

"THE ST. JIM'S HUNGER-STRIKER!" GRAND LONG COM-
PLETE SCHOOL YARN **INSIDE.**

The **GEM** 2^D

**GUSSY GOES ON A
STARVATION DIET!**





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Bull himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned and no replies given by post.

A. S. W., of Chingford, writes:

I have been for hours looking through the dictionary, trying to find the longest word in the English language. The longest I can find is INTERCOMMUNICABILITY. Can you beat that?

ANSWER: Coming to the top after some deep diving into Webster's and Nuttall's, I can equal yours with another twenty-letter word, INCOMPREHENSIBLENESSE; but I can't beat it, unless you will allow NON-INCONTROVERTIBILITY. While I spare a moment for my prep, perhaps somebody else can oblige?

P. M., of England, Europe (with a Holloway postmark), writes:

How do you do, Blake, old chap? Did you enjoy your breakfast? What's the meaning of tisket, a-tasket, swing, making it hor, lava duck? I hope you enjoy your tea.

ANSWER: Tisket a-tasket it is to be found in the popular song, and no doubt it was put in to rhyme with basket. Swing is the name given to dizzy jazz wherein player or crooner renders rhythm rather than exact notes of score. Making it hot may apply to my morning cup of coffee or to the tea I'm looking forward to now; applied to music, it means "going to town," "swingin' it," raising roof, or splitting ceiling. Lava duck has nothing to do with the Englishman's love of roast duck. That reminds me. Gussy is burning the toast, by the smell of it. Excuse me, old fellow!

"Anxious," of Cardiff, writes:

My pal and I have been having a most fierce argument on our pet subject. Can you save blood being spilt by answering these: 1. Who won the British Junior Figure Skating Championship at Empress Hall, Earl's Court, on January 23rd and 24th? 2. Did Sabu take part? And if so, how many points did he obtain?

ANSWER: In my diary I find this entry: Cecilia Colledge retained the European Amateur Skating Championship, scoring 1,848.5 points, to beat Megan Taylor, with 1,837.4 points, while third place fell to 14-years-old Daphne Walker, new phenomenon of the ice. I believe I remember a film of Sabu at the rink, but I didn't hear he skated.

J. Herman, of Kaapstad, South Africa, writes:

As a South African, I have one grudge against you. Why haven't you kept up your Rugger?

Surely there are enough fellows in the Junior School to justify a Rugger as well as a Soccer team? It would give fellows who are rarely in the Soccer XI a chance. For a Rugger XV, I suggest:

DANE

GLYN, HERRIES, DIGBY, REILLY

CLIVE, CARDEW

LUMLEY-LUMLEY, HAMMOND, JULIAN, KERRUTISH, LAWRENCE, OWEN, KOUMI RAO, GORE.

This still leaves the Soccer XI intact, with a few reserves!

ANSWER: Had to cut your jolly letter to fit space, but much appreciate all you say. If Tom Merry decides to adopt the suggestion, however, I can imagine quite a "scrum" for places! You can rely on this: If we take up Rugger, we shan't do things by "halves," or even "three-quarters." Your XV is a very smart "try," anyhow. We're almost "converted"!

"An Employee of S. A. Smart & Son, Gloucester," writes:

Send you a bob by the next post if you can answer these:

1. I'm 15 years of age. How tall should I be?
2. Where is the Red Sea?
3. Who is the cleverest chap at St. Jim's?
4. Who is writing to you? A boy or a girl?

P.S.—Sorry I can't send a snap, but it would give the show away.

ANSWER: 1. Weight for age tables vary, but Hammond of the Fourth is 15 and he's 5 feet 2 inches. What's an inch or two between friends, anyway?

2. Between Egypt and Arabia, the Red Sea extends from the Isthmus of Suez, 1,200 miles to the S.E., to the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb.

3. They say Rushden, North, and Dudley are the "big brains" of the Sixth, though Kildare is clever enough to combine sport and study in fair proportions.

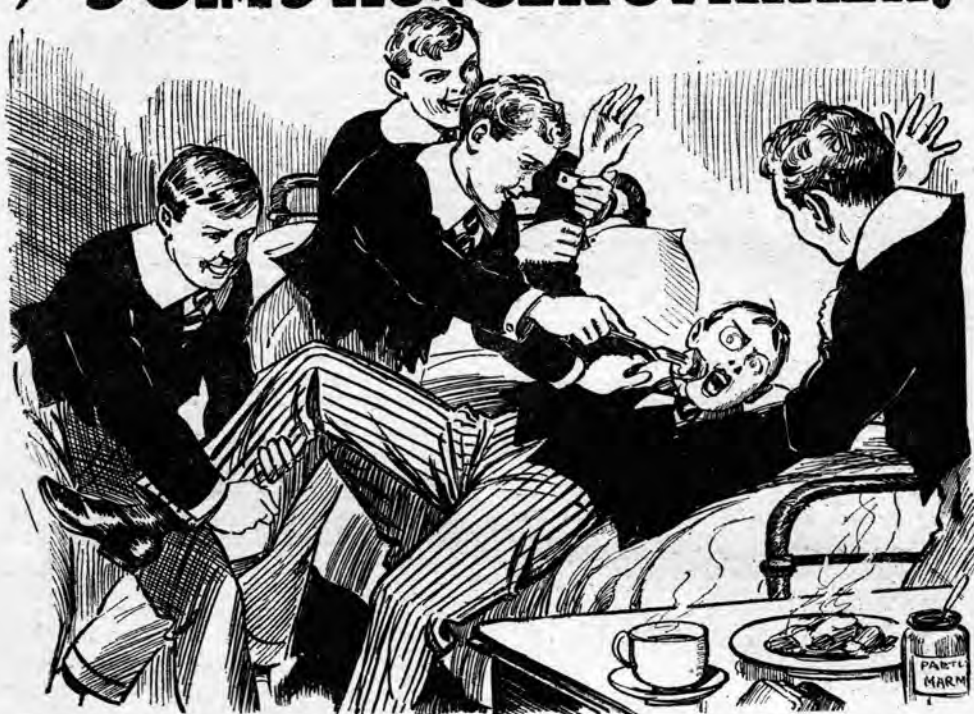
4. Neither. Your handwriting clearly reveals you to be one of the Siamese twins. Well, you asked for it!

P.S.—Cross the postal order "A. & Co."

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POWERFUL LONG COMPLETE YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S, STARRING GUSSY
IN THE ROLE OF—

The ST. JIM'S HUNGER-STRIKER!



While Blake & Co. held Arthur Augustus, Tom Merry cut off a piece of beef-steak pudding and held it out on a fork. Gussy writhed and wriggled furiously and set his teeth. But Tom simply rammed the pudding into his mouth. "Gwoough!" spluttered Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwumbs! You wottahs!"

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Chips In!

"SOUNDS like Wally," said Jack Blake, "More trouble!" grinned George Herries.

"The kid's catching it!" remarked Robert Arthur Digby.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, ejaculated:

"Bai Jove!"

The chums of the Fourth had just strolled up the passage in which the Third Form was situated, and had stopped in astonishment when they heard sounds of turmoil and strife proceeding from that room.

The voice of Mr. Selby could be heard, shouting at somebody. That "somebody" was yelling as though in pain, and

Few—if any—fellows would go on hunger-strike merely to protest against apologising to a Form-master. But that is the course Gussy takes—and it's left to his chums to try to save him from wasting away to a shadow!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

Jack Blake & Co. recognised the dulcet voice of Walter Adolphus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy minor was evidently in trouble with his Form-master again. D'Arcy minor was very often in trouble with Mr. Selby. Indeed, it seemed as though Wally was born to trouble, tribulation, and strife.

It was time that prep was over in the Third Form Room, and the

chums of the Fourth had come along to invite Wally to a "spread" in Study No. 6. They did not often extend invitations to D'Arcy minor, but as the Third Formers were playing the Fourth a footer match on the following Saturday, Jack Blake & Co. had thought themselves to have Wally in to tea and discuss arrangements for the match over the festive board.

Trump, tramp, tramp!

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "Selby must be chasing Wally round the Form-room. I wonder what the little beggar's been up to!"

"They're going it, and no mistake!" said Digby.

Crash!

The door of the Form-room was suddenly dragged open, and the form of Wally D'Arcy dashed forth. Wally's hair was dishevelled, his face was flushed and excited. He hugged a shaggy mongrel beneath his arm.

"Gwreat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wally, deah boy—"
"Stand back, Gus!" panted Wally. "Selby's after me and Pongo! Oh, my hat! Here comes the old bird!"

Mr. Selby pounded out of the Form-room, waving a cane aloft.

The master of the Third Form seemed in a tearing rage. He saw Wally in the passage, and made a bee-line for him.

Wally promptly dodged the cane and scuttled up the passage, still clutching Pongo, his shaggy pet.

"D'Arcy minor! Stop! Come back!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "I command you to surrender yourself and that dog to me!"

"Rats!" responded Wally recklessly. "You're not going to touch Pongo! He's going back to his kennel!"

"You insolent young seamp!"

Mr. Selby fairly flew after Wally, who was making towards the stairs at the end of the passage.

Jack Blake & Co. followed, considerably surprised, and wondering mightily.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wally, you weekless young ass—"
"Stop, D'Arcy minor!" cried Mr. Selby, his gown flowing in the manner of a sail behind him. "If you don't stop, it will be all the worse for you!"

"You shan't touch Pongo!" retorted Wally, looking back defiantly at the master. "He's a defenceless animal, and I'm not going to see him swiped with your rotten cane! Oh crumbs!"

Pongo had taken matters into his own hands, so to speak. Seeing his opportunity to escape from his master's arms, he gave a wriggle and a jump and landed on the floor of the passage.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wally, halting. "Pongo! Pongo, old chappie—"

"Bow-wow-wow!" barked Pongo excitedly, and he turned to greet Mr. Selby as that incensed gentleman dashed up.

Mr. Selby came to a sudden full-stop as Wally's shaggy pet turned upon him. Pongo eyed Mr. Selby viciously.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!" he growled.

Mr. Selby backed hastily away.
"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "That animal is going to make an attack upon me! D'Arcy minor—"

"Good old Pongo!" said Wally, chuckling. "Seize the cane, old man!"

Jack Blake & Co. gasped.

"Wally, you fwabjous little idiot!" exclaimed D'Arcy major in horror. "You can't allow that howlid dog to go for Mr. Selby!"

"Mr. Selby went for Pongo first!" grinned Wally. "Blessed if I thought he'd make such a fuss about bringing a dog into the Form-room for prep! Poor old Pongo couldn't rest in his kennel, all through the growling of that rotten bulldog of yours, Herries!"

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"Look here——" began Herries, bristling with wrath at Wally's disparaging reference to Towser.

"Keep that dog off!" shrieked Mr. Selby, as Pongo advanced towards him, growling. "D'Arcy minor, I command you!"

"He's got his mad up, sir!" grinned Wally. "He's a cute little beggar, and I suppose he's going to have some of his own back on you, sir, for swiping him with the cane when you discovered him in the Form-room cupboard!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r!" growled Pongo.

"Good heavens! Help!" cried Mr. Selby, skipping away.

Jack Blake strode forward quickly and grasped Pongo before that shaggy animal reached Mr. Selby. Pongo snapped and growled, but was held firmly by Blake and Herries.

Wally D'Arcy glowered.

"You ass, Blake——" he began.

"Weally, Wally, it is impos to allow that dog to attack Mr. Selby, whatevah the pvoecarion," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I considah——"

"D'Arcy minor! You shall now be punished severely!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, recovering his self-possession and striding towards Wally, his cane upraised.

Wally eyed the cane apprehensively and backed away.

"Look here, sir——" he began. "I'm not—yow-ow! Oh crumbs! Yah! Yaroooooh!"

Wally uttered these cries of pain as Mr. Selby's cane descended upon his shoulders with stinging force.

"I'll teach you not to bring dangerous animals into the Form-room, and place my personal safety in jeopardy, D'Arcy minor!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, between his teeth. "Take that—and that—and that!"

And at each repetition of the word "that," Mr. Selby brought the cane down heavily on the person of Wally D'Arcy.

Wally fell back, gasping with pain.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Yarooooooh! Yow-ow-ow!" wailed Wally involuntarily. Usually, he was as tough as nails, but those stinging cuts inflicted upon him were more than he could bear. He roared.

Mr. Selby, thoroughly enraged, followed Wally up as the fug retreated down the passage, lashing him mercilessly with the cane.

Wally's howls resounded down the passage.

Jack Blake & Co. looked meaningly at each other.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his monocle glimmering in his eye.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Yoop! Oh crumbs! Help! Ow-ow!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "The rotter isn't half laying into the poor kid!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, pushing back his cuffs, and advancing upon Mr. Selby. "This is beyond a joke, deah boys! I'm not standin' that!"

"Hold on, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake.

But Gussy did not "hold on"—at least, not as Blake meant it. He grabbed Mr. Selby's arm as it was raised to deliver another blow of the cane upon Wally's back, and he held it firmly.

"Stop, you wotiah!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Selby's face went quite pink, and he wrenched his arm free.

"D'Arcy major! How dare you!"

"Leave my minah alone, Mr. Selby!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, whose noble blood was

boiling in his veins. "I considah your treamtent of him quite bwutal, and quite without weason! You are exceedin' your duty as a mastah!"

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Mr. Selby.

"I wepeat that you are exceedin' your duty as a mastah, Mr. Selby!" said D'Arcy firmly. "I wegard you as a bwutal wottah, bai Jove!"

Mr. Selby stood rooted to the floor, gasping incoherently. Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at their chum in utter astonishment.

"Gussy, old man!" breathed Blake.

"I am fully awah of what I am doin', Blake!" said D'Arcy haughtily. "I am givin' Mr. Selby to undahstand that I wprotot against his bwutal treamtent of Wally, and that it must stop immediately!"

"Great pip!"

Mr. Selby's face worked spasmodically, and storm clouds settled on his brow. He set his teeth and, grasping the cane firmly in his hand, whirled round on D'Arcy.

"D'Arcy major, you—you insolent rascal!" he exclaimed. "How dare you address me in that manner?"

D'Arcy did not reply. He stood like a paladin of old, his eyeglass gleaming in his eye.

"You ass, Gus!" exclaimed Wally, under his breath. "He'll go for you!"

D'Arcy major sniffed. Mr. Selby's eyes glistened.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy major!" he grated. "I shall cane you severely for your impertinence."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Wha-a-at!"

"I considah that I am quite justified in pointin' out your misconception of duty, Mr. Selby!" said the noble swell of the Fourth. "I wefuse to be caned by you, anyway! I wefuse to see my minah bwutally ill-tweeted!"

"D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Your insolence is unprecedented, boy! Obey me at once, and hold out your hand!"

"I wefuse!"

"Gussy!" said Blake appealingly. "Gussy, old man, you can't kick against the traces!"

Gussy did not even hear.

"For the last time!" went on Mr. Selby furiously. "Will you hold out your hand, D'Arcy major?"

"I wepeat that I wefuse, Mr. Selby!"

Whack!

Mr. Selby brought the cane down heavily across the shoulder of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and the swell of St. Jim's uttered a gasping yell of pain.

"Yow-ow! Oh cwumbs! Ow!"

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

Mr. Selby's ire was roused, and he lashed Arthur Augustus in a manner that suggested the beating of a carpe.

"Yawoooh! Yow! Oh, you beastly wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus. "How dare you cane me! Yoop!"

The noble Gussy's blood was fairly up. He whirled round upon the Third Form master, grasped the cane, and endeavoured to wrench it from his hand.

Mr. Selby lung on to the ashlant and closed with D'Arcy.

The master and the Fourth Former then proceeded to perform a species of tango along the passage, locked in each other's embrace.

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally, who had now recovered Pongo from Jack Blake. "Go it, Gus! Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake, Herries, and Dig did not laugh. They realised that this was a very serious affair for Gussy. Wrestling with a master would be regarded by the Head as a heinous offence.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Mr. Selby hugged each other with quite brotherly affection, and sailed down the passage towards the stairs.

"Look out!" roared Blake, in alarm, as the two strugglers neared the top of the stairs. "You'll fall down, and— Oh, my hat!"

Crash!

Mr. Selby and Gussy had reached the top of the stairs, still wrestling furiously. They toppled on the brink, hovered a while, and then, with two wild yells, they went rolling down the stairs together.

CHAPTER 2.

On the High Horse!

BUMP, bump, bump!
"Yawoooooh!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yah! Oop!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

They both went down the stairs like sacks of coal, bumping most horribly meanwhile.

Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and Wally D'Arcy

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stood on the top landing, open-mouthed with horror.

"My giddy aunt!" ejaculated Blake. "Gussy will catch it now! He— Oh! Great Scott! Look out, Taggles!"

Taggles, the school porter, carrying a pail of whitewash, had appeared at the bottom of the stairs, evidently intending to mount them.

"Look out!" shrieked Wally D'Arcy. "Clear out of the way, you chump— Oh crumbs! That's done it!"

Crash!

Mr. Selby and D'Arcy reached the bottom of the stairs, and cannoned forcibly into Taggles. The St. Jim's porter fell, bowled over like a ninepin, and his pail of whitewash went up in the air, to fall upon the three strugglers on the floor.

Swoooooosh!

"Gurrugh!" gurgled Mr. Selby, as a torrent of whitewash enveloped his head.

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the whitewash surged over his beautiful clobber.

"Ow, ow, ow!" moaned Taggles, sitting up in

a puddle of whitewash and blinking dazedly around him. "Wot the dickens— My 'at! Mr. Selby, sir!"

Mr. Selby danced to his feet and dragged Arthur Augustus up afterwards. He shook a clammy fist beneath Gussy's nose.

"You little rascal!" hooted the Third Form master. "You are responsible for this—this affair! Taggles, cease those ridiculous noises and clear this mess up! Come with me to the Head, D'Arcy!"

Gussy groped for his monocle, cleaned the whitewash from it, and jammed it into his eye. He looked severely at Jack Blake & Co., who had come downstairs grinning. Then he regarded Mr. Selby with a lofty air.

"Vewy well, sir," he said. "I am quite prepared to explain mattaths to Dr. Holmes. I need hardly point out that this would not have happened if you had not made that brutal attack upon me at the top of the stairs!"

"Silence, D'Arcy!" grated Mr. Selby. "Follow me to the Head's study at once!"

And, squelching whitewash as he went, Mr. Selby stalked off. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed him, his noble nose high in the air.

A shriek of laughter from the boys who had assembled followed them.

Wally of the Third looked round him and whistled.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he exclaimed. "Gussy's going to be hauled before the beak! What's going to happen now? My only sainted Aunt Jane! I'm going to be in this!"

