

Unheeding the arithmetical arguments of the swell of St. Jim's, Tom Merry wrote out six names carefully on six separate slips of paper, all ready for the "lots" to be drawn.

"Now we want a hat," said Tom Merry. "You can fetch one of your silk toppers along, Gussy, if you want to be useful."

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*Once again Tom Merry's courage proves him a worthy son of the Bulldog Breed. But in rescuing an old soldier the captain of the Shell lands himself in a difficult position at St. Jim's.*

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"But you have w'tten only six papahs, deah boy."

"Yes; that's all right."

"But we are seven!"

"Six!"

"Seven, you ass!"

"Six!"

"Seven!"

"And still the little maid replied, we are seven!" murmured Monty Lowther, quoting Wordsworth.

"Six!" said Tom Merry firmly.

"Unless you are off your wockah, Tom Mewwy, I fail to compwehend you. There are us four chaps, and you thwee duffahs—how do you make that six?" demanded Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

"Ahem! The—the fact is, Gussy—" "Well?"

"I'm afraid you would—ahem!—soil your beautiful clobber in getting over the wall," said Tom Merry seriously. "So—merely on account of your clobber,

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of course—ahem!—I think you had better stay in the dorm."

"Not at all, deah boy. I will put on some old clothes."

"Oh dear!"

"Besides, I will wisk the clobber," said Arthur Augustus. "This is vewy kind and thoughtful of you, Tom Mewwy, but I cannot be left out of takin' my share of the wisk."

"But we want the tuck to be brought in, you know," said Tom; "and—you know what you are, Gussy!"

"Yes, you know—you know!" murmured Lowther.

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed through his monocle, and his noble nose was a little more elevated.

"I fail to undahstand," he said loftily. "If you cannot twust to my disewetion—"

"You see, you'd run into a prefect," said Tom; "you'd give the whole show away, and then the feed wouldn't come off at all. So, in the cires, and especially considering the risk to your clobber, I think—"

"Vewy well!" Arthur Augustus' noble nose rose still higher. "I compwehend you now, Tom Mewwy. Of course, in the cires, I shall decline to come to the feed. Good-evenin'!"

"Where are you going, ass?"

"I am wetirin' fwom this study!" said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. "Good-evenin'!"

"Catch hold of his ears, Blake!"

"Certainly!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus dodged.

"You uttah ass! If you catch hold of my yabs, I shall stwike you!" he exclaimed. "As Tom Mewwy declined to twust to my disewetion, I decline to have anythin' furthah to do with the mattah, and I will wetiah!"

"Now, look here, Gussy—" urged Tom Merry.

"Enough said, Tom Mewwy!"

"You know you are an ass, you know!"

"Pway say no more! Aftah this, I wegret that I shall be unable to wegard you as a fwiend! Blake, I insist upon your lettin' me pass!"

"Oh, make it seven!" said Manners. "And if Gussy draws the lot, and he fails to get in the tuck, we'll scalp him!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"All serene!" said Tom Merry. "Get off the high horse, Gussy! I'll put your silly name down. There you are."

"Thank you!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I should wefuse to have my name put down aftah your wemark, but I am weally concerned for you fellows. I twust the lot will fall to me, as I am convinced that I am the only fellow here who is likely to bwing it off!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I do not wegard that as an intelligent wemark, Tom Mewwy!"

"Put your paw into the hat!" said Tom.

Seven slips instead of six were dropped into a straw hat and shaken up, and then a cloth was put over the hat.

"The first name out takes it," said Tom Merry. "Who's going to draw?"

Jack Blake fumbled in the hat and drew forth a slip.

The fellow whose name was written on that slip was to be entrusted with the task of getting in the consignment of tuck after lights out that night.

Six fellows hoped fervently that the

name would not be that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; for though the swell of St. Jim's had the very best intentions in the world, his chums could not help feeling that he was not the best-fitted for that very secret and risky expedition.

Blake held up the slip, and six voices ejaculated as the name was revealed:

"Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus smiled serenely. His name was written on the slip that came from the hat.

"Bai Jove, you fellows are in luck!" he remarked. "It will be all wight now—wight as wain!"

"Tell you what," said Blake—"I'll volunteer!"

"You would make a muck of it, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

"Leave it to me, Gussy!" said Tom Merry appealingly.

"I am afwaid your judgment is not to be welied on, Tom Mewwy."

"Why, you ass—"

"Let me go, Gussy," said Lowther.

"You are such a duffah, Lowthah, you know!"

"Why, you fathead—"

"Pway wely on me, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "I shall do the twick all wight, but I should have felt vewy uneasy if any of you fellows had gone. You leave it to me."

And Arthur Augustus walked out of the study, smiling. He was completely satisfied.

But Tom Merry & Co. were not quite satisfied; they could not help wondering whether that carefully planned feed could come off, after all.

But it was settled now. As Manners remarked classically:

"Jaeta est alea" (the die was cast).

CHAPTER 2.

One Thing Needful!

BED-TIME came a little while after the lots had been drawn in Tom Merry's study.

But in the short interval Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the recipient of many remarks and kind offers.

There was a certain amount of risk, of course, in getting out of bounds and "buzzing" down to the village after lights out. If the junior who made the bold venture happened to be spotted by a master or a prefect, he would certainly be caned, and "gated" perhaps for a month's holidays.

Naturally, the chums of the School House had considered it a fair thing all round to draw lots for it. But the lot having fallen upon Arthur Augustus, it was curious to see how many fellows were perfectly willing to volunteer.

Arthur Augustus had unlimited faith in his own tact and judgment. But that faith was sadly lacking on the part of his chums. In that respect they were all doubting Thomases.

But D'Arcy steadily declined to listen to the voice of the charmer.

The lot had fallen upon him, and he regarded that as a stroke of real luck for his comrades. His triumphant return with the tuck would silence all hostile criticism. And he had no doubt about his triumphant return with the tuck.

So Blake, Herries, and Digby were frigidly rebuffed, and Kangaroo, Talbot, and Dane, who also made offers, were requested to depart and eat coke.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther received the same reply.

"May as well give up the idea of supper in the dorm at all," Monty Lowther remarked, when the Shell were going to bed. "It's off for to-night. We'll have the feed to-morrow."

And the other prospective feasters agreed with Lowther.

But Arthur Augustus went serenely upon his way. He took a pair of rubber shoes into the Fourth Form dormitory with him that night.

"Faith, and what are they for?" asked Reilly of the Fourth.

"Make less wov, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Eh—are you going out, then?"

"Pway excuse me if I do not answah that question, Weilly, as it is wathah a secwet," replied Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great caution.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you champion ass!" growled Blake. "Tell the whole dormitory! Tell Kildare, too! He'll be in in a minute!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You'd better get those shoes out of sight before Kildare comes in!" grinned Levison. "He might smell a rat if he saw them."

"He might!" chuckled Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you're quite wight!" agreed D'Arcy. And he slipped the shoes into the bed. "Pway don't uttah a word about it! Of course, Kildare mustn't know anythin'!"

"Hallo! What is it that Kildare must not know?" asked the owner of that name, as he came into the dormitory to see lights out.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

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

Arthur Augustus' amazing manner of keeping a dead secret tickled the Fourth.

"Well," said Kildare, looking at Arthur Augustus, "what's the little game?"

"G-g-game, deah boy?" stammered the swell of the Fourth.

"Yes. What are you up to?"

"Up to?"

"If you're planning some rag for to-night, remember I've got an eye on this dormitory," said Kildare severely. "If I hear anything there will be trouble. Now turn in."

"That's all wight, deah boy; you won't heah anythin'," grinned Arthur Augustus, thinking of the silent rubber shoes.

"Well, turn in," said Kildare good-humouredly.

The Fourth Form turned in, and the captain of St. Jim's turned out the light and left them.

Arthur Augustus' chuckle was heard in the darkness.

"Wathah pulled the wool ovah his eyes, deah boys—what?"

"Fathead!" grunted Blake.

"But what's the little game?" demanded Mellish curiously.

Mellish was always curious, especially about matters that did not concern him.

"I am afwaid I cannot answah your question, Mellish, as we are keepin' the whole mattah a secwet. You are wathah a sneak, too."

"You silly ass!" said Mellish angrily. "You think I don't know you are going out of bounds to-night?"

"Bai Jove! How do you know?" asked Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, deah boy, did you tell Mellish anythin' about it?"

"No, ass!" growled Blake.

"Did you, Dig?"

"No, fathead!"



Tom Merry stepped up behind the listening spy of the Fourth, and gave him a shove that sent him headlong off the plank into the ditch. Splash! "Groogh!" gasped Mellish, floundering in muddy water.

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Dig! Did you, Hewwies?"

"No, chump!"

"Then that wottah Mellish must have been 'eavesdwoopin'," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Mellish, I wegard your conduct as despicable—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at in Mellish's wotten conduct. I wegard it as beneath despision—I mean contempt!"

"You silly ass!" roared Mellish. "You've told the whole dorm yourself."

"Wats! I have not uttated a word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have a gweat mind to get up and give you a feahful thwashin', Mellish! I stwongly disappwove of your spying ways. Howevah, I shall wegard you with silent contempt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway wake me up at eleven, Blake, if I should drowp off to sleep."

"What do you want to wake up at eleven for?" chuckled Lumley-Lumley.

"That is a secwet, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus' secret, and his way of keeping it, kept the Fourth amused for some time, and it was later than usual when they dropped off to sleep.

But Arthur Augustus did not drop off to sleep. He was keeping very wide-awake.

Blake, Herries, and Digby went to sleep. They were not worrying in the least about calling their noble chum at eleven.

The swell of St. Jim's had to depend on himself.

By half-past ten his eyes were firmly sealed, and he was sleeping the sleep of

the just, and dreaming that he was keeping carefully awake.

But as eleven strokes sounded out from the clock-tower, Arthur Augustus opened his eyes and yawned. Even in his sleep it was weighing on his mind that he ought to be awake, and he came out of the land of dreams as the clock struck.

He sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Bai Jove, something's stwikin'," he murmured. "I wondah what it is?" He drew his watch from under the pillow and struck a match. "Eleven, bai Jove!"

"Hallo!" came a sleepy voice from Blake's bed. "What's that light?"

"It's all wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, as the match went out. "It is eleven o'clock, and I am just off."

"You're not just off," said Blake drowsily. "You've been off for a long time—off your rocker. Go to sleep!"

"What about the expedish, deah boy?"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"I uttably wefuse to chuck it!" Arthur Augustus slipped from his bed

and began to dress, and slipped on the rubber shoes. "You can go to sleep, Blake. I will wake you when I come back with the gwub."

"When you come back with a prefect, you mean!" growled Blake.

"Oh, wats!"

Blake grunted, and settled down to sleep again. He had to give Arthur Augustus his head, but he had little expectation of seeing the tuck that night.

But D'Arcy was very determined. He crept silently from the dormitory,

and closed the door behind him, and crept away to the box-room.

He opened the window, stepped out upon the leads outside, and closed the window after him. He had to leave it unfastened, of course. Then he dropped to the ground and scudded away to the school wall.

Lights were still gleaming from some of the lower windows in the School House, and Arthur Augustus was very careful to avoid the radius of light as he scudded across the quad.

He reached the wall, where the old slanting oak made it easy to climb, and chuckled with satisfaction at his success.

To climb the wall and drop into the road outside was the work of a few minutes. In the road he gave another gleeful chuckle.

"The silly asses!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "They will be wathah surprised when I come back with the tuck all wight. Ha, ha, ha!"

Greatly pleased with himself and things generally, the swell of St. Jim's started down the road at a trot.

The road was dark and lonely, only a pale glimmer of moonlight coming between heavy banks of clouds.

Arthur Augustus trotted on cheerfully, reflecting on the pleasant surprise for his chums when they should discover that he had carried out the nocturnal expedition without a hitch.

He had only to get to the village shop, knock up Mrs. Murphy, get the quid's worth of tuck, and scud back to St. Jim's with it—it was as easy as falling off a form.

He had just reached the crossroads

about half-way to Rylcombe when he suddenly halted.

An annoying thought had flashed into his mind.

He stood in utter dismay.

"Bai Jove! The money!"

He had forgotten to ask Tom Merry for the pound note.

Everything had gone rippingly, excepting that he had neglected that trifling matter and had no money with him.

"Gweat Scott!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The uthah ass has forgotten to give me the pound note! The uthah duffah! I should nevah have thought that even Tom Mewwy could be quite such an ass as that! Oh dear!"

The game was up.

To knock up the village shop at that time of night when one had a quid to expend was one matter. The same process when one could only explain that one had forgotten to bring one's money was quite a different matter. Arthur Augustus could imagine the kind of reception he would get.

"Bai Jove!" he said again. "Oh deah! What is to be done?"

CHAPTER 3.

More Bounds-Breakers!

TOM MERRY sat up in bed.

Round him the Shell fellows were sleeping the sleep of healthy youths.

Tom had awakened, and he lay for a few minutes dozing, and the thought of Arthur Augustus and his expedition came into his mind.

That thought was enough to waken him widely.

He heard a quarter toll out, and he groped for his watch, and in a ray of moonlight that streamed in at the high windows he saw the time; it was a quarter-past eleven.

"Ten to one he's fast asleep," murmured Tom Merry. "There won't be any feed to-night. My hat!"

The thought of the pound note came into his mind, and he barely suppressed a howl of laughter. He had not thought of it before.

Arthur Augustus had been so busy making his plans for the night that his mighty brain had not touched upon a trifle like that.

Tom Merry had given most of his thoughts to the unsuccessful task of persuading Arthur Augustus to yield up the post of honour, so the pound note had remained folded up in Miss Priscilla's letter in Tom Merry's jacket pocket.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom. "Oh, the duffer! If he's gone without it—"

Tom Merry slipped out of bed.

The lot had fallen to Arthur Augustus, and it was only the "game" to let Gussy go if he chose. Tom Merry decided to take the pound note to him and give him a call if he were still asleep.

He dressed himself quickly in the darkness. If Gussy were still in bed he would give him the note; if he had already gone, sublimely unconscious of the fact that he was unprovided with funds, there was nothing for it but to go after him.

"If he's gone he will have left the window unfastened," murmured Tom Merry. "I'll jolly soon see."

He crept out of the dormitory, taking his boots in his hand, and hurried down the passage to the box-room.

Suddenly he stopped, and listened intently, his heart beating fast.

A slight sound had come from the darkness of the dormitory passage, and

it sounded to his ears like a cautious footfall.

He listened for a few moments, scarcely breathing.

But the sound was not repeated. Evidently it was not some over-zealous prefect on the look out.

The Shell fellow hurried into the box-room, closed the door, and quickly examined the window.

It was unfastened.

Arthur Augustus was evidently gone.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"The silly ass! I wonder when it will occur to him that he hasn't the money with him!" he murmured.

He put on his boots quickly, and in a few minutes more was out of the House and scudding away towards the school wall.

A light glimmered in the old quad. Taggles, the porter, was coming away from the direction of the Head's house, going back to the lodge. From the zig-zagging of the lantern Taggles carried it was not difficult to guess that the porter had been drinking success to temperance with his friend the Head's gardener, and doing it not wisely but too well.

"Allo! What's that?" ejaculated Taggles suddenly.

Tom Merry squeezed close against a tree in the darkness and held his breath.

Taggles wagged the lantern round in a circle and mumbled, and finally went on to his lodge, still mumbling.

Tom Merry waited until he was gone, and then scudded off to the wall, climbed it, and dropped into the road.

The moon had disappeared behind a heavy ridge of clouds and the darkness was intense.

That D'Arcy had gone out he was assured, but where the swell of St. Jim's was then was a puzzle. He might be only a few yards ahead, or already at the village.

As Tom Merry stood looking about him in the darkness, he heard a scraping sound at the wall behind him, and swung round. It was a sound as of someone climbing, and it could only be D'Arcy, he supposed.

But the sound stopped, and he could see nothing in the darkness. His boots had made a sound on the hard road, and perhaps that had given the alarm.

Tom shook his head. He concluded that he had been deceived and that the sound had been the rustling of a branch against the wall in the light breeze.

In the darkness and silence he started down the road towards the village.

The moon came out from behind the clouds, and a silvery light fell into the lane, lighting it up for the moment as if it were day.

Tom Merry looked along the lane for a sign of Arthur Augustus, but, as far as his eye could reach, the road was deserted.

"The blessed fathead!" growled Tom Merry. "He's at the village by now, arguing with Mrs. Murphy, perhaps, to get the things on tick."

The moon disappeared again.

Tom Merry hurried on down the lane, keeping on the grass beside the road, in order to run without noise. He did not want to attract the attention of any chance passer at that hour of the night—especially Mr. Crump, the village policeman, if that gentleman should chance to be making his rounds.

Mr. Crump would indubitably have reported the fact to the Head of St. Jim's the next morning if he had found a St. Jim's boy out of bounds at that late hour.

Patter, patter, patter!

Tom Merry stopped in sheer astonishment.

He was running without a sound himself, but from the darkness behind him there came a sound of rapid footsteps on the road.

Was D'Arcy behind him, after all? Had he been delayed in getting out of the school?

Tom Merry backed into the shadow of a tree beside the road, and watched for the runner to pass.

The patter of footsteps came closer and closer, and a gleam of moonlight, falling into the road, revealed the junior running.

But it was not Arthur Augustus.

It was Percy Mellish of the Fourth.

Tom Merry set his teeth hard. He knew what the presence of the spy of the Fourth meant.

Mellish had got "on" to the fact that D'Arcy was breaking bounds that night, and had followed him—to spy.

To the mind of a fellow like Mellish, it would not occur that D'Arcy's object was the innocent one of fetching in tuck for a dormitory supper.

The cad of the Fourth was on the track, hoping to catch Arthur Augustus "out."

Mellish came to a halt within a few yards of the hidden Shell fellow, and blinked round him in the half-light. He was evidently puzzled.

"Which way has he gone, the rotter?" Tom Merry heard the muttered words. "Down to Rylcombe, or the footpath to Wayland? Confound him! If he dodges me, I shall have my trouble for nothing! Hang him!"

Tom Merry grinned in the darkness under the tree. He watched the panting junior with some curiosity. He was interested to know what would be Mellish's next step.

The cad of the Fourth was evidently puzzled.

He had left the dormitory after Arthur Augustus, and the swell of St. Jim's was well ahead; but Mellish had undoubtedly heard Tom Merry getting out of the box-room.

Tom remembered the sound in the passage, and again at the school wall.

Not having the least suspicion that the Shell fellow was out of doors as well, Mellish had supposed that he was close behind D'Arcy, when, as a matter of fact, it was Tom Merry that he was following.

