

"THE HIDDEN MENACE!" THRILLS AND FUN with the **INSIDE.**
ST. JIM'S FLYERS on the RIVIERA

The GEM

2^D

**GUSSY
BRINGS DOWN
HIS ENEMY!**





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 letters 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.

J. V., of Montreal, writes:

I've made up my mind to stump you on at least one question. So here I go:

Is Redfern of the New House any relation to Barbara Redfern of Cliff House?

Do they use sealing wax in making gramophone records?

Is the Montreal River in Saskatchewan?

Is the Editor of the GEM also the Editor of the "Magnet"?

The best of luck in answering these!

ANSWER: Reddy and Barbara Redfern are brother and sister. Monty Lowther says that when he starts making gramophone records he will include honey and a dash of glue to make the jokes "sweet" and "water-tight," but never sealing wax! The Montreal River is not in Saskatchewan—which place, you will note, is spelt with a "t." The Montreal is a small river near the border of Quebec. You're right; the Ed. edits both papers. Howzat, old-timer!

D. T. G. Brown, of Portsmouth, writes:

I am 15½ years old, and 6 feet high. Is there any boy or master at St. Jim's taller? See if you can work this science question out in 15 minutes; it is one I had a little bother with. What is the horse power of a locomotive which starts a train of 300 tons, and in 2 minutes gets up a speed of 40 miles per hour?

ANSWER: Yes, Kildare of the Sixth is a shade over six feet. Your mathematical problem had me baffled, but I enlisted the aid of Harry Manners, and his answer is: 35,433 h.p. Oh, and by the way, Monty Lowther asks could you help him? He wants to know how long it would take a tramcar with square wheels to climb Mount Snowdon in a snowstorm? Work it out by "square" root!

S. M., of Manchester, typewrites:

1. Why do people say it's always raining in MANCHESTER? It isn't. The people who say it is are the people who've never been there. 2. I'd like a list of all the masters in the school and the Forms they teach. 3. You've got Americans, Australians, Italians, New Zealanders, Irishmen, Welshmen, Scotsmen, Londoners (and even Yorkshiresmen), but apparently no Lancastrians. If there are any, I should like to hear about them.

ANSWER: 1. Let's ask "The Umbrella Man," shall we? 2. Mr. Raitton (6th), Mr. Ratcliff (5th), Mr. Linton (Shell), Mr. Latham (4th), Mr. Selby (3rd), Mr. Carrington (2nd). 3. Gosh, the

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school must be more crowded than I thought! I think you'll find we have only one representative of each kind—and we HAVE a Lancastrian—Bernard Glynn, the inventor of the Shell, who hails from Liverpool.

A. J. S., of Bucks, writes:

You mutilated my original letter, which would have made Racke & Co. look more decent than Mr. Clifford leads us to believe. You also got me wrong. When I say gambling, I mean a little sport, counters 8 @ 1d., and only an occasional cigarette. What's the harm in that?

ANSWER: I never ignore a complaint. Admire the decent points—if any—of Racke & Co. if you want to. But they would no doubt sneer at a fellow like yourself who is content to gamble for small stakes and who, after all, doesn't smoke very much. Personally, I prefer to pal with a chap like Tom Merry—who at least hits straight from the shoulder!

BRIEF REPLIES.

My best thanks to the following for writing. I am sure you fellows—and girls—will appreciate that only shortage of space prevents my answering you in full.

Miss R. G., of Upper Clapton.—The field varies with the type of bowling. C. Beal, Weymouth.—Levison has scored 12 goals. No Rugger is played at St. Jim's. Harold Thompson, Leeds.—The New House Thompson is same height as you, but 16 and probably heavier. F. D. F., Southsea.—1,677 GEMS to date. Wonderful record, isn't it? Lawford Hopkins, Cardiff — 20 or 30 in the Third, but no studies below Fourth. P. M. R., Islington.—Glad you enjoy the page. St. Jim's 32, Claremont 0, a cup-tie; Claremont had injuries! O.K., Gravesend.—Why did the orange peel? Because it saw the lemon squash. Kenneth Park, Monkseaton.—Engine and tender 90 or 100 feet, passenger coach 40 to 70 feet. "Wanting To Know," Hull.—Sorry, old boy, there isn't a copy of the first GEM in existence. J. C. D., Dun Laoghaire.—I'm skipper. Boxes in order—Merry, Talbot, Blake, Noble, Roylance. K. McAndrew, Leeds.—Later, the Shell list, perhaps. Roughly 300 at St. Jim's. "Football Fan," Maidstone.—No goal. Penalty-taker mustn't kick ball twice. Langton "keeps" for the First.

CANNES, PLAYGROUND OF THE RIVIERA, IS THE NEXT PORT OF CALL OF THE ST. JIM'S FLYERS. BUT LURKING AHEAD OF THEM IS THE ENEMY WHO IS A MENACE TO THEIR SAFETY! GREAT NEW YARN!



The HIDDEN MENACE!

Monty Lowther was walking a little ahead of his chums when a rustle in the wistaria on the wall caught his ears. His glance shot up—to fix on a dark and swarthy face that was peering through the creepers. He knew that face—the swarthy, greasy face of Giuseppe Fosco! “The dago!” ejaculated Lowther.

CHAPTER 1.

Lowther is Too Funny!

“BY gum!” exclaimed Monty Lowther.

He started. He stared.

All the other passengers in the cabin of the Silver Swallow looked round at once.

The passenger plane, soaring over the Maritime Alps, was swooping down to Cannes, in the red glow of the sunset. The white town of Cannes and the blue Mediterranean beyond could be seen from the windows of the Silver Swallow. Roads like white ribbons unrolled under the eyes of Tom Merry & Co. looking down.

The plane was running as smooth as silk. If it dipped or tilted every now and then, the St. Jim's air trippers were used to that. Six fellows entirely failed to see the cause of Monty Lowther's sudden excitement.

Tom Merry and Manners looked at Monty rather suspiciously. They were well acquainted—

The mysterious black box entrusted into the care of Gussy has brought danger to the chums of St. Jim's ever since they started their Continental air tour. But never has the danger been more acute than when the flying schoolboys arrive on the Riviera!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

only too well acquainted—with Monty's japing proclivities, and suspected some sort of rag.

But Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth all asked at once:

“What's up?”

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was sitting down polishing his eyeglass with the sedulous attention so important a task deserved, jumped to his feet.

“Yaas, wathah! What's up, Lowthah?” he exclaimed.

Tom Merry fully expected Lowther to answer “We are!” The St. Jim's party were “up”—

they had been “up” ever since the Silver Swallow had pulled out of the Cevennes.

But Monty did not make that answer. If he were jesting, it was a deeper jest than that.

“I'm watching the day go!” he exclaimed.

“The dago!” shouted six fellows at once.

“Yes; look!”

Lowther pointed from the window westward, where the round red sun seemed to be touching the hills before it disappeared.

Tom Merry & Co. crowded to the window. The "dago" was a startling word to their ears.

All through that holiday air trip, Giuseppe Fosco, the dago, had been on their trail. They had left him behind at Lyons, and hoped, but did not quite believe, that the Italian had lost their track and would not turn up at Cannes. So Monty Lowther's announcement was quite startling.

"You're dreaming!" exclaimed Blake, staring down at a white road that looked like a ribbon. "I can't see anybody."

"Couldn't pick a man out from this height!" said Digby. "Not if he was there, and he isn't there."

"Tons of dagoes on the Riviera, too!" said Herries. "You couldn't tell one from another at this distance."

"Wathah not!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "You're dweamin', old fellow. That blightah Fosco is gettin' on your nerves."

"Blind?" asked Lowther. "Mean to say you can't see the day go?"

"Well, where is he, then?" demanded Blake, scanning the ribbon-like road. "Walking?"

"Going down over that hill!" said Monty, pointing.

"Why, you ass, that hill's too far off to see a house on it, let alone a man!" exclaimed Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom Merry suddenly. He had caught on to Lowther's playful play on words. "Right as rain! I can see the day go from here."

"Bai Jove! Can you weally, Tom Mewwy?" "Plain as anything!" said Tom. "Going down over that hill, just as Monty said."

"Blessed if I can see anything on that hill, except the sun setting!" said Manners. "I can't see anything like the dago! Oh!" he added suddenly, as it dawned on him also. "I see! Ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Manners, as Monty's nearest, dearest, and most victimised pals, were quick on the uptake. They had, so to speak, been brought up in the menagerie! They had a lot of this sort of thing in Study No. 10 in the Shell at St. Jim's. There was hardly a word in the language out of which Monty Lowther could not produce some execrating and execrable pun.

Tom and Manners generally contributed a loyal chuckle when Monty propounded a pun. If they saw the joke, it deserved a chuckle; if they didn't, it prevented Monty from explaining it!

But the Fourth Formers were less wise to Monty's ways, and they were puzzled. All four of them scanned the hillside on which the sunset lay in a crimson flood. It was barely possible to discern a road over that hill. It was impossible to discern anybody on the road—dago or otherwise.

"Bai Jove! Can you see the dago as well as Tom Mewwy, Mannahs?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"I can see the day go all right!" agreed Manners. "If you Fourth Form kids can't you'd better get some specs."

"Well, I jolly well can't!" said Herries.

"Same here!" said Dig, shaking his head.

"Are you quite suah, Lowthah, that you can see the dago?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove! If that bwute is awound, it means that he has discovahed that we are goin' to Cannes, and he is on the twack again! I shall have to take feahful care of that beastly black

box if that wotten dago has twacked us heah. But are you suah, Lowthah?"

"Quite!"

"Rot!" said Blake.

"Hand me my field-glasses, Tom, old chap! If the dago is goin' down ovah that hill, I shall be able to pick him out with the glasses. We cannot be too suah, though I feel certain that Lowthah is mistaken. We must tell Pawson immediately we see him."

Arthur Augustus adjusted the field-glasses and focused them on the glowing hillside.

But even with the glases, from the height at which the Silver Swallow was flying, it was impossible to pick up any human figure on that hill. There was absolutely no trace of a dago to be seen!

"Rot!" repeated Blake.

"Rubbish!" said Herries.

"Bosh!" said Dig.

"Weally, I think you must be mistaken, Lowthah!" declared Arthur Augustus. "There is nobody to be seen at all!"

"You can't see the day go?" asked Lowther. "Well, it's perfectly plain to me! Have another squint."

"All wight!"

Again Arthur Augustus searched the hillside through the glasses, while Blake and Herries and Digby scanned it. But no member of Study No. 6 was able to pick out any object. D'Arcy snapped the glasses shut at last.

"Nothin' and nobody there!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I entially fail to see what you fellows are cacklin' at! Do you mean to say that you can still see the dago, Lowthah?"

"I'm watching the day go!" answered Lowther. "I've always liked sunsets."

"Sunsets?" repeated Blake.

"Yes! You fellows want to see an oculist!" said Monty. "If you can't see the day go, you'll be saying next that you can't see the night come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" from Tom Merry and Manners.

But the Fourth Formers did not laugh! They stared at Monty Lowther. They glared at him! They looked as if they could eat him. They had got it at last!

"The day go—" gasped Blake. "You howling ass—"

"You blithering owl!" roared Herries.

"Bai Jove! Do you mean to say, Lowthah, that you have made us all jump, and set us watchin' that beastly hill like a flock of sheep lookin' at a twain, simply to get away with a wotten pun?" hooted Arthur Augustus.

"You've been watching the day go, have you?" bawled Digby. "Well, now you can watch something else come! Bump the silly ass!"

"Here, I say—chuck—it—" yelled Monty Lowther, as Study No. 6 jumped at him as one man and collared him right and left. "I say—yaroooooh!"

Bump!

The Silver Swallow almost shook as Monty Lowther was bumped on the floor of the passenger cabin. Monty roared. He yelled. Perhaps he had expected the Fourth Form fellows to laugh over that leg-pull. Whatever he had expected, he had not expected this! This was what he got!

Bump!

"Oh! Owl! Leggo!" roared Monty.

"Give him another!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bump him!"
 "Ow! Oh! Rescue!" yelled Lowther, struggling frantically. "Tom, you ass— Manners, you fathead— Rescue! Yaroooh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry and Manners. Monty's joke had struck them as more or less funny, but the outcome struck them as funnier still. They yelled.

"One more for luck!" gasped Blake.

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Study No. 6 released Monty, leaving him sitting on the floor of the cabin, gasping and spluttering for breath. He was still spluttering when the Silver Swallow circled down to the landing-place and came to rest on a wide lawn in the grounds of the Villa des Fleurs.

CHAPTER 2.

Awkward for Gussy!

"**B**AI JOVE! Pawson knows how to manage things, deah boys!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"He do—he does!" agreed Tom Merry.

"Topping!" said Blake.