And Wally followed in the whitewashy footsteps of his major and Mr. Selby.

On the way to the Head's study, the Terrible Three met Mr. Selby and Gussy.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stopped and stared. They could hardly believe their eyes.

"Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry. "What the merry thunder has happened?"

"Lots!" replied Arthur Augustus. "I had to interfere in Mr. Selby's twreatment of my minah. Mr. Selby went for me, and while we were w'estlin' we fell down the stairs and collided with Taggles, who was at the bottom with a pail of whitewash. I'm goin' to see the Head now, deah boys!"

"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" murmured Lowther quite faintly.

"You're in for it, Gussy!" said Manners.

D'Arcy sniffed.

"The Head is sure to see the dwift of my argument when I explain affaiths to him," he said. "Don't wowwy, deah boys; it will be all wight!"

Mr. Selby wheeled round.

"D'Arcy, do not stop talking to those juniors! Follow me!"

"Vewy well, sir."

Mr. Selby squelched on. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed in quite a dignified manner, oblivious to the fact that his clothes were plastered with whitewash.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Hallo, here's Wally with that mongrel of his! Have you been up to anything, Wally?"

"Only hid Pongo in the Form-room cupboard!" grinned Wally. "I'm going to the Head, and explain what a beast old Selby is. Gussy's not going to stand alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's going to be squalls!" said Monty

Lowther. "Wally, if I had a minor like you, I'd drown him!"

"Rats!" said Wally, and he passed on his way. Blake, Herries, and Digby joined the Terrible Three in the passage. They were not looking happy. They realised that Gussy was "in for it."

The noble Arthur Augustus, however, was quite calm and collected as he followed Mr. Selby into the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes was seated at his table, writing, when Mr. Selby swooshed in. He gave a violent jump as he saw the state the Third Form master was in.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Head, rising. "Whatever has happened, Mr. Selby? How come you to be in such a disgraceful condition?"

Mr. Selby seemed to choke.

"This junior is the primary cause of the affair, sir!" he stuttered. "I have brought him to you for the severe punishment he deserves! I am incapable of dealing with him."

"Bless my soul!"

"This boy obstructed me whilst I was punishing another junior," said Mr. Selby, in trembling tones. "He actually tried to wrest the cane from my grasp—struggled with me, sir! I, of course, resisted his violence, and he dragged me downstairs—"

"Weally, Mr. Selby—" began Arthur Augustus hotly.

"I repeat, sir, he dragged me downstairs," said Mr. Selby furiously. "Taggles was at the bottom with a pail of whitewash. There was a collision, and—and—you see the result!"

"Yes, I see the result, Mr. Selby," said the Head coldly. Then he turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "D'Arcy, is it possible that you—"

"I did not dwag Mr. Selby down the stairs, sir," said Gussy respectfully, but firmly. "He and I were stwugglin' for the cane, and we both fell down togethah!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, his face hard and stern. "How dare you, D'Arcy, wrestle with a master in order to prevent him doing his duty!"

"Weally, sir, I considah that Mr. Selby was exceedin' his duty!" said D'Arcy. "He was bruttally ill-tweatin' my minah—"

"It's a lie!" hooted Mr. Selby. "D'Arcy minor had the effrontery to introduce a dog—a ferocious dog—into the Form-room, and when I essayed to chastise the brute, which was growling at me, D'Arcy minor seized the dog and ran away with it. I followed—"

"You caught my minah, and lashed him like a bwute!" said D'Arcy cuttingly.

"Rubbish!" panted Mr. Selby. "I was merely caning him—"

Tap!

The person who tapped at the Head's study door did not wait for an invitation to enter. He came in very hurriedly. It was Wally D'Arcy, still clutching Pongo.

"D'Arcy minor!" exclaimed the Head. "What is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"I've come to stick up for old Gus!" said Wally cheerfully. "Mr. Selby's not going to have it all his own way. Don't look so scared, Gussy. I'm here to stand by you!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"This is the junior I was punishing, sir!" said Mr. Selby viciously. "See, he still has the ferocious brute with him—"

"G-r-r-r!" growled Pongo, looking hungrily at Mr. Selby.

The Third Form master backed hastily away.



Mr. Selby and D'Arcy bumped to the bottom of the stairs and cannoned into Taggles. The St. Jim's porter was bowled over like a ninepin, and his pail of whitewash went up into the air, to fall upon the three strugglers on the floor. "Gurruhh!" gurgled Mr. Selby, as a torrent of whitewash enveloped his head.

"I'm here to stick up for my major, sir," said Wally, addressing the Head respectfully. "Mr Selby was pitching into me—

"Goy!"

"Ahem!" coughed Wally. "I—I mean, he was hitting me like a brute with the cane, when Gussy—I mean, my major—interfered. Then Mr. Selby went for him, and then Gussy—I mean, my major—got his back up—I mean, went for Mr. Selby—I mean—"

The faintest semblance of a smile twitched at the corners of Dr. Holmes' mouth, but quickly faded. His face was hard and stern as he regarded Wally.

"You committed a very serious breach of the school rules by bringing an animal into school grounds, D'Arcy minor," said the Head severely. "When Mr. Selby discovered the animal, it was only right and proper for you to surrender it—"

"Mr. Selby whacked Pongo with the cane, sir!" said Wally stoutly. "I'm not going to have old Pongo whacked; I'd rather be whacked myself."

"I struck the ferocious creature in self-defence!" grated Mr. Selby. "The brute was about to spring on me—"

"I have no doubt you acted in a proper manner, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes. "D'Arcy minor, you deserved to be caned most severely. D'Arcy major, your offence in obstructing a master in his duty is even more serious."

"Weally, sir, I considah—"

"I can barely credit you with such conduct, D'Arcy major!" said Dr. Holmes severely. "You have acted in an insolent manner towards Mr.

Selby, thus causing him this unseemly violation of his person. You will kindly apologise to him, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus set his teeth hard, and his eyes glinted.

"I am sorry, sir," he said. "But in the circumstances, I feel bound not to apologise to Mr. Selby."

"What!"

"I considah that his treatment of my minah and myself has been most brutal, and that he is entirely in the wrong!" said D'Arcy firmly. "Therefore, I cannot apologise to Mr. Selby until he has first apologised to my minah!"

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Selby strode forward, trembling with rage. "The insolent young monkey!" he stuttered. "He has no right to criticise me—a Form-master—and to demand that I should apologise to his minor! I shall certainly do nothing of the kind!"

"Vewy well, Mr. Selby," said D'Arcy quietly. "I wufuse to apologise to you until you have altered your mind!"

The Head compressed his lips tightly, and reached for a cane.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy!" he said grimly.

Arthur Augustus obediently extended his palm. Swish!

D'Arcy gasped, but quickly recovered himself. That swish was a stinger, but to show signs of pain over a mere caning before Mr. Selby was certainly, to Gussy's idea, *infra dig*. So he nerved himself for the next swish.

"The other hand, D'Arcy!"

Swish!

D'Arcy's hands were smarting and aching, for the Head had laid on the cane with all the force he could muster.

Swish! Swish!

The operation was repeated, and then Dr. Holmes laid down the cane.

"Now, D'Arcy," he said very quietly, "you have been punished for your impertinence. You will now have the goodness to apologise to Mr. Selby, and then we shall consider the matter closed."

"I am sowwy, sir——"

"D'Arcy, will you obey me?"

"I wegwet that, in the cires, I must wofuse to obey you, sir," replied Arthur Augustus unwaveringly. "I considah that Mr. Selby——"

Dr. Holmes' face was hard and stern.

"Do you realise, D'Arcy major, that you are deliberately disobeying your headmaster?" he said.

Arthur Augustus looked deeply distressed.

"Bai Jove! I'm feckfully sowwy, sir, that you should think me lackin' in pwopah wospect for my headmastah. Howevah, I considah that this is a mattah between Mr. Selby and myself. I am not sowwy I intahfered with him, and I should wegard it as my painful duty to intahvene again if he bullied my minah——"

"D'Arcy!"

"I mean it, sir!" said D'Arcy firmly. "Aftah havin' tweeked my minah bruttally, I considah it wight and pwopah for Mr. Selby to apologise to Wally. Until he does, it is impos for me to say I am sowwy for the way he has been tweeked."

Mr. Selby's face had turned quite green.

"D'Arcy, how dare you take it upon yourself to dictate to your masters!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "I shall waste no more time in words. Unless you apologise to Mr. Selby immediately, I shall have you removed to the punishment-room, and you will remain there until you decide to render Mr. Selby the apology that is due."

Arthur Augustus drew himself up to his full height. Usually he was one of the most urbane of fellows, and very easy going. But the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a very strong will of his own, which could be adamant when D'Arcy decreed. He decided that this was an occasion upon which he must be as firm as a rock.

"Well, D'Arcy?" said the Head, after a pause.

"Very well, sir," said Gussy evenly. "I am quite willin' to go to the punishment-woom wathah than tendah Mr. Selby an apology. I wepat that it is impos for me to do so, unless he first apologise to my minah!"

"Gussy, old chap," exclaimed Wally, in pleading tones, "don't get on the high horse, you know! Mr. Selby needn't apologise to me—I don't want his rotten apology——"

"An apology is due to you, deah boy," said D'Arcy major gently. "I am goin' to take the course which I think is wight, and uphold the twadition of our family. Let it nevah be said that a D'Arcy gave in to the will of the oppressah!"

Dr. Holmes made an angry gesture, and rang the page's bell.

"I will take you at your word, D'Arcy," he said. "You will probably come to your senses after a night of confinement in the punishment-room. Ah, Toby! Fetch Mr. Railton, will you?"

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Toby, the page, fetched Mr. Railton.

The Housemaster looked in amaze at Mr. Selby's whitewashed condition, and at the D'Arcy brothers. His face became troubled when the facts of the matter were laid before him.

"Will you kindly remove this boy to the punishment-room, Mr. Railton," said the Head, in conclusion. "No chance must be offered for his escape."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose there is nothing in D'Arcy's allegation that Mr. Selby was treating his minor in an excessively harsh manner?"

"None whatever, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Selby with asperity. "The two unmitigated young hooligans——"

"Kindly moderate your expressions, Mr. Selby," said the Head coldly. "Mr. Railton, D'Arcy major may go at once. D'Arcy minor, you will surrender that dog of yours to Taggles, who will have instructions to place it in the kennel, and see that it is kept there. Mr. Selby, that is all, I think."

Arthur Augustus, his eye gleaming, followed Mr. Railton from the room. He went with his nose held high in the air.

Mr. Selby's eyes were glinting. He was quite satisfied that he would humble D'Arcy.

Wally D'Arcy was dismissed from the Head's presence, and later, after conversing with Dr. Holmes, Mr. Selby went in quite a good humour.

CHAPTER 3.

On Hunger-strike!

"LICKED?" Jack Blake asked that question anxiously as Arthur Augustus walked into the passage. His chums were awaiting him there.

Mr. Railton glanced at them, and walked on.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, rubbing his hands. "The Head caned me, so I don't mind so much. But I'm not goin' to knuckle undah to Mr. Selby. No feah!"

"Where are you going with Railton?" asked Blake. "Is he going to lick you, too?"

"No, deah boy. He's takin' me to the punishment-woom. The Head says I'm to be kept there until I apologise to Mr. Selby."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I am afraid I shall have to spend the west of the term in Nobody's Study, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "For I certainly have not the slightest intention of apologisin' to Mr. Selby."

"Gussy, you frabjous ass——"

"I wofuse to be called a frabjous ass, Blake!"

"Look here, you burbling fathead, you can't——"

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, from the end of the passage. "Are you coming?"

Arthur Augustus hurried after the Housemaster, and his chums looked at one another dependently.

"Gussy's in another scrape!" groaned Blake. "When the chump gets on his high horse there's no reasoning with him. Let's come and see him shut up!"

And the chums of the School House followed in the footsteps of Arthur Augustus and Mr. Railton.

Before going to the punishment-room Gussy requested that he might be allowed to change his clobber, a request that Mr. Railton good-naturedly conceded.

Then, having changed his whitewash garments, the noble swell of the Fourth followed Mr. Railton to Nobody's Study.

Jack Blake & Co. followed at a distance.

Mr. Railton turned the great, rusty key in the lock, and threw the door open.

"You must go inside, D'Arcy," he said quietly.

"Vewy well, sir," said Arthur Augustus, and he stepped into Nobody's Study.

The room was cold and bare. He could not suppress a shudder as he looked in.

"D'Arcy," said the Housemaster gently. "I trust that you will soon think the matter over, and do as Dr. Holmes requests you. I am sure that he does not desire, as I do not desire, that you should be confined here!"

"Thank you vewy much, Mr. Railton!" said D'Arcy gratefully. "But I assuah you, it is quite imposs for me to apologise to Mr. Selby, and, in the cires, I must wemain here until that deewer is wescinded. If, howevah, Mr. Selby apologise to my minah, I shall weward that as suffish, and shall then wendah him an apology."

Mr. Railton looked curiously at the swell of St. Jim's, and when he departed, after locking the door of the punishment-room, there was a troubled look on the Housemaster's handsome face. Perhaps he could see deeper than Dr. Holmes, and realised that D'Arcy, though acting upon an exalted sense of dignity, was not wrong in the main.

Arthur Augustus looked round his prison and shivered.

"Gwoogh!" he said. "This is jolly wotten! But I'll nevah give in!"

He looked out of the grimy window, which was guarded by iron bars. The only view was a drear expanse of brick walls.

"Oh deah!" said D'Arcy.

He sat down on the hard bed, and, clasping his hands between his knees, relaxed into deep thought.

He did not feel cheerful. Mr. Selby was probably gloating over him, and that thought spurred D'Arcy's determination again. He had felt himself called upon to chip in when the Third Form master had been ill-treating his rator, and he was not sorry. He could not apologise to Mr. Selby unless the master first apologised to Wally.

And, as that did not appear at all likely, Arthur Augustus gloomily realised that his outlook was by no means rosy. He would not for a moment think of wavering.

When the noble Gussy was on his dignity, wild horses would not drag him down.

But he felt that it was incumbent upon him in some manner to remedy his predicament as far as possible.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus suddenly.

The light of inspiration had entered his eyes, and he gave a chuckle.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "What a wippen' ideah! I'll go on hungah-swike as a pwotest against my unjust imprisonment! The Head will then wrealise that I'm in earnest. Yaas, wathah! I'll go on hungah-swike, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus seemed quite elated at the idea. He could rely upon his determination and will power. D'Arcy prided himself upon his firmness. It was his opinion that he could be as firm as a rock; but Blake said he was as obstinate as a mule.

Tap!

Arthur Augustus jumped from the bed and approached the door.

"I say, Gussy——"

It was Wally's voice.

"Yaas, Wally?"

"You burbling cuckoo!"

"What!"

"Why the thump don't you get yourself out of this mess?" said Wally's voice in urging tones.

"I don't need Selby's silly apologies! He's an old tartar, you know! Take my tip, Gussy, and forget all about things. You've been licked."

"Weally, Wally, I cannot forget Mr. Selby's wotten behaviour! I must stay here until——"

"Oh, you ass!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Better give Selby some soft sawder, old chap! Don't play the giddy ox, you know!" said Wally, through the keyhole.

"Wats!" responded his major. "I'm not goin' to bow and scwape to Selby! I weward him as a wottah! The Head will have to welease me soonah or latah. I've made up my mind to go on hungah-swike!"

"Ob, my sainted Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally.

"I mean it, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm goin' to wefuse all my gwub as a pwotest! It's the only way to make the Head see wreason!"

"Gussy, you fatheaded mule——"

Then another voice interposed. It was the voice of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Cut off, D'Arcy minor, you young rascal! Don't let me catch you hanging about here again!"

There was a scuffle outside, and the footsteps of D'Arcy minor were heard receding down the passage.

BILLY BUNTER IN THE LIMELIGHT!

You know Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, of course! And you're also acquainted with Jack Drake, the boy 'tec! Well, these two popular characters appear prominently in

"The Clue of the Purple Footprints!"

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"D'Arcy!" exclaimed Kildare, rapping at the door.

"Yaas, Kildare!"

"The Head wishes to know whether you've decided to apologise to Mr. Selby. He told me to inform you that he is very sorry to have to keep you here, and he hopes you have come to your senses. You can be released at once if you tell Mr. Selby you are sorry."

"Weally, Kildare, it's imposs for me to tell Mr. Selby I am sowwy, for I should be tellin' an untwuth," replied Arthur Augustus, through the keyhole. "Thank Dr. Holmes vewy much for his considewation, but tell him my mind is made up, and I cannot think of wavewin'!"

"Better think it over, young 'un," said Kildare in tones of concern. "It's jolly bad form to disobey the Head, you know."

"I have no desial to disobey the Head, but, in the cires, I am bound to do so," said Arthur Augustus distressfully. "I twust Dr. Holmes will not misconstwue my conduct. I can't back out, Kildare."

"You'll think differently in the morning, you young ass!" said Kildare. "Well, if you refuse to come out you must stop there. I'll bring you in some tea."

"You need not, Kildare!" said D'Arcy, through the keyhole. "I wufuse to have my tea!"

"Why, you young idiot?"

"I'm on hungah-strike, you see!"

"Great Scott!"

"I mean it, Kildare! I'm going to wufuse all my gwub until I am unconditionally wufused from this woom! It's the only way to pwotest!"

"You reckless young ass!" breathed Kildare. "Do you think you'll frighten the Head by refusing your food?"

"I hope to make Dr. Holmes wrealise that I am actin' undah a sense of injustice and misundahstandin', Kildare!" replied the prisoner in Nobody's Study.

"You'll make yourself ill if you don't eat your grub."

"Pwobably, deah boy. That wests with the Head and Mr. Selby."

"But—but it will be your own fault."

"I shall wogard myself as a martyr in the cause of justice and humanity!" replied Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Pway don't twy to persuade me to atah my mind, Kildare! I'm as firm as a wock, you know!"

Kildare looked helplessly at the door, and then walked away.

It was no use arguing with the swell of St. Jim's. The stalwart Sixth Former was of the opinion that D'Arcy's views would change after a night spent in solitary confinement in the punishment-room.

He went straight to the Head's study and acquainted Dr. Holmes of D'Arcy's determination.

Dr. Holmes knitted his brows with anger when he heard.

"The impertinent young rascal! Kildare, instruct Toby to take D'Arcy up some cocoa and bread-and-butter. I will see D'Arcy in the morning."

Toby, the page, was dispatched to the punishment-room with a tray, upon which was a plate of bread-and-butter and a cup of cocoa.

Kildare opened the door, and the tray was set down on the table.