He stood in the lane, blinking round him in the gloom, and finally crossed to the side of the road, where a plank crossed the wide, deep ditch, giving access to a dark footpath through the wood.

Mellish stared along the footpath, standing on the plank, and bent his head to listen for a sound from the wood.

Which way had his quarry gone? He little dreamed that Tom Merry was standing within three yards of him, hidden by the thick darkness under the tree.

A sudden gleam came into Tom Merry's eyes.

Mellish, standing on the plank over the ditch, looking into the wood, had his back, of course, to the road and to Tom Merry.

The temptation was too strong for the junior to resist. The opportunity of giving Mellish a lesson for spying was too tempting.

Tom Merry stole across the intervening grass without making a sound.

Mellish, staring into the wood and listening, did not dream that there was anyone behind him.

In two seconds Tom Merry was close behind, and then he sprang to the listening spy of the Fourth, and a violent shove between the shoulders sent

Mellish headlong off the plank into the ditch.

Splash!

"Groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry darted away down the road.

Mellish came up in the ditch, gasping and spluttering. There was only a foot of water; he was in no danger. But there was a foot more of soft and clinging mud under the water. And the water was coated with a greenish ooze.

Mellish simply swam in mud and ooze as he stood in the ditch.

"Groooh! Oh! Ugh! Yow! Oh, you rotter, D'Arcy! Yawp! Ah! Ooooooh!"

The smell Mellish had stirred up in the ditch was not agreeable! It was powerful—it was deadly! The unhappy spy of the Fourth scrambled out of the ditch, choking with mud and ooze, and slime and smell.

"Ooooooooh!"

For some minutes he sat there, trying to get his breath. From head to foot he was smothered—his face had disappeared, his clothes even were unrecognisable. And the "whiff" of the mud was awful!

"Oh dear!" groaned Mellish. "Ow! Oh, the awful beast! Grooooooh! Yooph! Oh!"

He staggered on his feet at last, glaring about him. Mellish was not a fighting-man; but if Arthur Augustus had been at hand then, Mellish would have attacked him.

He had not the slightest doubt that it was Arthur Augustus that he owed his disaster to. He had not caught a glimpse of him, but he had no doubts.

But the road was lonely and silent, and even the satisfaction of imparting some of the smelly mud to his assailant was denied him.

Mellish squelched away back to the school. In his present state he did not feel equal to any more spying. Squelching out mud and water and slime at every step, the unhappy spy of the Fourth tramped away, in a mood that could only be called homicidal.

CHAPTER 4.

A Nice Night for Gussy!

"THE uttah ass!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark at least a dozen times, referring to Tom Merry every time, as he stood at the crossroads in Rylcombe Lane, in doubt.

To return to St. Jim's for the pound note, and make his whole journey over again, was rather too large an order. Even if he succeeded without a mishap, the juniors certainly wouldn't care to be called in the small hours of the morning to partake of that famous feed.

But the only alternative was to go on to the village in a stony state, and trust to his eloquence with Mrs. Murphy, or else to throw up the whole affair. That, however, was impossible—a D'Arcy never said die!

So Arthur Augustus, after standing a good five minutes in doubt—analytically the asininity of Tom Merry—started again for the village. After all, he might be able to explain to Mrs. Murphy, and obtain the tuck all the same. He had great faith in his persuasive powers.

He passed the end of the turning which led up to Glyn's house—where Glyn of the Shell's people lived, and passed under the thick shadow of the trees farther along the road.

Then he halted again with a sudden jump.

There was the sound of a movement



under the overhanging branches that thickly shadowed the road, and he caught a glimpse of a moving shadow.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus involuntarily.

A sudden light gleamed out—it came from an electric torch. The light flooded the startled face of the swell of St. Jim's, and blinded him. He blinked in the light dizzily.

"Who is there?"

"Only a kid!" muttered a rough voice.

The light was shut off as suddenly as it had been turned on, and darkness reigned under the trees once more.

Arthur Augustus rubbed his dazzled eyes.

"Bai Jove! Who is there?" he repeated.

There was no reply.

There were at least two persons lurking there under the trees, Arthur Augustus knew; but they made no movement. His first thought, naturally, was that they were footpads—they could scarcely have any other reason for lurking there at that hour of the night.

But they did not offer to molest him. After the flash of light and those muttered words, he saw and heard nothing of them.

The swell of St. Jim's hurried on.

If they were footpads, the sooner he got out of their neighbourhood, the better. Keeping his eyes in their direction, though without seeing them, he hurried on up the road, and breathed a little more freely when he was at a safe distance.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured, as the sleeping village came in sight. "That was a nawwow escape—a couple of twamps, I suppose. They couldn't have wobbled me of anythin', as that fathead Tom Mewwy forgot to give me that pound note. But, bai Jove, they might wipe in the tuck goin' back, if they're still there. The wottahs, they have thwown me into quite a fluttah!"

Rylcombe was fast asleep when Arthur Augustus trotted breathlessly into the old High Street at last.

He halted outside Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop.

Then he proceeded to knock at the door.

He had been knocking for about five minutes—getting louder with every

knock—when an upper window opened, and a head in a nightcap was put out, and a decidedly cross voice demanded to know who was there.

Arthur Augustus stepped back and looked up, and raised his hat politely to Mrs. Murphy.

"Pway excuse me, Mrs. Murphy—"

"Master D'Arcy!" exclaimed the good dame, in astonishment.

"Yaas."

"What are you doing out of your school at this time of night?" exclaimed Mrs. Murphy.

"I've come to fetch something."

"What?"

"I wequiah a pound's worth of tuck!"

"Nonsense! I cannot serve you at this hour!"

"Weally, Mrs. Murphy—"

"Go back to school at once!"

"I twust, madam, that you will not let me have this long walk for nothin'?" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I believe I have the honah of bein' wathah a good customah, madam?"

The reply was a mumble.

"Pway, madam—"

"A pound, did you say?" came the good dame's voice.

"Yaas."

"Then I will come down."

"One moment—"

"Well?"

"I feel I am in honah bound to mention that I have forgotten to bring the money with me—"

"What!"

"But I will wun down to-morrow on my bike and settle—"

Slam!

Arthur Augustus gazed up at the window in astonishment. It had closed suddenly, and with violence, and Mrs. Murphy had disappeared.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "what a vewy we-markable woman to wetiah like that before I had finished speakin'! Mrs. Murphy! Madam!"

The window remained closed and there was no reply.

Arthur Augustus, feeling very puzzled, began knocking at the door again.

It did not occur to him at first that the good dame was not inclined to come down in the middle of the night to give him "tick." But after he had knocked in vain for another five minutes it dawned upon his mighty brain.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus indignantly. "This is uttably wotten! Is it poss that the absurd old lady supposes that it is merely a twick to obtain c-wedit? I wegard that as insultin'. I shall certainly have to explain fully that it was owin' to Tom Mewwy's stupidity that I left the pound note behind."

Knock, knock, knock!

There was no sign of Mrs. Murphy. Evidently she had made up her mind to let Master D'Arcy knock till he was tired.

But there was a sound of heavy footsteps in the silent village street, and Arthur Augustus looked round in some alarm. He knew those heavy official footsteps. They could belong to no one but Police-constable Crump, plodding along on his beat.

The knocking, which echoed in a hollow way through the silent street, had caught the ears of Police-constable Crump, and he turned a corner near at hand.

At the sight of him, Arthur Augustus simply jumped away from the tuckshop and fled.

He did not want to be marched back to St. Jim's by Mr. Crump and delivered over to the tender mercies of the Head or his Housemaster.

He ran for the lane—and there was a sound of thumping boots behind him.

Police-constable Crump had caught a glimpse of him, and was panting along in pursuit.

"Gweat Scott! I shall have to wun like anythin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He vanished down the lane like a startled deer and sped along it as fast as he could go.

The heavy footsteps of the village policeman died away behind.

Mr. Crump was not a great runner; he had too much weight to carry for that.

Arthur Augustus paused in the lane to take breath. He remembered the two suspicious characters he had passed. He did not want to run into them again.

He turned from the road and took the short cut through the wood. The densely-dark footpath through the trees was not the route he would have chosen at that hour of the night, but he was not nervous, and it had the advantage of cutting off a quarter of a mile in the distance.

Arthur Augustus tramped away along the footpath disconsolately.

He had failed.

It was owing to circumstances over which he had no control that he had failed, certainly; but he could already hear the voices of Blake, Herries, and Dig making that ancient and irritating statement: "I told you so!"

It was annoying, to say the least of it.

But there was no remedy, and he tramped morosely along the footpath, determined that on the morrow he would tell Tom Merry very plainly what he thought of him.

The footpath brought him out near the walls of St. Jim's, and he disconsolately climbed the wall and dropped into the quadrangle.

All the lights in the school were

extinguished now. St. Jim's lay, a black mass, under the dark sky.

Arthur Augustus was crossing the quad when he stopped and listened. From the fountain in the quadrangle there came a sound of splashing, and a mumbling, gasping voice.

"Oh, the rotter! I'll pay him out for this! The beast! Groooogh!"

"Mellish, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in blank amazement.

He approached more closely.

Mellish, with his handkerchief dipped in the water of the fountain, appeared to be engaged in washing mud and slime from his face, his hair, and his clothes.

As a matter of fact, Mellish had been thus engaged for a considerable time. He could not go back to the dormitory in his reeking state, and he had stopped at the fountain to clean himself as much as possible. Even as it was, with the best he could do, he was likely to leave muddy traces behind him when he got into the House again.

"Hallo, Mellish!" said Arthur Augustus, in a low tone. "I didn't know you were out of the dorm, deah boy!"

Mellish spun round.

"D'Arcy! You rotter!"

"Eh?"

"You beast!" hissed Mellish. "Look at the state I'm in!"

"Bai Jove, there's a howwid smell!" said D'Arcy. "I am sowwy if you have had an accident, Mellish, but I wefuse to be called names."

"You rotter! Oh, you—you—"

Mellish made a rush at him, reckless of the danger of being heard from the House.

Arthur Augustus backed away promptly. He did not understand the cause of Percy Mellish's wrath, but he understood that Mellish was reeking with evil-smelling mud, and he wasn't inclined to let the muddy junior get close.

As Mellish still came for him, he fairly ran, and dodged away through the trees.

The cad of the Fourth bumped into

a tree in pursuit and gave a howl, and then returned to the fountain to resume his ablutions.

Arthur Augustus, surprised and breathless, reached the back of the House and climbed in.

In the box-room he paused.

"That wottah must have gone out this way," he muttered. "I had bettah leave the window unfastened for him. I wondah what has happened to him? He seemed vewy watty about some-thin'."

Silent in his rubber shoes, the swell of St. Jim's made his way to the Fourth Form dormitory. His chums were fast asleep, and Arthur Augustus was glad of it. He did not mean to wake them up.

He slipped off his clothes and turned in.

He was scarcely in bed when Percy Mellish came sneaking into the dormitory, and there was a whiff of smell that he brought in with him.

Arthur Augustus sat up.

"Is that you, Mellish?"

"Yes, you rotter!"

"I twust you have had some sense to fasten the window? Othahwise, you will be bowled out in the mornin'."

"Yes, you cad!"

"What are you callin' me names for?" said Arthur Augustus quietly. "I do not wish to thwash you, this time of night, Mellish, but—"

"You've ruined my clothes!" muttered Mellish. "Look at the state I'm in, and I've been cleaning myself out there for half an hour or more. I shouldn't wonder if I've left mud in the passage, and the box-room, too. I was smothered. Well, if I get spotted I'll see that you are spotted, too, you can bet on that."

"How is it my fault, you ass? Have you fallen into a ditch?"

"You pushed me in, you rotter!"

"Bai Jove! I did?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"You know you did!" hissed Mellish as he peeled off his muddy and wet clothes. "I shall have to hide these things somehow, and put on my Sunday togs. Oh, you beast!"

"I did not push you into a ditch, Mellish."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I had no ideah you were out of the dorm till I saw you in the quad."

"What's the good of pitching me that yarn?" snarled Mellish. "You came behind me and shoved me in the ditch because you knew I was following you."

"If I had known you were followin' me, you spyin' cad, I should have given you a feahful thwashin', and probably pushed you into a ditch," said Arthur Augustus. "But, as it happens, I did not, and if you express the slightest doubt of my statement, Mellish, I will get up now and give you a feahful thwashin', at the wisk of wakin' the House!"

Mellish growled, but he expressed no further doubt of D'Arcy's statement—audibly, at least.

A sleepy voice came from Jack Blake's bed—the murmur of voices had awakened him.

"Hallo! Who's burbling?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, it's you!" Blake blinked in the dark. "Been out, ass?"

"Yaas."

"You don't mean to say you've got the tuck?" exclaimed Blake, broad awake now. "You've really pulled it off? My hat!"

"Ahem!"

"Good!" said Blake, sitting up in bed. "If you've got the tuck, Gussy, we'll have the feed, and I take back

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some of the things I said about your brains."

"You need not twouble to get up, Blake."

"Why not, if you've got the tuck?"

"Ahem! I haven't got it. Owin' to unforeseen cires— There is nothin' whatevah to cackle about, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle like a fatheaded hen, Blake! Tom Mewwy forgot to give me the pound note."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I found I had no cash."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Mrs. Murphy, for some weason she did not acquaint me with, declined to give me cwidit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will wake the whole dorm, Blake, if you cackle in that ridiculous mannah," said Arthur Augustus. "It was scarcely my fault that Tom Mewwy forgot to give me the money."

"You forgot to ask him for it, you mean."

"Well, I—I— Ahem! I—I—"

"Well, of all the blithering idiots!" came from Dig's bed.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Of all the burblin' cuckoos!"—that was Herries' contribution.

"If you fellows like, I will go and wake Tom Mewwy up now, and get the pound note, and—"

"And we'll have the feed along with the milk in the morning," chuckled Blake. "Don't be an ass, Gussy! Go to sleep! You haven't disappointed us."

"Weally, Blake, I am vewy glad I have not disappointed you. You weally do not feel disappointed?"

"Of course not. We expected this."

"Why, you uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We knew you'd muck it up somehow," growled Herries. "Go to sleep, for goodness' sake!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Arthur Augustus snorted, and laid his head on the pillow. In about half a minute he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER 5.

Tom Merry to the Rescue!

TOM MERRY chuckled as he trotted down the road after disposing of the spy of the Fourth in a manner that was so eminently satisfactory—not to Mellish, of course.

Mellish could not be expected to be satisfied.

The Shell fellow paused a little distance down the road and listened. He heard the enraged spy squelching away towards the school, and chuckled again.

Mellish was evidently disposed of.

Tom Merry dropped into a walk, still following the grass verge beside the road. He had wasted some time on Mellish, and he had no hope of overtaking Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's was at the village by that time, or before.

The captain of the Shell walked on. He was not afraid of missing Arthur Augustus; either he would find him in the village, or he would meet him coming back.

But matters were not destined to pass that night as the captain of the Shell expected. The adventures of that eventful night were by no means over.

In the stillness of the night a sound of clear and ringing footsteps came to his ears,



He stopped.

The approaching footsteps came down the lane that led to Glyn House. Somebody was coming from Glyn House, doubtless a visitor leaving unusually late.

Tom Merry paused under the shadowy trees, to wait for the pedestrian to pass.

Tom often visited Glyn House with Bernard Glyn, and he did not want to be seen by somebody who perhaps knew him. A report to the Head, and gating for the next three or four half-holidays in consequence would have meant missing several junior cricket matches.

He waited. The footsteps came ringing on from the lane to the road, and in a glimmer of moonlight through the trees Tom caught the glimpse of a square-shouldered figure and a white moustache.

He was glad he had kept out of sight. The square shoulders and white moustache belonged to Major Stringer, a retired Indian veteran, who lived in the neighbourhood, and was reputed to be immensely rich, and a grim old martinet.

There was not the slightest doubt that if Major Stringer had seen a St. Jim's fellow out of bounds at that hour, he would have felt it his duty to report the matter to the Head.

Major Stringer had brought home with him from India the very strictest notions of discipline, and there were rumours in the village that he ruled his house with a rod of iron, as if they had been sepoys in his regiment.

Tom Merry was exceedingly glad to have escaped the sharp eye of the major—all the more because that sharp eye had been on him once on a certain occasion—when, by accident, a footer had come into contact with the major's silk hat, and severely damaged it.

He waited for the major to pass on. But the old gentleman paused in the road to light a cigar.

Tom Merry stood silent under the trees, squeezing against a trunk. He was not more than six feet from the major, and he feared that the glimmer of the match might reveal his presence.

However, the match went out, and

the scent of the cigar came to him, and the major moved on.

Then, so suddenly that it dazzled the junior, a gleam of light came from the blackness under the trees on the road towards Rylcombe.

The electric light flashed out, and shone on the startled face of the major, as it had shone on that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a quarter of an hour earlier.

Major Stringer started back, and the cigar dropped from his lips.

"Gad!" he ejaculated.

The light was instantly shut off.

At the same moment two shadowy forms leaped from the dark, sure of their victim now, and two strong pairs of hands grasped the major, and he went to the ground with a crash.

He uttered a startled cry as he went down, and began to struggle furiously.

"Footpads, by gad! Hah! Would you, you scoundrels?"

"Hold him, Bunny!" panted a hard voice.

A knee was planted on the major's chest, but the tough old soldier was not easily held. He grappled with his assailant, and the ruffian panted again:

"Bunny, you fool, out him!"

Tom Merry had stood dazed, utterly taken aback by the startling, sudden happening.

But as he heard the footpad's sudden cry, he ran forward.

One ruffian was kneeling on the major, striving hard to keep him down, and the other—the man called Bunny—was aiming a blow at the old soldier's head with a short, thick cudgel.

If that blow had fallen, the major would have been stunned.

Tom Merry sprang forward just in time.

"Stop, you villain!" he panted.

He fairly hurled himself at Bunny.

The ruffian, startled by his sudden appearance, missed his blow, and the cudgel barely grazed the major's head. The old gentleman uttered a cry of pain. But, with indomitable pluck, he struggled with the man who was holding him.

Bunny turned ferociously on Tom Merry.

His cudgel swept up for another blow, this time aimed at the junior, while the two men on the ground grappled and rolled over in conflict.

Tom Merry saw the blow coming, and tried to dodge it. He saved his head, but the cudgel crashed on his shoulder with stunning force.

The next instant his fist clenched, and as hard as iron, caught Bunny on the chin in a terrific uppercut.

The ruffian gasped, and toppled over backwards as if he had been shot.

Crash!