"What-ho!" agreed Manners.

Everybody was pleased.

Indeed, any fellow who had failed to feel pleased at the Villa des Fleurs, at Cannes, would have been a difficult fellow to please at all.

It was a one-story building, with wide verandas running round three sides, standing in extensive grounds that glowed with many-coloured flowers. Tropical-looking palms nodded by the garden walks.

Wistaria clung and clustered over the verandas, almost hiding them from sight. White walls and red roofs peeped out. Tall french windows reflected back the last gleam of the setting sun.

Almost within a stone's throw the blue Mediterranean rolled, dotted here and there with white sails.

Lord Eastwood's man, Pawson, had the task of managing that trip for the St. Jim's air-trippers. Undoubtedly Pawson did his work well. Pawson had fixed up all this by telephone from Paris while his youthful charges were seeing the sights of that city. The admirable Pawson had picked out a very pleasant spot for the sojourn in Cannes.

Half a dozen menservants were carrying the juniors' suitcases from the plane to the villa. In a wide doorway at the back of a wide porch clustered with wistaria a very fat gentleman stood awaiting the juniors as they walked to the house, bowing in greeting long before they reached him.

Apparently he was a butler. He seemed overjoyed to behold the English milords—which was very polite of a butler who was let along with the furnished villa.

He was a very fat gentleman. He bowed and bowed with Gallic politeness as soon as he spotted the party coming up the flower-bordered path. Every time he bowed his well-filled waistcoat almost touched his plump knees, and his doublechin nearly disappeared into his collar.

Arthur Augustus fixed his eyeglass on him as he approached in something like alarm. Gussy liked politeness; but at every bow he rather feared that the plump major-domo might burst something.

"That's the butlah, I pwesume," remarked

Arthur Augustus. "You'd bettah leave it to me to speak to him, as I speak the best Fwench here."

"Who speaks the worst?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, don't call him a cochon, as you did the cabdriver in Paris," said Blake. "The Froggies get shirty if you call them pigs."

"Weally, Blake, the word cochon is so vewy like the word cocher that any fellow might get mixed. Pway leave it to me! Pawson told me that chap's name. It means Butcher in English, I think—"

"Boucher?" suggested Tom Merry.

"No, that's not it. Pewwaps it means gwocah—"

"Epicier?" said Tom.

"Bai Jove! No! I know it means somethin'—you see, I was memowisin' it by that! Pewwaps it's bakah."

"Boulanger!"

"That's it—Monsieur Boulangah! I knew I wemembahed it all wight!" said Arthur Augustus. "A fellow doesn't want to bwag about his Fwench, you know, but I am wathah a dab at it. That butlah chap is named Boulangah, which means butcher—I mean, gwocah—that is to say, bakah, in English. Leave it to me to speak to him; you fellows are suah to get it w'ong if you put it in Fwench."

Monsieur Boulanger was bowing as if by clock-work. How he got his weight up again after letting it down rather puzzled the juniors. Perhaps he had had a lot of practice.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus, as they came into the porch. "The chap is feahfully polite, but I weally hope that he will not bwreak somethin', bobbin' up and down like that! He is wathah too fat for those gymnastics, you know. Bai Jove! He is about twice as fat as Fatty Wynn, at St. Jim's."

"Shurrup, ass!" whispered Tom.

The plump major-domo's plump face was wreathed in a large, wide, welcoming smile, which no doubt he turned on regularly for the successive tenants of the Villa des Fleurs. But as Arthur Augustus made his remark Tom discerned a sudden slackening, as it were, in that large, wide smile. It occurred to him that the major-domo of a Riviera villa often let to English visitors probably spoke English.

But that rather obvious possibility did not occur to Arthur Augustus' powerful brain.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" he said.

"Suppose—" murmured Tom.

"No supposin' about it, deah boy—he's at least twice as fat as Fatty Wynn, at St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! It would be wathah a good spot of exahcise to walk wound him. How he does those physical jerks without burstin' somethin' is quite a mystewy to me. What are you makin' faces at me for, Tom Mewwy?"

"Gussy, you ass—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, there is no harm in wemarkin' on the chap bein' tewwifically fat when he cannot undahstand a word I say. I twust you do not think me capable of makin' any wemark on it when I speak to him in Fwench!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you can wely on my good mannahs. I am surprised at you, Tom Mewwy!"

"I think that sportsman's surprised at you,
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too," remarked Monty Lowther. "Come on, Gussy, and don't open your mouth any more; you always put your foot in it, you know."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Welcome, gentlemen!" said the major-domo of the Villa des Fleurs, as the juniors arrived in the doorway. "I have happiness in welcoming you to the Villa des Fleurs after your so venturous journey in one aeroplane. I—Hippolite Boulanger—and all others are at your orders."

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus in dismay.

Gussy crimsoned.

Evidently Monsieur Boulanger understood English as he was speaking it.

Arthur Augustus stood overwhelmed. His manners were, as a rule, unimpeachable. He would have perished a hundred times, if not a thousand, before allowing himself to be heard making personal remarks. But the fat gentleman had undoubtedly heard every unfortunate word. It was really awful!

"Please to enter!" continued Monsieur Boulanger, waving a large plump hand. "Gratify me by pleasing to enter with yourselves."

Tom Merry & Co. gratified Monsieur Boulanger by pleasing to enter with themselves. Arthur Augustus entered with a crimson face.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Dud-dud-do you speak English, Monsieur Bouchah—I mean, Epicier—that is, Boulangah?"

"A small English, monsieur," said Monsieur Boulanger, bowing. "Meeting many English milords, I come to learn some small English."

"I weally beg your pardon, monsieur!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I assuah you that I did not mean to be wude! Pway accept my apologies!"

"Du tout, sair! Rien de rien!" said Monsieur Boulanger, still bowing as if by clockwork. "Monsieur Pawson, he come to arrive with himself after?"

"Pawson's coming on by train," explained Tom Merry. "He was feeling rather shaky on the plane, so he took the train from Millau."

"C'est ca! That wishes to say verree good! You come, that I the rooms display."

"I weally assuah you I wegwet extwemely—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Par ici, messieurs!"

Still bowing as if he had a spring in his podgy back, the major-domo bowed the juniors to their quarters—a row of light and airy rooms on the veranda. Five or six menservants carried in their suitcases.

Having bowed them to their rooms, Monsieur Boulanger bowed himself away, backing, in the middle of a bow, round the corner from the passage into the hall.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus in great distress. "I suppose there is no doubt, deah boys, that that chap heard me wemarkin' that he was vewy fat?"

"Hardly!" grinned Blake.

"Better stick to French here, Gussy!" advised Monty Lowther; "then the natives will never know what you're saying."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally it is not a laughin' mattah!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is fwrightfully bad form to make remarks on a chap bein' fat. Of course, I should nevah have uttached a word if it had occurred to me that he understood English. Anybody might have wemarked how fat he was, you know, as he is so tewwifically fat—"

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"Chuck it!" hissed Tom Merry, as the plump major-domo appeared round the corner from the hall.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus who, having his back to that corner, was unaware that the major-domo was returning. "Weally, I think it was quite excusable, in the circumstances, the chap bein' so vewy, vewy fat—"

"Dinner will be served," said a voice behind Arthur Augustus.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus revolved suddenly on his axis. His eye almost popped through his eyeglass at the sight of Monsieur Boulanger again.

"In thirty minutes, if it pleases you then to dine," continued Monsieur Boulanger, unmoved.

"Bai Jove!"

Monsieur Boulanger bowed himself away again. "Oh cwumbs! Do you think he heard me?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! He will think I have feahfully bad mannahs to keep on wemarkin' how fat he is! What are you fellows laughin' at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. dispersed to their rooms to change for dinner. Arthur Augustus went into his room with a very worried brow. He was deeply distressed by that unintentional faux-pas. But there was only half an hour in which to dress for dinner, which meant very quick work—for Arthur Augustus—so he had to dismiss the distressing episode from his noble mind, and concentrate on matters of immediate urgency.

CHAPTER 3.

Not a False Alarm!

"THE dago!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "What!" roared six fellows.

Dinner was over. Soft moonlight streamed down on the Villa des Fleurs, on its wide-extended gardens, on the white road that ran outside the gates, and on the glistening sea.

Tom Merry & Co. were taking a walk in the moonlit gardens, thoroughly enjoying their first evening in Cannes. Arthur Augustus was surmising by what train Pawson would reach the town, and at what late hour he would arrive. Monty Lowther, strolling a little ahead of his chums, was thinking.

The subject of his reflections, in point of fact, was the name of the town in which the St. Jim's trippers were now sojourning. A town's name which was pronounced "Can" offered scope for a pun.

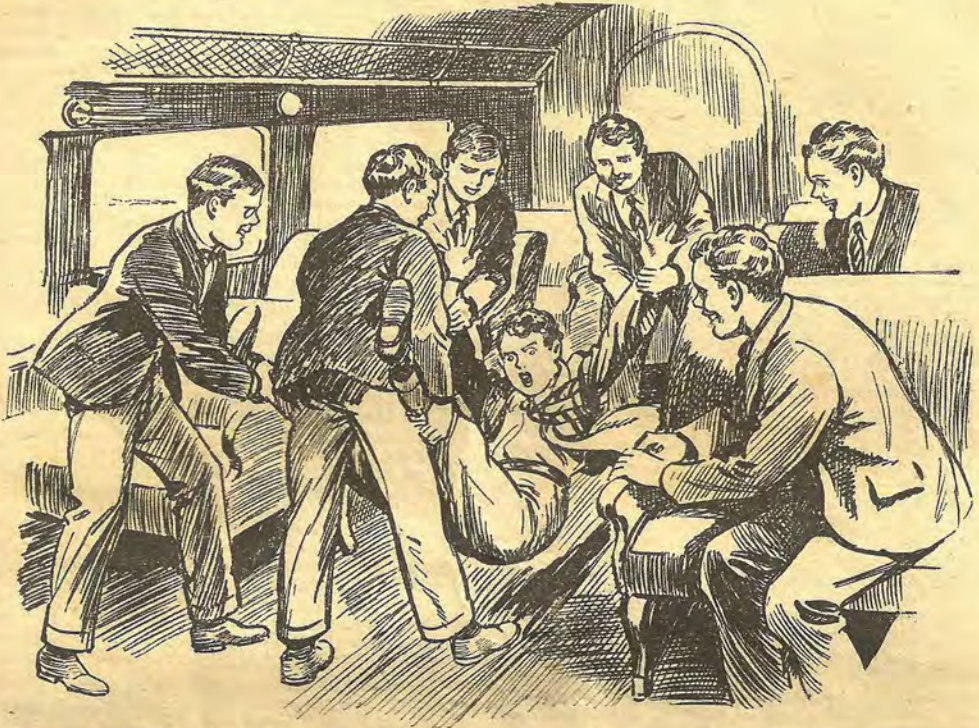
But Monty came out of those reflections with a jump.

Between the gardens and the road was a wall, which was thickly clustered with wistaria. Monty was walking along the path that ran parallel with the wall, when a rustle in the wistaria caught his ears, and his glance shot up, to fix on a dark and swarthy face that was peering through the creepers.

Lowther came to a halt, startled.

He knew that face—the swarthy, greasy face of Giuseppe Fosco! It was the Italian, who was tracking Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to relieve him of the mysterious black box that Gussy had in his keeping.

The dago did not notice Lowther for a moment. His black, beady eyes were fixed on Arthur



The Silver Swallow almost shook as Monty Lowther was bumped on the floor of the cabin. He yelled. Perhaps he had expected Blake & Co. to laugh over the leg-pull. Whatever he had expected he had not expected this! Bump! "Oh! Ow! Leggo!" roared Monty. "Give him another!" said Blake. "Yaas, wathah!"

Augustus, a few paces off with the other fellows.

But Monty's eyes were full on him as he stirred the wistaria to clear his line of vision. Evidently the dago had pulled himself up the wall from the road—perhaps at the sound of voices within—to look into the garden of the villa. Equally, evidently, he knew that the St. Jim's party were at Cannes, and had located them at the Villa des Fleurs.

For a moment, Monty Lowther stood as if spell-bound, staring at the dark face, and the scintillating black eyes. Then he shouted "The dago!" and made a jump forward, to grasp at the man before he could drop back.

"The dago! I saw the dago!" shouted Lowther.

"At it again!" roared Blake. "My hat! Isn't that rotten joke played out yet? Give him some more of the same!"

"I tell you I saw the dago!" yelled Lowther. "Hands off, you silly fatheads! I saw the dago—"

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Study No. 6 collared Monty Lowther promptly. He had pulled their leg on the Silver Swallow. He was not pulling it again. They collared him, and sat him down on the gravel path. Not for a moment did they doubt that the funny man of the Shell was being funny again.