Kildare did not utter a word. He looked hard

at the prisoner of St. Jim's, and then followed Toby from the room and locked the door.

As the captain of St. Jim's went down the passage with the key in his hand, Tom Merry & Co. came along. They stopped when they saw Kildare blocking their path.

"You kids must keep away from the punishment-room!" said Kildare curtly. "It's against rules to speak to a boy detained there! Mind, I shall report any boy I find talking to D'Arcy! I must do my duty!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another dolefully and turned back.

"I say, Kildare," said Blake anxiously. "I hear from young Wally that Gussy has gone on hunger-strike. Is that right?"

"The young idiot says so," replied Kildare gruffly. "He's just had some grub taken in to him. If he doesn't take it there will be trouble in the morning."

Tom Merry & Co. went into Study No. 10 in the Shell passage to discuss the state of affairs. They were really concerned for Arthur Augustus.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "He's got his back up, and no mistake. I wonder if he really means to go on hunger-strike?"

Blake grunted.

"He's as obstinate as a mule," he said. "The ass would starve himself rather than give in if he's made his mind up! He's a bubbling chump, of course, but—but Selby was really in the wrong, you know! He lost his temper when he pitched into Wally. Selby's a beast!"

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed the others heartily.

"And Gussy's on the high horse," said Blake gloomily. "He won't apologise to Selby, and if he's on hunger-strike, that means that he won't touch grub until the Head lets him out of the punishment-room. Goodness knows how it's all going to end!"

And the chums of the School House settled down to a gloomy tea.

Tom Merry & Co. could not be happy in the circumstances. They wondered vaguely what would come of Gussy's hunger-strike.

CHAPTER 4.

No Surrender!

MR. RAILTON opened the door of the punishment-room next morning and entered.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sitting on the edge of his bed, arranging his tie by means of a pocket-mirror. The swell of St. Jim's was fully dressed and immaculate as usual.

Mr. Railton glanced hard at D'Arcy's face and saw that it was a trifle pale; otherwise, he was as placid and serene as ever.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Wailton!" said Arthur Augustus, placing the mirror in his pocket and rising.

"Good-morning, D'Arcy! Ah, I see you have not eaten the food sent up to you yesterday evening."

"No, wathah not?"

The tray stood where Toby had placed it on the table, the bread-and-butter hard and dry.

"My dear boy," said Mr. Railton, in deep distress, "do you not anticipate the fruits of your folly? If you refuse to partake of food you will become ill, and you will have nobody to blame but yourself. Surely an apology to Mr. Selby is far more preferable to—"

"I pwefer to go hungwy, sir, wathah than bow

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

The archery experts have been discussing the best type of arrow. Apparently the broad one is now out of favour.

The B.B.C. broadcast a running commentary on an eclipse of the moon not long ago. Many well-known stars were present.

Brief Report: Baggy Trimble, guest during the vac. at Gussy's party, complained of feeling ill, and took a glass of lemonade, his cap, his coat, his departure, no notice of anybody, a taxi, a couple of pills from his pocket, and finally a week in bed. Taking ways, has Trimble.

Lowther's Air Raid Tip: How To Prevent A Bomb Dropping In Your Morning Coffee: Drink Tea.

Remember, whoever hopes to get a living out of horse-racing is a chump. Or a book-maker.

An American visitor complains that the work of many English business men comes to a full stop after lunch. It isn't really a full stop—just a coma. Snor-r-re!

Stop Press: It is now believed that the

burglar who broke into a Rylcombe residence and took an umbrella and two books was only getting his own back.

"Film Actress Gets Publicity Through Pet Lion." This is known as signing on the dotted lion.

"The Matterhorn Scaled in New Film." The triumph of mind over Matterhorn.

Rumour has it that Crooke of the Shell has a double. Two bad!

Reader wants to know if he can become an actor when he grows up. That depends on how long he can go without food!

Third Form flash: "Write down the names of the 11 greatest people in the world," said Mr. Selby. After a while he noticed D'Arcy minor gnawing his pen. "Can't you decide, D'Arcy minor?" asked Mr. Selby. "I can't make up my mind who is going to be the goalkeeper," explained Wally.

The modern schoolgirl certainly knows how to sew, we read. Sew what?

The average judge is very much older than the average financier, we hear. The former can often give the latter as much as twenty years.

During the showing of a film in Germany a man shot himself, we hear. Some of them are pretty putrid, I know, but a fellow ought to have more self control than that.

EXTRA: Read "Leaves From My Lag Book," by an ex-jail governor. For auld lag's-syne? Wow!

Now I'm going to have a well-earned rest. Good luck, chaps!

down to Mr. Selby," said Arthur Augustus respectfully, but firmly. "I have been caned, and I wegard that punishment as quite suffish."

"But surely, D'Arcy, you do not imagine you can intimidate the Head into releasing you—"

"Pway allow me to assuah you, Mr. Wailton, that I have no intention of intimidatin' the Head. I twest he will not think me lackin' in pwopah respect for my headmastah. But I feel bound to wotest against my impwisonment here, and I am goin' on hungah-stwike just to let Dr. Holmes see that I am in earnest, and that I wegard myself as bein' in the wight, and Mr. Selby in the w'ong."

Mr. Railton laid a hand upon the Fourth Former's arm and looked him steadfastly in the face.

"D'Arcy, I ask you not to act in so reckless a manner. You do harm to yourself by refusing food. It is now time for breakfast, and I will instruct the page to bring you some food—"

"Thank you, sir," said D'Arcy very quietly, but in determined tones. "But I cannot eat any food until I am released from here. It will be hardly

necessawy, therefore, to instwuct Toby to bwing up my breakfast. I am as firm as a wock."

"My dear boy—"

"Pway do not twy to persuade me, sir. I wepeat that I am as firm as a wock!"

Mr. Railton looked despairingly at the swell of the Fourth and retired.

A little later he returned with Toby, who was bearing another tray. Upon it reposed a dish of fried bacon and eggs, which looked very appetising indeed, some bread-and-butter, marmalade, and a pot of coffee, with cup and saucer, milk, and sugar.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked hungrily at the tray, and then turned his face away.

"Here is your breakfast, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton gently. "Make a hearty meal, and think matters out afterwards. I am sure you will then realise how foolish you are to resist the Head's orders. He has no desire to penalise you."

"You are vewy kind, sir," said D'Arcy quietly. "But I feel bound to wufuse this food. Toby, deah boy, please take it away."

"Leave it here, Toby, and take the other tray

away," said Mr. Railton curtly. "D'Arcy, I will leave you here with this food. As you have had nothing since yesterday dinner-time, no doubt the pangs of hunger will help you to overcome your obstinacy. You are, in my opinion, a very foolish boy, D'Arcy."

"Weally, sir—"
But Mr. Railton was gone. The key grated in the lock, and the swell of St. Jim's was left alone in his prison.

The smell of the eggs and bacon and coffee filled the dreary room with a warm, appetising glow.

Arthur Augustus cast longing looks at the food before him, but his iron will would not waver.

"Oh, it's wotten!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's, gazing out of the dirty window. "Weally howwibly wotten! I'm feahfully hungwy, but it is my duty not to touch the gwub. I am as firm as a wock!"

The lonely junior turned from the window, and, in order to place the breakfast as much out of temptation's way as possible, he picked up the tray and placed it under the bed.

Then he sat down on the bed and relaxed into a reverie.

He was awakened from his reverie by the entrance of Toby, who had come to make the bed.

Knox of the Sixth was outside to see that the prisoner did not escape. But D'Arcy was not thinking of bolting; he knew the passage was guarded.

Toby made the bed—and, of course, discovered the tray underneath.

"Take it away, Toby," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I have no intention of eatin' it."

"Oh, Master D'Arcy!" murmured Toby.

Then the school page dived into his pocket and drew forth an envelope.

This he handed to D'Arcy—only just in time, for Knox's sour face appeared in the doorway.

"Buck up, lazybones!" he rapped. "Don't you take that tray away; leave it on the table."

Toby hesitated, then he laid the tray down on the table.

Knox leered exaltingly at Arthur Augustus.

"In a pretty fine pickle—what?" he chuckled. "You'll have your back bent yet, you little sweep!"

"Weally, Knox, I wegard your wemarks as decidedly impertinent," said the swell of St. Jim's, his eyeglass glinting. "Pway wemove your face from view—it wowwies me!"

Knox pushed back his cuffs and advanced into the room; but when he saw Arthur Augustus also push back his cuffs and stand his ground fearlessly he turned back.

"You'll suffer for your cheek!" he snapped. "If I had my way I'd have you sacked!"

Knox slammed the door after Toby had departed and locked it.

"The wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Then he remembered the letter Toby had secretly conveyed to him.

He took it from his pocket and opened it. The enclosed missive was in Jack Blake's hand, and read thus:

"Dear Gussy,—We haven't had a chance to get near the door to speak to you—Selby and Knox hang about like wolves. You're a silly duffer to go on hunger-strike. We all say so. For goodness' sake eat your grub, or you'll
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fade away to a shadow! Selby's not worth all that trouble. Cheerio! Your old pal,

"JACK BLAKE."

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy. "It's vevy good of Blake, but I wepudiate his wemark that I'm a silly duffah. I'm perfectly in the wight, bai Jove!"

The bell for classes went, and Arthur Augustus smiled ruefully when he realised that all his chums were going into the Form-room for lessons, whilst he was languishing in solitude in the punishment-room.

The pangs of hunger gnawed at him, but the Fourth Form junior steadfastly resisted the temptation to eat.

Arthur Augustus went over to the window again, and stared moodily forth. He gave a start of surprise when he caught sight of Wally.

The Third Former waved his hand reassuringly, and grinned.

"Good gwacious!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "The young wascal ought to be in his Form-woom. I wondah what he intends doing!"

Wally had scuttled away, and Arthur Augustus was left to his own wondering thoughts. Certainly Wally ought then to have been at lessons with Mr. Selby. The bell had rung ten minutes ago. Surely Wally was not playing truant?

A shrill whistle from below caused Arthur Augustus to look down again. Wally had a tall ladder with him, evidently borrowed from Taggles' lodge, and a bundle.

Wally placed the ladder against the wall until the top reached just below the window-sill of the punishment-room. Then Wally began to mount, carrying the parcel with him.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The weckless young boundah—"

"Coming, Gus!" called Wally, from the ladder.

Arthur Augustus dragged his bed towards the window, stood on it, and opened the window. The iron bars across the inside prevented him from climbing through.

"Wally, you young ass!" he exclaimed. "Why aren't you in your Form-woom?"

"Selby licked me for chucking ink pellets at Carly Gibson," said Wally. "After the fourth whack I pretended to faint, and, when Selby brought me round, he was so frightened that he excused me. Properly took in the old rotter, didn't I?"

"Bai Jove! You'll get into a feahful wov, you little boundah, if he catches you!"

Wally chuckled. "I don't care for Selby!" he said. "He can go and eat coke! I've brought you some grub, Gussy!"

"I'm afwaid I cannot eat it, deah boy." "Now, look here, Gus—" began Wally, glowering at his major.

"My pynipples won't allow me to take any gwub, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I'm on hungah-stwike, you know."

Oh, you blitherer! You've had no grub since dinner yesterday, have you?"

"No, deah boy." "Then, for goodness' sake, eat some of this, Gussy!" implored Wally. "There's a rabbie-pie, a cake, some ham sandwiches, a bag of tarts, some chocolates, and—"

"Don't tell me, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hastily. "I weally cannot accept

them, Wally. "It would be contwawy to my wresolutions, you know."

"But, Gussy, you'll be ill!" gasped Wally, in great surprise. "How the thump can you exist without grub? You'll have to give in sooner or later."

"Wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with spirit. "I should wegard it as my duty to hold out to the last."

"You can't stay here for ever, Gussy," groaned Wally.

"I should pwefer to stay here for evah wathah than apologise to Selby, whom I wegard with uttah contempt. I considah that he bwutally ill-used you, Wally, and that an apology is due from him to you first."

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!" groaned Wally. "I'm sorry you've got into this scrape, Gus, and you can rely on me to stand by you. But you're as obstinate as a mule, you know."

"Weally, Wally——"

"Don't jaw, Gussy. Here's the grub. Can you reach it?"

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "But I'm not goin' to."

"Gussy, old man, don't be a chump, and——"

"I refuse to be a chump—I mean——"

"Good heavens!"

The sharp, spiteful voice of Mr. Selby broke upon his ears.

Wally almost fell off the ladder when, looking down, he beheld his Form-master glaring up at him.

CHAPTER 5.

Selby Goes "Up in the Air"!

"OH crumbs!" ejaculated Wally. Arthur Augustus gave vent to an exclamation of dismay.

"Wally, deah boy, you'll get into a feahful wow!"

Wally of the Third set his teeth hard.

"D'Arcy minor," cried Mr. Selby, "come down this instant! You have evaded lessons this morning by means of falsehood and subterfuge. You depraved little rascal, come down here immediately!"

"Rats!" responded Wally.

Mr. Selby almost raved.

"D'Arcy minor, I command you——"

"You excused me this morning, sir!" called back Wally defiantly. "Leave me alone! I want to speak to my major. It's all your fault that he's in this mess!"

"Wally, deah boy——" exclaimed Arthur Augustus from behind the iron bars.



Wally waited until the Form-master had almost reached him, and then swung himself underneath the ladder and commenced to climb down. Mr. Selby halted in amazement and blinked down quite stupidly as he saw the Third Former descending beneath him.

"I don't care!" said Wally recklessly. "Here, Gussy, take this grub!"

"D'Arcy minor, you insolent young scoundrel!" shrieked Mr. Selby, almost dancing with rage. "Come down! Do you hear me?"

Wally heard Mr. Selby, but he did not budge.

"Very well," said Mr. Selby, between his teeth. "I will climb up and fetch you down!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, as Mr. Selby, suiting his action to his word, commenced to climb the ladder.

The hero of the Third looked appealingly at his major at the punishment-room window, and thrust the bundle of tuck upward. But Arthur Augustus, with a white, anxious face, refused it.

Bump!

Wally dropped the parcel, and it landed on the quadrangle below.

Mr. Selby was half-way up the ladder.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Wally. "Look here, sir—"

"As you disobeyed my order to come down, I have come to fetch you!" grated Mr. Selby, between his teeth.

Wally waited until the Form-master almost reached him, then, grasping the side of the ladder with one hand, he swung himself over and underneath. Then he commenced to climb down swiftly underneath the ladder.

Mr. Selby, almost at the top of the ladder, halted in amazement, and blinked down quite stupidly as he saw the Third Former climbing down beneath him.

Wally looked up and chuckled. Then, as Mr. Selby clumsily commenced to climb down backwards, a new idea occurred to the young scamp of the Third.

The ladder was rather an old one, and several of the rungs were loose.

Wally took his penknife from his pocket, and as he climbed down he hacked at the rungs. Mr. Selby, making clumsy efforts to get down, did not perceive what Wally was doing.

By the time Wally reached the bottom of the ladder he had wrenched six rungs from their places, thus leaving a long gap between Mr. Selby and the ground.

When Mr. Selby reached the last rung and found his legs dangling into space, he glared down in amazement.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, seeing that he could not get down any farther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Wally. "Rotten ladder, sir, isn't it? What a nuisance, those rungs coming out just when you want to get down?"

"You young rascal!" raved Mr. Selby, clutching the ladder very tightly. "This is a trick—an audacious trick! How am I to get down?"

"Damn, sir!" replied Wally cheerfully. "If I were you, I'd slide down!"

Mr. Selby blinked apprehensively downwards, but did not attempt to slide down. He was not an athletic gentleman, and he was afraid of a nasty bump.

"D'Arcy minor," exclaimed Mr. Selby, trembling with rage. "you shall be most severely punished for this! Run and fetch another ladder, boy!"

Wally D'Arcy did not move.

From the barred window above the scared face of Arthur Augustus looked down. The prisoner in Nobody's Study trembled for the fate of his minor.

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"Help!" shrieked Mr. Selby, raising his voice on high. "Help, help!"

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Wally.

The gowned figure of Dr. Holmes had emerged from the School House. The Head gazed at the scene before him in horror, and made haste towards the spot.

The sight of Mr. Selby a prisoner up the ladder astounded him.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Selby—sir!"

"I have been made a prisoner up here by that unmitigated little rascal!" hooted Mr. Selby, trembling with rage. "He escaped from the Form-room under the pretence of being ill, and came here to communicate with his major. Being suspicious, I came out of the Form-room to see where he was, and eventually discovered him here—mounted upon this ladder, speaking to his major.

"He refused to come down, so I climbed up after him. Then the reckless young miscreant climbed down the underneath of the ladder, and—and I believe he removed those rungs purposely."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, turning with a thunderous face towards Wally. "Is it possible, D'Arcy minor, that you are guilty of such conduct?"

"I wanted to speak to my major, sir," said Wally stoutly. "The burbling ass won't eat grub, so I thought I might persuade him to eat some if I took it to him. There's the parcel of tuck on the ground."

"D'Arcy minor, your disregard of discipline is amazing!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes angrily. "You must be taught that the rules of the school cannot be flouted in this manner. Kindly replace those rungs in the ladder, so that Mr. Selby can descend!"

Wally did so, not daring, of course, to disobey the Head's command.

Mr. Selby angrily climbed down, and at last reached solid earth.

"Come with me, D'Arcy minor," said the Head grimly. "I will see that he is sufficiently punished, Mr. Selby. This food will be confiscated."

"Very well, sir!" grated Mr. Selby, and he swished away in a raging temper.

Wally D'Arcy followed the Head indoors and turned to wave a hand cheerfully to his major.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed that youth in deep distress, as he watched Wally disappear into the School House with Dr. Holmes. "Whatever will happen to Wally now? The young boundah! He is in for a fearful vow now, bai Jove!"

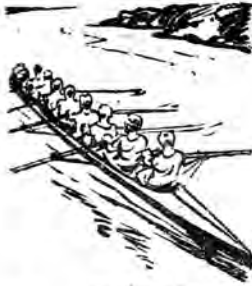
And Arthur Augustus sat down on his bed and spent the rest of that morning in gloomy, hungry silence.

CHAPTER 6.

Forcible Feeding!

AFTER lessons that morning Tom Merry & Co. were assembled in Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, the headquarters of Tom Merry & Co.

The chums of the School House were looking gloomy and glum. Their thoughts were with the lonely junior confined in Nobody's Study. It was not only the fact of Gussy being shut up there—that was the lesser evil—but the prisoner's hunger-strike was what worried them. They knew that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would not



Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 37.

THE MISSING BOAT RACE MASCOT.