Tom Merry, one of the best athletes in the Lower School at St. Jim's, was a hard hitter, and he had put all his strength and all his weight into that terrific drive, and it had fairly doubled the ruffian up. The cudgel clattered in the road; Bunny rolled over, groaning.

The pain in his left shoulder, where the cudgel had struck him, was bitter, but for the moment Tom Merry hardly noticed it.

He groped for the cudgel he had heard fall, and grasped it, and sprang towards the major and his assailant.

Crash!

The ruffian had got the old gentleman under again, and was kneeling on him and gripping his throat, when the cudgel came on his head with crashing force.

Tom Merry was too excited to think or care how hard he was hitting. The footpad rolled over, with a groan.

"By gad!" panted the major, sitting up dazedly. "Scoundrels! Ruffians! Penal servitude for this! Oh, my neck! Ow! Begad!"

Tom Merry reeled against a tree. His shoulder was hurt, and he almost fainted with the pain, but he still gripped the cudgel.

A light gleamed on the road.

Heavy footsteps came from the direction of the village.

"Wot's all this 'ere?"

It was the voice of Police-constable Crump.

Bunny made a sudden bound, and disappeared in the trees, and was heard a second later crashing through a hedge. But the other man lay where he had fallen, groaning. He was not in a state to move; the doughty blow on his head had more than half-stunned him.

"Help! Police! Footpads!" gasped the major.

Tom Merry dropped the cudgel and backed into the shadow of the trees.

Major Stringer did not want any more help, with his assailants disposed of so thoroughly and the policeman at his side.

Tom Merry remembered the danger of being recognised, and he was quick to take cover. There was a terrible ache in his shoulder. He had to clench his teeth to keep back the sound of pain that almost forced itself from his lips.

Police-constable Crump flashed his electric lamp on the scene, and helped the major to his feet.

Tom Merry, secure in the deep shadow of the trees beside the road, silent on the grass, ran for it.

He had acted gallantly, and he had run a big risk, and he was hurt, but the important matter at that moment was to get away unseen.

The assistance he had given to Major Stringer would not make any difference to the fact that he had been out of bounds at close on midnight—an act of which the Head would take a severe view, if it came to his knowledge.

Indeed, the danger he had been in would possibly increase the Head's anger, for the footpads might have attacked him if he had fallen in with them alone. It dawned on Tom's mind, in fact, that there were good reasons for keeping the school rules, apart from the fact that they were "rules."

He ran hard. The group in the road were between him and the village, and he had to scud away towards St. Jim's.

In a few minutes he was far beyond the reach of Police-constable Crump's electric lamp, and the sound of Mr. Crump's gruff voice had died away far behind.

Then Tom Merry halted. The pain in his shoulder was intense, and it made him gasp.

He sat down in the grass beside the road, at a short distance from the school, and removed his jacket and unfastened his shirt. Then he felt carefully over his shoulder with his fingers, heedless of the pain a touch caused him, and gasped with relief as he ascertained that there were no bones broken.

He could feel a bruise forming, and he knew that on the morrow his shoulder would be black and blue. But that was nothing in comparison with a serious injury. His left arm would be stiff for a day or two, that was all. It meant knocking off cricket for a few days.

There was no sound from the road. Mr. Crump had probably secured the

fallen ruffian, and was taking him to the station. As for Bunny, he was probably a mile or more away by that time.

Tom Merry sat and rested.

His shoulder hurt him, but the pain was abating a little now. He was not inclined to go down to the village, however. He was determined to wait where he was till Arthur Augustus came by, little dreaming at the moment that Arthur Augustus was already within the walls of St. Jim's.

It had not occurred to him, naturally, that the swell of the Fourth had taken the shorter path home through the wood.

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus had been climbing the school wall at the very moment when Tom Merry had been tackling the footpads.

Midnight sounded from the clock tower of St. Jim's, and the heavy strokes came dimly to the ears of the captain of the Shell. He rose to his feet and looked anxiously down the road.

Where was D'Arcy?

"The blithering ass!" murmured Tom Merry. "He can't be staying in the village all this time. Where the dickens has he got to? Blessed if I'll wait any longer!"

With a dull, heavy ache in his shoulder, Tom started for the school. He could not repent that he had come out, considering the service he had rendered to the old major, but he was feeling extremely seedy and "rotten." It was with difficulty that he climbed the school wall.

All was dark and silent as he dropped into the quadrangle.

Suppressing a groan, the Shell fellow tramped silently across the quad and made his way round the House. He climbed the outhouse, and just as he drew himself on the leads he heard a sudden sound.

Click!

It was the catch of the box-room window. It had been fastened, and he was shut out!

CHAPTER 6.

Silence is Golden!

TOM MERRY grunted.

He dragged himself on to the leads and approached the box-room window.

He tried it, but it was fastened within. He had been only a few minutes behind whoever had entered—Mellish, doubtless. Or was it D'Arcy? It had occurred to him for the first time that Arthur Augustus, not knowing, of course, that he was out, might have taken the short cut home.

Tom Merry tapped on the window, in a faint hope that the fellow who had gone in might be still in the box-room.

But there was no sound within.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom.

"What rotten luck!"

He was shut out, but it was useless to stand there and bemoan his fate. That would not help.

He climbed on the window-sill, and opened his pocket-knife, and essayed to pass it between the sashes, to push back the catch.

Snap! The blade had broken.

He opened the second blade and started again, more careful now.

Fortunately, this time he succeeded. There was a snap, but it was the snap of the catch as it sprang back.

With a breath of relief, he pushed up the sash and tumbled into the box-room.

He closed the window and paused.

Before he fastened it, he wanted to know whether both Mellish and D'Arcy

were indoors. Mellish, spy as he was and cad generally, could not be left out all night, though it would be no more than he deserved.

Tom removed his boots, and, leaving the window unfastened, stole on tiptoe to the Fourth Form dormitory and listened.

There was a murmur of voices in the dormitory.

He heard Mellish's snarling voice and the stately tones of Arthur Augustus in response, and that was enough.

He glided away again to the box-room and fastened the window. Both the Fourth Formers were back in their dormitory, and that was all he wanted to know.

With aching shoulder and his head almost dizzy with pain, he crept to his own dormitory and entered silently.

All he wanted now was to get to bed to sleep.

There was no sound in the Shell dormitory save the steady breathing of the juniors.

Tom Merry slipped off his clothes swiftly and turned in, and, in spite of the ache in his shoulder, he was asleep a couple of minutes after his head touched the pillow.

He did not wake again till the rising-bell was clanging out in the sunny summer morning.

Clang, clang, clang!

Tom Merry's eyes opened.

There was a dull ache in his shoulder. His left arm was still painful, and he gave a little yelp as he moved it.

Monty Lowther, already out of bed, looked at him, with a grin.

"Turn out, slacker! What price that feed?"

"We'll jolly well talk to Gussy this morning!" said Manners. "Of course, we knew there wouldn't be any feed, as it was left to Gussy. I suppose he slept like a top all night."

"Of course he did, the ass!" said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry grinned as he thought of the pound note still reposing in his pocket. He turned out of bed.

"Hallo! What's that?" asked Lowther, as Tom took the note from his pocket and held it up.

"The giddy note!"

"But, Gussy—"

"He forgot the money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then he may have gone without it!" howled Glyn. "Ha, ha, ha! I wonder what Mrs. Murphy said to him if he woke her up at half-past eleven to ask for tuck on tick?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows hurried through their dressing. They were anxious to know how Arthur Augustus had fared—whether he had made the expedition, and what kind of reception Mrs. Murphy had given him, if he had.

No one in the Shell dormitory had any suspicion that Tom Merry, too, had been out that eventful night.

The captain of the Shell dressed without a word.

He had wisely decided to say nothing of his adventure with the footpads. He had a natural modest dislike to representing himself in a heroic light, but that was not his chief reason.

He knew that Major Stringer's mishap would be the talk of the neighbourhood. The major was a great man for a mile and a half, so to speak, and the attack upon him would cause any amount of excitement.

The major would certainly mention that a boy had come to his help; and if St. Jim's fellows knew that Tom Merry had been out, and had come home with a bruised shoulder—if, in



"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus as a torch beam suddenly shone on his face and blinded him. "Who is there?"
 "Only a kid!" muttered a rough voice, and then the light was shut off.

fact, he allowed it to be known that it was he who had helped the major—the matter was certain to come to other ears.

The juniors could, of course, be depended on not to sneak. But if so many fellows had known of Tom's share in the major's adventure, there was not the slightest doubt that someone would have chattered incautiously.

And thanks from the old major for help rendered would not have compensated Tom Merry for a caning from the Head and a gating for half a dozen half-holidays.

Tom, apart from reasons of modesty, had a very natural dislike for coming into the limelight in the circumstances.

He intended to confide the matter later, under a pledge of secrecy, to Manners and Lowther, his intimate chums. But there was no need at all for it to go further.

So he dressed in silence.

He was careful to keep his bruised shoulder out of view as he dressed. The Terrible Three left the dormitory unusually soon after rising-bell, and with them went Glyn, Dane, Kangaroo, Talbot and Gore, all eager to hear what Arthur Augustus had to say.

Monty Lowther threw open the door of the Fourth Form dormitory. The Fourth Formers were dressing, but none had gone down yet.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, half-dressed, and wholly indignant, fixed a withering glare upon Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass!" was his greeting.

Tom stared.

"Hallo! What's the matter now?"

"You mucked up the whole thing, you feafuhl duffah!"

"I did!"

"Yaas, wathah! You uttably forgot to give me that wotten pound note."

"You forgot to ask me for it, you mean."

"Weally, you chump—"

"You undertook to fetch the tuck," said Tom Merry. "Naturally, it didn't occur to me that you would go without the tin."

"I wegard that as havin' acted like a howlin' idiot, Tom Mewwy. I was tweated with gwoss diswespect by Mrs. Murphy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatever to cackle at. When I explained to that vewy suspicious old lady that I had forgotten to bring any money, she actually slammed the window shut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And wefused to open it again," continued D'Arcy. "I should wegard such conduct as simply wude if Mrs. Murphy were a man. I had to come away empty-handed."

"As well as empty-headed," said Monty Lowther sympathetically. "Poor old Gussy!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And Mellish had all his trouble for nothing," chuckled Blake.

"Mellish?" said Lowther. "What had Mellish to do with it?"

Blake grinned gleefully.

"He followed Gussy out. He got on to it that Gussy was going out, and he thought he was up to something, and spied on him—didn't you, Percy dear?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Mellish.

"He never thought Gussy was going out for harmless and necessary tuck, of course," grinned Blake. "He thought he was going to the Green Man,

perhaps. Did you think he was going to the Green Man, Mellish?"

Mellish did not answer.

"Oh, my young friend, beware of inquisitiveness," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "My dear Mellish, I have observed this unpleasant trait in your character more than once." Lowther was imitating the solemn manner of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. "Beware of it, Mellish. As you grow up—"

"Shut up, you silly idiot!" howled Mellish furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beware of it," said Lowther. "As you grow up this disgusting trait in your character will grow also, unless you hold it in check while yet in your youth, my boy! Oh, make an effort while there is yet time."

"You silly fathead!"

"It is for your own sake I speak, Mellish. I implore you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But that isn't the best," chuckled Blake. "The cream of it is that somebody shoved Mellish into a ditch, and he came home reeking. He thinks it was Gussy, but Gussy says it wasn't."

"It was!" howled Mellish.

Arthur Augustus laid down the collar he had been about to adjust.

"What did you say, Mellish?" he asked, with ominous quietness.

"I said it was you, you rotter!" growled Mellish.

Arthur Augustus crossed towards Mellish, who promptly dodged round his bed.

"I am sowwy, Mellish, but I have no wresource but to give you a feafuhl thwashin'," remarked Arthur Augustus. "You have cast doubt upon my word."

Mellish jumped over the bed.

"Stop, you wottah!"

Mellish cleared another bed as Arthur Augustus rushed after him, and bolted for the door, with his jacket in one hand, and his necktie in the other. He disappeared down the passage.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was incapable of quitting the dormitory without a collar on, so Mellish escaped. The swell of St. Jim's finished his toilet with a frowning brow.

The Shell fellows, after explaining at full length their opinion of Arthur Augustus and his manner of conducting an expedition, departed chuckling.

It was agreed on all hands that it was precisely what might have been expected of Gussy, and, indeed, Blake declared that he was thankful it was no worse.

Gussy might have been marched back into the dormitory with Mr. Railton's hand on his shoulder, or the tuck might have been purchased and confiscated immediately afterwards. And, in fact, Blake went so far as to propose a vote of thanks to Gussy for having forgotten to take the pound note with him.

But Arthur Augustus did not stay for the vote of thanks. He marched out of the dormitory with his noble nose high in the air, leaving his comrades grinning.

CHAPTER 7.

Looking for the Culprit!

"SOMETHING'S up!" murmured Tom Merry, at the breakfast-table.

It certainly looked like it.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was at the head of the table, and he was looking very thoughtful, and frowning.

Mr. Lathom, at the Fourth Form table, was looking worried. Knox, the prefect, and Kildare had been seen in consultation with the two masters. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, had also been seen speaking to them, and he wore a frown as he sat at the senior table.

It was only too clear that "something was up" in the School House that morning.

Tom Merry could not help wondering whether it had anything to do with the expedition of the previous night.

So far as Tom was aware, he had left no trace of his exit and entrance, and he had not breathed a word on the subject yet, even to Manners and Lowther.

Mellish, too, was generally keen enough to look after himself. Perhaps Arthur Augustus had given himself away, somehow. But the swell of St. Jim's, who was quite satisfied with all his precautions, was quite easy in his mind.

After breakfast, when the School House fellows should have left the dining-room, Mr. Railton ordered the Shell and the Fourth to remain, while the rest went out. The Form-masters also remained, and Kildare and Knox, prefects.

Fourth and Shell looked at one another apprehensively. If all their consciences had been perfectly clear there would have been nothing to dread, of course; but so many consciences could not be clear all at once. It really was not to be expected.

As Monty Lowther had sapiently remarked, they were all human at times.

Fourth and Shell stood waiting for the chopper to come down, as they expressed it. Mr. Railton was looking very severe.

The Housemaster of the School House
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was generally very kind and genial, but he could be severe when severity was required—and he appeared to think that it was required now.

"Boys," said Mr. Railton, "it has come to my knowledge that someone broke bounds last night after lights out in the junior dormitories."

The juniors were silent. Everybody present knew that D'Arcy and Mellish had been out of bounds, but, naturally, nobody intended to say so.

"This is a very serious matter," said Mr. Railton. "I have no choice but to investigate the matter very carefully, and inflict condign punishment on the offender; I need not enlarge upon the seriousness of the offence."

There was a murmur among the juniors.

"To break bounds at any time is a serious matter, but at night it is doubly serious, and I have no resource but to report the delinquent to the headmaster for a flogging!"

"Oh!" murmured the juniors. Mellish turned almost yellow. He had carefully hidden his muddy clothes, but he had a lurking fear that they might come to light.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy were calm and self-possessed. They did not intend to give themselves away, of course, and they knew there would be no sneaking. They did not see anything to fear.

Mr. Railton was not tactless enough to question each boy separately; he had no desire to drive a boy into falsehood by unfair questioning.

True, Tom Merry and D'Arcy would not have answered untruthfully, in any case, but many fellows would have considered it justifiable if their Housemaster had taken an unfair advantage. But that was not Mr. Railton's method.

"If the boy in question cares to come forward, I will do my best to make his punishment more lenient," said Mr. Railton.

There were some subdued smiles upon the faces of the juniors. Nobody was likely to come forward for the pleasure of being flogged by the Head. The juniors were more likely to dodge that treat as long as they possibly could.

Mr. Railton waited a minute for a reply, but none came.

"Excuse me, sir," said Monty Lowther, at last, in his blindest tone. "May I ask whether this is a certainty—this shocking circumstance, sir?"

Mr. Railton looked at him.

"It is quite certain, Lowther. Traces of mud have been found leading from the box-room along the dormitory passage. Some boy from either the Shell or the Fourth Form broke bounds last night, and came home in a very muddy state."

Mellish almost gasped.

"The matter will now be investigated," said Mr. Railton. "You may go!"

The juniors went.

They gathered in the quadrangle to discuss the situation. In the School House Mr. Railton and the Form-masters and Kildare and Knox were investigating.

Figgins & Co. of the New House came over to inquire the cause of the serious and sedate discussion. They found Mellish shaking his fist under Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic nose.

"Weally, Mellish, I wepeat that you are mistaken," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally did not push you into the ditch!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Figgins.

"Flogging for somebody, if it comes out!" said Blake dismally. "Gussy, of course!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Gussy been putting his foot in it again?" said Kerr sympathetically.

"It's all Mellish's fault," said Arthur Augustus. "He followed me out to spy on me, and fell into a ditch, and left a lot of twaces when he came in, and Waiton is on his twack."

"If I get bowled out, you'll get it as well as me, I know that!" said Mellish savagely.

"You are a sneakin' wottah, Mellish!"

"Hard lines!" said Figgins. "But I'm really surprised at you, Gussy! What were you going on the tiles for?"

"You uttah ass, I was not goin' on the tiles! I went out to fetch in a feed from Mrs. Murphy's——"

"And forgot to take the money!" sneered Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then the feed hasn't come off," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll tell you what, you chaps—I'll manage it for you. It's simply awful now the tuckshop's closed, you know. I haven't had anything since breakfast!"

"Nearly ten minutes!" grinned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bell rang for chapel, and the juniors proceeded to chapel, and then to morning lessons. The investigation was still proceeding, but apparently no discovery had been made.

Morning lessons passed off without interruption.

When the classes were dismissed there still came no announcement. Mellish's muddy clobber had evidently not been unearthed yet, and the cad of the Fourth was breathing a little more easily.

At dinner the Form-masters were still looking very severe, but they had nothing to say about the escapade of the previous night.

After dinner the Terrible Three sauntered out into the quadrangle.

Tom Merry debated in his mind whether he should now confide his share in the matter to his two chums. He had no wish to keep it a secret from them, but it was safer for Manners and Lowther to know nothing till the investigations were over.

Knowing nothing, they could say with a clear conscience that they knew nothing, if suspicion should turn in their direction.

Tom Merry was thinking the matter over, when he gave a sudden jump.

From the direction of the gates a man came striding towards the School House—a man with square shoulders, a white moustache, and a bronzed face.

"Hallo! What does old Stringer want?" remarked Lowther. "Hallo, hallo! Where are you off to?" he added, in amazement.

Tom Merry was scudding round the House. His chums followed him in astonishment.

Major Stringer, without noticing the juniors, passed into the School House.

"What's biting you, Tommy?" demanded Lowther, as he ran the captain of the Shell down behind the gym.