Bump!

Monty Lowther sat down hard and heavy. He yelled as he sat on the gravel. It was not a comfortable seat.

"You potty chumps!" yelled Lowther. "I tell you I saw the dago!"

"We all saw the day go, old bean!" grinned Blake. "Can't you think out a new one?"

"Yaas, wathah! That's gettin' wathah old, Lowthah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "You can't catch the same bird twice with the same chaff, you know."

"So you saw the day go, did you?" grinned Herries.

"Yes, just there. Let go—"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly owls!" yelled Monty Lowther, scrambling up in a flying cloud of gravel. "Haven't you a spot of sense? You've let him get away now! I tell you I saw the dago—"

"Can it!" said Manners. "That joke's wearing thin, old chap!"

"Tell us a new one!" suggested Tom Merry.

"Fathead!" gasped Lowther. "Ass! Chump!"

He made a bound at the wall and clambered up, in a sea of wistaria, at the spot where he had seen that swarthy face peering through.

But the dark face was gone, and there was no sign of any man to be seen on the moonlit white road. Giuseppe Fosco had lost no time once the alarm was given.

The six fellows on the path stared at Lowther.

"What's that game?" asked Blake.

"Bai Jove! You will make your clobber feahfully dustay. Lowthah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I should not like to wisk my twousahs like that."

"Gone!" hooted Lowther, from the top of the wall.

"Who's gone?" asked Tom Merry.

"The dago!" yelled Lowther. "We might have got him this time! Now he's gone! You blithering asses have let him get away!"

Tom Merry jumped.

"The dago!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to say that you saw the dago?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Didn't I tell you so?" howled Lowther. "He was spying through the wistaria, and I saw him! We could have grabbed him if those Fourth Form fags hadn't played the goat! Now he's gone!"

Monty Lowther dropped back from the wall. His chums stared at him, realising that it had not, after all, been a false alarm.

"Well, you ass!" said Blake.

"Didn't I tell you—" yelled Lowther.

"You fathead!" hooted Herries.

"Look here—"

"You chump!" said Dig.

"I told you—"

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "This is weally too bad, Lowthah! It appeahs that that wotten dago has twailed us down to this place, and we might have collahed him, and chucked him into chokay, if you hadn't been such a leg-pullin' ass! I twust, Lowthah, that this will be a warnin' to you!"

"Idiot!"

"Weally, Lowthah, of all the cwass asses—"

"I told you—" raved Lowther.

"How were we to know you were talking sense?" demanded Blake. "Is it a thing any fellow who knows you would expect?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Your own fault, Monty; you're too funny by half. Let's cut out on the road and see if he's still about."

The juniors hurried along to the gate, and ran out on the road.

On their left, the town of Cannes lay brightly lighted and sparkling. On their right, the road wound away up into the dusky hills. In front of them was the sea. They looked up and down and round about, but there was no sign of the dago. Giuseppe Fosco, if he had been there, had departed promptly.

"We shall have to be on our guard to-night if that brute knows where to put his finger on us," remarked Tom Merry, as they came back towards the gate after a fruitless search down the dusky road.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

"The black box is all wight, as it is still in the post, and will not be collected ffrom the post office till to-morrow. But that wottah Fosco doesn't know that. I dare say he thinks it is in my pocket."

"We should have had him," grunted Lowther, "if you fellows hadn't been such fatheaded chumps!"

"You mean, if you hadn't been such a funny ass!" said Blake.

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"Look here, you Fourth Form chump—" "Well, you look here, you Shell fathead—" "Chuck it!" said Tom Merry. "Can't be helped now. We'd better get in to bed—it's past bed-time! No good waiting for Pawson, I suppose?"

"Talk of angels!" said Blake.

"What—"

"There's Pawson!"

A car came up the road from the direction of Cannes, and stopped at the gate of the Villa des Fleurs. The juniors, still a little distance from the gate, looked at it and saw a portly form descend—the well-known portly figure of Pawson, Lord Eastwood's man.

CHAPTER 4.

Pawson Jumps!

"PAWSON!" murmured Manners. There was rather a peculiar expression on the face of Manners of the Shell.

Tom Merry gave him a quick look.

Tom was the only member of the St. Jim's party to whom Harry Manners had confided his doubts and suspicions of Pawson. Tom knew what the expression on Manners' face meant at the sight of Lord Eastwood's valet.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That's Pawson, deah boys! Come on! Pawson will be glad to see that we awived safe and sound in the plane and wight on time!"

"Will he?" murmured Manners.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Tom.

"Bai Jove! What did you say, Mannahs?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Manners coloured. The unsuspecting Gussy was the last fellow in the wide world to whom he would have uttered a word of his suspicions, unless he had proof to back them up.

"Oh, nothing, old chap!" he stammered. "Cut on!"

Arthur Augustus cut on, with Blake and Herries, Dig and Lowther. Manners caught Tom Merry's arm and slowed him down. The car was backing and turning to return to the railway station at Cannes, and Pawson had gone in at the gate without seeing the juniors on the dusky road.

"Pawson's arrived, Tom," said Manners in a low voice. "Think he expects us to have arrived here before him?"

"Yes, I do, old chap!" answered Tom. "I know what you think—but—Pawson's all right!"

"We're going to see," said Manners quietly. "Look here, Tom, you know what I think! Gussy sent that dashed black box ahead by registered post to Cannes to get it off his hands during the trip. It arrived long ago, and is waiting at the post office to be collected. When we dropped down at that place in the Cevennes, Pawson made an excuse to go on by train from Millau—"

"He gave a good reason," said Tom.

"Trust him for that!" said Manners, with a curl of the lip. "Anyhow, he did—and left us to follow on by plane, after exploring that old show in the Cevennes. Our guide lost us—the guide specially engaged by Pawson—and but for an utterly unexpected stroke of luck, we should have had to stay over another day."

"I know," said Tom uneasily. "But—"

"So, instead of arriving in a quick plane before Pawson in a slow train, we should have arrived a good bit after him—if Pawson fixed it up with that guide!"

"I can't think he did."
 "I can—and do," said Manners. "And as he knows nothing about our stroke of luck in getting off after all, I'm certain that he thinks we're still back in the Cevennes, and will be jolly startled to find that we've got in first after all!"
 "Um!" said Tom. "Well, we'll see if he looks startled!"
 "That's what I'm speaking to you for—keep an eye on his face when he sees us here!" said Manners. "He planned to leave us behind so that he could collect that packet with the black box in it at the post office before we turned up—and if he did, Gussy would never see it again!"

"Pawson can't know what's in it, Manners! He knows nothing about it, except that some man landed it on Gussy to take care of, and that that dago Fosco is after it like a dog after a bone!"

"He knows from that that it must contain something awfully valuable. Dagoes don't run all those risks for nothing!"

"Well, yes! But—"
 "Gussy won't open it, of course, as it was entrusted to him—he can't! But if he did, he would find something jolly valuable in it! Whatever it is, Fosco knows!"

"I suppose so! But—"
 "But," said Manners, "Pawson isn't collecting that box without an eye on him to-morrow morning! I'm going to see that he doesn't, as we've got here in time, after all!"

"I hardly think—," murmured Tom.
 "Quite!" agreed Manners. "You've nothing much to do it with, old bean, or you'd think the same as I do!"

"Don't be an ass! Let's get in, and see whether Pawson jumps when he spots us here. I suppose that's what you want?"

"Exactly!"
 "Come on, then, they're going in!"
 The two Shell fellows hurried on and joined the rest of the party as they were turning in at the gate. Pawson had already disappeared up the path towards the villa. Arthur Augustus was talking as they went up the shadowed path.

"Pawson will wathah jump, you fellows, when we tell him what happened to us in the Cevennes—about that wascally guide losin' us, you know. It's wathah wuff on Pawson, because he specially selected that guide, and thought that he was feahfully twustworthy! Howevah, it wasn't Pawson's fault that the wotfah turned out to be a wascal!"

"Not at all!" agreed Blake.
 "We must be vewy careful not to say anythin' implin' that we considah Pawson to blame!" added the considerate Gussy. "It would hurt his feelin's, you know! And he is weally a wonderful man, Pawson—bein' taken in by that wotten guide is the only mistake he's made on this twip."

There was a sudden stream of light from the shadows ahead. The front door of the villa had opened. Light streamed out into the porch, revealing the portly form of Pawson standing there. Within was seen the much more portly figure of Monsieur Boulanger, who had opened the door.

So far, it was clear, Pawson had no idea that the juniors were on the path behind him. According to Manners, he had no idea that they had reached Cannes at all.

Tom Merry could not share Manners' doubts of Lord Eastwood's man. But he could not help feeling a little curious to note how Pawson would react to the sudden sight of the St. Jim's crowd.

If Manners was right, he had plotted with the Cevennes guide to keep them back; and certainly he could have no knowledge that anything had gone wrong with that plot. So if he still believed them to be far away in the Cevennes, it was certain that he would be surprised and a good deal startled to see them now.

Arthur Augustus ran on a little ahead of the others who were close to the porch when the door opened. Pawson was speaking to the major-domo within, when Arthur Augustus called to him.

"Heah we are, Pawson!"
 That familiar voice behind him seemed to have the effect of an electric shock on Lord Eastwood's man!

Manners had said that he would jump. He did not merely jump—he bounded! Portly as Pawson was, he fairly bounded, and spun round from the doorway with lightning swiftness.

Manners pressed Tom's arm.

"Look!" he breathed.
 Tom Merry did not need to be told to look. His eyes were on Pawson's startled face, and he caught his breath. At that moment he believed that Manners was right.

For if Pawson knew nothing of the delay caused by the guide in the Cevennes—if he had not expected the juniors to be kept back in the mountains—if he had expected them to arrive as per arrangement ahead of him at the Villa des Fleurs—why did he look startled at seeing them there?

For he did look startled. He looked astounded. His eyes seemed on the point of popping from his portly face.

He stared at Arthur Augustus as if the swell



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of St. Jim's were his own spectre. He seemed, for the moment, unable to believe that Arthur Augustus really was there.

So utter was his surprise that even the unsuspecting Gussy could not help seeing it, and being surprised by it.

"Bai Jove! I'm not a ghost, Pawson!" said Arthur Augustus, smiling. "Is anythin' the mattah, Pawson?"

Almost in a moment, Pawson recovered himself.

For one moment—hardly more than a moment—he had been utterly startled and amazed and taken off his guard. But it passed swiftly, and Pawson was himself again. There was a perceptible pause before he spoke; but when he did, his voice was as calm and bland as usual.

"Dear me! Is that you, Master Arthur?"

"Yaas, wathah, Pawson! Did I startle you, my dear chap? I did not mean to startle you, Pawson!"

"I admit you did, sir!" said Pawson. "At this hour I expected that you boys would be gone to bed, and your voice behind me suddenly gave me quite a start!"

"I am weally sowwy, Pawson!"

"Not at all, sir!" said Pawson. "I am afraid I am, perhaps, a little nervy after a day's travel in slow French trains. I trust, sir, that you had a pleasant trip in the plane."

Tom Merry doubted his eyes. He wondered whether he had fancied that startled amazement in Pawson's face. There was not the slightest trace of it now. Pawson was completely his calm, bland, deferential self.

"Yaas, wathah! It was a vevy agweeable flip, Pawson," answered Arthur Augustus, "though we came vevy neah missin' the plane, and havin' to stay ovah anoathah day! But I'll tell you about that latah—you must be feahfully tired aftah a day in the twain! Twot in, Pawson!"

Manners gave Tom Merry a significant look as the juniors went into the villa.

"Well?" he whispered.

Tom did not answer. He did not know what to think. But Manners did—or, at least, he was convinced that he did; and if Lord Eastwood's man was playing a double game, there was going to be at least one watchful and wary eye on him.

CHAPTER 5.

Early Birds!

"TURN out!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Don't slack, old man!"

Bright and early in the morning, Manners of the Shell came into Tom Merry's room in the Villa des Fleurs.

Early as it was, the sun was shining brightly on the rolling blue Mediterranean and the bright banks of flowers from which the "Villa of Flowers" took its name. Manners threw open the slatted "volets" at Tom's window, letting in a flood of sunshine.

Tom yawned.

He was no slacker. But the previous day had been a long, hard, tiring one for the St. Jim's trippers. Morning and afternoon had been spent in tramping on the rocks of the Cevennes; then had come the "hop" to Cannes, and the juniors had gone to bed rather late. In which circumstances, they felt entitled to an extra hour in bed.

"Look here, Manners," yawned Tom, "what's

the big idea? I'm tired. So are you! So's everybody! Chuck it!"

"Tumble up!" answered Manners.

"What's the time?" demanded Tom.

"Seven!"