A CHALLENGE from Gordon Gay of Rylcombe Grammar School to Tom Merry & Co. to meet the Grammarians in an eight-oared race on the River Rhyl resulted in a series of before-breakfast trials for Tom Merry and his crew. A mascot, in the shape of a small metal Saint James, given to the crew by Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's guardian, was missed one day after practice. D'Arcy Minor, the coxswain, said it was not missing when they launched the boat. Suspecting that somebody not well disposed towards the crew had removed it, "Detective" Kerr proceeded to investigate.

KERR: Oh, Sturgis! You were down here early as usual, I suppose?

STURGIS: Yes, Master Kerr. It's my job to open up the boathouse and get things ready for you young gentlemen when you come down.

KERR: You didn't see the mascot taken, yet you were here the whole time till we arrived?

STURGIS: Perhaps not the whole time, sir. I had to row across the stream yesterday morning, for instance, to get some timber across from the other bank, and anybody might have slipped into the boathouse then.

KERR: I say, Wally, you're absolutely certain the mascot was on the boat when we took to the water this morning?

D'ARCY MINOR: Well, Kerr, I think so. I said I was sure on the spur of the moment, but now I come to think of it, it may have been yesterday I noticed it. It's been fixed to the wash streak in front of bow's seat for a week now. And I suppose it's easy enough to take a thing for granted, and then find it's missing.