"N-nothing!"

"What did you bolt for, you ass?"

"Did I bolt?" said Tom innocently.

"Yes, you did! Have you been falling foul of old Stringer?" asked Manners. "He can't have come to complain to the Head about you, I suppose?"

Tom chuckled.

"No, I shouldn't think so. Let's go and look at the cricket. Knox is batting, and I want cheering up."

So the Terrible Three went to look at Knox's batting, which was always an amusing spectacle.

A quarter of an hour later Tom Merry, who had his eye on the gates,

was greatly relieved to see the old major depart.

Major Stringer's visit might, of course, have had nothing to do with the happening of the previous night, but Tom had his doubts.

The thanks of the major for assistance rendered were of no special value to him — weighed in the balance against the flogging Mr. Railton had promised to whoever had broken bounds that night.

CHAPTER 8.

Simply Amazing!

"D'ARCY!" Study No. 6 were chatting under the elms when Kildare bore down upon them.

There was a somewhat peculiar expression on Kildare's handsome face, and the juniors were on their guard at once.

Blake nudged his chum as a warning to be careful, and Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on him inquiringly.

"Wow! What are you pokin' me in the wibs for, Blake, you ass?"

Blake murmured something indistinctly.

"Yaas, Kildare," said Arthur Augustus. "Anythin' wanted?"

"You're wanted," said Kildare.

"You'd like me to bowl for you?" said D'Arcy diplomatically.

"You're wanted in the Head's study."

"Bai Jove!" "I—I say, is anything up?" asked Blake.

Kildare smiled. "D'Arcy's rubber shoes have been found," he said. "Perhaps D'Arcy will explain why his rubber shoes were dusty and why they were hidden in the hatbox."

"Oh dear! You don't mean to say that Wailton looked into my hatbox, Kildare? I should weally not have expected that of Wailton!"

The captain of St. Jim's laughed.

"You young ass, a prefect found them there! You are to go to the Head at once. But I don't think you need be alarmed. Dr. Holmes knows all that happened last night, and there's nothing to be afraid of. But cut off at once."

"You see, deah boy, it was quite an innocent expedish," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sure Dr. Holmes would not suspect me of bweakin' bounds fwom any wotten motive. It was simply a question of tuck."

"Yes; go to the Head now."

"You see, the tuckshop bein' closed, we—"

"Buzz off!"

"Yaas, certainly! In the cires, Kildare, you will see that— Pway don't take hold of my yah, Kildare; I am goin'!"

And D'Arcy went.

Blake, Herries, and Digby accompanied him to the Head's door.

"Mind," said Blake, "if there's trouble we're coming in; the old boy will go easier with a crowd of us, and we were really in it, too. It was only by chance that a howling idiot went out instead of one of us."

"Weally, you fathead—"

"Go in, ass!"

Arthur Augustus tapped at the Head's door and entered. Kildare's words had relieved him of some of his apprehensions, though after what Mr. Railton had said that morning he did not quite see how the Head could take a lenient view of the matter.

To his surprise, he found the Head looking very good-humoured. The Housemaster and Mr. Lathom were also in the study. They were looking very good-humoured, too.

"Ah, it is you, D'Arcy!" said the Head benevolently.

"Yaas, sir," Kildare says you want to see me, sir."

"You were out of bounds last night."

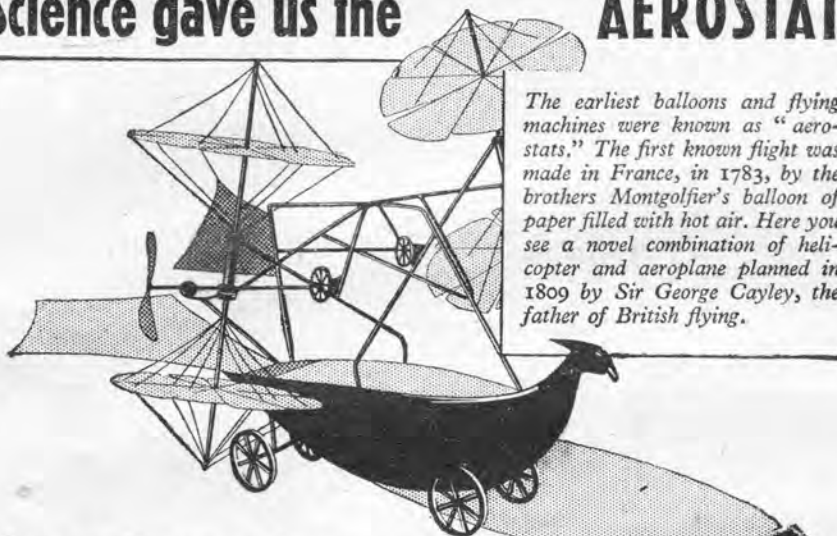
"Ahem!"

"You need not hesitate to admit the fact, D'Arcy, as there is no longer a question of punishment, owing to what has occurred."

"I am vewy glad to heah you say so, sir," said D'Arcy, greatly relieved, and immensely puzzled, at the same time.

(Continued on next page.)

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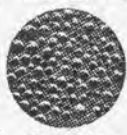
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"You may be aware that Major Stringer has called," said the Head.
 "No, sir; I was not aware of it," said Arthur Augustus, still more perplexed. What Major Stringer's call could possibly have to do with him he could not fathom.

"You admit that you were out of bounds last night, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Your motive—"

"I am sure, sir, that you would not attribute a wotten motive to me. I was simply goin' to the tuckshop."

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"You see, sir, Mrs. Taggles' shop being closed—"

"You can go to the shop in the village in the day-time, D'Arcy."

"But the wemittance didn't come until aftah lockin'-up, sir."

"Do you mean to say that you introduced tuck, as you call it, into the school at a late hour last night?" asked the Head.

"Oh, no, sir! That ass—I mean Tom Mewwy—forgot to give me the money, and I nevah thought of it till I was nearly there, and so—"

Dr. Holmes suppressed a smile.

"So you had your journey for nothing?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Very well, D'Arcy, I accept your assurance that you had no worse motive for breaking bounds; but it is, nevertheless, a serious matter, and I should have administered a flogging had not other circumstances come to my knowledge."

"Oh!"

"But, considering your conduct last night, D'Arcy, I feel that I have no resource but to pardon you."

"You are very kind, sir."

"Major Stringer made a special request to that effect, and I did not see how I could refuse him."

"Major Stwingah, sir?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

All Arthur Augustus knew of Major Stringer was that he was a grim-faced old martinet, with a reputation for hot temper and great severity. Why a stranger—and such a stranger—should have called on the Head to speak up for him was beyond the understanding of the swell of St. Jim's.

"So I have decided to pass the matter over, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir. It was vevy kind of Majah Stwingah to speak up for me, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"He judged correctly that a lad capable of such plucky conduct could have had no bad motive for being out of bounds, even at so late an hour," said the Head. "I agree with him on that point. But it must not occur again, D'Arcy. This time you are pardoned, but if there should be any recurrence of this reckless conduct you will be severely punished."

"Yaas, sir."

"Now you may go," said the Head. "Having, I hope, made you sensible of the seriousness of your fault, I will add that I am very pleased with your conduct last night, and I congratulate you."

"Bai Jove! I—I—I mean—I—" stammered Arthur Augustus, in utter confusion. "I—I—you are vevy kind, sir, but—"

"That will do, my boy," said the Head kindly. "You may go!"

"Yaas, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He left the study like a fellow in a dream.

Blake & Co. awaited him with anxious looks.

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"Well?" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Not licked?"

"No. Only feahfully surprised!"

"Well, the Head's a brick!" said Dig. "Come away, before he changes his mind."

Arthur Augustus followed his chums into the quadrangle in such a state of amazement that his eyes were almost bulging from his head.

The news had spread that the swell of the Fourth had been spotted, and in the quadrangle he was surrounded by an inquiring crowd of juniors.

Mollish was among them, grinning.

Now that somebody had been spotted, the cad of the Fourth felt quite safe—and he was quite assured that Arthur Augustus would not have given him away.

The Terrible Three came over from the cricket ground, and joined the crowd under the elms.

They had just heard the news.

"Not licked?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"No."

"Lines?"

"No."

"Anything?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Nothin'!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Only congratulations!"

gasped Arthur Augustus.

"What?"

"The Head congratulated me on what I did last night," gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Unless I am dweamin', the Head must be off his wockah!"

"Well, my hat!"

And the juniors, as astounded as Arthur Augustus himself, stared blankly at the swell of St. Jim's.

It was past D'Arcy's comprehension, and it was past theirs.

CHAPTER 9.

Blake Makes a Discovery!

"CONGRATULATED?" said Blake.

"Yaas."

"What for?"

"For what I did last night."

"Breaking bounds?" said Gore.

"Yaas."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"I suppose," said Arthur Augustus, "I am not dweamin'? I pwesume that I shall not wake up pwesently in the dorm?"

"But—but—Railton said that the chap who had been breaking bounds would be flogged!" howled Lowther.

"Yaas, I know!"

"And you've been congratulated?"

"Yaas."

"Well, this beats it!" said Blake.

"Beats it hollow!" said Tom Merry.

"You're quite sure that you didn't dream that, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, if the Head congratulates a chap for breaking bounds, we can all please him that way," remarked Levi-son. "I'd break bounds every night for that matter."

"There must be some mistake, somehow," said Tom Merry. "What did

the Head tell you he was congratulating you for, Gussy?"

"For my conduct last night. He said he was very pleased!"

"Pleased!" howled the juniors.

"Yaas!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"He said I had done w'ong, and must not do it again, as I should not get off next time, and then he said he was vevy pleased with my conduct, and congratulated me!" said Arthur Augustus dazedly. "I cannot comprehend it. But Wailton and Lathom were there, too, and they both looked vevy pleased, and nodded approval."

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Tom Merry, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "It simply beats the band!"



Just as Tom Merry drew himself on to the roof, he heard a window. It had been fastened a

Still, you've got off the licking, and that's something."

"Yaas, I am vevy glad of that, of course; but I am vevy perplexed. It seems to me very mysterious!"

"As mysterious as a giddy novel!" said Lowther. "Of course, there wasn't any harm in it—but a chap wouldn't have expected the Head to be pleased."

"And then Stwingah, too—"

"Major Stringer!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a start. "What had he to do with it?"

"That is the most remarkable thing of all. It appears that he has called on the Head and spoken up for me, and I do not even know the man, you know. I don't see how old Stwingah can have known that I was out of bounds last night. It is a vevy gweat mystewy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "What are you cacklin' at, Tom Mewwy?"
 Tom Merry's eyes danced.
 He understood now.
 The major had not, of course, recognised his rescuer the previous night in the darkness and the hurry, but he had known that he was a schoolboy—probably had seen the St. Jim's cap. He had guessed that his rescuer belonged to St. Jim's, or perhaps had simply called to ascertain whether he belonged there or not—and had told the Head the story.
 It was for that rescue, of which Arthur Augustus was sublimely ignorant, that the swell of St. Jim's had been pardoned.



ard a sudden sound. Click! It was the catch of the box-room
 ned and he was shut out!

Tom Merry understood the mistake now.

But he did not explain the sudden burst of laughter which had drawn all eyes on him.

He did not mean to explain. So long as that mystery remained a mystery, Arthur Augustus could not be flogged. The swell of St. Jim's, quite unconsciously, was getting the benefit of Tom Merry's action, and Tom was glad for him to get it.

The captain of the Shell walked away towards the cricket ground to escape questions, leaving the amazed juniors gathered round D'Arcy.

Lowther dashed after him, and caught him by the shoulder.

"Tom—why—what—"

"Yow!" yelled Tom.

"What's the matter?"

"Ycop! Leggo my shoulder!"

gasped Tom Merry, jerking himself away, his face twisted with pain.

It was his left shoulder that Monty Lowther had grasped.

Lowther stared at him blankly.

"What on earth's the matter? What's wrong with you?"

"Oh dear!" groaned Tom Merry.
 "Oh! Ah! Yow! Nothing's the matter!"

"Anything wrong with your shoulder?"

"Well, I've got a bruise there," admitted Tom.

"How did you get it?"

"Got a knock!"

"Must be pretty bad for you to howl out like that," said Manners, who had come up. "How did you do it?"

"I didn't do it," said Tom Merry; "and it's a dead secret—not for you chaps, but it's got to be kept dark, or Gussy will get his flogging, after all. Come with me, and I will a tale unfold."

The astounded Shell fellows followed him.

Out of hearing of any juniors, Tom proceeded to explain.

"I was out last night," he explained. "I remembered the note, and went after Gussy. I didn't find him—and the note's still in my pocket." And in a few words Tom gave an account of the exciting encounter with Major Stringer and the footpads. "Mind, it's got to be kept dark. Stringer's told the Head, and, as Gussy was out of bounds, the Head's jumped to the conclusion that it was Gussy who helped old Stringer out of his fix—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a mistake, but it's got Gussy off his licking," said Tom. "No need to say a word—see?"

"And Gussy is getting all your giddy kudos," said Manners.

"Oh, blow the kudos!"

"True heroes are always modest," said Lowther solemnly. "Thomas, I commend your conduct."

"Don't be a fathead, old chap!"

"And your shoulder's hurt, is it?"

"Black and blue this morning," said Tom ruefully. "That ruffian gave me an awful wallop there with his club. But it doesn't hurt much now, except when a silly ass shoves his silly paw on it!"

"Well, you fathead, you should have told me!"

"I've been going to tell you," said Tom. "But mind, it's got to be kept dark now. If the Head knew, Gussy would get his licking all the same."

And it was agreed that Tom's adventure should be kept a dead secret.

Tom Merry hoped that the matter would end there and then. But the matter was far from ending.

After lessons that afternoon, Blake went down to the village tuckshop on his bike; and he did not forget to take the pound note with him.

When he returned, plenty reigned in Tom Merry's study. Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three gathered to the feed that had been so long delayed, and Figgins & Co. of the New House

honoured it with their presence, and several other fellows—most of them still interested and puzzled by the queer incident of the Head's congratulations to D'Arcy.

Blake had brought back a paper from the village—the local paper, which was published that day. And there was news in that paper.

"They were chatting about it in Mrs. Murphy's shop, so I got the paper," Blake explained. "It's about old Stringer—and Gussy."

"Bai Jove! About me, deah boy?"

"Yes, you secretive young villain!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You deceitful, prevaricating—"

"What?"

"He's been taking us in!" said Blake, with a sorrowful shake of the head. "I should never have believed it of Gussy—taking in his old pals!"

"I uttably fail to undahstand you, Blake!"

"Shush! Don't add fuel to fire!" said Blake chidingly. "Gussy, I am shocked at you!"

"You uttah ass—"

"If I did not put it down to your celebrated modesty, Gussy, I should punch your head for keeping it dark," said Blake.

D'Arcy gazed at him in utter astonishment.

"I pwesume you are jokin'," he remarked at last.

"Do you mean to say you're still keeping it up?" roared Blake. "I tell you it's in the paper."

"Bai Jove! What's in the papah?"

"About the gallant rescue."

"You are speakin' in widdles, deah boy."

"What the giddy dickens are you driving at, anyway?" asked Figgins.

"Listen, my children!" said Blake.

And even the succulent feed was forgotten as Blake proceeded to read out a paragraph in the "Rylcombe Gazette."

The paragraph was somewhat long-winded, but the information it contained was to the effect that Major Stringer, a well-known and highly respected resident in the neighbourhood, had been attacked by a couple of footpads directly after leaving Glyn House the previous night.

He would have been undoubtedly seriously hurt and robbed but for the prompt aid rendered by a schoolboy, whose name was at present unknown, but who was supposed to belong to St. James' School, that celebrated scholastic foundation in the vicinity of Rylcombe. One of the footpads was under arrest; the other had for the moment eluded Police-constable Crump.

"There!" said Blake. "That's why old Stringer came here; that's why the Head pardoned our prize ass and congratulated him! And the cheeky duffer kept it up to us that he didn't understand—wasn't going to tell us about it, by gum! Now, Gussy, you Ananias, what have you got to say?"

CHAPTER 10.

Not Gussy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had nothing to say.

He was dumb.

His astonishment was so great that he stood with his mouth open, gasping like a fish newly landed.

"Well?" said half a dozen voices in chorus.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus at last. "This is astonishin'!"

"Why didn't you tell us?" demanded Herries.

"Blessed modesty! Hiding his giddy
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light under a giddy bushel!" said Digby.

"Blessed cheek!" murmured Kerr.

"Spare his blushes!" said Blake.

"Modesty, thy name is Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rubbed his noble nose thoughtfully.

All eyes were upon him.

"This weally beats the band!" said D'Arcy. "I should nevah have supposed that Mellish would do a thing like that!"

"Mellish?" said Blake.

"Yaas, it must have been Mellish; he was the only other fellow out of bounds, you know."

"Wasn't it you?" howled Blake.

"Wathah not. I nevah heard of it till this minute," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose old Stwingah didn't see the chap cleahly in the dark; and he is wathah an old duffah, anyway!"

"It—it wasn't you?"

"Certainly not! Appawently, the Head thinks it was me, as it was found that I was out of bounds, owin' to a pwyin' boundah findin' my wubbah shoes in my hatbox."

The Terrible Three were silent. They alone possessed the key to the mystery.

"But—but it can't have been Mellish did it," said Blake. "Mellish would have bunked if there'd been any danger. He's a funk! Besides, if he did a plucky thing like that, he'd let all St. Jim's know about it!"

"Yaas, it certainly seems vewy odd if it was Mellish; but it was certainly not me. I wathah think I came on those footpads, though; there were two wuffians lurkin' in the lane, and I passed them near the woad up to your house, Glyn."

"Why didn't you arrest them and give them in charge?" asked Bernard Glyn, with great solemnity.

"Weally, I could not vewy well seize two hulkin' wuffians—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you are wottin', you wottah! Besides, I didn't know they were waitin' there for anybody. I thought they were two twamps, and I came home anothah way, so as not to wun into them again. I suppose it was aftah that that they tackled the old majah. If I had been there, of course, I should have wushed to the wescue like anythin'. But, as it happened, I was not there; so, of course, I had no opportunity of wushin' to the wescue. The Head is labouwin' undah an ewwah."

"Jolly lucky error for you!" said Fatty Wynn. "You were going to get a flogging."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn," he said, in his most stately manner, "I twust you do not think I am goin' to leave the Head labouwin' undah that ewwah?"

"Least said, soonest mended!" said Blake.

"I cannot possibly consent to takin' the cwedit for a bwave action that I have not committed—I mean, performed, deah boy."

"You want to be flogged, fathead?"