"Well, you ass, leave it till eight, anyhow!" exclaimed Tom. "Bother you, we're on holiday, aren't we—and we fagged ourselves to the limit yesterday. What are you up to?"

"We're going to the post office with Gussy to collect his packet!" said Manners. "I'm going to root Gussy out!"

"Oh, blow!" said Tom. "I heard Gussy tell Pawson last night that he left it to him to collect the mail at the post office! That's Pawson's job, isn't it?"

"Quite! He can collect all the mail he likes, and stick to it, for all I care, except the packet with the black box in it! He's not going to stick to that!" said Manners.

Tom Merry gave another prolonged yawn. Overnight, he had been rather impressed by Manners' doubts of Pawson. In the early morning, half-awake, he was not so much impressed.

"Well, it's all right, anyhow," he said. "The post office doesn't open till nine, and it's only a short walk into Cannes."

"Doesn't it?" said Manners.

"No; I heard Gussy ask Pawson, and he said nine!"

"He would!" agreed Manners.

Tom sat up.

"Look here, Manners, don't be an ass! Think Pawson would have said nine if the post office opened earlier?"

"Yes!"

"Fathead!" said Tom.

Manners laughed—a sarcastic laugh.

"You see, when Pawson said nine, I sort of wondered if he'd got it right," he explained. "So before I went to bed, I got an opportunity of asking Monsieur Boulanger on the quiet! He told me the post office in Cannes opens at eight."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

"It would suit Pawson to call for the mail while we're all in bed," continued Manners sarcastically. "It would serve his turn, just as well as leaving us over an extra day in the Cevennes! But he's not pulling my leg so easily as yours."

Tom looked steadily at his chum for a moment or two. Then he turned out of bed.

"I suppose Boulanger knows—and Pawson might be mistaken," he said. "He can't know everything, though old Gussy fancies he does. But if the post office opens at eight, we'd better get going. Is the idea to trot along with Pawson when he goes to collect the mail?"

"Just that!"

"All right, then! I can't think that you've got it right, Manners, but I do agree that there's no harm in seeing that that packet gets safely to Gussy. The silly ass gave some stranger his word to take care of it, and it's got to be taken care of."

"If you want to stick in bed, you can leave it to me!" said Manners. "But the blighter may get up to some trick or other, and it would be safer to have more than one on the spot! He's as cunning as a bagful of monkeys."

Tom Merry laughed.

"All right, ass—I'll come! Let a chap get his bags on!"

Manners left Tom to dress and went along to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's room. In that room he found four beds, instead of the one that had been there when the trippers arrived. Blah.

Herries, and Digby had taken up their quarters in Gussy's room for the night to see him safe if the dago cropped up.

Evidently the dago had not cropped up; Manners found Study No. 6 all fast asleep, and slumbering peacefully.

He crossed over to Arthur Augustus' bed, and gave the swell of St. Jim's a shake. Gussy's eyes opened sleepily.

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Mannahs?"

"Yes, old bean! Turn out!"

"Yaw-aw-aw! What's the time, Mannahs?"

"Ten past seven!"

"I'm wathah sleepay, Mannahs! Wun away and play, and leave a chap to wepose."

"But we want you, old chap!" said Manners. Manners could not explain to Arthur Augustus that he was going to keep an eye on Pawson. Arthur Augustus' property had to be protected without Arthur Augustus being told that it was in need of protection. "Tom and I are going out—"

"It's feahfully early to twot out, Mannahs, aftah gettin' feahfully fagged yestahday! Go back to bed."

"We're going into Cannes," said Manners. "I don't think you ought to let us down, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I twust I am not the chap to let a fellow down! But how am I lettin' you down, you ass?"

"Well, you know the troubles a fellow can land in among a lot of foreigners, unless they've got a chap with them who speaks the language!" said Manners solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"You can't let down chaps who rely on you, Gussy, just because you want to slack in bed like Trimble of the Fourth!"

"Pway do not compare me with Twimble, Mannahs! Of course, if you put it like that, I will turn out at once, and twot along with you! But I am weally vewy sleepay."

"Lovely out of doors," said Manners. "The sea's glorious, and Cannes looks like a picture postcard! Cut your bath this morning!"

"Are you jokin', Mannahs?"

"No, ass!"

"Then pway don't be an ass!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I can wuff it when wequiahed, but I see no weason at all in wuffin' it now to that fwightful extent!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Well, buck up!" grunted Manners, and he left Arthur Augustus draping himself in a dressing gown.

Manners strolled along to the hall, where the door stood wide open on the sunny, scented garden. A May morning on the Riviera was delightful; and Manners stood looking out at the rolling sea beyond the gardens and the road till Tom Merry joined him. Monsieur Boulanger and his myrmidons were laying breakfast for three on a table under a tree.

"Pawson up yet?" asked Tom with a smile, as he joined his chum.

"I haven't seen him."

"Bet you he's fast asleep in bed. Must be jolly tired after a day in French trains."

"Pawson's room is like the rest—he can step out on his veranda without showing up, if he likes."

"And you think he has?"

"He has—or he's going to," said Manners sourly. "He doesn't know whether any of us

might turn out early, and I dare say he'd rather not meet our eyes."

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Tom good-humouredly. "Bet you he's fast asleep, and will still be asleep when we go out."

"None so blind as those who won't see!" remarked Manners. "Let's get some brekker!"

The two juniors went out into the sunny garden. Pawson's room opened on the veranda on the left side of the house, where all the household staff had their quarters. It could not be seen from the gardens in front. Certainly, if Pawson desired to leave the villa unnoticed, it was easy enough for him to do so; he had only to step out by his french window, and leave quietly by a back gate, without being seen at all.

"Bonjour, messieurs!" greeted Monsieur Boulanger. "One verre fine morning! You rise from bed at early hours, isn't it?" Monsieur Boulanger bowed as he began, and bowed again as he finished, with the easy grace of a polite hippopotamus.

"Bonjour!" said Tom. "Is Pawson up yet, Monsieur Boulanger?"

"Non!" answered the major-domo. "He take an early breakfast with himself, that good Monsieur Pawson, alors, il dorme—he sleep—he comes to be fatigued with travel in one train."

"Still in bed, then?" asked Tom.

"Mais oui, monsieur."

Tom gave Manners a grin as they sat down to breakfast. Pawson had breakfasted in bed and gone to sleep again, which was quite a natural proceeding in the circumstances. Tom had little or no doubt of it. Manners had! It remained to be seen which was right.

The two Shell fellows had finished breakfast, and Manners was getting impatient, when Arthur Augustus appeared. Gussy's morning toilet was not a rapid operation. It was now a quarter to eight, and though the walk to the post office in the Rue Notre Dame, in Cannes, was a short one, Manners did not mean to be a minute late when that establishment opened its doors for the day.

"Bai Jove! Lovely mornin', you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus, dropping into a vacant chair. "Anybody else up?"

"Nobody yet!" said Tom.

"We're feahfully earlay birds!" said Arthur Augustus. "Coffee, please—I mean, cafe au lait, s'il vous plait! And some of those nice little wolls! Is anythin' the mattah, Mannahs? You seem wathah fidgety, old chap."

"We're waiting!" grunted Manners.

"Is there any huwvy?"

"Well, we want to get going!" said Tom. "Buck up, Gussy! Can't give you more than five minutes."

"Bai Jove! What's the feahful huwvy? How-evah, I will not keep you waitin', if you want to start. I'll wush through bwekkah."

Fortunately, meals were not such important functions as dressing or changing clobber, in Gussy's estimation. He was got away from the table in five minutes, and the three juniors went together down the path to the gate on the road by the sea. Manners turned in the direction of the town, and his companions followed on.

Arthur Augustus sauntered with elegant leisure, quite unaware that several times Harry Manners was tempted to accelerate him with a foot on his beautiful trousers. But it was only a few

minutes into the town—and as they came into the Rue Notre Dame Arthur Augustus uttered an exclamation.

"Bai Jove! We're not the only earlay birds, you fellows! There's Pawson!"

"Dear me!" said Manners, with a grim, satirical smile.

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

Ahead of the juniors was a portly figure. Pawson—evidently an early bird also—was walking along the Rue Notre Dame, and as the three juniors looked at his portly back, he stopped at the post office. It was one minute to eight!

CHAPTER 6. Safety First!

"GOOD-MORNIN', Pawson!"

Pawson repeated his performance of the previous evening!

That cheery greeting from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to startle him almost as much as the sight of Arthur Augustus at the door of the Villa des Fleurs.

He spun round

"Oh!" he ejaculated. The next moment he saluted Arthur Augustus with bland deference.

"Good-morning, sir! You are abroad early."

"Yaas wathah! Earlay to bed, earlay to wise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise, you know, Pawson!" said Arthur Augustus, apparently forgetful that Manners had rooted him out, and that, but for Manners, he would still have been fast asleep. "Nothin' like earlay wisin to keep a fellow fit! But weren't you tired, Pawson, aftah a day in a feahful Fwench twain?"

"A little, sir!" admitted Pawson. "But—the fact is, I did not sleep well after my journey, and I turned out a little early. If you desire a plesan' walk, I suggest the Boulevard de la Croisette—you obtain a splendid view, sir, of the harbour, and the boats—"

"That sounds' all wight!" said Arthur Augustus. "Let's staggah along to the Boulevard de la Cwoisette, you fellows."

"It is quite near here, sir!" said Pawson. "If you take that direction—"

"Wight-ho! Come on, Tom Mewwy—come on, Mannahs—"

"Hold on a minute!" said Manners.

He stooped to tie his shoe-lace—which did not need tying. The hour of eight was striking. The doors of the post office were due to open. They were not open yet, and Manners guessed that Pawson was banking on the leisurely manners and customs of the south to get the juniors off the scene before those doors did open.

It could hardly be a matter of more than a minute or two—which could be usefully occupied in tying a shoe-lace.

If Pawson was inwardly exasperated, as Manners had no doubt, no sign of it showed in his portly face. If he wanted to get rid of the juniors, there was nothing he could do. Tom Merry and D'Arcy had to wait while Manners tied that shoe-lace. And Manners was still industriously tying it when the doors of the post office opened and Arthur Augustus glanced round.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "They're openin' the post office, Pawson, and it is only eight. Didn't you say nine?"

The plump lips compressed a little.

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"I think the building opens early for the cleaners, not for the public, Master Arthur!" explained Pawson. "If you will follow the street opposite, it will land you directly to the Boulevard de la Croisette—"

"Yaas; come on, you chaps."

"Might as well go in for the mail as we're here!" suggested Manners blandly. Manners could be bland as well as Pawson.

"Nothin' dc n', deah boy—Pawson says they don't open for the public till nine!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pawson will see to that latah!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Pawson. "If you walk for an hour, the morning's mail will be ready for you at the villa when you return."

"Yaas, I shall be wathah glad to get my lettahs," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust there will be a lettah frowm my patah with news of the Nizam's Diamond. I should vevy much like to heah that they have snaffled that wotten wascal who wobbed my patah of the Nizam's Diamond. Wouldn't that be jollay good news, you fellows?"

"Topping!" said Tom Merry.

"Accordin' to what we heah on the wadio, they think that a howwd cwook called Chicago Hank had it!" said Arthur Augustus. "It would be wippin' to heah that they had collahed the bwute and got it back. I am vevy anxious for a lettah frowm my patah."

"Let's go in and see!" said Manners, still bland. "There's people going in, so it looks as if the place is open for the public. Perhaps they've altered the time since Pawson was last in Cannes."

"Yaas, I suppose that's poss. Do you think so, Pawson?"

"I hardly think so, sir! I do not think it will be possible to claim letters before nine o'clock!" said Pawson, shaking his head.

"Oh, all wight! Come on, Mannahs—Pawson will get the lettahs. We're wastin' time, old chap."

"Well, we'd all like letters from home if we can get them!" said Manners, still bland, and inflexibly determined. "Let's make sure! I'll ask this chap."

A postman was coming out of the building, and Manners addressed him.

"Excusez-moi—la poste est ouverte?" asked Manners.

"Oui, m'sieur!" answered the man.

"Bai Jove! He says it's open," said Arthur Augustus in surprise. "You must have got the time w'ong, aftah all, Pawson! Let's go in and get the lettahs."

Tom Merry glanced at Pawson as the juniors went in, and Lord Eastwood's man respectfully followed.

If Pawson was really playing the game Manners suspected, Tom could guess what his feelings must be like. But Pawson's portly face was quite expressionless. If he had anything to hide, he was good at hiding it.

It proved that letters and packets were available—evidently Pawson had got the time wrong! There were several letters for Gussy, and one for Tom—and there was, of course, the registered packet waiting for Arthur Augustus.

Manners grinned cheerfully as Gussy slipped the packet containing the mysterious black box into an inner pocket. He noted that Pawson's eyes followed it as it disappeared there, though Pawson's face expressed nothing.