KERR: So it might actually have been taken yesterday or the day before?

~~~~~

waver one jot from his determination. Would the Head give way? They wondered. That seemed hardly possible.

"Oh, this is too awful for words!" groaned Jack Blake. "Gussy has had nothing to eat since dinner yesterday, and it's almost time for dinner to-day! Twenty-four hours without grub! Poor chap! He will be ill by to-night! Goodness knows how long he'll keep it up! He's so jolly obstinate!"

"Young Wally tried to persuade him this morning," said Monty Lowther. "Selby was looking murderous when I saw him just now."

The chums of the School House grinned feebly.

D'ARCY MINOR: It's possible—though I can't imagine who should want to play such a trick.

KERR: Hallo, Grundy! You wanted a place in the St. Jim's crew, I believe?

GRUNDY: I did. As the best oarsman at St. Jim's, I think I'm entitled to it. But, of course, Tom Merry can't see my merits. He rows in a totally different style—in a different class altogether—so he can hardly expect to appreciate my abilities! Why, I came down early this morning and watched the practice. It was laughable!

KERR: You weren't down before the crew went off, I suppose?

GRUNDY: Yes, I was. I stripped out, and showed Sturgis, the boatman, what I could do in a skiff. He said it was a remarkable display. But he thought he heard somebody in the boathouse, and rushed off.

RACKE: Not me again, Kerr, surely? Have a heart!

KERR: What's the matter? Guilty conscience? I wasn't going to question you, Racke.

RACKE: All the same if you were. I'm sure Tom Merry will lose, anyway!

PIGGOTT: What were you asking Racke about, Kerr?

KERR: Why do you want to know, Piggott?

PIGGOTT: Not about the winner for the three-twenty? Racke knows it. He has had a tip. But he won't tell me, the beast!

KERR: No. We were discussing rowing.

PIGGOTT: Oh! I offered to cox Tom Merry's crew, but he preferred Wally D'Arcy. Favouritism, of course!

KERR: What makes you want to shine at sport for suddenly?

PIGGOTT: Why not? Think I can't steer a boat as well as Wally? I'm not such a duffer as Grundy, I hope! You should have seen him in a skiff. He's a scream, really!

KERR: I can believe that, Piggott. If I see Tom Merry, I'll tell him you were disappointed at not being given a chance as cox, and see what he says.

*(Has Piggott stolen the mascot? If so, can you see how it can be proved against him? Kerr's solution will be found on page 33.)*

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They had heard all about Mr. Selby's adventure on the ladder that morning.

"Wally's had the licking of his life!" said Tom Merry. "I saw him in the quad a little while ago. He was wriggling like an eel!"

"Serves the young beggar right!" grunted Blake. "If he was my minor I'd skin him!"

Tap!

"Oh, come in, fathead!" cried Tom Merry. The door opened and Mr. Railton walked in. Tom Merry gasped with dismay when he saw Mr. Railton.

"That is hardly a polite way to invite a visitor

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into your study, Merry!" said Mr. Railton tartly.

"I am so sorry, sir!" exclaimed Tom, going red. "I had no idea it was you!"

"Very well, Merry," said Mr. Railton, his face clearing. "I have come to ask you boys whether you would care to—ahem!—persuade D'Arcy to take his food. He has just refused his dinner, and his breakfast is still untouched. Perhaps, as you are chums of his, you might be able to remonstrate with him. He is a very foolish youth."

Tom Merry & Co. jumped up gladly.

"Yes, rather, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'll do our best to knock some of the obstinacy out of the chump! How many of us may go, sir?"

"You, Merry, and Blake and Herries and Digby I consider will be sufficient," replied Mr. Railton. "Come along with me at once, my lads!"

Tom Merry, Blake, Herries, and Digby followed Mr. Railton with alacrity.

Knox was mounting guard at the end of the passage where the punishment-room was situated. He scowled at the juniors as they passed into the room with Mr. Railton.

Arthur Augustus was sitting on his bed when Tom Merry & Co. came in. He jumped up and regarded them with evident surprise.

"Hallo, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake, making a manful effort to be cheerful. "We've come to help you eat your dinner, you know!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle. "You surpwise me, Blake. I have already wefused to eat my

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dinnah. It is against my pwinciple, you know. I'm on hungah-stwike!"

"Oh, you blithering ass!" exclaimed Blake, careless of what Mr. Railton thought of his slang. "Can't you see how dotty you are? Now, Gussy, be sensible, and don't play the giddy ox—"

"I wefuse to have my conduct wiculed, Blake!" replied Arthur Augustus firmly. "My impwisonment in here is uttally unjustified, and I—"

"But you can't live without grub, you chump!" exclaimed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Have your dinner, Gussy, there's a sensible chap!" urged Tom Merry. "You won't do any good by hunger-striking—"

"On the contwawy, Tom Mewwy, I hope to be welaesed!" said D'Arcy, with asperity. "I feel bound to wefuse my gwub. Please take it away, deah boy!"

An appetising-looking dinner was on the table. Blake glanced at it and picked it up.

The dinner consisted of beef-steak pudding, peas and potatoes, with apple dumpling to follow.

"Look, Gussy!" said Blake, holding out the tray temptingly. "Surely you can't refuse this! Pile in, old chap! You must be hungry!"

Arthur Augustus turned away, biting his lip hard.

"Take it away, Blake!" he gasped.

"Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry persuasively.

"Have a good feed, Gussy!" said Herries.

"Nothing like a good dinner to buck you up, old chap!" urged Robert Arthur Digby.

"I don't want it, deah boys!"

Jack Blake glanced at Tom Merry and the others.

"He's obstinate!" he said. "We must cure him of his obstinacy. If he won't eat his grub, we'll have to make him eat it. Hold his blessed nose and cram it down his neck!"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Tom Merry enthusiastically.

Arthur Augustus turned pale.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Look here, you fwightful boundahs, I wefuse to be forcibly fed! I shall cease to weward you as fwriends if you attempt any such thing!"

"Nab him!" said Blake.

Mr. Railton stood in the doorway and did not interfere as Tom Merry & Co. grasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and bore him backwards on the bed.

"Yawwooooh!" roared D'Arcy, struggling. "Welaese me, you howwid boundahs! Gwooooh! Ow!"

"I've got his nose, Tommy!" said Jack Blake.

"That's right, Dig and Herries—hold his arms and legs! Now, Tommy, give him the grub!"

"What-fo!" chuckled the captain of the Shell. He cut off a piece of beef-steak pudding and held it out on a fork.

Arthur Augustus writhed and wriggled furiously and set his teeth.

Tom simply rammed the pudding into his mouth.

"Gwooooh! Oh cwombs! You wotfahs! Yawwooh!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

"Swallow it!" roared Blake.

"Yewwugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's hunger-striker had no choice in the matter. The first morsel of beef-steak

pudding went down, and Tom Merry & Co. roared.

Their roars of laughter changed to roars of dismay, however, when all of a sudden the bed gave way and Arthur Augustus fell out of their grasp. Crash!

"Yawooooh!"

"Yooooooop!" roared Herries, as the end of the bed lunged forward and cannoned into his chest. "What the merry dickens—"

"The rotten bed's down!" roared Blake.

The bed in the punishment-room was an old one, and the struggles of D'Arcy upon it had caused the framework to give way.

The St. Jim's hunger-striker, thus released, was up in a trice, grasping a bolster.

"You howwid boundahs!" he gasped, standing in the centre of his wrecked bed. "The first who attempts to reach me I shall stwike, bai Jove!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry had dropped the beefsteak pudding and the apple dumpling. Fortunately, those articles were not spoiled.

The chums of the School House stood back and regarded their warlike schoolfellow in consternation.

Arthur Augustus, his eyeglass glinting, held the bolster aloft.

Jack Blake made a dart towards him, but fell back when the bolster thudded upon his head. Digby, who followed up the assault, roared with pain as the bolster whirled round upon him and sent him crashing upon the iron rail of the bed.

"Thud! Whack! Wallop!"

Tom Merry & Co. attacked Gussy in force, but he swiped away energetically with the bolster and beat them back.

"Clang, clang, clang!"

"There goes the dinner gong!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, hastily interposing. "Boys, please desist and go down to your dinners. I shall have to find other means of dealing with this foolish youth!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, my head!"

Tom Merry, Blake, Herries, and Digby presented a battered and dishevelled aspect as they withdrew from the bedstead at Mr. Railton's command.

"Victows, bai Jove!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whose face, pale before, was now flushed. "It's no use twyin' to feed me, dear boys. I am as firm as a rock!"

"You blithering ass!"

"You dunder-headed jabberwock!"

"Dear me! Boys, please go!" exclaimed Mr. Railton hastily, as Tom Merry & Co. thus delivered their opinions of the hunger-striker.

The dinner-bell had ceased to ring.

"Go down to your dinner at once!"

Tom Merry & Co. retired, darting expressive glances at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Mr. Railton set the dinner upon the table and also went, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER 7.

Ways and Means!

"SOMETHING'S got to be done!"

Thus Jack Blake, after tea that day.

Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Digby, and Herries agreed that something certainly ought to be done.

"The silly ass has gone all day without any-

thing to eat!" said Blake almost tearfully. "I heard from Kildare that Gussy has refused his tea, and that he looks quite ill. How the poor chap must be suffering!"

"Oh, it's rotten!"

Three figures loomed up in the dusk of the quadrangle. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House.

"Hallo, you chaps do look blue!" remarked Figgins. "How's Gussy?"

"Starving!" said Blake shortly.

The heroes of the New House looked extremely sympathetic.

"Jolly serious affair, you chaps," said Figgins. "Gussy can't last long on air, you know."

"The poor chap must be going through it," remarked Kerr quietly.

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"Yes, he must be," he said feelingly. "How on earth D'Arcy does it, I don't know. When did he last have a meal, Blake?"

"Yesterday dinner-time," replied Blake.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the Falstaff of St. Jim's in horror. "And it's tea-time to-day! Oh, my hat!"

Fatty Wynn shuddered at the bare thought of undergoing that ordeal himself.

"The question is," said Tom Merry, "how are we to get Gussy out of his scrape? The Head won't give in—nobody can expect him to, hardly. And Gussy is so obstinate that he'd rather die than give in!"

"The silly chump!"

Wally D'Arcy walked up and joined them. Wally was looking considerably worried.

"Gussy's still on the high horse," he said. "I say, you chaps, we've got to get old Gus out of this. We mustn't let him stay in Nobody's Study any longer. I shan't have any brother left by the end of the week."

"You ought to be in there instead of him!" growled Blake.

Wally gave a snort.

"Why couldn't the Head lick me instead of wanting Gus to apologise to Selby?" he exclaimed. "I've just been to the Head and offered to have a flogging on condition that Gussy is released; but he said that Gussy had insulted Selby, and owed him an apology, and if he refused he must take the consequences, and that the discipline of the school must be upheld, and all that tommy rot. Gussy's an ass, but he's a good ass, and he means well, and I'm going to stand by him. I'm not going to leave my major stranded. Somehow, I'm going to get Gussy out of that rotten prison."

"You'll never do it, kid!" said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I know how this will end. The only way is to get Selby to apologise to you. Gussy would bow down then."

"But how the merry thunder am I to get

(Continued on the next page.)

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Selby to apologise to me?" demanded Wally. "He hates me as much as I hate him!"

Suddenly Monty Lowther gave a chuckle. That chuckle developed into a roar of mirth.

Monty's companions turned to him with glares. "What are you laughing at, Lowther?" demanded Blake gruffly. "This is no laughing matter!"

"No; but we'll make it!" chuckled the humorist of the Shell. "I've got an idea, chaps. It's risky, but it might work!"

"What is it?" demanded many eager voices. "We'll dupe old Selby to-night," said Monty Lowther swiftly. "He takes a walk round the quad every evening—a constitutional, you know. Well, to-night he's going to see old Gussy in the quad. Now what would Selby do if he saw Gussy scooting out of gates? Chase him, ch?"

"But how the dickens will Selby spot Gussy scooting out of gates?" roared Blake. "Gussy's in Nobody's Study, and there's no chance of getting him out!"

"It won't really be Gussy," explained Monty Lowther sweetly. "Selby will see a second edition of Gussy. Old Kerr, dressed up!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Me!" gasped George Kerr.

"Yes, you, old chap," said Monty. "You've impersonated old Gussy before, haven't you? Well, you could do it to-night. It will be as easy as falling off a form in the dark. Selby would chase you, and you'd lead him into Ryleombe Woods, and disappear. Then Selby will be attacked by masked ruffians, who will pinch his boots and lock him up in the old woodman's hut. Those ruffians will be myself and Tommy in disguise."

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Then, while Selby is in the woodman's hut, minus his boots and unable to get back to St. Jim's, young Wally will happen along, as if by accident, and discover Selby there. Selby will ask Wally to run back and fetch some boots, of course. Then Wally will ask Selby to apologise to him first in exchange for that small service. You know how funky Selby is of catching cold? He'd do anything, I reckon, rather than stay in the woodman's hut all night. He'd apologise to Wally, and then everything in the garden would be lovely."

Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths. They looked at Monty Lowther in admiration.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally D'Arcy. "What a wheeze! Can we do it?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically. "Are you going to impersonate Gussy for this evening, Kerr, old chap?"

"Rely on me!" chuckled Kerr, the amateur actor of St. Jim's. "I'll work the giddy oracle! It's a good idea, Monty!"

"What luck if it works!" exclaimed Figgins. "Gussy will apologise to Selby, of course. We needn't tell him how we've worked it, though."

"No fear!"

"I say, you fellows!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "Gussy will be simply ravenous when he does come out of the punishment-room. Let's all whip round and stand him a stunning feed this evening, eh?"

"Good old Fatty!"

The chums of St. Jim's whipped round liberally, and Fatty was entrusted with the task of preparing the feed for the hunger-striker when he was released that evening—as they were quite confident he would be.

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And they set to work on the arrangements for duping Mr. Selby.

CHAPTER 8.

The Jape on Selby!

"GOODNESS gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Selby, halting in amazement.

He was taking his evening "constitutional" round the quadrangle, a little later, when the evening shadows had fallen over St. Jim's.



The two disguised juniors suddenly dashed forward and grasped the old bird in a gruff, villainous voice. "The old bird is spotted, you rascals!" panted

Mr. Selby suffered with indigestion, and his physician had prescribed this daily exercise as a means of combating that discomforting complaint.

The master of the Third Form, in walking round by the Cloisters, had caught sight of a figure lurking there that caused his eyes to open wide.

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Selby again, peering at the elegantly dressed junior hiding in the shadows. "D'Arcy major! Can it be possible that he has escaped? D'Arcy, stop!"

The object of Mr. Selby's attention jumped out into the moonlight, as though frightened. A monocle glittered in his eye, and there was no possible doubt in Mr. Selby's mind that this was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, who had somehow succeeded in escaping from the punishment-room.

"Good heavens! The young scoundrel! D'Arcy, come here at once!"

But "D'Arcy" did not obey that order.



and grasped the Third Form master. "Old 'im, 'Arry! Old bird is spyin' on us—that's what he's up to!" "Release me," panted Mr. Selby.

Instead, he turned and streaked across the quadrangle towards the woodshed.

"Stop!" screamed Mr. Selby, dashing off in pursuit. "You hear me, D'Arcy? Stop!"

"Go and eat coke, you wotiah!" was the reply, in the unmistakable aristocratic tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Mr. Selby simply tore along. It goaded him to madness to think that D'Arcy had escaped from detention in the punishment-room. The longer D'Arcy remained there before apologising to him

the better Mr. Selby liked it. He was furious at the thought of being deprived of his prey.

"Stop!" he shrieked. "D'Arcy, I command you to stop!"

But the disguised Kerr did not stop. He dashed away at top speed, with Mr. Selby in full pursuit.

Kerr was a good runner, but Mr. Selby certainly was not. The junior vanished round the outbuildings, making for the side gate. He was, however, careful that Mr. Selby should keep easy trace of him.

Kerr chuckled as, dashing through the gate into Rylcombe Lane, he heard Mr. Selby pounding and puffing along laboriously behind him.

The pseudo swell of St. Jim's made for Rylcombe Woods.

Mr. Selby, puffing and blowing like a pair of very old bellows, followed at top speed.

Once within the shadows of Rylcombe Woods, George Kerr slackened his pace. He could hear Mr. Selby crashing through the trees after him.

"Hallo, Kerr!"

It was Tom Merry's voice, in an undertone, coming from behind a clump of brambles. But the figure who stepped out did not at all resemble the captain of the Shell. His appearance was more that of a particularly ruffianly footpad. The person who followed looked even more villainous and disreputable. He greeted Kerr in a cheery voice, which was none other than Monty Lowther's.

"Worked it, Kerr?"

"Like a charm!" chuckled the pseudo swell of the Fourth. "Selby's after me like a cat after a mouse! Hark! Here he comes!"

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry. "Now to work the footpad act! This is where you disappear, Kerr!"

"What ho!"

And Kerr disappeared.

Next minute Mr. Selby came stumbling through the trees, dishevelled and considerably scratched.

The disguised juniors waited, and then, all of a sudden, they dashed forth and grasped the Third Form master roughly.

"Old 'im, 'Arry!" muttered one, in a gruff, villainous voice. "The old bird is spyin' on us—that's what he's up to!"

"Release me, you rascals!" panted Mr. Selby, going pale with fright. "I assure you I am not spying upon you! I am chasing a reprobate pupil of mine, and—"

"Haw, haw, haw!" guffawed the other footpad. "'Ark at the old bird, 'Erbert! Tryin' to stuff us up, ain't 'e? No, mate, we've 'ad enough of you interferin' blokes spyin' on us! Let's put 'im somewhere where 'e can't spy on us, 'Erbert!"

"Wot-ho!" chuckled 'Erbert. "Into the woodman's hut with 'im, 'Arry!"

"Release me!" shrieked Mr. Selby, struggling desperately. "I promise I will not act as informer upon you! I am merely chasing a school-boy. He will elude me if you don't release me immediately! Let me go!"

"No fear!" said 'Erbert. "Rush 'im away, 'Arry, and if 'e shouts stuff that old 'anky of yours into 'is mouth!"

Mr. Selby shuddered at the bare thought, and was hurled away, struggling and protesting.

The woodman's hut was reached, and into this the two "footpads" dragged the luckless Third Form master.

Mr. Selby was almost frantic.

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"Help!" he yelled. "Help!"
 "Haw, haw, haw!" laughed 'Arry derisively. "You can 'owl till you're blue in the face, old bird, but you won't make nobody 'ear you—not till mornin', at any rate. People ain't so fond of roamin' in these 'ere woods late o' nights, unless they are poachers like us—see?"

"You miscreants, release me!" panted Mr. Selby. "I will not give information to the police about you—"

"Yes, we trust you—I don't think!" snorted 'Erbert, dragging at Mr. Selby's arm. "Kim on inside! That's right. Got that rope, 'Arry? Good! We'll truss 'im up!"

Mr. Selby struggled and protested violently, but to no purpose. His arms were bound behind him, and he was dumped down in the corner of the woodshed. Then, in order to make his escape more unlikely, 'Arry and 'Erbert calmly removed Mr. Selby's boots, and walked away with them.

"You'll be bound in the mornin', old dear!" chuckled 'Arry, as he and his ruffianly companion departed. "Don't 'owl like that 'ere. Surely you don't mind spendin' the night in this little wooden 'ut! No, mate, nobody will find you this side of six o'clock to-morrow mornin'. Nighty-nighty!"

As the woodshed door rattled to, and the rusty key was turned in the old padlock, Mr. Selby struggled to his feet.

"Oh, my goodness!" he moaned, wrenching fruitlessly at the bonds upon his hands. "Those ruffians quite misunderstood my purpose! I shall catch my death of cold if I remain here throughout the night! Yow-ow!"

Mr. Selby uttered this fiendish yell as his unprotected feet came into contact with a sharp stone.

Still with his hands clasped behind him, Mr. Selby hobbled gingerly towards the door.

He thrust his shoulder against the door, but it would not budge.

Thud, thud, thud!

"Good heavens!" gasped the luckless Third Form master, turning away baffled. "Whatever shall I do? Yaroooooh!"

Again one of his bootless feet struck something sharp, and the pain caused Mr. Selby to dance about on one leg like a Dervish.

At last, he reached the little window. The glass had been broken out of the frame years ago, but there was not sufficient space to enable him to climb out—even if he managed to reach it.

"Oh dear!" moaned Mr. Selby. "This is intolerable. Help, help!"

From the dark woods came the echo of his voice.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Selby frantically.

Then there came a hurried footstep outside, and an excited voice exclaimed:

"Hallo! Who's that yelling?"

Mr. Selby heaved a deep sigh of relief. He recognised the voice as that of Walter Adolphus D'Arcy of the Third.

"Is that you, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed. "This is I—Mr. Selby, your Form-master!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, in tones of elaborate amazement. "Can that really be you, sir?"

"Yes, D'Arcy, it is really I!" cried Mr. Selby eagerly. "I have been molested by two ruffianly footpads, and made a prisoner in this shed, and

my boots have been taken away. D'Arcy, my dear boy, please release me, and run back to St. Jim's for another pair of boots."

"Great pip!"

Mr. Selby kicked the hut wall impatiently.

"Do you hear me, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" replied Wally, quite cheerfully.

"Then please do as I ask you, my boy!" cried Mr. Selby, controlling his passion. "I must get back to the school as soon as possible."

"Ahem!" coughed Wally diplomatically. "I—I say, sir, it may not be you. How do I know that it may not be some rascal imitating your voice, so that I shall let him out?"

"I tell you, it is really I—Mr. Selby, your Form-master!" shrieked Mr. Selby, almost tearfully. "D'Arcy, I implore you, open this door, and then fetch me a pair of boots from St. Jim's!"

"All right, sir, I'll risk it!" said Wally. "But, I say, sir—"

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"If I release you, will you say you are sorry for the way you pitched into me the other day?" asked Wally, with cherub-like innocence. "One good turn deserves another, you know."

Mr. Selby breathed hard through his nose.

"Very well, D'Arcy minor," he said, with an effort. "I—I am sorry the—the incident occurred. Now will you open this door?"

"Yes, rather, sir! Half a tick!"

Wally soon had the door open. He gave an inward chuckle when he saw Mr. Selby standing in his socks, his hands tied behind him.

He complied with Mr. Selby's urgent demands, and untied his bonds.

Mr. Selby was free at last.

"All serene, sir!" said Wally cheerfully. "Why on earth did they take your boots?"

"The miscreants were poachers, and were under the impression that I was spying on them, and intended giving information to the police," stammered Mr. Selby. "This is why they made me a prisoner. They are well away by now. I was, in fact, pursuing your major, who has escaped from the punishment-room."

"Gammon!" said Wally. "The place is too well guarded for that!"

"I tell you the young rascal has escaped!" exclaimed Mr. Selby. "Do not stand there arguing with me, D'Arcy minor! Have the goodness to fetch me a pair of boots from St. Jim's. Be as quick as possible."

"Yes, sir!" said Wally dutifully, and he scampered off.