"Wats! I wefuse to appeah undah false colours—"

"Pass the jam!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Give him a bun and shut him up!" said Blake.

"I will have a bun, but I will not be shut up. It is my duty to acquaint the Head with the fact that I am not the hewoic wescuah."

"Rubbish!" said Blake. "You were the heroic rescuer right enough. The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,532.

You do these noble deeds without noticing it, you know. A D'Arcy never does anything like a common mortal. You rescued the major, and then forgot all about it."

"Imposs, deah boy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' to persist in wottin', you wottahs—"

"We are going to have tea," said Tom Merry. "Pile in, Gussy!"

"Vewy good, deah boy! But aftah tea—"

"Sufficient for the tea-time is the feed thereof," said Monty Lowther.

"After tea, Blake, you'd better chain him up in the study. Herries will lend you Towser's chain."

"Certainly!" said Herries heartily.

"You uttah asses—"

"But who the dickens could have done it, if Gussy didn't?" said Figgins.

"None of us were out. It's the sort of thing a New House chap would do, but we were in bed. But I'll bet Gussy's Sunday topper that it wasn't Mellish."

"Mellish came home rather a wreck, though," said Digby. "Somebody had pitched him into a ditch. He said it was Gussy."

"It wasn't Mellish," growled Blake. "Mellish would have bolted. Perhaps he did bolt, and fell into the ditch. It's lucky for Mellish, too, that our giddy prefects aren't up to the form of Sexton Blake. They found that somebody had been out of bounds by the mud in the box-room and the passage, and they found it was Gussy because of his dusty rubber shoes. It hasn't occurred to their mighty brains that Gussy's shoes, having only dust on them, couldn't have left the mud in the passage."

"I'll bet you Knox gets on to it!" said Tom Merry. "Knox is looking into the matter, and he's awfully sharp. If he finds Mellish's clobber, Mellish will be in for it."

"Unless he turns out to be the hero," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that about Mellish?" asked the owner of that name, looking into the study.

"Trot in," said Blake. "All heroes are welcome. Mellish, old man, did you rescue the major last night?"

"What major?" asked Mellish, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha! There's only one major been rescued. Read that!"

Percy Mellish read the paragraph in the paper. A peculiar look came over his face as he read it.

All eyes were upon Mellish's face. Nobody thought for a moment that he was the unknown hero, but they were wondering whether he would lay claim to the distinction.

"Old Stringer must have thought it was D'Arcy," he remarked at last.

"Gussy says it wasn't—was it, Gussy? Gussy! Where's that blessed ass got to?" exclaimed Blake, jumping up.

Arthur Augustus had slipped quietly out of the study.

"Gussy!" shouted Blake.

No reply.

"If he's gone to the Head, I'll—I'll—I'll—" Blake did not finish. He rushed down the passage after the vanished swell of the Fourth.

But Arthur Augustus was gone.

At that very moment he was tapping at the door of the Head's study.

CHAPTER 11.

D'Arcy Does His Duty!

"COME in!"

Dr. Holmes gave the swell of St. Jim's a kindly glance as he entered.

The Head was standing by the telephone.

"If you please, sir—"

"One moment, D'Arcy. Major Stringer is speaking to me on the telephone. He desires to be informed if I have yet discovered the name of the boy who rendered him so signal a service, and I am very glad to be able to—"

"Dr. Holmes—"

The Head made him a gesture to be silent.

"I must speak, sir."

"D'Arcy!"

"I am not the chap, sir."

"What!"

"I undahstand, sir, that you are undah the impression that I wescued Major Stwingah fwom the footpads last night?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, I didn't, sir."

Dr. Holmes lowered the receiver, and looked blankly at the flushed face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I fail to understand you, D'Arcy."

"I am twyin' to explain, sir."

"Do you mean to tell me that it was not you who rendered assistance to Major Stringer last night?" asked the Head sternly.

"Yaas, sir."

"Bless my soul! You have, then, come here to undeeceive me?"

"Yaas, sir."

"And why did you not do so before?" asked the Head sharply. "You are aware that I pardoned your faults because of your supposed act of courage, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir; but I was not aware of it then. I was vewy much surprised when you let me off, and I did not see what Majah Stwingah had to do with it. But I have just seen it in the papah, sir, and so I have found out that you were labouwin' undah a misapprehension."

"Oh!" said the Head.

"As I do not wish, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "to claim the cwedit of an action I did not perform,

(Continued on page 18.)

TOO HARD TO CRACK!

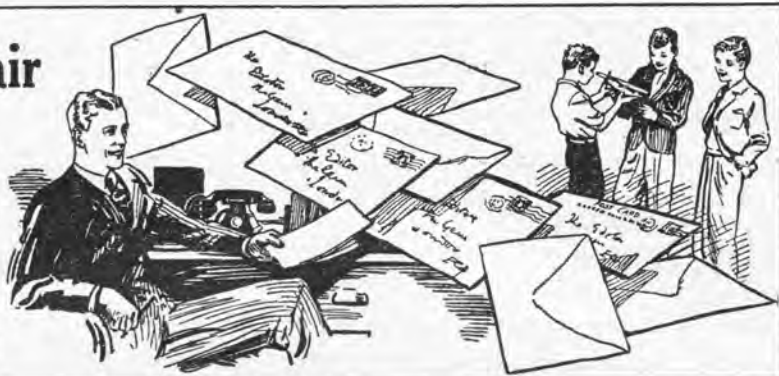


"It's hopeless, Joe! Let's try the gas-meter!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss N. Peace, 261, Ingram Road, Bloxwich, Walsall.

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM,
Fleetway House, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, chums!—I have just been preparing for publication the next St. Jim's story, and the task afforded me the utmost pleasure. The reason was that it is, from first line to last, a grand story—Martin Clifford at his best and brightest. In fact, it's definitely is, in my opinion, the best yarn of the year, bar none. It has the engaging title:

"THE TOUGH GUY OF THE SHELL!"

and introduces a newcomer to St. Jim's—something new in new boys. Every reader is going to like George Alfred Grundy. He is an amazing youth, who believes that fists speak louder than words.

Big, burly, and strong, with two leg-of-mutton fists, Grundy is too much of a handful for most of the juniors at St. Jim's. He could, in fact, lick many seniors. In spite of his pugnacious tendencies, however, the new boy is no bully, and he is a likeable fellow. But he is a self-willed, autocratic chap who was born to find trouble, mostly of his own making. Needless to say, he makes plenty of trouble for himself, and others, at St. Jim's. George Alfred hasn't been there five minutes before two or three fellows feel the weight of his fists!

Believe me, readers are going to enjoy themselves immensely reading about George Alfred Grundy. See that you "meet" this tough guy next Wednesday.

"THE RIVAL SCHOOLS!"

With the opening of Friardale Academy next door to Greyfriars, it naturally follows that ragging and rivalry breaks out between Harry Wharton & Co. and the foreign boys of the new school. Hoffman, the German junior, who was until recently in the Remove, is the first of the foreigners to "get it in the neck" from the Famous Four. This leads to reprisals by the aliens; but at the critical moment trouble starts among themselves, due to the feud between Hoffman and the French boy Meunier—and it has humorous results for the Remove!

This sparkling yarn, written in the fascinating style of popular Frank Richards, is full of fun and excitement—so don't miss it. Take my oft-repeated advice, chums, and order the old paper in advance.

IN REPLY.

Now let me see what there is to answer in my mail. My first reply is to:

J. Sicari (Fremantle, Australia).—Pleased to hear that you are so keen

on the GEM and "Magnet." You are certainly wise in having a standing order for the two companion papers. It's the surest way of getting them regularly. Your jokes were not quite suitable. Try the Jester with some more.

D. Stocks (Brisbane, Australia).—By the time you see this reply you will have read the further "Toff" stories, and I hope you enjoyed them. Mr. Macdonald has to take a holiday now and again, and when he does another artist illustrates the St. Jim's stories. Thanks for your interesting letter and good wishes.

Miss E. Jarman (Natal, S. Africa).—Pleased to hear from you again. I will bear in mind your suggestions, but it will not be possible for me to get the autographs you want. If you like writing stories, don't give it up because your brother chips you about them. Kerr was featured in last week's story. I hope you have now fully recovered from your cycle accident. Have another try to win half-a-crown.

P. Ford (Maidstone).—Jack Blake is the best boxer on points in the Fourth Form.

J. Godfrey (Bristol, 5).—Glad to welcome you to the ranks of GEM readers. D'Arcy is fifteen years three months; Tom Merry, sixteen; Talbot, sixteen years one month; Skimpole, fifteen years five months; Manners, sixteen; and Lowther, fifteen years eleven months. Yes, Kildare is captain of St. Jim's.

Miss J. Brice (Hatfield, Herts).—I have heard no further news yet about the Greyfriars film. Skimpole's Christian name is Herbert. The first Tom Merry story was called: "Tom Merry's School-days." The first "Magnet" yarn was entitled: "The Making of Harry Wharton."

A. Mills (Mitcham).—I am sorry I cannot help you to find a correspondent in Spain. Shall I put a notice in "Pen Pals" for you?

S. Jones (Wallasey, Cheshire).—Pleased to hear that you have become a GEM reader. The story of Harry Wharton's arrival at Greyfriars has been published in the old paper. The St. Jim's and Greyfriars characters are fictitious. The black sheep of the Shell and Fourth are Crooke and Levison respectively. Blake is fifteen years four months; Figgins, fifteen years three months; Kerr, fifteen years five months; Wharton, fifteen years four months; Cherry, fifteen years two months; Hurree Singh, fourteen years eleven

months; Nugent, fourteen years ten months. The other juniors' ages are given in other replis.

A. Scott (Aberdeen).—Very many thanks for your interesting letter and good wishes. The first two GEMS contained adventure yarns. Yes, I should like to read your story. Send it along. I will pass on your letter to Mr. Brooks.

A. Moss (Retford, Notts).—I am pleased to hear that you think the GEM is the best boys' paper. Thanks for your list of the St. Jim's characters you like best. Sorry, your joke was not quite suitable.

W. Dunlea (Cork, Ireland).—Many thanks for your letter and your selections of the best St. Jim's stories and the most popular characters. I will bear in mind your suggestion. Yes, there will definitely be more stories featuring Talbot. I cannot give you the date when the series dealing with Levison's reformation will appear. Kildare is Irish. The best boxer in the Shell is Tom Merry, while Jack Blake is the best in the Fourth Form. Your joke failed to make the bell ring. Try again.

W. Symes (Mowbray, S. Africa).—See reply to Miss Brice. Yes, you may have the autographs of Martin Clifford and Frank Richards. Send your album, with stamped addressed envelope. A story featuring Kerr appeared last week.

R. Parkhurst (Twickenham).—Thanks for your congratulations. Send along your autograph album, with stamped addressed envelope, for Mr. Clifford to sign.

L. Boudville (Perak, Malaya).—Cutts is seventeen. The other ages you want are given in previous replies. The GEM was first published in March, 1907. Thanks for your suggestion. You are not required to send an illustration with your joke, but a description of the picture is, of course, necessary. Joke illustrations are drawn by the GEM Jester. Incidentally, your joke failed to make the Jester smile.

W. Preston (Ilford).—The average ages of the Forms at Greyfriars are: Sixth Form, seventeen and a half; Fifth Form, seventeen; Shell, sixteen and a half; Upper Fourth, sixteen; Remove, fifteen and a half; Third Form, thirteen and a half; Second Form, twelve and a half. Kildare is seventeen years eight months; Wingate, seventeen years eleven months; Redfern, fifteen years four months; Fatty Wynn, fifteen years four and a half months. The latter is fourteen stones eight pounds. The "Magnet" was first published in February, 1908. Thanks for your sketch.

PEN PALS COUPON
26-6-37

THE EDITOR.
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,532.

I felt it my duty to come and tell you."

"Oh!"

"I had not the faintest idea that anythin' had happened to Majah Stwingah, and I did not know that I was supposed to have rescued him, sir."

"Then why did you suppose that I told you I was pleased with your conduct?" asked the Head.

"I weally could not imagine, sir."

"Why did you suppose that I congratulated you?"

"I could not account for it, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

There was silence in the study.

Dr. Holmes coloured a little. He seemed to have forgotten that the major was still on the telephone. He gazed at the swell of St. Jim's at a loss for words.

A sharp buzz on the bell reminded him of the major. He raised the receiver again.

"No, major," he said into the receiver.

"I am sorry to say that the boy is not yet known. I shall, however, pursue my inquiries, and I will inform you. Yes—yes. I understand that you would like to see him—quite so. A very brave action—I agree with you, a credit to the school—Oh, quite so! I will certainly inform you. Good-bye!"

Dr. Holmes hung up the receiver. Then he fixed his eyes upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy again.

"I am glad you have come to me, D'Arcy," he said, after a pause. "May I ask what is your precise object in coming and telling me this?"

"I could not consent to receive the credit for what I had not done, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"Quite right and proper," said the Head. "But you are aware that, as you did not perform the action for the sake of which I pardoned you, you are still liable to be punished for your transgression of the laws of the school in breaking bounds last night?"

"I am aware of that, sir!"

"Ahem!" coughed the Head.

There was another pause.

"Having pardoned you once, D'Arcy, although under a misapprehension, I do not feel justified in rescinding my pardon," he said. "In addition, I am convinced that your object in breaking bounds was not an unworthy one."

"Thank you, sir! But I do not wish to take advantage of an ewwah, sir," said Arthur Augustus nobly. "Pway do as you think best, sir!"

The Head coughed.

"I am not likely to do otherwise, D'Arcy."

"Yaas; quite so, sir."

"However, instead of the severe caning I should have administered in the first place, I shall merely give you an imposition."

"Thank you, sir."

"You will take five hundred lines, and you will stay in on Saturday afternoon to write them out," said the Head. "Now you may go."

"Vewy well, sir!"

There was a knock at the door, and Knox came in.

The bully of the Sixth was looking elated, and Arthur Augustus did not need telling that he had made some discovery that would be uncomfortable for somebody.

"What is it, Knox?" asked the Head.

"I have discovered that another junior was out of bounds last night, sir," said the prefect.

"From what I have just learned, I

concluded as much," said Dr. Holmes. "But you are sure of the fact, Knox?"

"Quite sure, sir! It occurred to me to examine the shoes belonging to D'Arcy, and I found that they were merely dusty, with no traces of mud on them. It was, however, the traces of wet mud in the box-room and the passage which caused me, in the first place, to call Mr. Railton's attention to the matter. I have, therefore, made a further investigation, and I am informed that the boots of another boy in the Fourth were noticed to be very wet and muddy by the boot-boy; so wet, in fact, that this morning the boy in question put on a different pair. They were the boots of Mellish of the Fourth."

Arthur Augustus was passing out of the study slowly, for he was interested in Knox's discovery, having the amiable desire to put Knox's new victim on his guard. As soon as he heard Mellish's name, however, he went down the passage with a rush.

He arrived, breathless, in Tom Merry's study, whither Blake had returned, disappointed, from his pursuit.

"Mellish here?" asked Arthur Augustus, gasping.

"I'm here," said Mellish. "What's up?"

"You're bowled out, deah boy!"

Mellish gave him a furious look.

"You've given me away?"

"Why, you uttah wottah—"

"Shut up, you cad!" said Tom Merry. "You know that D'Arcy would do nothing of the kind!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Then how am I bowled out?" asked Mellish sullenly.

"Knox has been spying, as usual. He's found out that your boots were wet this morning, and he puts the mud down to you."

"It was bound to come out!" said Blake savagely. "Have you owned up that you are not the hero, fathead?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And what's the verdict?"

"Gated on Saturday, and five hundred lines, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "It's weally enough to discourage a chap fwom ownin' up, isn't it? How-eh, the Head dwopped the canin'—he weally couldn't do less in the cires."

"Then there's a hero's job vacant," remarked Monty Lowther. "The best thing you can do, Mellish, is to turn out to be the missing hero."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish's eyes glistened.

"I huvwied here to warn Mellish that Knox was on the twack," said Arthur Augustus. "The beast will be down on you soon, deah boy, askin' questions. You had bettah own up."

"Oh, rats!" growled Mellish uneasily.

"It won't be a flogging—the Head can't vewy well give you worse than he's given me, for the same bisney, you know."

"Do you think I want five hundred lines and a gating?" howled Mellish.

"Cave!" murmured Blake. "Here comes the Knox bird!"

The bully of the Sixth strode into the study.

CHAPTER 12.

Percy Mellish—Hero!

TOM MERRY & CO. greeted Knox with a grim silence. They were on the worst of terms with the prefect. But Knox had not come there for the Co. He was looking for Mellish, and learned that that

estimable junior was in Tom Merry's study.

"So you're here, Mellish," he said grimly.

"What's wanted?" said Mellish sullenly.

"You are," said Knox. "You were out of bounds last night."

"It's a lie!"

"You deny it?" demanded the prefect.

"Yes," said Mellish desperately.

The juniors in the study did not speak a word. It was not their business to betray the wretched cad of the Fourth, much as his falsehood disgusted them.

Knox's lip curled.

"Then how was it your boots were soaked with water this morning," he asked—"soaked with water and smothered with mud?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered Mellish.

Knox grinned.

"Are you wearing your usual clothes to-day?" he asked.

"Yes."

"There isn't any mud on them," said the prefect, scanning him from head to foot, "and they look cleaner altogether than a fag's everyday clothes. You may as well own up that you've got your Sunday Etons on, Mellish."

"I—I haven't!"

"Very well. Come to the dormitory and show them to me."

Mellish did not move.

"You must have got smothered last night from what I hear about your boots," said Knox. "I've seen the boots, too—they're still damp. You must have been in the water—in a ditch, perhaps. I expect I shall find your clothes, those you wore yesterday, in a mucky state. Anyway, we'll see. Come to the dorm with me."

Mellish remained where he was.

"You hear me, Mellish. The Head has sent for you, but if you deny that you were out of bounds, I mean to take proof along with me. Come with me."

As the dismayed Mellish did not move, the bully of the Sixth gripped his collar and led him out of the study.

Mellish was led to the dormitory, where he was forced to unlock his box, in which reposed the clothes he had worn the previous night.

Mellish had cleaned them as well as he could, but they still showed plain enough traces of his misadventure, and they were still reeking with damp.

Knox grinned as he examined them. He was sure of his victim now.

"You still deny that you were out last night?" he asked.

Mellish was silent.

"Come to the Head."

The cad of the Fourth, still silent, followed Knox to the Head's study. His face was desperate. The proofs against him were undeniable, and he was by no means sure of getting off so cheaply as Arthur Augustus had done. For the good reputation of Arthur Augustus stood him in good stead, while Percy Mellish's reputation was of the worst.