Leaving Pawson in the Rue Notre Dame, the

three juniors walked down to the boulevard by the shining sea.

They sat down on a seat on the Boulevard de la Croisette to watch the yachts and other craft in the harbour. There Arthur Augustus drew the packet out, unpacked it, and revealed the black box.

"Wight as wain!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "Wathah a bwight ideah to send it on to Cannes by registered post, deah boys, what?"

"Brilliant!" agreed Tom Merry, with a smile.

"You see, it was perfectly safe in the post, and that wotten dago nevah had a chance to get at it on our way down south!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Is that whv you're giving him one now?" asked Manners.

"Bai Jove! What do you mean, Mannahs?"

"I mean that about fifty people have passed while you've been unpacking that packet, and a dozen of them were Italians!" answered Manners.

"I nevah thought of that, deah boy! But it's all wight—that dago won't get it off me," said Arthur Augustus confidently. "I'm wathah wary, you know."

"Oh, fearfully!" agreed Manners. "Never was such a wary chap, Gussy! Nobody could pull your leg right under your nose, what?"

"Wathah not!" assented Arthur Augustus.

"What will you bet that your pocket won't be picked before we get back to the villa?" asked Manners.

"If I were a bettin' chap, Mannahs, I would bet a million to one."

"Sorry you're not a betting chap, then!" said Manners. "Chance to make a fortune if you were."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Look here, old chap!" said Manners earnestly. "You were a howling ass to take charge of that black box. But you've done it, and it's plain that it's got something awfully valuable in it. It's up to you to take care of it. Let Tom put it into his pocket going back."

"Tom Mewwy isn't a careful chap like me, Mannahs."

"Oh! Perhaps not!" gasped Manners. "But it's you the dago will have his eye on, not Tom. See?"

"Yaas, there's somethin' in that!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Put it in your pocket, Tom, old man."

"All right!" agreed Tom.

"Don't let all the world see you giving it to Tom!" said Manners hastily. "How do you know that Fosco isn't watching us this very minute? Any of those loafing Italians might be pals of his. Drop a hanky over it on the seat and let Tom take it without everybody in Cannes seeing him."

"Oh, all wight!"

D'Arcy laid the black box on the seat, and Tom Merry, taking out his handkerchief, dropped it



As the wooden shutters at the window were suddenly thrown open, the dago spun round, his hand flying to the back of his trousers where he packed his knife. In the french window stood the portly figure of Pawson, a revolver in his hand! "Leave that knife alone, my friend!" said Lord Eastwood's valet.

carelessly over the box. Both of them were smiling—both regarding Manners' caution as excessive. However, they played up.

Having allowed a few minutes to elapse, Tom picked up his handkerchief with the little black box inside it, and restored it to his pocket. The mysterious box was now in Tom's possession, the transfer unseen by any spying eye that might have been on the schoolboys on the crowded boulevard.

"And now," said Manners, "stick that packet together again very carefully, so that anybody can see that it's got something very valuable in it, and put it back in your pocket, Gussy."

"But there's nothin' in it now, Mannahs."

"No need to tell all the South of France that."

"Oh, all wight! You are wathah an ass, Mannahs, thinkin' that I might get my pocket picked, but anythin' for a quiet life."

The black box had travelled in a cardboard packet, carefully sealed. The swell of St. Jim's put together the cardboard packet, re-wrapped the paper round it, and restored it to his pocket. Any spying eye could not have failed to observe his action, but could not, certainly, have detected that the cardboard packet was now empty.

Then the three juniors resumed their walk. After a stroll on the Boulevard de la Croisette they walked back through the town. By way of the Boulevard du Midi they arrived at last at the Villa des Fleurs. They had, on their way, passed through jostling crowds in several places. At the gate of the Villa des Fleurs Manners came to a stop.

"Before we go in let's see if you've got that packet safe, Gussy!" he said.

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Safe as houses, deah boy! Think I've had my pocket picked?"

"Well let's see."

"Oh, all wight! Look!"

Arthur Augustus slid his hand into the pocket where he had placed the cardboard packet. Then quite an extraordinary expression came over his face.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

His hand came out empty.

"Gone?" asked Manners.

"Yaas! It is weally most extwaordinawy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Somebody must have been watchin' us all the time, you know, and some wotten wascal has picked my pocket! He's got that packet."

"Lucky the black box wasn't in it," said Manners dryly.

"Oh cwikey! Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus chuckled. "He's welcome to an empty cardboard packet! Ha, ha! Do you know, you fellows, I nevah had the faintest ideah that my pocket had been picked—not the foggiest! And you know what a wary chap I am!"

"Don't we?" grinned Tom Merry.

"The bwute must have been feahfully skilful!" said Arthur Augustus. "You see, it's not only that I'm a wary bird, but I was on my guard all the time. Yet it happened! It's jollay luckay that that beastly black box was in Tom's pocket, and not in mine. Got it safe, Tom?"

"Quite!" said Tom, laughing.

"Leave it where it is now," suggested Manners.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I had bettah take care of it," he answered.

"You see, I'm wathah a more wary chap than Tom Mewwy. Safety first, you know!"

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"Oh crikey!"

And the black box was in Gussy's pocket once more as the juniors walked up the path to the Villa des Fleurs.

CHAPTER 7.

The Black Box Changes Hands!

"WHAT about the pictures?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Pictures—on a day like this?" said Tom Merry. "What about a boat?"

"I was thinking of taking some photographs," remarked Manners.

"There's a good picture-house—"

"There's a jolly good boat—"

"There's a splendid light for photographing."

Tom Merry laughed. The Terrible Three of the Shell were faithful comrades, but often and often their tastes differed.

"We don't get a chance to go into a French cinema every day," Lowther pointed out.

"How often do we get a chance of sailing the jolly old Mediterranean?" asked Tom.

"There's one thing," said Manners. "While I'm here I want to get a good lot of photographs. We don't come to the South of France every day."

After lunch the St. Jim's trippers discussed plans for the afternoon. Study No. 6 had already decided; they were going to play tennis. The three Shell fellows had three different ideas about what should be done.

"Well, look here!" said Lowther. "Where there's a will there's a way. We'll get the boat out and run down as far as the Boulevard de la Croisette. That's for you, Tom. Manners shall snap every man Jack and woman Jenny that we spot, as well as all the craft in the harbour. That's for you, Manners. And when we land we'll go to the pictures. That's for me!"

"A Daniel come to judgment!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "How about it, Manners?"

"O.K. with me," agreed Manners. "I'll get my camera."

Manners went into the villa. He found Blake, Herries, and Digby collected at the door of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's room. They were all speaking at once, and addressing D'Arcy within.

"How long are you going to be, Gussy?"

"Are you going to keep us a week, or a month?"

"Is it the big idea to play tennis by star-light?"

"Weally, you fellows, a fellow cannot change like gweased lightnin', you know! Pawson is helpin' me, and I shan't be long."

Manners paused.

He glanced into the room. Arthur Augustus was in spotless flannels, but his beautiful white shoes were not yet on. Arthur Augustus was quite capable of putting on his shoes unaided. There was no choice about that matter at school, in fact. Nevertheless, when a deferential manservant seemed to take real pleasure in assisting, Gussy was not the man to say him nay.

Pawson was putting on Gussy's shoes for him now. Arthur Augustus sat gracefully, and stretched out elegant legs. Manners' eye shot round the room in search of the lounge jacket Gussy had been wearing before he changed. It lay on an ottoman. Manners knew what was in the pocket of that jacket. Arthur Augustus, intent on the shoeing process, had momentarily forgotten. Manners smiled—rather grimly.

It was ten to one—if not a hundred to one—that Arthur Augustus, when Pawson had finished shoeing him like a horse, would pick up his racket and sally forth with his chums, in blissful disregard of that discarded jacket. Even had he thought of it, he would have considered it quite safe, with Pawson about. More likely, he would not think of it.

"No charge to see the show!" said Jack Blake, glancing round at Manners. "Front seat, if you like. The performance lasts an hour."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Master Arthur will be ready in a few minutes, sir!" said Pawson, with his deferential cough.

"You don't know him," answered Blake. "When he's finished—if he ever is—he has to admire himself in the glass for a quarter of an hour."

"You uttah ass, Blake—"

Manners laughed, and went into the room. He sat down on the ottoman, where Arthur Augustus' jacket lay. Arthur Augustus glanced at him.

"Mind if I watch the show, Gussy?" asked Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"We'd better all sit down!" said Herries. "We shall be too tired for tennis if we stand here till Gussy's finished changing."

"Weally Hewvies—"

"Lots of room!" said Manners. "Here you are!" He picked up D'Arcy's jacket and laid it on the bed, out of the way. Blake, Herries, and Dig stepped in and sat in a row on the ottoman.

Manners turned back from the bed, where he had laid the jacket. His right hand slipped into his trousers pocket. No one but Manners knew that in those few moments a little oval-shaped black box had been extracted from D'Arcy's jacket pocket and transferred to Harry Manners' trousers pocket!

Manners joined the three Fourth Formers on the ottoman. He smiled genially at the bald spot on Pawson's head, glimmering in the sunshine, as he knelt at Gussy's elegant feet.

There was a shout from the hall.

"Coming, Manners?"

"Come in and see the show!" called back Manners.

"Eh! What show?" Tom Merry and Lowther looked in.

"Bai Jove! There is no show, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I am simply changin' my shoes for tennis. Mannahs is twyin' to be a funnay ass like Lowthah."

"There, sir!" said Pawson. The most elegant shoes in the South of France were finished at last. Pawson rose, and Arthur Augustus rose.

"All weady, you fellows," he said. "Where is my wacket?"

"I've got your racket, ass!" said Blake. "Don't crack that glass, or your governor will have to pay for it when we go."

Arthur Augustus, surveying his elegant figure in a tall pier-glass, disdained to answer that remark. Satisfied with his reflection, which was indeed a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, the swell of St. Jim's took his racket from Blake, and was ready to sally forth.

His chums and Manners followed him, leaving Pawson tidying up the room, in his usual careful and methodical manner.

"Got your camera?" asked Tom, as the four Fourth Formers went out, to head for the tennis-court.

"Just going to get it!" answered Manners, and he went along to his room. Tom and Lowther going back to the hall to wait for him there.

Manners came back under a minute. But by that time the door of Arthur Augustus' room was closed. It was Pawson's duty to put away the clobber discarded by Arthur Augustus when he changed. Manners guessed why he had taken the trouble to close the door while he did so.

He smiled grimly at the closed door.

Taking the door-handle and turning it silently, Manners suddenly threw the door open and stepped in.

"Did I leave my hat here?" he asked cheerfully.

Pawson was standing by the bed. Arthur Augustus' jacket was in his hand. True, he had to pick up that jacket to put it away. But Manners had guessed that that particular garment would be in his hands when the door was flung open. He had guessed right.

Pawson turned, jacket in hand.

"Your hat, sir? I think not—I do not see it, sir!"

"Oh, must have left it in the hall, then!" said Manners. "All right!"

He shut the door and walked away, grinning. Pawson was welcome to go through every pocket in that jacket, while the little black box was in Manners' trousers pocket. It was safe there when Manners joined his chums and they went out together.

CHAPTER 8.

Two of Them!

MONTY LOWTHER grunted.

"Let's see the next!" he said.

"Bow-wow!" said Tom Merry and Manners together.

Monty was keen on pictures. Monty was going to be a film star some day—perhaps! Tom Merry was keener on the open air, and Manners' mind was very occupied that afternoon, though not, as usual with his beloved camera.

"Well, cut, and trot around!" said Lowther. "I'll turn up at the boat in an hour's time. Say an hour and a half."

"O.K."

Tom and Manners threaded their way out, leaving Monty to himself. They had sailed round the Rade and the Jete, and landed at the boulevard by the sea, a cheery trip in a light wind on the sunny blue waters. But Manners had not taken any snaps during the run; his camera had remained unused in its case. Neither had he given much attention to the film on which Monty's eyes were glued, and he was glad to get out again. Tom Merry glanced at him curiously several times as they walked away from the cinema.

"Penny for 'em, old chap!" he said at last.

"I'm a bit bothered!" said Manners, breaking a long silence. "But I've been thinking it over, and I think I've got it straight. This way—we're going to Cook's—it's somewhere near the station."

"What about a spin in the boat while we're waiting for Monty?" asked Tom Merry persuasively.

"I've got some business at Cook's."

"Oh, all right!"

They walked to the establishment of Thomas Cook & Son, in the Rue de la Gare. Tom wondered what Manners' business might be in the tourist agency. Pawson was managing the

Easter trip, and managing it most efficiently. There was nothing for the trippers to do for themselves, except enjoy life.