A little way in the depths of the woods, Tom Merry and Monty Lowther met him.

The Shell fellows had removed their disguise. They greeted Wally with grins.

"O.K., kids!" chuckled Wally. "Selby's apologised."

"Oh, ripping!"

"The old bird looks quite nobby in his socks," said Wally. "It's a pity he hasn't got to walk back to St. Jim's like it. There are some jolly hard stones in the lane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You heartless little beggar!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "You'll find Selby's boots along the path there. Buck up over the job, Wally. We want to get Gussy released, and have that spread in the study afterwards."

"Oh, of course!" said Wally, becoming alert at once. "Although I haven't been on hunger-strike, I could jolly well do with a feed. So long, you

chaps! I'll find Selby's boots and give 'em to him!"

"Buzz off, kid!"

Wally "buzzed" off. He discovered the boots, artfully laid there by "Aray" and "Erbert," and ran swiftly back with them to the woodman's hut.

Mr. Selby was surprised to see him back so soon.

"No, sir, I haven't been back to St. Jim's already," explained Wally. "You see, I happened to find these in the wood. Those rotten footpads must have thrown them down."

"That is most fortunate, D'Arcy," said Mr. Selby.

And he commenced to put on his boots.

Wally essayed to depart.

"Do not go, D'Arcy," said Mr. Selby nervously.

"I think you had better—ahem!—walk with me back to St. Jim's."

"In case those footpads turn up again, sir?" asked Wally. "Right-ho!"

Mr. Selby glared at Wally; then, having affixed his boots, he stood up and walked out of his temporary prison.

Wally D'Arcy followed him, chuckling.

CHAPTER 9.

Gussy Apologises!

TAP! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped up from where he was sitting on his bed in the lonely punishment-room.

The solitude of the dismal room was getting on his nerves, and the craving for food made his plight more distressing.

The knock at the door startled him.

Tap!

"I say, Gus!"

The voice through the keyhole was Wally's, and Arthur Augustus realised with wonder that his minor's tone was jubilant.

"Wally! You young boundah!" he ejaculated.

"Wun away, deah boy! Nobody is allowed to speak to me, and if you are caught you will be licked, bai Jove!"

"Rats!" retorted Wally through the keyhole.

"I say, Gus, you are coming out of there to-night! Selby has apologised to me!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, quite taken aback.

"Honest Injun, Gussy!" chortled Wally. "I rescued him from the woodman's hut in Rylcombe Wood this evening, and he apologised!"

Arthur Augustus gave a gasp.

The startling news had quite taken his breath away.

"Gweat Scott!" he exclaimed. "You have sent me into quite a fluttah, Wally. Did Selby weally say he was sowwy?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wally jubilantly. "He's really apologised to me, and everything in the garden's lovely, old son! You'll apologise to him now, Gus, won't you?"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, slowly and wearily. "I shall be pleased to apologise to him, as f'rom one gentleman to another."

"Good!" cried Wally. "Then I'll go and tell him!"

"Bai Jove! Look here, Wally—"

But D'Arcy's minor was gone.

At the end of the passage he ran into Knox.

Gerald Knox gave a yelp as Wally's head struck him in the waistcoat, and he fell back against the wall.

(Continued on next page.)



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

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

HALLO, CHUMS!—I have just been planning next Wednesday's super issue, and I can tell you, it was a real joy preparing the stories for the printer, but it was a real problem fitting them into the space! You see, the opening yarn of Martin Clifford's great new St. Jim's series is longer than usual, and I really wanted another two pages to get it all in. But by a little wangling, I have succeeded. So next week's new yarn will be exactly the same in length as Martin Clifford typed it.

I feel that the features "Laugh These Off!" and "Detective Kerr Investigates" deserve a rest after such a lengthy run. Readers will be more than compensated by the extra length of the grand new St. Jim's story. It is called:

"THE FLYING SCHOOLBOYS!"

Thanks to the generosity of Gussy's pater, Lord Eastwood, Tom Merry & Co. are booked for the most exciting holiday trip of their lives—a tour on the Continent in a sumptuous air liner. What a grand holiday! Wouldn't we all like to be going with them, eh? But if we cannot travel with the chums of St. Jim's, we can do the next best thing—read all about their adventures!

But before the flying schoolboys depart, Arthur Augustus becomes involved in a very strange affair in Wayland Woods. An American in fear of enemies entrusts into Gussy's care a little black box. What it contains is a mystery, but from that moment danger dogs the St. Jim's chums on their holiday trip, and the black box in Gussy's possession is the cause of it!

Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the opening story of Martin Clifford's new series. And another thing—tell all your pals the good news. They'll want to read the yarn, too.

"HANDSOME ALF!"

Frank Richards & Co., in the runaway balloon, find themselves in the thick of thrills in North-West Canada. They succeed in landing after a perilous cruise, only to run into worse peril in the shape of "Handsome Alf"! Alf Carson, to give him his right name, enjoys a certain amount of notoriety of an unpleasant kind in the North-West, being the leader of a gang of lawless ruffians. But that cuts no ice with the Cedar Creek chums when they run up against him. Handsome Alf has to climb down, but he swears to "get" them, and afterwards it's touch and go for Frank Richards & Co.!

Lastly, we have another grand story of the boys of the Benbow called "Lost At Sea!" It tells of the lively events that lead up to a terrible calamity—Jack Drake being struck down from the maintop in the darkness and falling into the sea! And only his enemy, Daubeny, knows about it!

Altogether next week's number is a thriller. Chin, chin, chums!

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When Knox recovered his balance, he made a dive after Wally, but that cheerful youth was well on his way up the passage. Knox pounded after him.

He was surprised when the fog, on reaching the bottom of the stairs, made for the Head's study.

"Come here, you young rascal!" roared Knox. "I'll give you the licking of your life, young D'Arcy."

Wally had reached the Head's study door, and he rushed straight into the room. Knox followed him.

Mr. Railton was with the Head. Both masters sprang to their feet in alarm as Knox and Wally D'Arcy entered so precipitately.

"Knox—D'Arcy minor!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I discovered this junior at the door of the punishment-room!" gasped the bully of the Sixth. "He ran away when I tried to grasp him. I chased him here, and—"

"I was coming to see you, sir," interposed Wally quickly. "My major has sent a message. He is willing to apologise to Mr. Selby!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

Mr. Railton's worried face lit up with a ray of joyful surprise.

"Good gracious! This is indeed gratifying!" he exclaimed. "Is that really the truth, D'Arcy minor?"

"Honest Injun, sir!" gasped Wally D'Arcy joyously. "Try him, sir!"

The Housemaster turned eagerly to Dr. Holmes. "The boy has given way at last, sir," he exclaimed. "His common sense has overruled his obstinacy!"

The venerable Head of St. Jim's nodded.

"Will you kindly bring Mr. Selby here, Mr. Railton?" he said. "I will go and see D'Arcy major. Knox, in the circumstances, D'Arcy minor is excused. You may go!"

And Knox went, scowling.

Dr. Holmes went up to the punishment-room and opened the door.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood facing him.

The noble swell of St. Jim's looked haggard and pale, and his eyes had lost their brightness. Even his monocle seemed to have gone dull.

"D'Arcy major," exclaimed the Head, "is it true that you have consented to apologise to Mr. Selby?"

"Yaas, that is twue, sir," replied Arthur Augustus quietly. "He has told my minah that he is sowwy, so, in the cires, I will wendah him the apology that is due, as fwom one gentleman to another. That will make things all wight."

"Very well, D'Arcy," said Dr. Holmes, much relieved. "Step this way with me, will you? You shall have the opportunity at once of apologiseing to Mr. Selby."

The Third Form master was already in the Head's study when Dr. Holmes and D'Arcy arrived.

Mr. Selby stared at Arthur Augustus like one in a dream.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "You—you have just fetched the young rascal from the punishment-room, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Selby," said the Head dryly. "D'Arcy major has been there ever since Monday, as far as I know."

"But—but," stammered Mr. Selby, "I saw him with my own eyes, in the quadrangle this evening. I chased him into the Rylcombe Woods, where I was attacked by footpads!"

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"Imposs, Mr. Selby!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have not left the punishment-room since Mr. Wailton locked me in there on Monday."

"At what time did this occur, Mr. Selby?" asked Mr. Railton coldly.

"It was eight o'clock," said Mr. Selby.

Mr. Railton smiled sardonically.

"Well, Mr. Selby," he said, "you might be interested to know that at precisely eight o'clock, this evening I was with D'Arcy in the punishment-room, endeavouring to persuade him to drink some cocoa."

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Selby was floored.

"You must have been mistaken," said Dr. Holmes dryly. "However, D'Arcy major has come here for the express purpose of apologiseing to you. Is that so, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus slowly. "I am sowwy, Mr. Selby, that you suffered so gweviously in our trowble on Monday. I apologise for my wuff t'wement of you. I twust you will accept that apology, as given fwom one gentleman to another, and that you will considah ewerythin' all wight."

Mr. Selby seemed to choke.

"Well, Mr. Selby," said the Head, raising his eyebrows and peering at the Third Form master over the rims of his eyeglasses. "D'Arcy major has rendered you an apology. Is that quite satisfactory?"

"Ye-es," stammered Mr. Selby at last. "I—I am satisfied!"

And, with a choleric look around him, Mr. Selby retired rather hastily from the Head's study.

"I am glad you have brought this painful matter to a close, D'Arcy," said Dr. Holmes, regarding the swell of St. Jim's severely. "I have no doubt that you were convinced that you were justified in the course you took. But surely, my boy, you could not expect me, as headmaster of this school, to lower my prestige so far as to accede to your demands?"

"I twust you do not think I have ovahlooked the wespact that is due to you, sir," replied Arthur Augustus, in a very weary voice. "But, as I pointed out to you pweviously, sir—"

"Yes, yes, my lad!" interposed the Head. "The matter now is happily ended, and we shall say no more on the subject. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the St. Jim's hunger-striker went.

Outside, his chums were eagerly awaiting him. Upon hearing that everything was settled, they raised a cheer, and immediately rushed Gussy away to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

There was a feast fit for the gods awaiting him, Fatty Wynn having performed his task of preparing the feast like a hero.

It was a merry gathering that partook of a meal from the festive board that evening.

Tom Merry & Co. simply piled D'Arcy's plate with good things.

Arthur Augustus was nothing loath to devour the goodly viands thrust before him, and he outdid Fatty Wynn in that occupation.

Everybody was glad that the battle between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Mr. Selby had ended amicably; but none was more glad than Gussy himself, who had stubbornly fasted in his role as the St. Jim's hunger-striker!

Next week: "THE FLYING SCHOOLBOYS!"

FRANK RICHARDS & CO.'S CRUISE!



By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

Cast adrift in a balloon—unable to land
—heading for unknown peril! Never
before have Frank Richards & Co. been
faced with such a situation.

Carried Away!

“YOU fellows seen it?”

Chunky Todgers asked that question eagerly as Frank Richards & Co. jumped off their horses at the gate of Cedar Creek School.

“Seen what?” asked Frank.

“It, of course!”

“But what is ‘it’?” asked Bob Lawless.

“Then you haven’t seen it,” said Chunky. “I haven’t, either. But Lawrence has, and Hopkins. They say the balloon’s coming this way.”

“The what?” exclaimed Frank Richards in astonishment.

“The balloon,” answered Chunky. “Tom and Molly Lawrence saw it when they started for school this morning. A man from a Thompson ranch saw it last evening—he was saying so in Gunten’s store. Jolly queer, isn’t it?”

Frank Richards glanced up at the sky. Fleecy clouds dotted the wide expanse of blue in the bright spring sunshine. But there was nothing else to be seen, save a distant eagle winging its flight towards the mountains.

In the Cedar Creek playground a good many of the fellows were standing with their heads thrown back, looking up at the sky.

“But it’s rot!” said Bob Lawless. “Where could a balloon come from in this section? No gas for it, I guess, if there was a balloon. You’ve been eating too much maple sugar, and dreaming, Chunky!”

“Must have come from somewhere,” said Todgers. “Over the line, perhaps.”

“That’s a jolly long way!” said Frank.

“Well, Lawrence has seen it,” said Chunky Todgers. “I say, Molly, you’ve seen the balloon, haven’t you?”

Molly Lawrence nodded.

“We saw it over the timber as we came up the trail,” she answered. “It was just drifting

with the wind. About a hundred yards up, I guess.”

“Who was in it?” asked Bob.

“I couldn’t see anyone.”

There was a sudden shout from Dick Dawson, who had climbed to the top of Mr. Slimmey’s cabin to obtain a better view.

“Here she comes!”

There was a rush for Mr. Slimmey’s cabin at once. Dawson, astride of the ridge at the top, pointed excitedly.

“There she comes—over the timber by the creek! Nobody in it, that I can see.”

“Look!” exclaimed Frank.

All the Cedar Creek fellows could see it now. The balloon was drifting low over the timber, and a rope, dangling from the basket beneath, brushed in the treetops. There was a large hook at the end of the rope, which caught occasionally in a bough, and gave the balloon a jerk; but it broke loose again. It was catching only in the twigs at the summit of the trees, which gave little hold. The great gas envelope, drifting on the wind, loomed larger and larger. It was coming directly towards Cedar Creek School, over the trees.

There were exclamations on all sides.

Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress, came out of the schoolhouse to gaze upward. Mr. Slimmey stepped from his cabin. Even the black stableman came out to see the unusual spectacle above.

“It must be adrift,” said Frank Richards. “Can you see anybody in the car, Bob?”

“Nix,” answered Bob.

“Maybe somebody down in the car, out of sight,” said Vere Beauclerc. “It’s jolly odd! That grapnel must have been thrown out to catch, if possible; the man wants to descend.”

“The galoot may be ill, if there’s anybody in the car at all,” said Eben Hacke. “And I guess there must be. The balloon can’t have started on its travels all on its lonesome.”

Every eye was fixed on the oncoming balloon. It was drifting lower now, but it still kept clear of the trees. It was so strange and novel a

right at the backwoods school that nobody at Cedar Creek was thinking of morning lessons just then. Even Miss Meadows forgot that it was time for the school bell to ring.

"It's going to pass right over us," said Kern Gunten, the Swiss. "I guess if that balloon's astray it's worth roping in!"

"Findings keepings!" remarked Keller.

"If it's astray a galoot would have a claim to salvage for roping it in," remarked Eben Hacke thoughtfully. "It's a bit too high up for a lasso, though, I reckon!"

"Just a trifle," grinned Bob Lawless.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Slimmey. "This is very remarkable! Lawless, you have very good eyes. Can't you see anyone in the car?"

"Not a sign, sir."

"It is very odd. Perhaps the voyagers have landed, and the balloon has broken away," remarked Mr. Slimmey thoughtfully.

"I guess that's it," said Bob, with a nod.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

"Hallo! Here comes somebody in a hurry!" exclaimed Lawrence.

A horseman came dashing up the trail past the school gate. He rode with his eyes glancing upwards, evidently watching the floating balloon. Somewhat to the surprise of the schoolboys, he turned in at the gateway, and jumped off his horse.

The man was a stranger at Cedar Creek. He was a tall, thin man, with a sharp nose, and gold-rimmed spectacles. It was easy to see that he belonged to the other side of the "line"—the border between Canada and the United States. He stood with his head thrown back, watching the balloon as it came slowly on, drifting on the soft breeze of spring.

"Oh thunder!" the schoolboys heard him exclaim. "Hyer she is, and out of reach! I guess this is no cinch!"

"Looks like the owner," grinned Bob Lawless.

"Is that your balloon, sir?" asked Frank Richards.

The big American looked at him.

"Yep!" he answered tersely.

"Anybody in it?"

"Nope!"

"Left you stranded?" asked Kern Gunten.

"Correct!"

The American gentleman was evidently a man of few words. He looked up at the balloon again, and then looked at the lumber schoolhouse. He seemed to be calculating.

"She'll pass over the shebang!" he was heard to mutter. "There's the hook hanging loose, and a good hand with a riata might rope it in. There's a chance, by gum!" He looked at the schoolboys again. "Youngsters, is there a boy here who knows how to handle a lasso?"

"You bet!" answered Bob Lawless.

"Lots!" said Frank Richards with a smile.

"Boys, I reckon there's a chance of roping in that balloon, if a younker here has the nerve to get on the roof yonder, and try for it as it passes over. I calculate I'll stand a hundred dollars, spot cash, to the fellow who does it!" said the big American. "Who's the best hand with a lasso here?"

"Bob's the man," said Frank at once.

"There's a chance, Bob. Go in and win!"

"I guess I'll try, if Miss Meadows will let me," said Bob Lawless. "I don't want any dollars, though. I'll do it to oblige you."

"So long as you do it, never mind the rest."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,624.

"I'll ask Miss Meadows."

"Schoolmistress—hey?" asked the American gentleman, looking round. "I guess I'll ask that lady!"

He strode across to the porch of the lumber schoolhouse, where Miss Meadows was standing, and raised his hat.

"Madam," he said in his brisk way, "Hiram K. Chowder at your service. You see that balloon? That is my property. I guess I've been chasing it for twenty-four hours!"

"Indeed!" said Miss Meadows with a smile. "I hope you will succeed in catching it."

"I guess I hope so, madam. That balloon's worth well over a thousand dollars!" said Mr. Chowder impressively. "I've had bad luck with that balloon. I've made twenty ascents, more or less, and never had such bad luck. But what can a galoot do when he's caught in a sudden gale of wind? I calculate I got off cheap in being blown northward to this hyer section, instead of being smashed up, as I might have been."

"You were fortunate," said Miss Meadows.

"In a way, yep!" said Mr. Chowder ruefully. "When I got the hook to hold on to a tree yesterday morning I reckoned it was O.K., and I climbed out to ask where I was, and whether there was anything in the grub line going. And hang me if that rope didn't drag loose, and the balloon float away before my eyes! I guess I was mad! It was hours before I could get hold of a boss and follow that balloon; and a dozen times I've lost the track of it when the blessed wind changed, and up and down this hyer valley I've been inquiring after it."

Mr. Chowder paused for breath.

Miss Meadows was sympathetic. She understood that Mr. Chowder had some request to make, and that this explanation was a preliminary to it.

Mr. Chowder pointed at the balloon with a long thin finger.

"You watch it, madam," he said. "That balloon is going to pass right over your schoolhouse hyer."

"It seems so," assented Miss Meadows.

"A good hand with a lasso might rope it in. You see, the big hook's floating," said Mr. Chowder. "I don't say it's easy; I say it's possible. Will you let that young galoot get on the roof and try, madam?"

Miss Meadows hesitated.

Bob Lawless had already got hold of his trail rope, and was forming a noose to turn it into a lariat. Bob was evidently quite ready for the venture, risky as it was.

"I guess, madam, that kid looks hefty, and he won't break his neck," said Mr. Chowder persuasively. "That balloon's worth a lot to me, madam. I earn my bread, I guess, with making balloon ascents in the States, and if I don't get her back, I calculate I'm a busted man!"

"Lawless!"

"Yes, Miss Meadows?"

"Do you wish to try to oblige this gentleman?"

"Yes, Miss Meadows," said Bob eagerly. "I think I might be able to do it, too!"

"Very well," said the schoolmistress. "You may try, Lawless; but take every care, and do not run too much risk."

"I'll be careful, madam," said Bob.

"I guess I'm much obliged to you, madam," said Mr. Chowder. "Youngster, if you rope in that balloon for me, I'm your debtor for life."

Black Sam brought a ladder from the stable, and Bob, with his lasso over his arm, clambered up to the high ridge of the schoolhouse roof. All eyes were on him as he stood perched there, lasso in hand. The balloon, drifting low, was past the timber now, and rolling on towards the school. In a few minutes it would be over the playground, and then it would pass over the schoolhouse roof. The iron hook would dangle a few yards above Bob's head.

A clear eye and a skilful hand were required for such a "catch"; and even so, the chances were ten to one against success. But there was a chance, at least; and a chance was worth trying for the sake of the stranded American gentleman. Bob Lawless intended to do his best.

There was a breathless silence in the crowd as the balloon drifted closer and closer. The great gas envelope towered above the upturned faces, the car swaying under it, and the loose rope dangling to and fro.

Bob, astride the roof ridge, had his clear eyes fixed on the floating hook as it swung nearer and nearer.

Mr. Hiram K. Chowder stood motionless, scarcely breathing, so keen was his anxiety that this faint chance of catching the truant would materialise.

Closer and closer. Bob's arm moved at last with an elastic swing, and the rope flew. There was a gasp of anxious eagerness in the crowd below as the noose of the lasso smote the floating iron hook in the air.

"Caught!" yelled Frank Richards.

"Hurrah!"

"Well done, Lawless!"

The balloon was floating on, and it could be seen that the lasso noose was looped on the iron hook. The noose closed up at once as the hook dragged away.

Bob, on the ridge, paid out the rope, or he would have been dragged away. He threw the loose end of his lasso downward to his chums.

"Catch hold!" he shouted.

Frank Richards and Beauclerc rushed to catch the rope, Mr. Chowder with them. For Bob alone could never have dragged the great monster downward. But almost as they reached the rope it was suddenly whisked away under their eyes into the air.

A strong gust of wind had caught the balloon, and it shot suddenly upwards. The trailing rope vanished above their heads. And then, as they looked up, Frank Richards & Co. uttered a cry of horror. Bob Lawless was holding on to the rope with both hands in a strong grip, and as the balloon shot upwards in the windy gust, Bob was dragged bodily from the roof and swept away into space.

Captured!

"**B**OB!" shouted Frank Richards.

"Good heavens!" gasped Beauclerc.

Miss Meadows' face was white.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Mr. Chowder.

Up and up went the balloon, with horrified eyes watching it from the playground. Below, on the lasso attached to the iron hook, swung Bob Lawless. So sudden had been the ascent that Bob had been snatched, as it were, from the schoolhouse roof as if by a giant hand. He had only time to close his grasp tighter on the rope

as he was whirled away, swinging to and fro in the air.

In a few seconds the earth was a hundred yards below him. It was rather by instinct than by thought that he tightened his grasp on the rope as he swung into space. Now his teeth were set, and his face, though white, was cool and steady. He was holding on to the lasso for his life!

"Bob!" groaned Frank.

Vere Beauclerc caught his chum's arm.

"Frank! After him! The balloon must come down again! It's only a gust of wind that drove it up. It was floating low before. After him! Get to the horses!"

Frank nodded.

They ran together to the corral, and led out their horses without another word. It was no time to think of school, or even to ask leave of Miss Meadows. They mounted in the gateway and dashed away in pursuit of the floating balloon. Three or more of the Cedar Creek fellows followed them. Past the school buildings, the chums rode across country in pursuit of the balloon.

"He's holding on!" breathed Frank.

"Thank Heaven for that!" muttered Beauclerc. "Bob's got plenty of nerve, and if he holds on he's safe."

"It must come down," muttered Frank.