He had been punished more than once for smoking, and he had been cautioned severely for being seen in conversation with some of the disreputable habitués of the Green Man in Rylcombe. He would have to prove that he had not broken bounds with a rascally motive.

A fellow had been expelled from St. Jim's for mighty visits to the Green Man, and Mellish's conscience was not clean.

He was inwardly quaking as he followed Knox to the Head's study, and he quaked still more as he entered that dread apartment.

"Here is Mellish, sir," said Knox,



"This is the chap, sir," said Blake. "This is Mellish. He is the chap who rescued you from the footpads." "Bosh!" said Major Stringer, staring at Mellish. "Rubbish!"

greatly elated by the success with which he was fulfilling the duties of a zealous prefect. "I have found the clearest proof that he was out of bounds last night. The clothes he wore yesterday were hidden in his box, muddy and wet. He refuses to explain to me how they came into that state, but—"

"You will explain to me, Mellish!" said the Head grimly.

Mellish's teeth chattered.

"Were you out of bounds, Mellish?"

"I—I—I—"

"Yes or no?"

"I—I thought—I—followed D'Arcy out, sir! I—I was afraid he might come to some harm, sir!" stammered Mellish. "I—I hope you'll excuse me, sir, because—because if I hadn't been there, Major Stringer might—might have been badly hurt, sir."

Dr. Holmes looked at him very hard.

Percy Mellish looked like anything but a hero at that moment, certainly; yet it was evident that that was what he was claiming to be.

"It was you, Mellish, who rendered assistance to Major Stringer?"

"Yes, sir."

Knox breathed hard through his nose. He knew Mellish better than the Head did, and he did not believe the statement for a moment.

But the Head could not doubt. Major Stringer had informed him that he was certain that it was a St. Jim's junior who had helped him. He had recognised the badge on his rescuer's cap in the moonlight. And as the heroic rescuer was not Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, it was evidently Mellish—unless there had been a third junior out of bounds at the same time.

"I—I am sorry, sir," mumbled

Mellish. "I—I was really anxious about D'Arcy, sir. I—I thought there might be footpads about, or something. I—I fell into a ditch coming home."

"Why did you not make yourself known to Major Stringer?"

"I—I was afraid to, sir. I—I—"

Mellish had to think before he answered. "I—I—I was out of bounds, sir, and—"

"I understand. Have you mentioned this to anyone among your school-fellows?"

"No, sir."

"You have kept it a secret?"

"N-not exactly a secret, sir, but—but I didn't want to appear a boaster, sir; it—it wasn't much I did."

"Major Stringer tells me that you saved him from very serious injury, and he was afraid that you had been hurt in the struggle," said the Head.

"I—I wasn't hurt, sir. Only—only I fell into the ditch coming home. I—I was in a hurry—"

"Very well, Mellish. I shall pardon your escapade, in view of your very brave action," said the Head. "I congratulate you on the courage you have shown."

"Thank you, sir!" said Mellish, regaining confidence now. "Of—of course, I couldn't see them pitching into him without lending a hand, sir."

"It was very courageous. You might have received serious injury yourself. You may go, Mellish."

Mellish was glad to go.

Dr. Holmes went to the telephone at once and rang up the major.

In a few minutes more Major Stringer was acquainted with the name of his heroic rescuer.

CHAPTER 13.

In the Lighthouse!

"MELLISH!"

"By gum!"

"Come off!"

"Tell us another!"

Such were the remarks of the School House juniors when the story of Percy Mellish's heroic conduct came to light.

The news excited quite a sensation. The most astonished of all was Tom Merry. But Tom held his tongue. He did not desire to reap any laurels, and he knew that it would be serious for Mellish if it came out that he had deliberately deceived the Head.

Manners and Lowther were wrathful, and inclined to give the wretched cad away. But Tom Merry held them to their pledge of secrecy.

"He would get it in the neck if the Head knew his leg had been pulled," said Tom. "It isn't our bisney to show him up. Besides—"

"Besides what?" growled Lowther. Tom laughed.

"I couldn't prove it," he said. "It would be a rival claim, and Mellish has made his claim first. And I'm jolly well not going to compete with Mellish for honour and glory."

"But it was you, wasn't it?" howled Manners.

"Yes; but Mellish would say it wasn't. He would have to stick to his yarn now. No good making him pile up a mountain of lies. He's told enough already. Least said, soonest mended!"

So the Terrible Three held their peace.

But the other fellows, in spite of the incredulity with which they received

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the news at first, simply had to believe it.

Mr. Lathom shook hands with Mellish before all the Fourth Form, and congratulated him on his pluck.

Mellish smirked modestly, and declared that any fellow would have done it.

The fellows were astounded, but they had to be convinced. Mellish had been pardoned for breaking bounds on account of his heroic conduct. Mellish was the hitherto hidden hero. And all his Form-fellows could say was, "Who'd have thought it?"

Certainly nobody who knew Mellish would have thought it. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sapiently remarked that you never knew, and he, for one, was determined to do full justice to a fellow who had thus shown his quality so unexpectedly.

Mellish, the hero, basked in an unusual limelight.

Whoever had tackled those two hulking ruffians to help the major was undoubtedly a hero, so Percy was a hero. He enjoyed his novel position.

That evening he was the lion of the School House. New House fellows came over to have a look at the hero. Percy Mellish was the cynosure of all eyes.

In the Common-room that evening Arthur Augustus gave him a graceful tribute in his graceful manner.

"I am sowwy for some of the wemarks I have made to you, Mellish, deah boy," he said. "I nevah though you were such a plucky chap. I am sowwy to say that I have always wegarded you as a wank outsidah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I wish you would not cackle, deah boys, when I am apologisin' to Mellish. I have always considahed you a wotten funk, Mellish!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"And a wegulah wastah, you know."
"You silly ass!" howled Mellish.

Arthur Augustus' manner of apologising did not seem to be to his taste, somehow.

"Weally, Mellish, I am expwessin' my wegwet. Aftah what you have done, I am quite sowwy that I have looked upon you as an uttah wascal!"
"Oh, shut up!"

"I wefuse to shut up till I have finished apologisin', Mellish! Aftah the wemahkeable discovewy that you are not an out-and-out wottah, I—"

Mellish stamped away.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Mellish may be a hewo, but his mannahs leave vewy much to be desiahed. It is weally not polite to walk away when a fellow is apologisin'. And I uttaly fail, Blake, to see any wesson for your wibald mewwiment."

That evening Mellish enjoyed himself. He liked the limelight, all the more perhaps because he rarely had any of it. He was complimented on all sides.

Knox was still doubtful, but Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth both told him that he was a plucky kid, and Mellish grinned and smirked.

The Terrible Three, naturally, had nothing to say to him on the subject, though they watched him very curiously.

How any fellow could sail under false colours and bag the credit that was due to somebody else in that manner was a puzzle to Tom Merry.

But Percy Mellish seemed to have no scruples about it.

The next morning Mellish was still an object of general interest. His study-mate, Levison, joined him in the quad when the Fourth went out from breakfast.

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Levison was a very keen youth, and he had the strongest doubts on the subject.

"You've surprised us all, Percy, old man," he remarked.

Mellish looked at him loftily.

"I don't see anything to be so jolly surprised about," he said. "I suppose I couldn't let old Stringer be attacked without chipping in, could I?"

"Well, it was risky," said Levison, eyeing him narrowly.

"I didn't stop to think of the risk!"

"Yes; that's jolly queer!"

"What's jolly queer?" growled Mellish.

"That you didn't stop to think of the risk!" grinned Levison. "Generally speaking, that's the very first thing you would have thought of. A fellow might almost suspect that you were humbugging—"

"Look here, Levison—"

"Only, if you were, it would come out who the real giddy hero was," remarked Levison. "I can't find that anybody else was out of bounds that night."

"So you've been inquiring?" sneered Mellish.

"Yes, rather! Why not? But nobody seems to have been out, and old Stringer seems sure it was a St. Jim's chap who helped him. He might have been mistaken. And it might be one of the Grammar School chaps—if, of course, it wasn't you—and the facts might come out yet."

Mellish's jaw dropped.

That possibility had not occurred to him. But now that Levison pointed it out, it gave him a throb of uneasiness.

Levison grinned at the expression on his face.

"What's the matter, Percy?" he asked.

"Nothing," grunted Mellish.

"If you were the chap, you're all serene," grinned Levison. "But if you were not, I advise you to be careful. Old Skeat is rather keen, you know."

"Inspector Skeat?"

"Yes. He will be down here to see you about it to-day, you know."

"Why should he want to see me?" asked Mellish.

"Your evidence will be wanted. They've caught one of the footpads, you know, and you'll have to appear as a witness."

"Good heavens!"

Mellish almost staggered. He had not thought of that, either.

Levison burst into a laugh.

The bell rang for morning lessons, and Mellish went into the Form-room. He went with a troubled brow.

He was very thoughtful indeed that morning, and it was only too clear that the "eclat" that had fallen to his lot was no longer a source of enjoyment.

After morning lessons, when the juniors were coming out of the School House, Jack Blake uttered a sudden ejaculation, and clapped Mellish on the shoulder.

"Here he comes, Mellish!"

Mellish jumped.

"Eh—who? What—?"

He stared round in terror of seeing Inspector Skeat or Police-constable Crump, from Rylcombe.

A square-shouldered man, carrying an umbrella, was striding across the quad towards the House.

It was Major Stringer.

"He's come to thank you, Mellish," said Blake. "What are you looking so scared for? He won't eat you."

"He's not so savage as he looks,"

said Digby. "Stand up to him, Mellish! What are you dodging away for?"

"I—I—I—" faltered Mellish.

"Modesty thy name is Mellish," grinned Levison. "Spare his blushes. Let him get out of sight."

Mellish backed into the House. He did not want to meet the grim-faced, steely-eyed old major—far from it.

Major Stringer strode into the House without glancing at Mellish in the Hall; but he halted suddenly as the Terrible Three came down the passage.

"Ugh!" said the major.

The chums of the Shell stopped, and Tom Merry made a strategic movement in retreat.

The major waved his umbrella to him.

"Come here!" he shouted. "You—I mean—you! What's your name—what? I want to speak to you."

His pointing umbrella indicated Tom Merry, but Tom affected not to understand.

The major remembered the name the Head had given him on the telephone, and hailed Tom by name—not his own name.

"Here, Mellish! Do you hear me, Mellish?"

"He's recognised you, you ass!" whispered Monty Lowther. "And he thinks your name is Mellish."

Tom Merry did not reply. He backed round the nearest corner, and the major looked surprised and a little angry, and shouted the name again.

"Master Mellish! Come here, I tell you, begad!"

"Here's Mellish, sir!" chortled Blake.

Major Stringer stared at him.

"Eh—what?"

"Come on, Mellish!"

Study No. 6 dragged Percy Mellish forward.

Mellish's modesty seemed to them absurd, and there was no reason why he shouldn't receive the thanks of the old gentleman he had so bravely rescued.

Mellish did not look or feel like a hero at that moment. He was only longing to escape; but there was no help for him.

A crowd of fellows had gathered round, ready to cheer the hero. They were quite prepared to do Mellish justice. But, as it happened, justice was the very last thing Mellish wanted at that moment.

"Here he is, sir—here's the hewo!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't wiggle, Mellish! The majah wishes to thank you for your hewoic conduct. Here he is, sir!"

CHAPTER 14.

The Hero!

MAJOR STRINGER stared at Mellish.

After a long stare he adjusted his eyeglass in his steely old eye, and stared again, with a stare that seemed almost to bore a hole in the unhappy junior.

"Who's this?" rapped out the major.

"Mellish, sir," said Blake.

"Nonsense!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Another boy of the same name," said the major. "I have called to see the boy who helped me the night before last—that boy I called to."

"Eh? This is the chap, sir!" said Blake, in astonishment. "This is Mellish, sir. He is the chap who

rescued you from the footpads, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Bosh!" said the major, twisting his white moustache impatiently. "Rubbish!"

And the major strode on, and went to the Head's study.

The juniors remained in a state of amazement.

"Well, I call that ungrateful," said Blake, with a whistle. "I thought he was going to make Mellish a speech, or something."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah his conduct vewy remarkable!"

"I—I don't want any fuss!" gasped Mellish. "Let me alone, confound you! I don't want the old donkey to thank me!"

"Affah his vewy remarkable conduct, Mellish, I advise you to take no furthah notice of him," said Arthur Augustus.

Mellish would have been only too glad to take D'Arcy's good advice. He scuttled out into the quadrangle, hoping fervently that he would be able to take no further notice of the major, and that the major would take no further notice of him.

But Major Stringer had called on business. He was a very determined old gentleman. He was there to find the junior who had so bravely helped him against the footpads, and he meant to find him.

The Head was expecting him, and, after greeting the major, rang the bell for Toby, and sent him for Mellish.

The unhappy hero was a long time coming. Toby had to look for him for at least ten minutes before he found him.

When he received the Head's message Mellish groaned. But there was no help for it, and, with slow and faltering steps, the hero of the Fourth took his way to the Head's study. His aspect was anything but heroic as he came into that dread apartment.

He looked rather as if he were going to his execution.

Dr. Holmes greeted him with a kindly smile.

"Ah, I have been waiting for you, Mellish! Major Stringer has called to see you, and to thank you—"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Mellish.

"This is the boy, major."

Major Stringer snorted.

"That is not the boy, Dr. Holmes!"

"What!"

"The boy who helped me was bigger—a little taller and much bigger built," said the major. "This is not the boy!"

Dr. Holmes almost gasped.

"But—but Mellish has assured me—Mellish, is it not a fact that you gave assistance to Major Stringer?"

"P-perhaps Major Stringer d-didn't see me vewy c-clearly in the d-dark!" stammered Mellish.

"Yes, that must be it," said the Head. "I have learned that two boys were out of bounds that night—Mellish and D'Arcy; but D'Arcy denies any knowledge of the affair. It rests, therefore, with Mellish. Doubtless, in the darkness, you did not see him clearly."

Another snort from the major.

"Quite so; but I saw him, though not clearly, and I am certain that I saw the boy as I came into this House. For some reason he dodged away, young rascal!"

"This is—is amazing!" said the Head. "If Mellish has made a false claim—Bless my soul! You—you think you recognised another boy, major?"

"I know I did, sir."

"But—but as it all happened in the dark—"

"That is so; but I saw the boy, and

ON THE WRONG TRACK!



"I told you what would happen if we built next to the railway!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Kaukas, 6a, St. Ann's Road, South Tottenham, London, N.15.

I am sure I should know him again. At all events, I can ascertain by questioning the lad I saw as I came in. Have you any objection, sir, to my seeing all the juniors, and then—"

"I will order them to be assembled at once," said the Head, rising. "This matter must be probed to the bottom."

Five minutes later the prefects were assembling the School House juniors in Big Hall.

The juniors came in in a state of wonder, only the Terrible Three guessing what the sudden order might mean.

Tom Merry kept out of sight as much as he could in the ranks of the Shell. Never had the captain of the Shell been so anxious to avoid the public gaze.

He could feel only disgust for Mellish's falsehood, but, at the same time, he was strongly disinclined to be the means of showing up the wretched impostor.

Major Stringer came in with the Head.

The old major's steely eye glittered over the juniors.

Tom Merry kept his eyes on the floor. But it made no difference. The major's glittering eye fastened upon him almost at once, and he pointed with his umbrella.

"That is the boy!"

"Dear me!" said the Head. "This is Merry of the Shell! This is most surprising! Merry, come here at once!"

"G'eat Scott!" came a voice from the ranks of the Fourth.

"Silence!"

Tom Merry, his face crimson, came forward reluctantly.

Major Stringer's eye glittered at him through his monocle.

"So your name's Merry?"

"Yes, sir," murmured Tom.

"Hold your chin up!" snapped the major. "Let me see your face!"

He reached out with a brown hand and grasped Tom Merry by the shoulder, and the Shell fellow uttered an involuntary howl.

"Yow!"

"Hallo! What—what—what's the matter with you? Is your shoulder hurt?" rapped out the major.

"Oh dear!" groaned Tom Merry, in anguish.

The iron grasp of the major had sent

a throb of pain through him that made him feel like fainting for the moment.

"I thought the boy was hurt in the struggle, as I told you, Dr. Holmes. Young jackanapes!" said the major crossly. "Is your shoulder hurt, boy?"

"Only a—a bruise, sir!" stammered Tom.

"You should have had it seen to, Merry," said the Head quietly. "Now, kindly tell me, were you out of bounds the night before last, Merry?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"I—I went after D'Arcy because he'd forgotten to take the money with him."

"And it was you who assisted Major Stringer when he was attacked?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Mellish, come forward!" said the Head.

Mellish almost staggered forward. All eyes were upon him, and the glances seemed to scorch the wretched impostor.

There was a hiss from some quarters, and the Head made a gesture of silence.

"Mellish, do you still maintain that you are the boy who went so bravely to the help of Major Stringer?"

"I—I wasn't sir!" moaned Mellish.

"I—I didn't mean to say I was, sir; only—only I—I thought I was going to be flogged, so—so I—"

"I understand, Mellish. You told me a falsehood to escape punishment?"

"I—I—"

Dr. Holmes made a gesture, and the wretched Mellish backed away among the Fourth, wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"Now, Merry, you will kindly put an end to this mystification! Tell the truth at once! It was you who assisted the major?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"And why have you kept it a secret and allowed me to remain under a misapprehension?" asked the Head.

Tom Merry grinned slightly.

"I—I was out of bounds, you see, sir; and—and, besides, I—I—"

"But you were aware of what I had said to D'Arcy, doubtless, and you knew that you would be excused in the circumstances?"

"Yes; but—but—"

"I think I understand," said Dr. Holmes. "You did not wish to expose that wretched boy who made a false claim? However— But I will say no more about it. You are excused for being out of bounds that night, Merry, as it was the cause of your rendering assistance to Major Stringer."

"Thank you, sir!"

"You young rascal!" said the major. "I knew you at once! It was a plucky thing, by gad! I should have been brained if you had not been there! Give me your hand!" Tom Merry winced as the major gripped his hand with a grip of a vice.

"Dr. Holmes, this boy is a credit to your school, by gad! His schoolfellows should be proud of him!"

"So we are, bai Jove!" sang out Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, no longer to be repressed. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, I call for three wingin' cheeahs for Tom Mewwy!"

"Hurrah! Hip-pip-hurrah!"

The old Hall rang with cheers for Tom Merry, who had shown himself to be a boy of the real old English Bulldog Breed!