"They can tell you anything at Cook's!" explained Manners, as they went in.

"But what do you want to know?" asked Tom.

"I want to find a wood-carver."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom could only stare. What Manners wanted with a wood-carver was far beyond his comprehension. However, a polite young man was able to give Manners the information he desired, directing them to Monsieur Hermann in the Rue de la Gare, and they proceeded down the street in search of the establishment of Monsieur Hermann.

It was a small antique shop, with a window displaying curios, and Roman antiquities of modern manufacture for innocent tourists. Monsieur Hermann turned out to be a little dark gentleman of the Israelitish persuasion, with a velvet skull-cap, and a long beard, who spoke English.

He was seated behind a counter, at work on some wood-carving, when the juniors entered—Tom following Manners in, lost in wonder. Monsieur Hermann laid down his carving, and rose to his feet, bowing politely. He had been carving the lid of an ebony box, and Manners tapped it with his finger as it lay on the dingy little counter.

"I want something made of this wood!" he said.

"Mais oui! Yes, sir! Vat you like?" asked Monsieur Hermann. "I have many zings in ebony in verree great variety—"

"I mean, I want you to make something for me!" explained Manners. "Something like this!"

He drew the little black box from his trousers pocket. Tom Merry jumped nearly off the floor at the sight of it.

"Manners!" he ejaculated.

"I'm minding it for Gussy!" explained Manners calmly. "Now, Monsieur Hermann, can you make me something like this? I can't leave it with you, as it doesn't belong to me; but you can take the measurements, and so on."

Monsieur Hermann took the little black box and examined it. It was almost egg-shaped, though smaller than the average egg. It was of ebony, and there were several tracings on the surface, merely lines cut in the wood. Possibly they were there to conceal where it opened.

"It is a box!" said Monsieur Hermann. "I do not see how he open."

"That's a secret," said Manners, "and I don't want it opened. I want something made to look just like it—not a box, but just a lump of ebony carved the same size and shape, with the same lines cut on the outside. You see, I want them to look an exact pair."

"Je comprends!" assented Monsieur Hermann. "Zat is verree easy zing. In one hour I make him. Zat is hundred francs."

"That's all right!" said Manners.

"You leave zat box, and you come back chez moi in one hour—"

"I can't leave it—it's not mine. We'll wait."

Monsieur Hermann looked an honest old gentleman. But Manners had no idea of taking any chances with the black box. It was not going out of his sight for one moment.

"Comme vous voulez, monsieur!" assented Monsieur Hermann.

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It was an easy task that Manners had set the old wood-carver. All he wanted was an egg-shaped chunk of ebony, which was a simple matter enough. Monsieur Hermann measured the black box carefully and set to work. The box itself was left lying on the counter, and Manners leaned on the counter, his eye never off it while he waited.

Tom Merry roamed about the shop, looking at the assortment of antiques, till he was tired—which was not very long. It was a stuffy little place, with little to interest a schoolboy. When Manners suggested that he should take a stroll and come back later, Tom was very willing to do so—and he did! Manners, with untiring patience, went on waiting.

Tom walked about Cannes for half an hour or so, wondering more and more what Manners was up to. He came back to the antique shop at last, and was glad to find that the work was done.

Manners cheerfully paid over a hundred francs. Manners was a careful fellow with his money; but he parted with it as cheerfully as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might have done. He turned to Tom Merry with a black box in either hand.

"Guess which?" he grinned.

Tom looked at them. They looked exactly the same in size and shape, and in the lines cut on the surface, the resemblance was exact.

"Blessed if I can tell t'other from which!" said Tom. "You'll get them mixed at this rate, Manners."

"The dummy box is a bit heavier than the other!" said Manners. "It's solid, you know. Feel the weight."

"Not a lot of difference," said Tom, when he had weighed them in his hands. "But you can tell if you hold them both together."

"Exactly!" said Manners. "And I'm going to wrap Gussy's box up in paper, so that I couldn't make a mistake."

The genuine black box, carefully wrapped in tissue-paper, was deposited in Manners' inside jacket pocket. The dummy box was slipped into his trousers pocket. Then the juniors said "Bonjour!" to Monsieur Hermann, and left the shop.

As they walked away towards the Boulevard de la Croisette, Tom Merry gave Manners some expressive glances. He was more and more puzzled.

"Look here, what's the big idea?" he demanded at last. "Did Gussy ask you to get a replica of that box?"

"Think he's got sense enough?" asked Manners. "Gussy's not going to know anything about it."

"I suppose he asked you to mind that box, as you've got it?"

"He doesn't know I've got it," answered Manners. "He never asked me to mind it; he asked Pawson to pinch it."

"Wha-at?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"I mean, he left it in his jacket when he changed for tennis, and left Pawson to put away the jacket."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "And you—"

"Exactly! I snaffled it, and left an empty pocket for Pawson to grope in!" said Manners sarcastically. "I dare say he fancies Gussy has dropped it somewhere! I can see him going over Gussy's room on all-fours, rooting in all the corners!" Manners laughed. "I wish him joy of it!"

"But—" exclaimed Tom.
 "Gussy's got to have his box back, of course," said Manners. "Pawson will pinch it off him if the dago or some of his greasy pals don't pick it out of his pocket. Gussy's going to have the dummy box for Pawson to pinch."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. He understood now.
 "It's a bit of a responsibility taking charge of it without Gussy knowing, old chap," he said, after a pause.

"I know. But Gussy will be glad of it when the dummy box mysteriously disappears and the real one turns up safe and sound."

"Yes, if you're right about Pawson—"

"If!" snorted Manners.

"Yes. I think—"

"Gammon!"

"Look here, you ass, I think—"

"My dear chap, I'd take your word on any other subject," said Manners, "not on that—that's too steep."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, have it your own way," he said. "The box will be safer with you than with old Gussy, that's a cert. They'd have had it off him this morning if you hadn't chipped in. Come on! Monty will be waiting at the boat by this time."

They found Monty Lowther on the Boulevard de la Croisette, waiting by the boat. He began to tell them about the picture they had missed, which kept him too busy to inquire how they had spent their time—which, in the circumstances, was rather a relief.

The three Shell fellows pushed out and sailed the boat back to the Villa des Fleurs, Manners this time handling his camera, snapping yachts and fishing craft, and views of the shore and the hills beyond, and, happily, using up all his films by the time they arrived at the villa.

CHAPTER 9.

Pawson on the Spot!

"THIRTY—LOVE!"

"Bai Jove!"

The man who moved along a garden path in the extensive grounds of the Villa des Fleurs did not look anything like Giuseppe Fosco, the dago who had tracked the St. Jim's party across the Continent. He looked like a gardener.

He wore an enormous straw hat of plaited straw that looked like a basket upside-down, and screened his face from the hot rays of the southern sun, and also from general view.

Little more was to be seen of his face than a large untidy beard—an adornment that Giuseppe did not, as a rule, wear. He had a pair of clippers in his hand.

He listened to the cheery voices from the tennis court, and from under the big hat his black beady eyes scanned the four juniors there. If they noticed him at all they gave him no heed. Blake and Herries were playing D'Arcy and Digby, and they were giving attention to their game. They were not likely to heed one more among the half-dozen gardeners who trimmed the lawns and flower-beds and banks of wistaria at the Villa des Fleurs.

"Quattro," murmured the man in the basket-hat, "e tre in battello."

And Giuseppe smiled, and moved off towards the villa.

Four on the tennis court; three gone in the boat! The coast was clear so far as the St. Jim's party were concerned.

Giuseppe Fosco warily approached the villa, though there was nothing wary or watchful to be discerned in his manner if any eye had noted him. Every now and then he stopped to clip some twig or uproot a stray weed. He drew unobtrusively nearer the villa.

It was a hot afternoon in Cannes. Mad English played tennis, but natives were more likely to be sitting or lying in the shade. On the servants' side of the villa, and Giuseppe knew from careful spying, Monsieur Boulanger was asleep in a hammock under a shady tree. His staff were not likely to be specially on the alert or suspicious of gardeners.

He was taking chances, but Giuseppe was prepared to take long chances to get at the mysterious black box.

It was scarcely likely that D'Arcy had it about him while he was playing tennis. If not, it was in his room in the villa. Giuseppe was going to explore that room if he had a chance or half a chance.

He clipped stray twigs of wistaria at the veranda.

There was a step on the wooden planks, and a portly man glanced down at him. Giuseppe clipped industriously under Pawson's eye, but his heart beat a little faster.

That portly manservant, with his plump cheeks and his bald spot, did not look dangerous; but Giuseppe knew that he was more dangerous than he looked. He had handled a revolver when Giuseppe had penetrated on the Silver Swallow at Paris. It was a relief to him when Pawson, after a careless glance, went back along the veranda and disappeared in at one of the french windows.

Giuseppe breathed more freely.

In the drowsy afternoon no one was about. Giuseppe ventured at last to enter the veranda, clippers in hand.

He was ready to recommence clipping at the wistaria if an eye fell on him. But no one stirred, and stealthily he glanced in at the french windows, all standing open, of the schoolboys' rooms.

His black, beady eyes glittered at the sight of a handsome leather suitcase which bore the name "A. A. D'Arcy." He had found the room he wanted.

He stepped swiftly in.

Stealthily he drew the slatted wooden volets shut after him. Then, with a silent step, he crossed to the inner door and turned the key in the lock.

Then Giuseppe grinned.

This was his chance!

D'Arcy was not likely to come in. It was improbable that a servant would come to the room in his absence in the drowsy afternoon. The closed volets shut him off from view if anyone passed along the veranda outside. He had taken chances, but fortune had befriended him. If the black box was in this room it was at the Italian's mercy.

He began to search—stealthily, swift, watchful.

The black box, if it were there, was not in sight, but he had hardly expected it to be. The suitcase was unlocked, and he opened it, and began to root through the contents.

He did not hear a step on the veranda. He gave a sudden bound and a gasp as the wooden volets at the window were suddenly thrown wide open, letting a flood of sunlight into the dusky room.

He spun round, his dusky hand flying to the back of his trousers, where he packed that favourite weapon of the dago—his knife.

In the open french window stood the portly figure of Pawson.

But Giuseppe did not draw his knife. In Pawson's portly hand was a revolver, and the muzzle bore full on the man in the basket-hat.

Pawson's eyes, from his fruity face, glittered like points of steel. His plump finger was on the trigger. He smiled faintly, but it was a smile that was not in the least reassuring to Giuseppe.

"Leave that knife alone, my friend!" said Pawson in his quiet voice. "I shall shoot you down like a dog if you draw it, Giuseppe Fosco!"

Giuseppe's hand came away from the haft of the hidden knife. He stood breathing hard, his eyes, glittering like a snake's, on Pawson.

His rage was so deep, so savage, that he could scarcely restrain himself from clutching out the knife and springing. He knew that he had been trapped—trapped like a rabbit. Pawson had spotted him when he glanced down from the veranda, allowed him to enter, with the intention of cornering him there—he knew that now. But the revolver and the steely eyes over it daunted the dago, enraged as he was.

He dared not lift a hand. Pawson, he knew, was a manservant, Lord Eastwood's valet, entrusted by his lordship with the care of the schoolboys on their trip in the Easter holidays. But the steely eyes that gleamed at him over the revolver were not the eyes of a manservant. In those eyes Giuseppe could read a character as hard and desperate as his own. His life hung on a thread.

He expected Pawson to call—to summon the servants to secure him and hand him over to the police. Under the levelled revolver he dared not resist. His white teeth showed through the false beard, snarling like a wild animal.

But Pawson did not call. He did not summon the servants. He stepped into the room, and with his left hand drew the volets shut after him, shutting off the view from the veranda. But the muzzle of the revolver never swerved from Giuseppe's face for a moment.

The dago's black eyes snapped.

He did not understand, but he was cunning as a fox, quick on the uptake, and it came into his mind that this portly man was not, as he had supposed, merely protecting the interests of his master. The swift suspicion shot into his mind that Pawson was playing some game of his own.

Standing with his plump back to the closed volets, Pawson watched him quietly over the barrel of the revolver.

"Keep where you are!" he said. "Keep your hands in front of you! That apache in Paris could tell you that I am a good shot, Signore Fosco! The law here would justify me fully in shooting down an armed bravo who entered the house by stealth! I should not have the slightest compunction in laying you on your back, my friend, with a bullet through your carcass! I warn you to play no tricks."

"Furfante!" hissed the dago. "You have me in one corner! Furfante."

"Quiet!" said Pawson. Keeping the revolver steady in his right hand, he watched the dago like a cat. "From the fact that I find you here, Giuseppe, I conclude that you did not succeed in depriving Master Arthur of the black box after

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he left the post office in the Rue Notre Dame this morning."