They rode hard after the balloon, keeping pace with the floating monster. Cedar Creek School was left far behind. It was certain that the balloon must descend again to its former level, and then the lasso would trail on the ground.

But if it descended farther, or too suddenly, what would happen to Bob, then? And if he lost his hold—

Bob Lawless was keeping his hold. Both his hands were strong in their grasp of the rope, and he had succeeded in twisting it round one arm to make his hold more secure.

The earth was fifty yards below him, and a fall meant death, sudden and terrible. But Bob Lawless' nerve was good. So long as he held on he was safe, and he was holding on. His arms were beginning to ache, but he was by no means at the end of his strength.

Below him the rope trailed among the tree-tops as the balloon drifted on. It was settling downward again.

"Hold on, Bob!"

Frank Richards' shout floated up to him from below, and he knew that his chums were following him. The balloon was floating now over a thick belt of timber, and Frank and Beauclerc had been compelled to come to a halt. The timber was too thick for the horses. There was nothing for it but to dismount. The horses were sent trotting back to the school alone, and the two chums plunged into the timber.

Here and there, through openings in the trees, they caught sight of the balloon again, drifting slowly on the gentle breeze, and settling lower and lower.

Bob Lawless, hanging between earth and sky, felt his boots brush against high branches in the timber. The wind was so light now that the balloon drifted more and more slowly, and once or twice came almost to a stop over the trees.

Bob Lawless looked downward as he swung over an open glade.

"Bob!" came in a shout from below.

Frank and Beauclerc were running across the glade beneath him. It was easy to keep pace

with the scarcely moving balloon. Lower and lower it settled, and the end of the long trail rope was almost within reach of the schoolboys. Bob Lawless, setting his teeth hard, began to slide down the rope, hand below hand.

Frank and Beau kept pace below, watching for a chance to catch the end of the lasso. It came within reach at last. Frank made a spring upwards, and caught it in both hands and held on. The jerk tautened the rope, and the balloon surged down a little. Vere Beauclerc seized the rope the next moment.

"Come on, Bob!"

It was safe enough for Bob to slide down now, with the end of the rope on the earth. He came down fast, and landed on the ground. He did not let go the rope.

Bob Lawless stood panting, his cheeks white. In spite of his nerve, he had been through an experience that had told heavily on him.

"Bob, old chap!" gasped Frank.

Bob smiled faintly.

"That was a close call!" he muttered. "I—I thought I was a gone coon when I was whisked off the roof!"

"I—I thought so, too, Bob. You're not hurt?"

"Only a bit dizzy."

"Take a turn of the rope round a stump," said Beauclerc. "The wind may catch the balloon again, and all three of us might be dragged up."

"Oh, by gum! Yes, get a move on!" exclaimed Bob.

The rope was hastily passed round a tree twice and tied. The balloon settled lower, and the iron hook was almost within reach now.

"There! The dashed thing can't float away again!" exclaimed Beauclerc. "We've caught it for Mr. Chowder; you're entitled to the hundred dollars after all, Bob."

The rancher's son laughed.

"Old Chowder can keep his dollars," he said.

"But I'm glad we've bagged his blessed contraption for him. How far are we from the school?"

"Six miles, at least," said Frank.

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

"And we had to send our gees back at the timber," said Beauclerc. "Still, we've got the balloon. Hallo, here comes Gunten!"

Kern Gunten, the Swiss, came hurrying across the glade. Half a dozen of the Cedar Creek fellows had followed in pursuit, but they had turned back at the timber, losing sight of the balloon there. Gunten had kept on, however—not because he wished to be of any service to Mr. Hiram Chowder, but for more selfish reasons. His eyes glistened as he came up, and found the balloon secured.

"We've got it!" he exclaimed.

"We!" repeated Bob.

"Well, you've got it," said Gunten. "I reckoned you were done for when you were carried off, Lawless. You had a nerve to hang on to that rope as you did!"

"It was that or a broken neck," said Bob.

"Old Chowder was nearly weeping when I came away," grinned Gunten. "His horse was spent, and we left him miles behind. I say, this looks like being a good thing, you fellows. Chowder offered a hundred dollars for bagging his balloon."

"I don't want his dollars," said Bob curtly.

"You mean it's worth more?"

"I mean I don't want anything."

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"Look here, that's rot!" said Gunten. "We can stick him for three hundred at least; it's worth that for salvage. You fellows follow my lead in this. I've got a business head!"

Frank Richards & Co. looked at Gunten. The eyes of the Swiss were glistening with eager greed. Evidently he thought he saw the opportunity of a profitable transaction at the expense of the unlucky American.

"It's a regular cinch," went on Gunten. "The man himself said the balloon was worth over a thousand dollars. We're entitled to something per cent for salving it for him."

"You had no hand in it, Gunten."

"I'll stand in with you, and get you more than you could get for yourselves," said the Swiss. "Look here, we can make a legal claim before the sheriff. If Chowder doesn't agree to pay, the balloon can be detained until the matter's settled in court."

"My hat!"

"You see, Chowder's in a foreign country here," grinned Gunten. "He's left the United States over the line. He's in Canada now. Wif, my popper could work it like a charm, and put him to no end of expense before he could get the balloon back. He knows the law. Look here, you fellows stand in with me, and I'll undertake to screw a hundred dollars each for us out of the man."

"Do you think we want to screw money out of a stranger in distress?" roared Bob Lawless.

"Oh, don't be a fool, Lawless! I tell you, it's a regular cinch!"

"Not good enough!" said Frank Richards, laughing. "We are going to hand Mr. Chowder his balloon free of charge, Gunten!"

"What do you get out of the business, then?" demanded Gunten.

"Nothing."

"Strange as it may appear to you, Gunten, we don't want anything," remarked Vere Beauclerc. Gunten gave a snort of disgust.

"You can't fool me!" he answered. "You want to stick the pilgrim for the dollars, and have me out. That's your game!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Lawless roughly. "You're a worm, Gunten, and you don't understand a decent chap!"

"I think we can pull it in now," said Frank. "It seems to be settling down."

"Good! All together," said Bob.

The three chums pulled on the rope, Gunten watching them with a savage scowl. The balloon settled lower in the glade, clear of the trees, and the grapnel came in reach. Lower it came and lower.

"Stand clear!" shouted Bob.

And the chums of Cedar Creek jumped back as the great wicker basket bumped into the grass.

Sent Adrift!

FRANK RICHARDS drew the rope in, and wound it about the tree. Then he jumped into the car, to be followed by his chums and Gunten.

The great gas envelope bumped on the branches of the trees, and the wicker basket capped on the ground; but the balloon was a captive now.

"I suppose the chap will sail this home if he gets a good wind," said Frank Richards. "We've only got to fetch him here."

"By gum! I'd like to go up in it," said Bob.

"I reckon we couldn't sail back to Cedar Creek—eh?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Not unless you can guide the balloon," he said. "It depends on the wind, and the wind's blowing away from Cedar Creek."

"Well, after we've had a bit of a rest, we'll go and tell Chowder it's here, safe and sound," said Bob.

"Listen to me, you fellows," urged Gunten.

"There's no need to say a word to Chowder till he agrees to our terms. He'd never find the balloon in this timber; it can't be seen over the trees."

"Will you stop chewing the rag, Gunten?" exclaimed Bob Lawless impatiently. "I tell you we don't want to make anything out of the galoot!"

"And I tell you you're a liar!" said Gunten angrily. "Don't tell me silly yarns like that!"

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"You cegin' foreign worm!" he exclaimed.

"You think everybody's as big a rotter as you are yourself. But you can't call me a liar, Gunten?"

"You're lying, and you know it!" said Gunten savagely. "You want to make a bargain with Chowder, and leave me out. Hands off, you fool!"

Bob Lawless, with gleaming eyes, grasped the Swiss. Gunten struck at him savagely, and Bob uttered a sharp cry as Gunten's knuckles crashed into his face.

"By gum!" panted Bob.

He grasped the Swiss by the back of the collar and swung him over the rim of the car. Gunten hung there, his heels kicking against the wickerwork.

"You rotter!" shouted Bob wrathfully. "Get out! If you don't vamoose instanter I guess I'll come after you, and lay the trail rope about your carcass."

With a swing of his arm he tossed the yelling Swiss into the grass. Gunten sprawled at full-length. He sat up dazedly.

Bob Lawless shook his fist at him over the edge of the car.

"Vamoose!" he rapped out.

"You rotter!" hissed Gunten. "You—you—"

"Vamoose, I tell you!"

Gunten staggered to his feet. His face was white with rage and hatred as he glared at the three schoolboys in the car.

Bob Lawless picked up an empty meat tin from the bottom of the car, and it whizzed through the air as Gunten stood panting and shaking a furious fist at him. The Swiss yelled as the missile caught him on the chest. He dodged back into the thickets.

"Good riddance!" said Bob, rubbing his nose where Gunten's knuckles had landed. "By the great gophers, I've a jolly good mind to give him a taste of the trail rope. I will if he comes back."

"He won't come back," said Frank, laughing.

But Frank Richards was mistaken on that point. The Swiss had not gone far.

The three chums sat on the inside seat of the car, resting before they started on the long tramp back to Cedar Creek, and chatting carelessly. They did not guess for a moment that Kern Gunten was still at hand.

The Swiss, with a savage gleam in his eyes, had crept back through the thickets on his hands and knees, and was now close behind the tree



As they looked up Frank Richards & Co. uttered a cry of horror. Bob Lawless was holding on to the rope, and as the balloon shot upwards in the windy gust, Bob was dragged bodily from the roof and swept away into space!

round which the rope was secured. Keeping well out of sight behind the tree, he opened his clasp-knife, and sawed through the rope. In a minute or less it was cut through. Gunten tied the loose ends together with a length of twine to keep the rope in position.

The balloon was no longer secured. At the first motion the twine would snap like thread, and the rope would whisk away from the trunk. But, with the weight of the three schoolboys, the car was planted firmly on the grass now, and the great gas envelope towered over them, almost motionless.

Gunten was not finished yet. He put away his knife and came round the tree. Frank Richards & Co. did not see him till he caught the rim of the car and clambered in again. Bob Lawless started to his feet angrily as the Swiss jumped into the car.

"You've come back, you coyote!" he shouted. "By gum, I'll give you something that will keep you away!"

Gunten did not even look at him. He grasped one of the sacks of sand, and before Bob could seize him, or even understand what he was at, he raised it over the rim of the car with a great effort. The sack went over the rim and crashed on the ground, and Gunten leaped after it, just escaping Bob's fist. He rolled in the grass beside the sack.

"What on earth——" ejaculated Beauclerc.

"Is he mad?" exclaimed Frank Richards, in wonder.

Gunten's action astounded all three. Why the Swiss should leap into the car and pitch out a bag of sand and himself was a mystery. But the next minute they understood.

"Great Scott! She's going up!" shouted Bob Lawless, as the car rocked under their feet.

Frank rushed to the side. To his amazement and horror, the grass, and Gunten sprawling in it, were six or seven yards below. The rope, whisking away from the tree, dangled loose. It had been cut short, and the iron hook and the lasso lay on the ground, only a few yards of rope hanging from the car.

"It's going up!" gasped Beauclerc.

"He's cut the rope!" yelled Bob.

Below, Kern Gunten scrambled to his feet. He looked up after the rising car with savage exultation in his face, and shook his fist at the three schoolboys peering over the rim in utter dismay.

"Good-bye!" he shouted mockingly. "I hope you'll come down this side of the Pacific. Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunten's yell of mocking laughter died away below. The balloon was rising rapidly above the tree-tops.

"Hold on!" gasped Frank.

The car rocked wildly. Bob had given a hasty glance down, wondering whether the distance would be too great to jump, but the rise was too sudden. Already the loose rope was brushing the highest branches of the trees. And the balloon was rising higher. The heavy sack of sand had made all the difference. As the balloon rose above the timber a gust of wind caught it, and it went sailing away across the forest.

Kern Gunten watched it go till the tree-tops hid it from sight. His mocking laugh died away. As the balloon vanished a change came over the face of the Swiss. He had intended to give the chums of Cedar Creek a fright and a shock, and he did not care much if they were hurt. But it was borne in upon his mind now that the matter was probably more serious than he had thought.

It was quite possible that a serious accident might be the result of his rascally trick, and that he might have serious consequences to answer for. At that thought the rogue of the lumber school changed colour.

"Gosh!" he muttered uneasily. "Suppose they were killed!"

He glanced round quickly. He was alone in the wood. No eyes had seen him, save those of the schoolboys carried away in the balloon, and if they did not return alive—— He shuddered at

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the thought, but his thoughts were all for himself. He turned quickly and strode away through the timber.

It was a long tramp back to the plain. As he came out of the timber he caught sight of a horseman on the trail. It was Hiram K. Chowder. Mr. Chowder spotted him and rode up.

"Seen the balloon?" he called out. "Seen that youngker? Is he safe?"

"Yes, I've seen him," said Gunten calmly. "The balloon's come down in a glade."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Mr. Chowder, in great relief.

"Lawless landed all right," said Gunten calmly. "Richards and Beauclerc joined him there. I think they're going up in the balloon."

"What?" yelled Mr. Chowder.

"Well, I saw them pitch out a sack of sand, and the balloon went up," said Gunten. "Only a lark, I guess, Mr. Chowder."

"Only a lark!" gasped Mr. Chowder. "The young idiots! They may all break their necks! Oh, the pesky young jays!" He put his head back and stared at the sky over the trees. "Oh, Jerusalem crickets! There she goes!"

Afar in the distance, high over the trees, the balloon rose into sight from the plain. Gunten glanced at it, and tramped on towards the lumber school. Mr. Chowder had not thought for a moment of doubting his statements, and the rogue of Cedar Creek felt himself secure if the victims of his cowardly trick did not come back.

Mr. Chowder sat his horse motionless, watching the balloon, growing now to a speck in the distance over the timber. He was still gazing after it hopelessly when Gunten looked back again. The Swiss shrugged his shoulders and tramped on to Cedar Creek.

Between Earth and Sky!

"I—I say, this is no cinch!" groaned Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards was a little pale. The balloon, so far, was clearing the tree-tops, but now and again the car rocked against a very heavy branch, and it spun and oscillated, and the schoolboys were flung down.

How to make the balloon descend was beyond their knowledge; they had never been in one before, and knew nothing of such things. They held on desperately as the car rocked and bumped.

Ahead of them the ground was rising towards the Thompson Hills, and the thick tree-tops were at a higher level. Frank pointed in front of him.

"We've got to go higher, Bob!" he gasped. "If we crash into that the whole thing may be smashed up, and then——"

Bob Lawless understood.

"I guess that's so, Franky. Pitch out a sack, and we shall float clear at any rate."

"Better," agreed Vere Beauclerc. "If the gas-bag should bump into the trees it might burst, and that would be the finish."

It was pretty clear that only by rising could they stave off a catastrophe. Frank Richards grasped one of the sandbags, and Bob lent him a hand. It was heaved over the side, and disappeared, crashing through the tree-tops.

The result was startling. Relieved of the weight, the balloon shot up almost like a rocket. The three chums held on tenaciously, dazed and

giddy. The balloon, heeling over a little before the wind, floated on; but the car was steady now.

Frank Richards ventured to look over the side again. There was no danger now from the tree-tops. For the highest of the trees on the acclivity was more than three hundred yards below the car. The woods looked one shapeless dark blur.

The car floated level, and there was no need to hold on now. The chums sank into the seats, and looked at one another.

"Well, this is a go!" said Frank Richards at last.

"It is, and no mistake!" said Bob Lawless. He clenched his fists. "I guess I wish I had that villain Gunten here!"

"No lessons this morning, anyway," remarked Vere Beauclerc, with a faint attempt at humour.

"I guess I'd rather be doing Canadian history at Cedar Creek," said Bob. "How are we going to get out of this scrape?"

"There must be some way of getting the thing down," said Frank, gazing up at the great envelope swelling overhead. "Perhaps you pull one of these cords. I think there's a valve or something—"

"We can't get down among the trees, Frank," said Beauclerc quietly.

"No, that's so."

The balloon rolled on.

It was strange country that was spread out beneath the schoolboys. The earth was too far off for them to distinguish anything but the green of the plains, and the darkness of the woods. High overhead the sun burned in a sky of almost cloudless blue.

That there was no immediate danger was clear, and, as they realised it, the three chums took comfort.

"After all, we wanted a ride in the balloon," said Bob Lawless, with a faint grin. "Well, we've got it!"

"I—I suppose it's safe enough," said Frank dubiously. "Old Chowder must have come hundreds of miles in it when he was blown away!"

"We've only got to learn how to handle the thing, Franky."

"Only!" said Frank.

"Hallo, there's somebody downstairs!" said Bob.

"Downstairs," as Bob Lawless called it, was on the plain below. Far down, looking like moving specks, two horsemen could be seen, staring upward.

"Cowboys, I guess," said Bob. "By thunder, I wonder where we are now? I wonder if we could get down, Franky, now we're past the timber?"

Frank Richards wrinkled his brows. He could guess that the cord above his head worked the valve, by which gas could be allowed to escape to make the balloon descend. But the mechanism was quite unknown to him, and if too much was allowed to escape at once it meant a sudden rush down to earth—perhaps death.

He hesitated.

"Better try, Frank," said Vere quietly. "If we keep up much longer, goodness knows how we shall get home, if we land at all! We're a good twenty miles from school now!"

"All that!" said Bob Lawless. "Twenty miles on Shanks' pony isn't like the same distance on horseback. If we get stranded in the hills—"

"Better try it," agreed Frank.

He grasped the cord, and the three schoolboys

breathed hard as he pulled it. What the result would be they could not tell, but they had to take the risk.

But there was no result. Frank pulled the cord, and pulled again, but nothing came of it. "Let me try," said Bob.

Bob Lawless tried, with the same result.

"I—I suppose there's a valve or something, isn't there?" muttered the rancher's son, a little pale now.

"There must be. But—"

"It's jammed, I guess."

Frank Richards drew a deep breath.

"Either it's jammed or it's fastened, and—and we don't know how to open it," he said. "We—we can't get down."

Vere Beauclerc jerked at the cord. But the result was the same as before. The three schoolboys were grave and silent as the balloon drifted on.

Cool and courageous as they were, Frank Richards & Co. were dismayed by the strange position in which they found themselves; and they could not help wondering whether they would ever see Cedar Creek again.

Miss Meadows came out of the lumber school-house after lessons that day with a troubled face. Cedar Creek School dispersed in unusual silence and gravity.

Kern Gunten had told his tale at the school, and naturally, he had been believed. That the rascally Swiss had deliberately sent his school-fellows into danger was not a suspicion that was likely to occur to Miss Meadows.

She believed that Frank Richards & Co. had recklessly attempted an ascent in the balloon, and she was too alarmed for their safety to feel angry with them. News of what had happened had to be sent to the Lawless Ranch, and to the remittance man's shack, where Vere Beauclerc was expected home.

Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, mounted his horse, and rode away to take the news; there was nothing else to be done.

Soon after Mr. Slimmey had departed, Hiram K. Chowder rode up to the lumber school in the gathering dusk. The big American was tired, and his horse was spent. Miss Meadows called to him hastily.

"Have you any news, Mr. Chowder?"

Mr. Chowder shook his head.

"Nope!"

"Those unhappy boys—"

"Pesky young scallawags!" said Mr. Chowder wrathfully. "Why couldn't they let my balloon alone? But I'm going after that balloon, Miss Meadows. Hiram K. Chowder never says die—not Hiram K. I guess I'm after my property, if I have to trail it down as far as the Pacific Ocean, madam. Can you lend me a horse? I'll leave my critter here."

"Certainly," said Miss Meadows. "I only hope you may get some news of those unfortunate boys."

Hiram K. Chowder nearly snorted.

Miss Meadows was thinking of the three schoolboys, but Hiram K.'s thoughts, not unnaturally perhaps, were for his property. Mounted upon a fresh horse, the big American took the trail, in a chase that even Hiram K., sanguine as he was, could hardly avoid looking upon as hopeless.

Next Wednesday: "HANDSOME ALF!"

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Jack Drake dragged the mop, streaming with inky water, from the bucket. Swoosh! "Yurrrrgh!" spluttered Daubeny, as the inky mop was driven into his startled face. "Yooooogh!"

After Dark!

TAP! Mr. Capps, the steward, grunted, and put down his glass of toddy. Mr. Capps had retired to his little state-room after the labours of the day, and he did not like being disturbed.

The door opened, to reveal Jack Drake and Dick Rodney of the Fourth Form. Mr. Capps eyed them unkindly.

"Time you was in bed," he said. "Don't say you want anything from the canteen—it's closed."

"It isn't that," said Drake, with a smile. "We're just off to bed, Mr. Capps, and I wanted to speak to you first. It's about your man Slaney."

Mr. Capps frowned. He did not appear pleased about his man Slaney.

"Bless Slaney!" said Mr. Capps emphatically. "If I'd knowned the kind of lubber he was, he'd never have set foot on board the Benbow. I shouldn't wonder if the captain sticks him ashore when we touch at the Canaries. Best thing to do with the lubber."

"But—"

"He drinks," said Mr. Capps indignantly.

Drake glanced at the glass of toddy at the worthy gentleman's elbow, and grinned.

"But I've something that belongs to him," he said. "You know we found him tipsy in our cabin this afternoon. He—"

"I reported him to Captain Topcastle," said Mr. Capps, "as in dooty bound."

"Well, he left something in my cabin, and I want to give it to him. I've been looking

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The MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT!

By Owen Conquest.

for him, and can't find him," explained Drake. "Where is he?"

Mr. Capps grinned.

"Nor you won't find him," he answered. "He's in the clink."

"The clink?" repeated Drake.

"That's it—locked in, on bread and water for twenty-four hours," said the steward. "That's 'ow the skipper 'ave dealt with 'im. He won't steal another bottle of rum from the stores agin in a hurry, and make a beast of himself in a gentleman's cabin. Not 'im!"

Drake whistled.

"Oh, that's why I can't find him!" he said.

"I dessay. If you've got anything that belongs to 'im, you can give it to 'im to-morrow, or leave it 'ere with me."

"All serene! I'll see him to-morrow," said Drake. "Good-night, Mr. Capps!"

The two juniors turned away, leaving Mr. Capps to the enjoyment of his toddy. They

Vernon Daubeny doesn't hesitate at theft to get hold of the mysterious document in Jack Drake's hands, thus laying himself open to Jack's jape!

returned thoughtfully to the Fourth Form quarters on the Benbow.

"I shall have to keep that Spanish paper all night, then," Drake remarked. "I wish the tipsy ass hadn't left it in our cabin. Like his cheek to go to our quarters to guzzle stolen rum! Hallo, there's Daub!"