(Next Wednesday: "THE TOUGH GUY OF THE SHELL!" Meet George Alfred Grundy, the newcomer to St. Jim's, whose autoerotic methods are backed up by two hard fists! He'll be here next week. Order your GEM early.)

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THE GRAND STATE OPENING OF FRIARDALE ACADEMY THAT DIDN'T COME OFF—NO ONE COULD OPEN THE DOOR!

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

When Harry Wharton & Co. learn that the foreign schoolboys of Herr Rosenblum's Academy, who once stayed at Greyfriars, are returning, they scheme a great jape as a welcome to their old rivals.

The aliens are not coming to Greyfriars, but are taking up their quarters in Friardale Academy, the new school which has been built in the grounds of Greyfriars. The Mayor of Friardale is to perform the opening ceremony the next day.

The Famous Four's scheme is to screw up every door and window in the new school, and they decide to carry it out in the night. But Fritz Hoffman and Adolphe Meunier, the two foreigners of the Remove who will join Friardale Academy, get wind that something up against them is being planned. So when Harry Wharton & Co. steal out of the dormitory that night, Hoffman and Meunier are ready to follow them. (Now read on.)

On the Track!

"H OFFMAN, my shum!"
"Yes, Adolphe?"
"I zink zat ve follow zose rottairs."

"I tinks tat ve do, Adolphe."
The two aliens of the Greyfriars Remove jumped out of bed and dressed themselves with excited haste. Fritz Hoffman opened the door of the dormitory and peeped out.

The starlight glimmered through the window at the end of the passage. There was no sign of the chums of the Remove to be seen.

"Ciell! Zey are gone!"
"Hark! I tinks tat I hears te noise."
It was a faint creak from the other end of the passage, where there was a bend, leading to the box-room stairs.

The aliens understood at once. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh were leaving the house by means of the window at the foot of the box-room stairs. With a knotted rope it was easy to slide to the ground there under the dark shade of the trees.

Hoffman pressed Meunier's arm.
"I tinks tat tey goes on rope out of te window, Adolphe."

"I zinks zat is correct, Fritz."
"Tey leafs te rope to come in by."
"I zink zat so."
"Den ve uses it to follow tem."
"Ciell! Zat is ze programme."
"Ve finds out te secret, I tink."
"I zink so."

The two aliens crept silently towards the bend in the passage. They caught the glimmer of the starlight from the window. The sash was up, and a dark figure was disappearing over the sill.

Hoffman looked out of the window a moment later. The chums of the Remove were dimly visible below, and then they disappeared in the darkness.

Hoffman chuckled.
"Tey not tink ve here," he whispered.

"I goes first after tem."
"I takes ze lead, my shum."

"I tink tat I goes first."
"I zink zat I—"

"I refuses nottings to my friend Adolphe. He shall go first."

"Ciell! I deny nozzings to my shum Fritz. He goes first."

"As you vish, Adolphe."

"I helps you out of ze window, Fritz." Hoffman slid down the rope. Meunier speedily followed, and they ran to the

The FAMOUS FOUR'S GREAT JAPE!

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

corner of the building behind which the chums of the Remove had disappeared. A faint noise sounded from the direction of the Head's garden.

"Goot!" muttered Hoffman. "Tey are gone into te Head's garden to talk about te plot mit temselves alone before."

"I zink zat is correct."
"Ve follows tem and learns te whole plot."

"Zat is so."
They reached the little gate that gave admittance from the Close into the Head's private garden. It was locked, but it was easy enough to climb.

Hoffman stood politely aside for

The inauguration of Friardale Academy by the local mayor was the big moment in Harry Wharton & Co.'s great jape!

Meunier to pass over first, and held out a helping hand. But Meunier was not to be outdone in politeness. He also stood aside to assist his friend Fritz over the gate.

"My dear Adolphe, I assists you."
"Zen ve both goes togezzar," said Meunier, with a beaming smile.

"Goot! Ve both goes togedder."

And the two aliens climbed the gate. They dropped on the inner side of it, and at the same moment unseen hands reached out of the darkness, and they were grasped and dragged to the ground.

"Don't make a row," said a well-known voice. "Now, you silly asses, what are you up to? Have you been following us?"

Aliens in Durance!

"A CH! It is tat Vharton!"
"Ciell! It is zat Vharton!"
"Yes, you asses!" growled Harry Wharton. "We heard

you jabbering at the gate, and so we stopped to wait for you."

"Ach! You have given te show away, Adolphe!"

"It is you zat has given ze show away, Fritz."

"I tinks not."
"I zinks so."
"I tinks tat it vas you, Adolphe."

"I zink zat it vas you, Fritz."
"Shut up with your 'tinking' and 'zinking'!" growled Bob Cherry.

"The question is—what are you doing here?"

"Ve follows you tat ve learns te secret, ain't it?"
"Zat is correct."

"I thought so," said Harry. "And now we've collared you."

"I tinks tat you lets us go, or I trashes you after."
"I zink so."

"What are we to do with them, you chaps? We could hold their heads under the water in the fountain, but—"

"But that would make too much noise."

"How can we shut them up, then? We can't have them following us about all night."

"I tinks tat—"
"I zinks zat—"

"You vas interrupting me, Adolphe."
"I not cares ze vun rap, Fritz."

"Ach! I tinks you are French peeg!"
"I zink zat you are Sherman rottair!"
"Peast!"
"Rottair!"

"Shut up! Do you want to wake the whole house, and get a flogging for being out of bounds at night?" growled Nugent.

"Tat French peast—"
"Zat Sherman bouncer—"

"Shut up, I tell you! What are we going to do with them, Harry?"

Wharton's brows were wrinkled in thought. The Removites had fortunately discovered the pursuit in time. In five minutes more the aliens would have tracked them to the Cloisters, and they could not not have failed to guess that their destination was the new academy of Herr Rosenblum.

But how was further pursuit to be stopped? That was the question, and a difficult one to answer. Both the aliens were obstinate, and persuasion would simply be wasted on them.

"Give 'em a kick and send 'em back," suggested Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head.
"That won't do, Bob."
"Why not?"

"We thought they were asleep when we left, but they're on the scent. If they went back now they could wake up Billy Bunter and worm the secret out of him."

"By Jove, so they could!"
"Ve are villing to go back," said Fritz Hoffman.

"Zat is correct."
"I dare say you are," said Harry Wharton, "but we are not willing.

The only thing I can think of, chaps, is to lock them up in the gardener's shed, here."

"Well, that's a good wheeze."
"I vill not be locked up!"
"Ciell! I also refuse to be locked up zere!"

"Bring them along."

The two aliens were dragged to their feet. They struggled, but each was in the grasp of two pairs of hands, and their resistance was of little avail. They were bundled along the path to the shed at the bottom of the garden.

The shed was at such a distance from

"By Jove, it makes a chap feel like a giddy burglar!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The next step really is to break into the safe, you know."

"Or knock somebody on the head with a jemmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry's laugh sounded very hollow in the empty hall. He stopped it as the echoes rolled back from the desolate classrooms and passages.

"Let's get to work!" said Nugent abruptly. "Blessed if I like this place. It's too much like a giddy churchyard for me."

"The loneliness and the unmercifulness is terrific," murmured the nabob.

"Buck up, then!" said Harry. "Got the gimlet?"

"Here it is."

"Lucky we didn't forget that. This wood is as hard as a rock almost. I'll soon have a hole ready for the screw."

"Go ahead, then!"

Harry selected a spot where a screw would securely fasten the great door to the post, and started with the gimlet.

The wood was very hard; but his steady turns drove the gimlet in, and at last he untwisted it again and inserted the screw.

The screw, of course, was thicker than the gimlet; but the hole facilitated its entrance, and it did not take long to drive it home.

"We can't test it as the door's locked," said Harry. "But I fancy that screw will hold the door shut against anything but a battering-ram."

"Ha, ha! Yes; it will be a big shock for the foreigners."

"Now for the other doors. That little job has taken ten minutes nearly, and—"

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "At ten minutes a time we shall finish the job about noon to-morrow, I suppose, and we shall have to keep it up while the opening ceremony is going on."

"Oh, don't be funny! That was the first. I'll go round with the gimlet, making the holes, and you fellows can follow with the screws. You've got a driver each, and I can make the gimlet holes fast enough to keep you all going. We shall get through the work pretty quick, at any rate."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton led the way with the gimlet. The others followed with screws and screwdrivers. The work, as Harry said, proceeded at a good rate—especially as the juniors warmed up to it.

And it was thoroughly done. It was an extensive job, but it was done thoroughly. Every screw was driven well home, flush with the wood. At the end of half an hour every door in the building had been securely screwed up.

"That job's jobbed!" said Bob Cherry, breathing rather hard. "I've got a blister coming on my hand."

"The blisterfulness of my hands is terrific."

"Never mind," said Wharton, "it's all in the day's work, you know."

"My worthy chum means the nightful work."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, the night's work, Inky. Now for the windows. We've got to fasten up all of them that could possibly be climbed into."

"Right-ho! Buckle to!"

They buckled to. It was an hour's work to screw up the windows, but they did it. Half-past eleven rang out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars as Harry Wharton drove in the last screw.

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"Half-past," said Bob Cherry. "We're making a night of it, and no mistake. We shall feel pretty sleepy at rising-bell to-morrow."

"Can't be helped. We're finished now."

"Right-ho! Let's get out."

"My—my hat!"

"What's the matter now?"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh. His chums stared at him in the torch light.

"What on earth are you laughing at?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, we're prisoners, that's all!"

"Prisoners?"

"Yes; we're screwed in."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was true enough. The juniors had done their work thoroughly, and every window near the ground was screwed up. They had left themselves no retreat.

The situation was so absurd that they could not help laughing.

"We shall have to take out one of the screws, and shove it in again from the outside," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, that won't take long. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The funniffulness is terrific."

There was no help for it, and Wharton laboriously unscrewed one of the screws, and the window was opened.

The Removites jumped out, one by one, and Wharton knelt on the sill, and closed the window. It was a small one at the back of the house, and he drove in the screw in an obscure corner on the outside, where it was not likely to be discovered.

"That's done," he said, jumping to the ground.

"Good! And now let's get off!"

The chums hurried back to the Cloisters. In a few minutes they were once more at the gardener's shed in the Head's garden. Wharton listened at the door, but all was silent within.

"They've gone to sleep," he murmured. "I'll get the screw out, and then one of you can cut back to Gosling's lodge with the screwdrivers. If they saw them they might smell a rat."

The screw was silently withdrawn. Bob Cherry took the three screwdrivers, and hurried away with them. Wharton opened the door of the shed.

"Hallo, there!"

"Ach! I tinks tat I haf been asleep, ain't it!"

"I zink zat I have been asleep."

"Well, if you want to stay here for the rest of the night, we'll shut you in again," said Harry Wharton.

"What do you think?"

"I tinks tat I goes pack to ped, ain't it."

"I zink so, too."

"Then buck up!"

The quarter chimed out from the clock-tower. Fritz Hoffman rubbed his eyes as he came out of the shed.

"Ach! Is tat a quarter to eleven?"

"The quarterfulness is to twelve, my worthy German friend."

"Himmel! Ten you have been down to te village, ain't it, to stay out of school all tat time, you peastly pounders!"

"Ciel! Zat is certain. Vat have you to do at ze village, cochons?"

"Ask no questions, and you'll hear no whoppers," said Nugent. "Come along, if you want to use our rope to get in with."

"I tink tat I comes mit you."

"I zink so, also."

The juniors hurried back to the House. They were all anxious to get to bed. Bob Cherry was already waiting for them under the window. He had placed the screwdrivers under the bench outside Gosling's lodge, as had been arranged.

"Oh, here you are!" he said sleepily. "I'm ready for bed. I'll go up first, and you can send these alien Lounders up next."

He climbed up the rope. It was an easy task for the athletic junior. He was in the window in less than a minute, and looking out at the juniors below.

"Now, then," said Harry Wharton, "up you go!"

Hoffman and Meunier, whose friendship was off again, made simultaneous steps towards the rope. They both clutched it, and glared at one another.

"Leave go, you French pounder! Te Sherman always goes pefore te Frenchman!"

"Ze Frenchman goes before ze rotten Sherman!"

"Will you go up that rope, you utter asses?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I tinks tat—"

"I zinks zat—"

"Well, stay where you are, then. We're going to pull up the rope when we get in. Up with you, Inky!"

"The upfulness is terrific."

Hurree Singh climbed the rope. Frank Nugent followed, and then Harry Wharton swung himself up into the window. He leaned out and looked down on the two foreigners, who were still busy fiercely disputing.

"Are you coming up?"

"Oui, oui! I zink zat I orders you to go first, Hoffman."

Hoffman stepped back from the rope. "Te Sherman cannot go if te Frenchman orders him."

"You silly asses!" said Harry. "The rope's coming up now."

"Stop ze minute. I come!"

And Adolphe Meunier swung himself up. Fritz Hoffman followed. Then Harry drew in the rope, unfastened it, and closed the window. The Removites hurried silently away to their dormitory and tumbled into bed.

"Well, I feel rather inclined for a nap," Nugent remarked as he pulled up the blankets about his ears.

"The napfulness will be very welcome."

"French peeg!"

"Sherman beast!"

"Peastly pounder!"

"Rottair!"

"Shut up, you two!"

"I tinks tat I not shuts up."

"I zink so, too!"

"I tinks—"

Biff! Bob Cherry's pillow came with a whizz through the air and caught Hoffman on the side of the head.

"Ach! Vat vas tat pefore?"

"That was my pillow pefore!" grinned Bob Cherry, getting out of bed again. "And now I'm up, you may as well have a swipe or two."

"Ach, himmel! Leave off pefore!"

Biff! Biff! Biff!

"Himmel! Mein gootness! I'm hurt!"

"There!" said Bob Cherry. "Now perhaps you'll shut up! If you or Meunier makes a sound again to-night we'll all turn out and give you a wallop!"

And for the rest of the night there was peace in the Remove dormitory.

The Opening Day!

"YAW-AW-AW-AW!"
That was Bob Cherry's remark when the bell clanged the signal for rising the following morning.

And the others who had taken part in the previous night's excursion felt inclined to yawn also and go to sleep again. But Harry Wharton set the example by jumping out of bed.

"Up you get, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "No good hanging it out, you know. Quelch will be ratty if we're late for breakfast."

"I suppose so," yawned Nugent. "Here goes! Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" answered Bob Cherry.

But the chums of the Remove dressed actively enough, and went down in time, with the rest of the Form.

Some of the Remove were looking curiously at them, the signs of sleepiness in the faces being apparent.

"I heard somebody moving about in the night," Hazeldene remarked. "I suppose it was you chaps going out somewhere?"

"The supposfulness is correct," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Where did you go?"

"That's a little secret," said Bob Cherry blandly. "You'll guess a little later, but for the present, mum's the word."

Hazeldene laughed.

"Oh, keep the secret! Is it something up against Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth, though?"

"No; it's up against the aliens." "Faith, and ye might tell us phwat it is intirely!" said Micky Desmond.

"Faith, and you'll know soon enough intirely!" said Bob Cherry.

"Sure, and if it's mimicking me beautiful accent you are—"

"Silence, there!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Faith, sir, and I—"

"Silence!"

And there was silence at the Remove table.

But the news spread through the Remove, all the same, that there was something afoot up against the aliens, and when the Form went out, after breakfast, there were many inquiries addressed to the chums of the Remove. But the Famous Four maintained a discreet silence.

"Sure, and you can trust me intirely," urged Micky Desmond.

"Sure, and we could trust you to spread it all over the school," agreed Bob Cherry.

"Faith, and I—"

"I say, does Bunter know?" asked Levison.

"Yes, he knows."

"Then you'd better watch him," grinned Levison. "Somebody will have the secret out of him before you can say ginger-pop!"

"We're watching him," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "He's been under watch ever since we hit on the wheeze."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Still, you can trust the Remove with the wheeze," said Bulstrode.

"My dear fellow, mum's the word. You'll all see the thing out between the hours of ten and eleven this morning, and it's not long to wait."

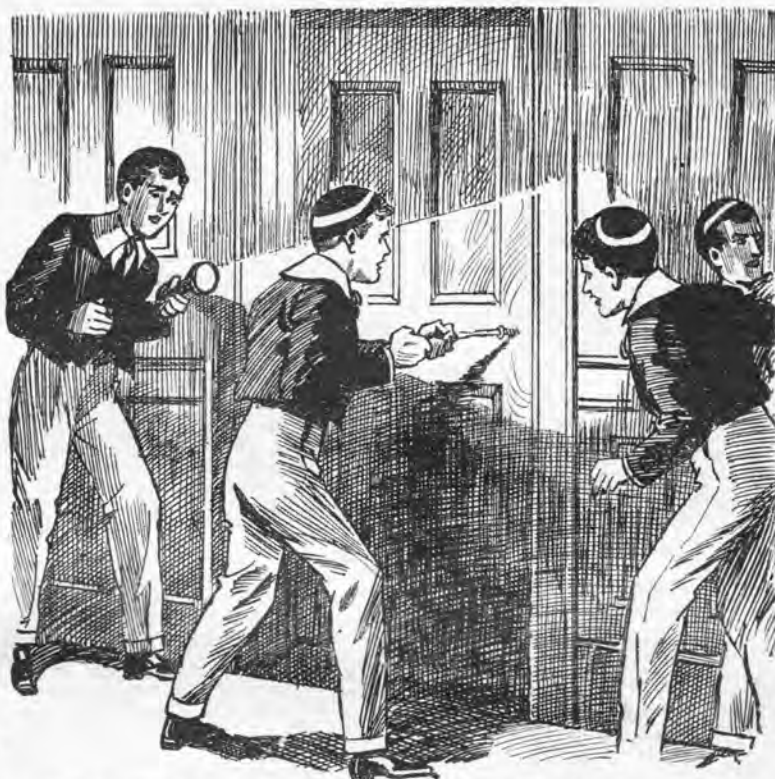
"Then it's something to do with the opening of the academy?"

"Yes; I'll tell you that much."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here, Bunter, this is where you shut up!"

"I say, Nugent won't let go of my arm!"



While Nugent shone the torch on the door, Harry Wharton drove the screw home through the door into the post. "I fancy this will hold the door shut against anything but a battering-ram," said Harry. "Ha, ha! Yes!" laughed Bob Cherry. "It will be a big shock for the foreigners to-morrow!"

"Of course he won't. He's got his orders."

"Yes, that's all very well—"

"Then what are you grumbling at?"

"Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to stand this. I want to practise the ventriloquial drone for a while before morning lessons, and Nugent won't let me go. I don't mind if he holds me while I'm practising, but he says he won't let me practise while he's holding me, and he won't let me go."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "Here's an opportunity for practising and developing my wonderful powers as a ventriloquist, and Nugent stands in the way. I don't want to walk about with Nugent holding me."