"Do you think so, furfante?" snarled the dago. "The fool's pocket was picked by a sure hand, but there was nothing but an empty packet."

"I feared it," said Pawson quietly. "Your search in this room, my friend, would be futile—the black box is not in this room."

The dago's black eyes snapped again.

"Ah! Then you—you have searched—"

Pawson shrugged his plump shoulders.

"Perhaps! Master Arthur must have transferred it to a pocket in his flannels, unnoticed by me—though I am not usually unobservant. At all events, it is not here. I feared that it had



Manners nudged Tom to draw his attention to a crowded table a portly man. In amazement Tom gazed at the face of the peep afternoon! No wonder he had not

fallen into your hands already, my friend—but since you are here, I know that that is not so! You are here to search for it, Giuseppe—it must, therefore, still be in Master Arthur's possession. And now—"

He paused for a moment.

"Something of great value," he went on, "is hidden in the black box. It has never been opened since it came in Master Arthur's hands—it is difficult to open, and Master Arthur has scruples—it appears to have been entrusted to him, in some extraordinary manner, and he would not dream of opening it and examining the contents. But you know, Giuseppe—you know, and that is why you seek it. You are going to tell me."

"Nai!" muttered the Italian.

"Never is a long word!" said Pawson composedly. "You are going to tell me, Giuseppe, or I am going to shoot you through the head! You may take your choice, my greasy friend!"

CHAPTER 10.

Quick Work!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther came in at the gate of the Villa des Fleurs. Looking past the villa as they came up the path, they could see the four white-clad figures on the tennis court.

"They're still going it!" remarked Monty Lowther. "Let's go and ask Gussy how many sets he's lost."

Tom Merry laughed, and followed Lowther by a path through the flower beds, round the villa, towards the tennis courts. Manners did not follow. He went on to the house.



where high play was going on. In one of the chairs sat not Pawson! That was where Pawson was spending his time. Manners had just asked the party to visit Monte Carlo!

Manners was glad to see that the Fourth Form fellows were still at tennis. It gave him an opportunity of getting into Arthur Augustus' room and slipping the dummy box into the pocket from which he had extracted the genuine box.

He had no doubt that that pocket, and every other pocket in the room, had already been searched by Pawson. Pawson was not likely to search in the same place again. So that would be all right.

Manners went quietly up on the veranda.

He had given the matter a good deal of thought, and decided on his line of action. But for him the black box would already have been lost half a dozen times over. It would be lost again; for even if Gussy was on his guard against the dago, he would never dream of being on his guard against Pawson, and it was Pawson's plump hand that would filch it. Gussy was going to carry about that dummy box, in the full belief

that it was the real one; and if Pawson succeeded in getting hold of it, Manners sardonically wished him joy of his prize!

But it was necessary to keep the matter very carefully dark. Manners had set himself the task of beating Pawson, and he knew that he had to deal with a wary man. He had the advantage that Pawson did not know of his suspicion, or suspect it. He was going to keep that advantage—unless and until it became possible to pin the man down and show him up in his true colours, and thus open Gussy's unsuspecting eyes.

If Pawson was about, Manners did not intend to enter D'Arcy's room till the coast was clear.

He stepped quietly on the veranda. Nobody was about. The volets were open at the windows of all the juniors' rooms except D'Arcy's. But Manners could see that those volets were not fastened; they were merely pulled to.

Quietly he stepped along to D'Arcy's window. It did not occur to him, naturally, that anyone would be in the room. He was sure that Pawson had searched it, but that search must have been over long ago. He had no doubt that the room was empty.

He stepped to the volets and threw them open. The next moment he jumped clear of the planks in his amazement at what met his eyes in the room—Pawson's portly back turned towards the window, his plump arm raised, a revolver in his hand, levelled at a dark-faced man in a beard and a basket-hat.

"Oh!" gasped Manners. He did not recognise Giuseppe. The basket-hat, shading the upper part of the face, the false beard covering the lower part, disguised the Italian from his eyes. But the scene was amazing.

"Pawson!" he gasped. Pawson half-turned. But even in that moment of surprise and intense rage and annoyance, he did not lose his presence of mind, and the revolver still covered the scowling, snarling ruffian in the basket-hat.

A quiver ran through Giuseppe like that of a tiger about to spring. But he did not spring. He stood where he was.

"Master Manners!" Pawson was cool again, once more.

"Yes—what on earth—" stuttered Manners. "You have stepped in at an opportune moment, sir!" said Pawson in an even voice. "I have caught one of the gardeners pilfering in Master D'Arcy's room—"

"Oh!" gasped Manners. "Cospetto!" breathed Giuseppe. His black eyes gleamed. He had guessed already that Lord Eastwood's man was playing his own game. He knew now that he was not to be denounced.

For reasons of his own—reasons hard for Giuseppe to guess—Pawson did not intend to hand him over to justice.

"Luckily I saw the rascal stealing in, and followed him here," went on Pawson calmly. "Perhaps you will have the kindness to call Monsieur Boulanger—you will find him in a hammock on the north side, if you will be so kind, sir."

"Certainly!" said Manners. "Keep him safe, Pawson—I'll be back with Boulanger under a minute."

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Pawson. Manners cut along the veranda at a run to call Monsieur Boulanger. Pawson's revolver

disappeared into his pocket, and he stepped aside from the window.

"Run, you fool!" he breathed. "You have less than a minute—run!"

Giuseppe's black eyes gleamed at him doubtfully.

"Fool! Idiot! Cannot you understand?" breathed Pawson. "In the hands of the police you would talk too much, my greasy friend—you would tell them what I prefer them not to know! Fool! Do you think I have not guessed that it is loot in the black box? Fool! Will you wait till they seize you?"

Giuseppe panted

"Sei furfante—sei furfante!" he snarled. But he lost no time. He passed Pawson with a rush, darted out on the veranda, and leaped to the ground. The next instant he was running like a deer.

Pawson followed him out.

He stood silent till Manners came cutting back along the veranda, followed by the fat figure of Monsieur Boulanger, panting for breath. Then he shouted:

"This way! He is gone—quick!"

He glanced quickly in the direction Giuseppe had taken. The Italian had disappeared behind a high bank of mimosa, and was already lost to view. Pawson's plump hand pointed in quite a different direction.

"Through those palms—" he shouted.

Manners jumped down from the veranda and ran towards the palms. Monsieur Boulanger panted after him. Pawson brought up the rear. Tom Merry and Lowther, who had not yet reached the tennis court, looked round, and then came running up at the sound of shouting.

"What's up?" called out Tom. "What's the row, Manners?"

"Pawson caught some sneak-thief in Gussy's room!" called back Manners. "He's dodging in the gardens."

"Oh! Some sportsman after Gussy's jolly old black box, you bet!" exclaimed Lowther.

"By gum! I shouldn't wonder! He looked like one of the gardeners! Pawson saw him cut round those palms."

No sign of the fugitive was found when the palms were searched. By that time, Giuseppe, in quite a different direction, had dropped over a wall, and was running hard up the Boulevard du Midi.

"Personne!" panted Monsieur Boulanger. "Personne! He has made a go-away along with himself very quickly! Mais je crois—j'en suis sur—it is to be certain that he does not belong—un voleur chez moi—non, non, non! Pas possible, messieurs. He go to come from another somewhere!"

"Certainly I took him for one of the gardeners!" said Pawson. "But his face was not familiar to me."

"An Italian?" asked Tom.

"A Frenchman, I think," answered Pawson calmly. "Some pilferer— He certainly looked like a gardener—you saw him, Master Manners."

"Yes, I should have taken him for one of the gardeners," said Manners. "But ten to one he was one of that dago's pals, all the same!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "If that ass Gussy left that idiotic black box in his room— Oh, my hat! Better call him."

Lowther cut off to the tennis court at a run.

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Tom Merry looked at Manners. Manners smiled, and walked back to the house.

Several servants had joined Monsieur Boulanger to search the gardens, and Pawson was industriously helping. Manners went up the veranda steps and into D'Arcy's room. This was his opportunity.

Manners was under half a minute in Arthur Augustus' room. When he emerged the dummy black box was in the pocket of an elegant lounge jacket hanging up in Gussy's wardrobe.

Two or three minutes later Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came cutting round the villa, rushed up on the veranda, and bolted into his room!

Manners smiled as he passed him. Then came a happy trill from Gussy's room—Arthur Augustus' voice, in tones of relief and satisfaction.

"It's all wight! It's in my pocket, just where I left it! Wight as wain!"

Gussy was in happy possession of the dummy box!

CHAPTER 11.

Going up to Monte!

"PAWSON'S wathah an ass!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that unexpected remark the following afternoon. Lunch was over at the Villa des Fleurs, and Tom Merry & Co. were in the veranda, looking out over the blue sea, and lazily mooting plans for the afternoon.

Six fellows glanced round at Gussy in surprise.

"Pawson?" repeated Tom.

"An ass!" said Blake.

"The inimitable Pawson!" ejaculated Manners.

"What," asked Monty Lowther, "has Pawson been and gone and done? Has he brushed your hair the wrong way?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Or failed to press your bags—"

"Pway don't be an ass—"

"Well, what's the row?" asked Herries. "Pawson's gone out for the afternoon, hasn't he? Want somebody to tie up your shoes?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"What has Pawson done?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"He has not done anythin', Tom Mewwy! I remarked that he is wathah an ass! He seems uttably unable to realise that I am a fellow of tact and judgment, and quite capable of keepin' you fellows fwom landin' in twouble."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"I was thinkin'," said Arthur Augustus, "of a wun up to Monte."

"Monte Carlo?" asked Tom. "It's only about twenty miles from Cannes, I think. Not a bad idea—it's worth seeing."

"Wicked gamblers and suicides strewn all over the shop!" said Monty Lowther. "Bank broken by a lucky man once a month—I don't think! Sweet are the uses of advertisement, as Shakespeare nearly said. Gussy, old man, if you're thinking of trying to break the bank at Monte Carlo, I forbid the banns."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! You seem as uttah an ass as Pawson!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I twust I am not a fellow to play the goat at a wotten

gamblin' table! Besides, fellows undah age are not admitted to the tables! We should not be allowed to play the goat if we wanted to—and I twust that no fellow here wants to play the goat!"

"Catch me making those gambling sweeps a present of my cash!" said Manners. "Might have a look at the place, though, and see the sheep going in to be fleeced."

"Yaas, wathah! And when I mentioned it to Pawson, he actually said that we had better keep cleah of the place!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Can't trust you out of his sight!" remarked Blake, shaking his head. "You see, you're such a rorty dog, Gussy, when you get loose on the Continent. Look how you ordered champagne at that show in Paris—"

"I did not ordah champagne!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I ordahed coffee, but the waitah misundahstood—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Pawson—if he had to report to Gussy's pater that Gussy had lost his shirt at roulette!" said Lowther.

"You uttah ass! I should wefuse to lose my shirt at woulette—besides, they don't play for shirts; they play for countahs—"

"Go hon!"

"Gussy wouldn't blow his brains out after losing all he had on the tables, like some of them!" remarked Blake. "He hasn't a pistol, and he hasn't any brains—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' up to Monte Carlo!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Pawson is wathah an ass! I drowped the subject when he waised objections—I should not like to hurt Pawson's feelings, you know, as he is so vewy dutiful and respectful. But, of course, I did not change my mind. I am goin'. What about a wun up to Monte this aftahnoon?"

"Not a bad idea!" agreed Tom.

"Good egg!" said Digby.

"Jolly good!" said Lowther. "We'll all keep an eye on Gussy, and see that he doesn't break out. Can't have him sticking there till midnight, backing black and red, and rien-ne-va-plus-ing!"

"I wepeat, Lowthah—"

"What about a train?" said Blake. "Gussy, old man, leave off talking and tell the Boulanger-bird to order the car for the train."

"I was goin' to say—"

"Are we going to-day or to-morrow?" asked Blake

"To-day, of course."

"Then don't say any more. If we're going to-day, there's no time for you to finish talking—you see that?"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus called Monsieur Boulanger, and the car was ready to take the party to the station by the time they were ready to take the car.

They started in cheery spirits. Nobody wanted a flutter on the green tables at Monte Carlo, even had it been practicable for schoolboys; but they wanted to look over the famous spot and give the celebrated casino the once-over.

Although schoolboys would not be allowed at the tables, no doubt they would be allowed to walk through the "rooms" and see the proceedings proceeding—which was all they wanted so far as roulette was concerned. Anyhow, it

was a beauty spot of the Riviera, and more than worth a visit.

The juniors were, in fact, rather surprised by Pawson's embargo. As Lord Eastwood had trusted him with the St. Jim's party, he was bound to be very careful to keep them out of mischief; but he could hardly have suspected that any of the juniors wanted to emulate the "man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo."