Daubeny of the Shell loomed up in the shadows. Daub's nose was swollen, and there was a scowl on his face. He disappeared the next moment, and there was a muttering of voices in the darkness. Egan and Torrence were with him.

"They'd have rushed me again if you hadn't been with me, Rodney," Drake remarked, as the two Fourth Formers went into Cabin No. 8. "Daub's determined to get hold of Slaney's word document, if he can. He was watching us. I suppose he knows Slaney is in clink, and I can't give it to him to-night. I wonder—"

He paused.

"What now?" asked Rodney.

"Daub's made up his mind to bag the document, if he can. I wonder if he'll think of coming here to-night after lights out?"

Rodney nodded.

"Very likely, I think," he said. "He could sneak in here while we're asleep easily enough."

"We'll be ready for him, if he does," said Drake.

He left the cabin and returned in a few minutes with a steward's mop, and bucket half-full of water. Into the bucket he poured the contents of the study inkpot, and half a bottle of indelible ink. Rodney watched him with a grin.

"Is that for Daub?" he asked.

"You bet!"

"Bed-time, you fellows," said Tuckey Toodles, coming into the cabin. "I say, Drake, you can't give that Spanish paper to Slaney; he's in clink. You'd better hand it to me for safety."

"Rats!"

"Of course, I wouldn't look at it," said Toodles. "I wasn't thinking of that. And I haven't borrowed a Spanish dictionary from Dr. Pankey to work at translating it. Don't you think so for a minute?"

"Ass!"

"I've just seen Daub and Egan and Torrence whispering together on deck," said Toodles. "Daub was saying he'd have it before morning, and—"

"Oh, was he?" said Drake grimly. "Well, if he comes for it, it isn't the document he will get."

"I'd look after it like the apple of my eye, you know—"

"Cheese it, fathead!"

Tuckey Toodles gave a discontented grunt. He was very anxious to get his fat hand on the mysterious document left in Cabin No. 8 by the intoxicated one-eyed seaman, Peg Slaney.

Tuckey had been dreaming dreams of buried treasure in the Spanish Main, on the strength of that mysterious paper.

The juniors turned in by the light of the swinging lamp in the alleyway outside. Mr. Packe, the master of the Fourth, made his rounds, seeing that his Form were all in their hammocks, and that there were no lights burning. The Benbow was a wooden ship, and lights had to be looked after very carefully.

But after Mr. Packe had gone, Jack Drake slipped from his hammock. He felt assured that Daubeny of the Shell would pay a visit to Cabin No. 8 that night in search of Slaney's document. On the morrow it was to be returned to the owner, after which Daub was not likely to have a chance at it.

The knowledge that the word "oro"—Spanish for gold—occurred in the document had made Daubeny very keen about it, added to what he had heard of Slaney's boasting among the crew of treasure that he knew of in South America. If Peg Slaney had a valuable secret, he was not a good hand at keeping it.

What happened to the document after he had returned it to Slaney, Drake cared nothing, but so long as it was in his keeping, he meant to keep it safe. He put the mop in the bucket of inky water, and placed them near his hammock. Then he got back into his hammock and waited. If Daubeny came creeping in in the darkness, he was going to meet with a surprise.

There was a glimmer of moonlight in at the porthole, but the greater part of the cabin was

black. Save for the sound of the wind in the rigging, and the occasional shuffle of a footfall on the deck overhead, all was silent.

Tuckey Toodles was soon fast asleep, but Rodney remained awake in his hammock. The chums did not speak. Half an hour passed, and then Drake's quick ears caught a sound of movement outside. There was a faint shuffling of socked feet, and then a murmuring whisper.

Then softly and silently the door opened.

Drake gripped the handle of the mop a little harder, his eyes gleaming. The visitors had arrived.

"You fellows asleep?"

It was a whisper in the gloom. Drake grinned, but he made no sound.

"You fellows awake?"

Daubeny's voice was a little louder this time. Only the resonant snore of Tuckey Toodles answered him.

"It's all right, Daub," came Egan's whisper. "Go ahead! Don't risk waking them."

"Hush!"

"Can you find the rotter's jacket in the dark?" It was Torrence's whisper now. "Don't bump on their hammocks."

"I shall have to turn on my electric torch," whispered Daub. "You fellows stand ready to rush them if they wake up and turn out. I'll simply collar Drake's clobber and bolt with it. We can search it afterwards."

"Right-ho!"

Daubeny turned on the torch, and stole softly into the cabin. The next moment there was a sudden commotion.

Jack Drake dragged the mop, streaming with inky water, from the bucket.

Swoosh!

"Yurrgrgggh!" spluttered Daubeny wildly, as the inky mop was driven into his startled face. Yooooogh!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rodney.

"Yooogh!"

The torch thudded to the floor and went out. In the darkness Vernon Daubeny clawed and dabbed frantically at his face. Drake slid out of his hammock, dipped the mop into the bucket again, and rushed forward. Daubeny went staggering out of the cabin, bumping into his startled comrades, and the mop lashed impartially over all three of them.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

"Oh gad! Hook it! The beasts are awake! Ow!"

"Yurrgrgh!"

Three inky and breathless raiders fled down the passage. They almost ran into Mr. Packe, who had been roused out by the uproar. Drake chuckled and closed the cabin door.

Outside Mr. Packe's angry voice was heard, and the stammering replies of the bucks of the Shell, explaining that it was "only a rag." To judge by Mr. Packe's tones, he was not at all placated by the explanation. Jack Drake chuckled as he turned in.

"I fancy we shan't see Daub again to-night," he remarked.

"I think not," said Rodney, laughing. "I fancy we shall see him in the morning—with a piebald complexion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake placed the Spanish document under his

pillow for safety, but there were no more visits to Study No. 3 that night. Vernon Daubeny had given it up for the present.

Drake Has An Idea!

JACK DRAKE grinned when he sighted Daubeny of the Shell on the deck of the Benbow the next morning.

Daub had done a great deal of washing and scrubbing, but he was still showing signs of the indelible ink. He bestowed a savage scowl on Drake, turned his back, and walked away to breakfast.

After breakfast Drake and Rodney came on deck again to enjoy the sea-breeze before lessons. The old Benbow was bowling along under her mainsail, foresail, and topsails, as gallantly as in the days of old, when she had sailed under Nelson's flag. Far as the eye could reach in all directions stretched the wide waters of the Atlantic. Big steamers loomed up astern and glided ahead in the distance, "walking" past the old windjammer; but speed was not an object with the school at sea.

"I've got an idea, Rodney," said Drake, as the juniors stood by the longboat davits, looking out at the sunshine on the sea. "Daub is awfully keen on getting hold of that paper—"

"So it seems!" said Rodney, with a smile. "You'd better take it into class with you."

"But I've got an idea. Daub doesn't know Spanish, and if he got hold of the paper he would have no end of trouble getting it translated without giving the secret away."

"But you're not going to let him?"

"It's a stunt," explained Drake. "I'm not going to let him have Slaney's paper, but if he's keen about translating a Spanish document, there's no need to disappoint him. Suppose we borrow a Spanish book from Dr. Pankey and make up a mysterious document for Daub?"

Dick Rodney stared at his chum for a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

"Good wheeze!" he exclaimed. "I'm on. Lots of time before lessons."

The two chums found Dr. Pankey in his cabin, and the medical gentleman greeted them with a kindly nod. Dr. Pankey was keen on Spanish, a language he knew as well as his own, and it had been arranged for the doctor to form a Spanish class on board the Benbow, for the fellows who cared to study it. A good many of the juniors had put their names down, thinking that a smattering of the tongue of Cervantes would be useful, as they were going to a Spanish-speaking country. Drake and Rodney had been the first to join up, and the class was expected to commence soon. Dr. Pankey nodded with benignant approval when Drake asked for the loan of a Spanish book. He had a fine assortment in his cabin, which looked more like a study than a cabin.

"You can look at this," he said. "It's a Spanish edition of 'Gil Blas,' which, as you know, was written in French. If you have not yet read it in French or English—"

"Nunno!"

"Then you shall read it in Spanish when we get on a little with our class," said Dr. Pankey. "You may take it away and look at it, if you like."

"Thank you, sir," said Drake.

The two Fourth Formers carried off the

volume to Study No. 3, and for the following ten minutes they were very busy there. When they came on deck they were smiling.

Daubeny eyed them sourly. Twice he had attempted to get hold of the Spanish document, and twice he had been foiled. If Drake carried it with him to lessons that morning, little chance remained for Daub. After lessons Slaney would be released from the clink, and would recover possession of his property. Daub had not quite given up hope, but very nearly.

The chums of the Fourth did not seem to observe Daubeny. They passed a few feet from him, talking.

"Safe enough here," Drake was saying.

Daub's eyes glittered.

Drake and Rodney passed on and stopped near the mainmast, still chatting, without a glance at him.

Vernon Daubeny moved away and strolled round the mainmast. Keeping the mast between him and the Fourth Formers, he listened.

Drake closed one eye at Rodney.

Daub was keen enough as a rule, but he did not guess that Drake had made that remark, in passing him, in order to put him on the scent. The Shell fellow had taken the bait.

Drake's voice, quite loud enough to reach Daubeny where he was lurking, went on:

"If I keep it about me, those rotters may try to rush me again, Rodney!"

"But is it safe?"

"Well, my desk is safe enough."

"If you've locked it—"

"It doesn't look, but I've put it under a lot of papers. Who'd think of looking there?" said Drake. "Besides, Daub goes into class the same time as we do. It's all right."

Without a glance in the direction of Daubeny, the Fourth Formers walked away.

Daubeny quitted the spot, his heart thumping. He had overheard enough, for he had not the slightest doubt that the Fourth Formers' remarks referred to the Spanish document.

He joined Egan and Torrence a few minutes later. Both of them were looking rather ill-used and sulky, after their experience in Study No. 8 the night before.

"It's all right, you chaps," breathed Daubeny.

"I don't feel all right, for one," grunted Egan.

"About Slaney's paper, I mean."

"Blow Slaney and his paper! We shall never lay hands on it, and I wish we'd never tried," said Torrence morosely.

"That's all you know," grinned Daubeny.

"I'm going to lay hands on it this morning; I know where it is."

"Where, then?" asked his chums together in a breath.

"In Drake's desk, in his cabin. I'll bag it while the rotters are at lessons," said Daubeny.

"We shall be at lessons, too."

"I can make an excuse to get out for a few minutes," answered Daubeny, with a grin. "I'm goin' to have that paper, I can tell you. There'll be nobody about during classes."

"Hallo, there goes the bell!"

Drake and Rodney joined the Fourth Formers, and Daubeny & Co. went into the Form-room with the Shell. In fine weather classes were held in the open air; the Shell on the poop, and the Fourth on the main deck, rather to the entertainment of the crew of the Benbow.

It was easy enough for Vernon Daubeny to make an excuse to quit the class for a few

minutes after lessons had started. He disappeared below, and when he came back, Egan and Torrence eyed him breathlessly.

Daubeny tapped his pocket as he sat down again. It was a sign that he had captured the prize. And the three bucks exchanged glances of satisfaction.

In the class on the main deck, Drake and Rodney grimed at one another. They had seen Daubeny go below, and they did not need telling the reason. Daubeny was in possession of the mysterious document—a much more mysterious document than he supposed!

Seeking the Secret!

DAUBENY of the Shell was anxious for lessons to terminate that morning. Lessons never did please the slacker of the Shell; but on this occasion he had particular reasons for his impatience. The Spanish document in his inside pocket seemed to be burning a hole there. He had found it under the papers in Drake's desk, but had not had time to take more than a hurried glance at it. That glance had shown him that it was written in Spanish. He was burning with impatience to get to work on it. He could have cheered, in his satisfaction, when Mr. Vavasour dismissed the Shell at last. "Come on, you fellows!" he exclaimed, catching his chums by the arms and dragging them away.

"You've got it?" Egan exclaimed breathlessly.

"Yes, rather!"

"But I say—we can't read it, you know!"

"I'm going to borrow a Spanish dic from the doctor. He'll lend me one like a shot. We can make it out with a dic!"

"We'll try, anyhow!"

Daubeny had no difficulty in borrowing a Spanish dictionary from Dr. Pankey. With the dictionary the three bucks hurried to their cabin, and closed and locked the door. With a hand that trembled with excitement, Daubeny drew the document from his pocket.

It was a soiled-looking sheet of paper, written in a straggling hand, in a language that was a mystery to the bucks.

"Now to make it out," said Daubeny. "Hallo!"

Tap!

The Shell fellows gave a guilty start as there came a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" called out Daubeny.

"Little me!" answered Jack Drake's voice. "Have you been rummaging in my cabin, Daub?"

"Certainly not!"

"There's a paper missing from my desk!"

"Better ask Toodles—he's the chap most likely to rummage in your desk, I should think!"

"Oh, I never thought of Toodles!"

Drake's footsteps were heard departing. Daubeny chuckled.

"I dare say he'll guess that we've got it," he said. "I don't care—he can't prove anythin'!"

"No fear! Let's get to work," said Egan.

The Shell fellows bent eagerly over the paper on the table. It ran:

"Blas de Santillana, mi padre, despues de haber servido muchos anos en los ejercitos de la monarquia espanola, se retiro al lugar donde habia nacido. Casose con una aldeana, y yo naci al mundo diez meses despues que se habian casado."

"My only hat!" murmured Egan. "Blessed if

I can make head or tail of it! I wonder what it means?"

Daubeny looked puzzled.

"I had a glimpse of it yesterday," he said. "I thought I saw the word 'oro' in it—Spanish for gold, you know. It doesn't seem to be here, after all. Of course, I only saw it for a tick. But it must be about gold; that blackguard Slancy is always bragging in the fo'c'sle about what he knows. The hands chip him about his buried treasure!"

"Silly ass not to hold his tongue if there's anything in it!" remarked Torrence.

"A fellow like that can't hold his tongue," said Daubeny contemptuously. "As soon as he gets a little grog inside, his chin begins to wag. Now we've got to make this out. We can guess some words. P'rinstance, 'espanola' must mean 'Spanish,' from the spelling; 'anos' must mean 'years'; and 'mundo' must mean 'world,' and 'diez' must mean 'ten.' Spanish is alike enough to Latin to guess that much."

"That doesn't help a lot."

"Get hold of the dic. Begin with 'B.' Find 'Blas.'"

Egan sorted through the dictionary, but to the disappointment of the eager seekers after knowledge, Blas was not given.

"Rotten thing!" growled Daubeny. "Try 'Santillana.'"

Santillana was not to be found in the dictionary.

"I say, this is rotten!" said Egan, looking rather blue. "Are you quite sure it's Spanish, Daub?"

"Yes, ass; but, now I think of it, Santillana is pretty certain to be the name of the place," said Daubeny. "Names of places aren't in the dic."

"The place where the treasure is buried, perhaps," exclaimed Torrence, his eyes glistening. "Very likely. Try 'despues.'"

"It means after or since," said Egan, after consulting the volume.

"Good! I'll write down the words as you dig them out. Now 'servido.'"

"It isn't here."

"May be a past participle—looks like one."

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: As apparently nobody had been seen at the boathouse apart from the regular crew and Grundy, it was difficult to decide who could have removed the mascot. Grundy had reason to feel aggrieved, convinced as he was of his own—non-existent—prowess, but Grundy was not the fellow to stoop to a petty act of that kind. Not until Piggott said how funny Grundy had looked in a skiff did I realise that Piggott must have been somewhere on the scene that early morning. Sturgis, the boatman, had heard somebody in the boathouse, but had not seen who it was. If Piggott, who thought he ought to have been cox, was there, it was with reason! Questioned before Tom Merry, Piggott admitted taking the mascot for spite. He restored it, and, somewhat to his surpris and relief, Tom Merry let the matter drop. Race result? St. Jim's beat Grammarians by the length of a canvas. A great victory, thanks—perhaps—to the lucky mascot!

said Daubeny, "Of course, past participles mightn't be given in the dic. Try 'muchos.'"

"Many," said Egan.

"Good! And 'anos.'"

"Years."

"Ripping! We're getting on," said Daubeny, scribbling with his pencil. "We've got 'since many years,' at any rate!"

"Of course, it will be many years since the treasure was buried, if it belonged to the old buccaneers," said Torrence.

"Of course. Now 'ejercitos.'"

"Ejercito is an army."

"Oh gad! I don't see what an army has to do with it. Still, there was a Spanish army in Venezuela once, when it was a Spanish colony. Try 'lugar.'"

"That's a place or district."

"Good! And 'donde.'"

"Where," said Egan.

"We're getting on. If we get most of the words written out in English, we shall be able to guess the rest, and make out the meaning of the thing."

It was quite unlike the usual customs of the bucks to be fagging over a foreign dictionary; but now they fagged over it as if they loved it. The verbs were the chief difficulty, as the different conjugations, of course, were not to be found in the dictionary, and without a knowledge of the language, they could not be reduced from the infinitive. But even with the verbs the enterprising Daub was not wholly unsuccessful. There was at least one infinitive in the document—"haber," to have—and it was easy to guess that "habian" was another form of the same word.

By the time the dictionary had been squeezed dry, so to speak, Daubeny had compiled the following—putting in blanks for the words not yet elucidated:

"... father, after ... have ... many years in the armies of the Spanish monarchy ... to the place where ... with a peasant ... and I ... world ten months after ..."

The three bucks surveyed that rather unpromising result, and looked at one another.

"Blessed if I can see any sense in that!" said Egan. "Something about his father in it. It doesn't look much like a clue to a giddy buried treasure, I must say!"

"Of course, we haven't got it all," said Daubeny, refusing to admit that he was discouraged. "The dashed verbs are a puzzle. But we'll get something out of old Pankey about that!"

"You can't show him the paper!"

"Of course not, ass! We'll go to him one after another, and ask him a word each. See?"

"Good!"

And Daubeny unlocked the door, and the bucks left the cabin. They were baffled so far, but they felt they were on the track, and Daubeny was very hopeful.

Not a Treasure Clue!

DR. PANKEY, the cheery medico of the Benbow, was rather surprised. He was keen on Spanish, and on his scheme of a Spanish class for the boys, and he was glad to see the juniors taking an interest in the matter. But he was surprised, all the same.

He was taking his ease in a canvas chair on THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,624.

deck when Daubeny arrived, and politely asked him what "retiro" meant.

A minute later Egan travelled along with an inquiry as to what "casoso" meant in Spanish.

"Married," said Dr. Pankey.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Egan involuntarily.

He had not expected to find any reference to matrimonial affairs in the mysterious document.

Five minutes later Torrence appeared in the office.

"Would you mind telling me what 'nacido' means in Spanish, sir?" he asked meekly.

"Pronounce it 'nathido,'" said the doctor, with a smile. "It means born."

"Oh, I—I mean thanks!"

The doctor returned to his book, but he was interrupted again. Daubeny appeared before him for the second time, and the doctor regarded him rather sharply.

"Can you tell me, sir, whether 'Santillana' is the name of a place?" inquired Daub respectfully.

The doctor smiled.

"Undoubtedly," he answered.

"In South America?" asked Daub eagerly.

"Possibly; but certainly in Spain. Are you reading 'Gil Blas' in Spanish, as well as Drake?" asked the doctor.

Daubeny started.

"'Gil Blas'?" he repeated. "That's the name of a book in French, isn't it?"

"Certainly; but I lent Drake a Spanish translation this morning. From your mentioning Santillana, I supposed you are reading it, or trying to," said Dr. Pankey, smiling. "'Gil Blas de Santillana,' you know, is the hero of the story by the great Le Sage."

"I—I didn't know—" stammered Daubeny.

A horrid suspicion smote Daub. He remembered the absence of the word "oro," which he was almost certain he had seen in the mysterious document. And it came into his mind that the paper he had abstracted from Drake's desk, though soiled, was not quite so old-looking as the genuine document. It began to dawn on the great Daub that he had not overheard Drake's and Rodney's talk unknown to them, as he supposed, and that his lofty leg had been pulled.

"Come!" went on the doctor. "If you are trying to study a Spanish book, I will help you, my boy. You and your friends have been asking me several words that occur in the opening paragraphs of 'Gil Blas' in Spanish. Is that what you are trying to read?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Daubeny. "The—the awful rotter—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I've been had," stammered Daubeny. "I—I—'Blas de Santillana'—of course, I was an idiot not to see it."

"Will you kindly explain what you are talking about, Daubeny?" asked the doctor, with some acerbity.

"I—I— Look at this, sir, and tell me what it is," said Daub desperately, handing the mysterious document to the doctor.

Dr. Pankey glanced at the paper and raised his eyebrows.

"Can you read it, sir?" asked Daubeny.

"Do you wish me to translate this, Daubeny?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Very well. 'Blas de Santillana, my father, after having served many years in the Spanish

(Continued on page 35.)



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THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT!

(Continued from page 34.)

armies, retired to the place where he was born. He married a villager, and I was born ten months afterwards.' It is the beginning of the Spanish version of 'Gil Blas,' said Dr. Pankey, still puzzled. 'Someone has copied it out of the volume I lent Drake this morning. I do not recognise the hand—'

"Oh!" mumbled Daubeny.

He thanked the doctor feebly and withdrew. He rejoined his chums, who looked at him in eager inquiry.

"Got it?" asked Egan and Torrance together.

"Spoofed!"

"What?"

"It is not the document at all," muttered Daubeny savagely. "That rotter, that cad, that practical jokin' cad—"

"Eh—who?"

"That rotter Drake!" breathed Daubeny.

"He's written a lot of rot out of Le Sage's silly novel, and put it there for me to find. They let me hear them talking on purpose. Oh gad!"

Daubeny clenched his hands in helpless wrath. For an hour the bucks had been fagging over that precious document, to discover at last that it was a fragment from the Spanish translation of a French novel.

Daubeny glanced round with lowering brows. Pog Slaney, newly released from the "clink," had come on deck with a sullen face. Jack Drake had gone to meet him at once, anxious to be rid of the document in his breast pocket.

Daubeny hurried across the deck to them. He was in time to hear Drake speaking.

"You left this paper in my study yesterday, Slaney. I've been keeping it for you."

Slaney's eyes glittered. He clatched at the yellow-looking paper as Drake held it out.

"I—I missed it," he muttered. "I couldn't come, after all, as I was in the clink. Thank you kindly, sir! I won't forget this."

Drake noticed Daubeny and turned to him with a smile.

"Getting on with your Spanish, Daub?" he asked agreeably. "You were jolly busy in your study."

"You spoofin' rotter—"

"Found any clues to buried treasure in the first paragraphs of 'Gil Blas'?"

"You—you—" Daubeny almost choked.

"If you're interested I can lend you the book. I've done with it now. I'm not making up any more mystery documents to leave in my desk for you to find, you know."

Daubeny swung away, choking with rage. Drake walked off with Dick Rodney, both the juniors laughing merrily. Before evening every fellow on the Benbow knew the story of the Spanish clue, and Daubeny was clipped on the subject till he fervently wished that he had never heard of the mysterious document.

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