"And I don't want to, either," grinned Nugent. "But needs must, you know. This is where you suffer for being a little chatterbox."

"Well, I'm going to practise the ventriloquial drone."

"If you start any ventriloquial groaning—"

"Droning, not groaning!"

"I don't care whether it's droning or groaning, you're not going to do it where I can hear you, or I'll give you something to groan for!"

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Oh, ring off!"

And Nugent marched away with a tight grip on the arm of the indignant Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove's expostulations were lost in the distance. The Removites roared.

"It's the only way," said Levison, laughing. "Bunter can't talk now. I say, I'm anxious for that opening ceremony to start."

All the Remove were anxious, as a matter of fact.

The Upper Fourth were not long in learning of the unusual excitement, and it at once aroused the suspicions of Temple, Dabney & Co. They came round to inquire.

"What's the little game, Wharton?" said Temple. "I hear there's something special on. What are you up to?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing up against you this time," he replied. "If you want to see something really funny, don't fail to turn up for the opening ceremony of the new academy."

"Oho! It's up against the aliens, then?"

"Exactly!"

"The exactfulness is terrific."

"Then it's all right," grinned Temple.

"We'll be there."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"But what's the wheeze?" asked Fry.

"You'll see when the time comes."

"Couldn't you tell us now?"

"Well, I could, certainly; but I'm not going to."

And the Upper Fourth fellows could learn nothing more than that.

Just before morning lessons commenced Hoffman and Meunier came out of the House, dressed very nicely and wearing top-hats.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Where are you off to, my pippins?"

"I think tat ve goes to te station to meet our schooffellows, ain't it," said Hoffman.

"Zat is correct."

"Then you're leaving Greyfriars?" said Wharton.

"Ve are leafing you, but ve returns to give you lots of te licking ven ve are packed up by our friends."

"Zat is certainly so, Fritz."

"You were punching Fritz's napper last night!" said Bob Cherry.

"We are good friends now, for to important occasion," explained Hoffman. "Adolphe is my chum."

"Fritz is my shum, also."

"Well, give us your fists," said Bob Cherry. "We'll see you to the gates. We're glad you are going to be our neighbours, and we can promise you some high old times."

"We promise you to high old times after, ain't it?"

"Zat is correct."

The two aliens shook hands all round, and were escorted to the gates, and the Remove bade them farewell as they walked out. Then they marched down the road towards Friardale.

The clang of the bell called the juniors to chapel, and they went in.

The aliens were gone from Greyfriars, but they were to return in force and become the close neighbours of their late schoolfellows, and, as Bob Cherry said, there would be high old times. But that prospect did not dismay the Greyfriars Remove. In troublous times they thrived.

The Opening That Didn't Come Off!

THE big hand of the clock in the Remove room had completed its circuit, and ten rolled out from the old clock-tower at the same moment. Mr. Quelch laid down his book.

"The class is dismissed for one hour," he said. "All the boys of Greyfriars are expected to attend the opening ceremony of the new academy, and to do honour to the arrival of our neighbours."

The Removites grinned. There was not much likelihood of any member of the Form missing the opening ceremony at Herr Rosenblum's academy.

The Remove filed out. There was a general movement towards the new building, and all the other Forms were going in the same direction.

Bunter found himself unwatched at last. The aliens being gone, it did not matter if the Owl of the Remove allowed his tongue to wag.

It was not five minutes after the class was dismissed that Billy Bunter confided full details to Skinner under a promise of profound secrecy, who, in turn, passed it on to about a dozen other fellows, also under a promise of strictest secrecy.

The Remove were consequently apprised of what to expect, and they awaited the moment of the opening ceremony with joyous anticipation.

The big bronze gates of the new school were wide open, and the boys of Greyfriars entered the grounds, and ranged themselves in a double row on either side of the approach to the great granite steps leading up to the door.

It was upon the steps that the Mayor of Friardale was to make his little speech, and then he was to insert a specially made golden key into the lock and open the door, and announce that Friardale Academy was open.

The golden key rather took the fancy of the spectators; but, as a matter of fact, Herr Rosenblum, who was of an economical turn of mind, had had the key made in Germany, and it was not so valuable as it looked.

There was no one in sight when the boys of Greyfriars crowded round the granite steps. But as the minutes

passed, people from the village of Friardale came up in twos and threes, as well as countryfolk from the districts round about.

By half-past ten there was a considerable crowd, three or four deep, on either side of the gravel drive up to the granite steps.

"Now we shan't be long!" murmured Bob Cherry, as the half-hour chimed out from the tower of Greyfriars. "I can hear wheels."

Bob Cherry was right. There was the sound of a carriage on the road, and a general craning of necks to see it and those it contained.

"It's the mayor's coach," said Nugent. And it was. The heavy, old-fashioned but resplendent vehicle in which the mayor took his drives abroad rolled into view.

The mayor could be seen, sitting up very stiffly in his mayoral robes, and beside him was the plump form and full-moon face of Herr Rosenblum, the Head of the new academy. Herr Rosenblum was in high good-humour, as could be seen by the cheerful smile on his fat face.

Since starting his foreign academy in England he had had many ups and downs, but in the new Friardale school he hoped that he had found a permanent haven at last.

There were several other important local personages in the carriage, and the carriage following, and the crowd gave a cheer as they came up.

Mr. Bootle, the mayor, bowed condescendingly to right and left, like a great-man fully conscious of his greatness, as indeed he was.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Hurrah for old Bootle!"

"Cherry!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Yes, Wingate," said Bob innocently.

"Be more respectful, you young ass, unless you want a licking!"

"Well, I can't call him young Bootle."

"The oldfulness of the worthy Bootle is terrific."

"Order, there!"

"Hurrah!"

The carriages stopped, and the great man alighted and mounted the steps. On the wide, granite slab at the top the mayor stopped, an imposing figure in his sweeping robes. He glanced over the crowd, and the crowd cheered again.

"Now watch for the fun," murmured Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, Bunter! He's just going to begin!"

"But, I say, you fellows—"

"Silence, there!" called out Mr. Quelch.

"But I say, you fellows," whispered Billy Bunter, "I could work in some ventriloquism here a treat."

"I'll stick this pin into you if you make a sound."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Cheese it!"

Bunter cheesed it, as Cherry elegantly expressed it, at last.

The mayor was clearing his throat. Mr. Bootle had written out his speech overnight, and conned over it that morning; but he had forgotten most of it, all the same, and was clearing his throat to gain time.

"Ah!" said Mr. Bootle. "Ah! Ahem!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry.

And the crowd, thinking it was time to cheer, followed his lead, and a loud cheer rolled through the morning air.

Mr. Bootle looked gratified, but a little surprised. He put down that

BUNTER OF BUNTER COURT



"Hallo, you fellows!

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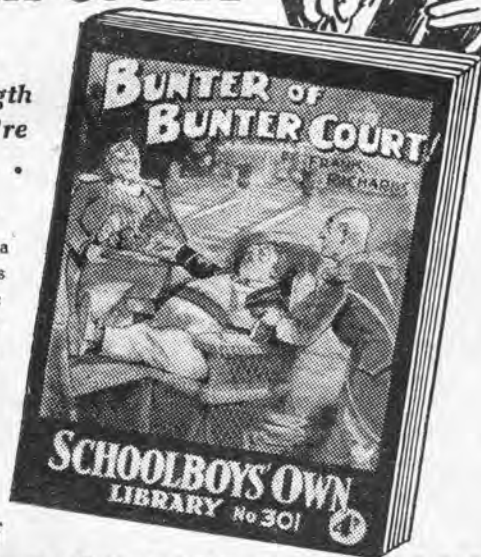
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hearty cheer to his popularity, and cleared his throat again.

"H'm! Ahem! Ah-h-h!"

"Hurrah!"

Wingate's heavy hand fell on Bob Cherry's shoulder. The junior looked up innocently.

"Anything the matter, Wingate?"

"Yes; you young scamp! If you make another sound, I'll run you back to school!" said the Greyfriars captain grimly.

And Bob Cherry's cheering was over for the present. The mayor cleared his throat, and cleared it again. Then he commenced:

"Gentlemen, it is with great—with great—with great gratification—with great pleasure that I stand here upon this occasion."

"I'd rather have sat down myself," murmured Skinner; and there was a giggle in the Remove.

Mr. Quelch looked round, and the giggle died away.

"It is an auspicious occasion. We welcome the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood. And why, gentlemen, do we welcome the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood?"

The mayor paused for a breath, not for a reply.

"Is that a conundrum?" murmured Nugent.

"We welcome the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood, gentlemen," resumed the mayor, "because—er—because the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood will—in short, I am sure you perfectly understand me. The Head of this new collegiate establishment will be Herr Powderblum—"

"Rosenblum," murmured the little German.

"Herr Poseybroom," said Mr. Bootle, imperfectly catching the name. "The Head of this new collegiate establishment will be Herr Prosygloom. We all extend a hearty welcome to Herr Noseybloom. We have the greatest respect for Herr—Herr Cosyroom, and we extend to him a hearty welcome, and the same to the new collegiate establishment, which he is opening in our neighbourhood."

establishment, which he is opening in our neighbourhood."

The mayor paused, and there was a cheer.

"There is already one collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood," said the mayor. "I need not mention it by name—"

"Good old Greyfriars!"

"Quite right—good old Greyfriars!" said the mayor. "Greyfriars is very old, indeed. This famous collegiate establishment has brought much custom to our tradespeople—"

"Especially at the tuckshop!" said a voice.

"Ahem! Greyfriars has brought much custom to our tradespeople, and I'm sure that the new collegiate establishment will confer similar benefits on the neighbourhood. For this reason, and for many others, we welcome the opening of the new collegiate establishment. I have accepted, with great gratification, the honourable duty of first opening the door with a golden key, and pronouncing the new Friar-dale Foreign Academy open. You, I think, Herr Cosyroom, have the key—"

Herr Rosenblum produced the key, and handed it to his worship, and there was a cheer as the glimmer of the gold was seen in the sunlight.

Herr Rosenblum smiled sweetly. He knew how much that gold was worth.

"I shall now proceed," said Mr. Bootle, "to open the door, and to announce that this new collegiate establishment is—in short, is open. When I have opened the door, it will be open."

"That's worth knowing, too," murmured Nugent.

"The new scholars of this collegiate establishment," said Mr. Bootle, "will march in under our observation, and—in short, they will march in. They are, I believe, all ready?"

"They was all retty," assured Herr Rosenblum.

There were fifty or more foreign boys—French and German, with a sprinkling of other nationalities, sons of foreigners resident in England.

At their head were the two old members of the Greyfriars Remove—

Adolphe Meunier and Fritz Hoffman. They grinned cheerfully at the Removites.

"I shall now proceed to the—the—in short, to open the door," said Mr. Bootle. "The—the door will then be open."

"Bravo!"

Mr. Bootle inserted the key in the lock and turned it. The lock acted easily enough, but the door did not open.

The mayor gave it a push, but it did not budge. The Removites grinned at one another, and watched developments.

Mr. Bootle gave the door another push. Then he turned with a somewhat heightened colour to Herr Rosenblum.

"The door will not open, Herr Prosyg-bone."

"Ach! Tat is ferry strange mit itself," said the Head of the foreign academy. "I vill gif it a push mit te hand, and I tink tat it open."

He pushed the door hard, but it did not budge. He bumped it harder, but the door held obstinately fast.

Some of the crowd were beginning to grin now. The mayor was very red, and Herr Rosenblum was perspiring. A ripple of laughter went up and down the crowd as the mayor and the herr bumped at the door together. But still the door did not move.

"Himmel! Tat is ferry strange."

The mayor frowned.

"The door is unlocked," he said. "Someone must have bolted it on the inside."

"Ach! I gave strict orders tat to door was to be left simply locked alretty, and, in fact, I vas te last person in te puilding, and I locked it meinself."

"Someone must have been in, since and bolted it."

"It is ferry strange."

"I suppose someone can get in at the back door and open it?" said the mayor tartly.

The German master looked troubled.

"Nein! All te oder doors are locked, too, and I tink I have not te keys."

"H'm! That is very unfortunate."

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"Stay! I have a key. Meunier, mein boy, take the key and open to pack door under to porch mit it, and go trough to house and unfasten to front door."

"Certainement, monsieur!" said Adolphe Meunier.

He took the key and hurried round the house. The crowd were all grinning now, with the exception of the aliens, who looked annoyed. The state opening of the new academy was likely to be a frost, and under the very eyes of the rival school!

Meunier returned in a minute, or less.

Herr Rosenblum frowned at him.

"Vy you not go in, mein boy?"

"I cannot open ze door, monsieur."

"The lock—is it not all right?"

"The lock is all right, vy itself, sir, but I zink zat ze door is bolted, for it will not open."

"Ach! Tell me the key, and I will try!" Herr Rosenblum snatched the key.

"I ask you to exercise me, Herr Bootle, for exercise!"

"Oh, certainly, Herr Rosenblum!"

The fat German bowed away.

The mayor and the two or three other local important personages stood on the granite steps with very red faces. The impressiveness of the state opening had all gone now. The crowd were laughing and the aliens were all scowling.

and everybody present who was concerned in the official proceedings wished that he was somewhere else.

Herr Rosenblum returned presently with a very crimson face.

"Ach! The door will not open mit itself," he said. "Someone has been in and fastened it."

"Ah! It must have been bolted."

"Nein, nein, mein Herr, dere is no bolt on zat door. I not understand it. I think zat someone here had better climb into ze window, ain't it?"

The mayor frowned.

"A very ridiculous proceeding. Herr Rosenblum."

"I think zat it cannot be helped. I begin to think zat dis is a shake."

"A what?"

"A shake—that you English call a practical joke."

"Oh, a practical joke!"

"Tat is him?"

"I presume," said Mr. Bootle, with all the chilling dignity of a mayor in full official robes, "I presume, Herr Rosenblum, that no one would venture to play a practical joke on me, Herr Rosenblum."

"I think zat a boy had better climb in to window," said Herr Rosenblum, dropping the topic. "Hoffman, mein boy, climb into a window and open ze door."

"I think that we had better send for a locksmith," said the mayor.

"Ach! Certainly, if you think so. Meunier, run mit yourself all to vay and bring vun locksmith."

"Oui, monsieur!"

Adolphe Meunier hurried off. Hoffman willingly climbed on one of the window-sills, and there he announced

that the window was fastened on the inside.

"I know tat," said Herr Rosenblum.

"Preak vun of te panes, and unfasten to catch mit itself, ain't it?"

"Ferry goot, sir!"

Hoffman drove his elbow through a pane, and the crowd laughed. The excitement was growing great. Hoffman put his hand through the aperture and pushed back the catch and strove to open the window.

But the window was as immovable as the door.

Hoffman pushed savagely at it. Two or three aliens clambered on the window-sill to help him. But their united efforts amounted to nothing. The window would not budge.

"Ach! Vy you not open it?" shouted Herr Rosenblum, getting excited.

"It will not open mit itself, sir."

"Nonsense! Get down, and I will try."

Herr Rosenblum clambered on the window-sill. There was a roar of laughter as the fat little German missed his hold and rolled to the ground.

But he was not to be beaten, and he clambered up again. His elbow went through one pane and his foot through another. But his efforts to raise the sash were in vain. He jumped down at last, scarlet with anger and excitement.

"It is vun thick!" he yelled.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the crowd.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the locksmith."

Meunier came panting up with the locksmith. The man immediately tried the key in the lock and pronounced that it worked perfectly.

"Den vy te door not open?" shrieked Herr Rosenblum.

"It's fastened inside, o' course!"

"Den you preak more glass and get into vindow and open it after."

"Very good, sir."

The locksmith smashed a large pane and disappeared into the house. Now the crowd waited eagerly for the door to open. The man was heard tumbling inside, but the door did not move.

Herr Rosenblum rapped on it.

"Vy you not open?" he called out.

"I can't, sir!"

"V' not?"

"The door's stuck, somehow."

"Ach, himmelt! Unfasten it!"

"It's not fastened."

"Den you open it!"

"It won't come open."

"Sir," exclaimed Mr. Bootle, "I—"

"Say nothing now. I must get tat door open."

"I must decline to remain here in an—in short, in an absurd position, while you get tat door open," said Mr. Bootle, with great dignity.

"I consider that the the—in short, the dignity of my official person has been trifled with. I have been, I think I may say, treated with want of respect. I shall now retire from the scene."

"It is not my fault tat te peasily door not open mit itself, ain't it, before?"

"The matter should certainly have been better managed. In any case, the only course consistent with any official dignity is to retire."

And the mayor forthwith retired. The important official and his important supporters rolled off in their carriages. There was a sudden shout from the locksmith on the inside of the great door.

"I've found it!"

"Ach! You have found what?"

"What's the matter? There's a big screw in here. The door has been screwed up."

"Screwed up! Ach, himmelt! Get te screw out!"

"I haven't a screwdriver with me."

"Ach! Idiot! Dummy! Someone has been playing a practical joke!"

"Ach! Vy for are you laughing, hein? Tat is vun serious matter pefore!"

But everyone was laughing. Even Mr. Quetch's severe face had relaxed.

Most of the aliens were laughing, too, now. The idea of the door being screwed up on the occasion of the state opening struck most of the spectators as funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites, and everyone joined in.

Mr. Quetch came forward and tapped the excited little German on the arm.

"It is evidently a practical joke," he said, "doubtless played by some mischievous lad from the village."

"Doubtless!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You had better let your boys come in to Greyfriars, and come in your self, while workmen can be sent to undo this piece of mischief."

"Ach! I think so, ain't it?"

And Herr Rosenblum walked away with Mr. Quetch.

Meunier and Hoffman rushed up to Harry Wharton & Co.

"Ach! I think tat you vas screw up te doors, ain't it?"

"I zink zat is correct."

"Tat is vere you go last night?"

"Zat is certain."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have caught you but for tat French pounder!"

"I catches you, but for zat Sherman idiot!"

"French peasant!"

"Sherman peeg!"

The two excited aliens rushed at one another, and in a moment more were fighting furiously.

The Removites roared with laughter. Harry Wharton and his chums strolled away.

"Well, it's been dippin' fun!" said Bob Cherry at last. "I think we've scored in the first round, anyway."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent.

"The rathfulness is terrific."

And the chums of the Removites agreed that it was terrific.

(Now the foreigners are back again there will be no little ragging and rivalry between them and the Removites. See that you don't miss "THE RIVAL SCHOOLS!"—next week's sparking yarn.)

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