Not that Tom Merry & Co. supposed that it was possible to break the bank at Monte Carlo, or any other gambling resort. Fellows with gambling tastes might think it possible, because they wanted to think it possible. Clear-headed fellows were not likely to believe that a casino could live on losses! They knew very little about roulette; but they knew that people who ran gambling as a business knew how to make the business pay.

The car rattled on into the Rue de la Gare in Cannes, and the juniors trooped into the station, where, in a few minutes, the Rapide picked them up and carried them onward. Between the tunnels there were splendid views from the windows, full of interest to the St. Jim's trippers.

Passengers every now and then passed up and down the train corridor. One passenger, a swarthy man in a black felt hat slouched over his face, passed the juniors' carriage several times, looking in.

As they were mostly looking out of the window on the other side, they did not notice or heed him till D'Arcy, glancing round, suddenly observed a swarthy face pressed to the glass on the corridor side.

"Oh cwikey!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, staring at it.

The face disappeared instantly.

"What—" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

"The dago!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Eh! Where?"

Arthur Augustus jumped up.

"In the cowwidah, deah boy—he was lookin' in through the glass! Bai Jove! The wottah is on this twain!"

"Sure?" asked Blake doubtfully.

"I tell you I saw him lookin' in! He is in the cowwidah; he went down the twain when I spotted him! I'm goin' aftah him!"

"But—I say—"

Arthur Augustus did not heed. He jerked open the door on the corridor, spun out of the carriage, and rushed down the corridor in the direction the owner of the swarthy face had taken.

Crash!

Bump!

"Oh cwikey!"

"Ach! Donner und blitzen! Ach! Mein gootness! Ach!"

Arthur Augustus, in his haste, had rather overlooked the fact that passengers might be coming along the train corridor any minute. It was rather unfortunate that a plump German was coming along, as Gussy rushed out. It was a terrific collision.

Arthur Augustus reeled back from the shock and sat down on the rocking floor. Opposite him sat a fat son of the Fatherland, with light-blue eyes shining with surprise and fury over a pair of spectacles that had slid down his fat nose. They gazed at one another, while Tom Merry & Co. gazed out of the carriage at both of them.

CHAPTER 12.
Face to Face!

"MEIN gootness!"
"Oh cwikey!"
"Ach!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Why does Gussy do these things?" asked Jack Blake in a tone of patient puzzlement. "What did you barge that chap over for, Gussy?"

"Oh cwumbs! I wushed into him entirely by accident!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I was wunnin' aftah that beastly dago—"

"Ach! Ofer you push me, isn't it?" roared the plump German. "Ofer I am knock mit breff in mein body all to go! Ach!"

"Bai Jove! I am feahfully sowwy—"

"Is it that you are mat?" roared the indignant German.

"Bai Jove! Not at all!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You see—"

"I tink tat you are mat! You rush like one bull before, and I am knock ofer after, mit breff in mein body all to go! Gott in Himmel! All te English are mat, and you are also mat!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled up. He was crimson with confusion. The Italian, if the Italian had been in the corridor, had vanished into one of the carriages along the train.

"I assuah you that I am feahfully sowwy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You see, I was aftah a chap, and in wathah a hurwy. Pway allow me to assist you to wise."

The German gentleman was making efforts to heave his weight up. But, once down, his weight did not seem easy to lift. He spluttered for breath as he heaved.

"Pway allow me, sir—" said Arthur Augustus politely, and he extended a hand to help.

The German gentleman was not looking polite at all. Perhaps he was not polite by nature, or perhaps his politeness had been knocked out of him along with his wind. Anyhow, he glared at Arthur Augustus as if he could have eaten him.

However, he grasped Gussy's hand for assistance in lifting his weight to the perpendicular. With one hand grasping Gussy's, and the other groping on the side of the train, the podgy Deutschlander at length heaved himself upright, and stood on his feet again, gasping for breath.

Having resumed the perpendicular, however, he did not let go Gussy's hand. He tightened his grip on it, keeping Gussy a prisoner.

"Weally, my deah sir—" ejaculated Arthur Augustus in surprise. He did not grasp why the fat German was still holding his hand. He certainly did not look in a mood for Anglo-German friendship.

But he learned the next moment. The plump gentleman from the Vaterland had one hand free. That hand he swung round, landing it on Gussy's ear with a loud, reverberating smack.

"Ach! Take tat, ten!" gurgled the German gentleman, "and tat after also."

Smack!

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You uttah wuffian, keep your howwid paws to yourself! Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the juniors' carriage.

"Also tat!" roared the German, still holding Gussy's hand with one fat paw, and smacking with the other. "And also tat!"

Smack! Smack!

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"Oh cwikey! Wescue, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. crowded out into the corridor. The plump German seemed disposed to go on smacking for ever and ever. Apparently he derived solace from the performance. But the juniors dragged Arthur Augustus away, and hooked him back into his carriage, red and ruffled and rumbled.

The fat man glared into the carriage after him, grunted, snorted, and said things in German, and finally waddled away up the corridor. Tom Merry & Co. were glad to see the last of him.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, panting for breath, and rubbing crimson ears. "What a feahful wuffian! If he was not old enough to be my fathah, I would give him a feahful thwashin'! What a feahfully bad-tempered bwute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to cackle at in this howwid expewience!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "And I tell you that that beastly dago is on the twain! I am suah it was the dago I saw lookin' in at the window."

"Gussy goes hunting Italians and catches Germans!" remarked Monty Lowther. "The wrong end of the Axis—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! The bwute got cleah, owin' to that silly ass gettin' in the way," said Gussy crossly. "Pway keep an eye open for him, deah boys—he is aftah the black box again."

Tom Merry & Co. were far from sure that the dago was on the train, but they promised to keep a keen look-out. While they watched the scenery from the train windows, Arthur Augustus kept a wary eye on the corridor. But the dago, if it had been the dago, did not reappear, and the train stopped at last at Monte Carlo.

The St. Jim's fellows descended from the train, and made for the lift, which saved a rather toilsome walk up to Monte from the station.

Plenty of other passengers were heading in the same direction—tourists from Cannes, and Nice, and Grasse, and other Riviera towns, going up to Monte for the afternoon, to add to the financial resources of the casino.

The lift was filling when the juniors reached it.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther packed in, and Blake, Herries, and Digby—but Arthur Augustus lingered to cast a wary eye round for the dago.

"Buck up, Gussy!" called out Blake.

More passengers crowded in.

"That chump will be left behind!" grunted Blake. "Gussy—"

"Comin', deah boy!"

But Arthur Augustus came too late. He was greeted by the word "Complet" from the attendant and shut out.

"Bai Jove! All wight, deah boys, I'll walk up, and meet you at the top!" called out Arthur Augustus.

And he walked away to the steep, curving path that led up to Monte. Only one other passenger was walking up, and he was ahead of D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus did not notice him; for, as he went, he was casting cautious glances behind in case the dago was following him.

Giving so much attention to the rear, Arthur Augustus had none to give in advance. And the man ahead, glancing back over his shoulder,

started and grinned at the sight of the schoolboy following him up.

"Cospetto!" breathed Giuseppe Fosco.

He had avoided the lift in order to keep clear of the party he was shadowing. Certainly, he had never dreamed that Arthur Augustus, separated from his friends, would follow him up the path.

At the curve, anyone on the path was out of sight from the station below, and from the esplanade above. Nothing could have suited Giuseppe better. If the schoolboy had the black box on him, it was Giuseppe's now. And he had—at all events, he believed that he had!

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus suddenly, as the man ahead turned back and came towards him, drawing a knife from his pocket as he did so. "Oh cwumbs!"

The danger was not behind! It was in front! Arthur Augustus, in dismay, stood face to face with the grinning Italian.

"Buono giorno, signore!" chuckled Giuseppe. "La scatola nera—the black box! You please to give!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!" panted Arthur Augustus, backing as the Italian advanced.

Giuseppe showed all his teeth in a delighted grin. Those words told him that what he sought was in D'Arcy's pocket. Certainly, owing to the change Manners had effected, it was not a very valuable prize. But neither Arthur Augustus nor the dago was aware of that.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. He backed away again, watching the Italian like a cat. Then, as Giuseppe leaped at him, he suddenly turned and raced down the steep path.

After him flew Giuseppe.

He covered the ground with swift leaps, and Arthur Augustus had no chance in such a race! But Gussy's noble brain was working at full pressure now! The path was steep; a man going at full speed down could not stop. With the clutching hand of the dago almost touching his back, Arthur Augustus threw himself suddenly on the earth.

The Italian went headlong over him.

He gave a howling yell as he crashed on hands and knees, and unable to stop himself, rolled down the slope, over the edge of a step, and down again.

Arthur Augustus bounded up like an india-rubber-ball and raced up the path.

While the yelling Italian rolled downward, Gussy raced upward—panting, his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord, and the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere thrown completely to the winds!

CHAPTER 13.

At Monte Carlo!

TOM MERRY & CO. stared.

They were waiting at the top. They rather expected to have to wait while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy negotiated the ascent at his usual leisurely rate. They could scarcely believe their eyes at the sight of the flying figure that suddenly burst on their view.

Crimson, breathless, panting, with his hat on the back of his head, dust on his clobber, and his eyeglass streaming, Arthur Augustus burst suddenly on their startled view.

"Gussy!"

"What the thump——"

"What the merry dickens——"

"Running a race, old man?"

"Oh cwikey! Wally wound, deah boys!" panted Arthur Augustus. "He's aftah me! The dago——"

"Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus, breathless, perspiring, panted. His friends gathered round him at once.

They watched the path for the dago. But no dago appeared in sight. Giuseppe had lost his chance, and when he picked himself up, after his rapid and unexpected descent, he was not likely to pursue the swell of St. Jim's into the full view of the population of Monte Carlo.

"Nobody coming!" said Blake. "But what's happened, you fathead?"

Arthur Augustus panted out an explanation.

"Well, you ass!" said Blake.

"You chump!" said Digby.

"You see, I hadn't the foggiest ideah that he was goin' up ahead of me," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I was watchin' behind like anythin'——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He took me quite by surpwise, you know! But I dished him all wight! He was yellin' like anythin' as he wolled down! But look at my clobber! I am all dustay! Look at my twousahs!"

"Isn't that Gussy all over?" asked Blake. "He thinks the dago is shadowing him, so he misses the lift, and walks after the dago into the only spot in Monte Carlo that is out of sight of a thousand people."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Gussy all over!" agreed Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Come on," said Tom Merry. "You've dished the dago, old ass, anyhow."



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"Yaas, watah! I must get a wash and bwush-up before we go anywhah! I am feahfully dustay—"

"Something else we must do first," said Blake. "We've got to find a shop and buy a chain—"

"What do you want a chain for, Blake?"

"To put on you, old bean, to lead you about Monte Carlo and keep you out of mischief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "Pway come along to the Cafe de Pawis, deah boys—I can get a wash and a bwush-up there."

Arthur Augustus being in a dusty and untidy state, there was evidently nothing else to be done, until Arthur Augustus was restored to his pristine spotlessness. So the juniors headed for the Cafe de Paris, and while Tom Merry & Co. sat down to coffee and cakes at the tables of the cafe, Arthur Augustus was able to undergo repairs in the hotel adjoining. When he rejoined his chums he was spotless once more, and his noble mind at rest.

Then the St. Jim's party walked across to the casino and ascended the steps. Plenty of people were going in and coming out—the former probably better provided with cash than the latter!

"Staggah in, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably they will let us look ovah the place if we ask them politely. Leave it to me to speak to them in Fwench."

The juniors passed through the outer doors into the hall within. Beyond were the swing doors that led into the roulette rooms.

An official in uniform glanced at them—and stopped to look again, probably surprised to see visitors of such youthful years, who, of course, were not admitted into the gaming rooms.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on him. The official was a plump Frenchman with a Semitic cast of countenance; and he was smiling—probably at the sight of a party of schoolboys butting into the casino.

"Pwobably that's the chap to ask," said Arthur Augustus. "Leave it to me to speak to him in Fwench! He looks watah a nice man, and he has a vewy pleasant smile."

The Frenchman's very pleasant smile broadened considerably. Evidently—to Tom Merry & Co.—he understood English. That did not occur to Arthur Augustus. He took off his hat very politely.

"Pway excusez-moi, monsieur!" he said. "Nous want to voir le casino—pas pour play roulette, you know—I mean vous savez, but just to look wouund—"

That speech in French caused the Frenchman's smile to extend almost from one ear to the other.

"Comprenny?" asked Arthur Augustus, still in French. "Nous will be tres much obliged if you donnez the permission to voir wouund. Gottez-vous cela, monsieur? Comprong?"

"Quite!" said the Frenchman, bowing. "I understand perfectly, monsieur! No one could fail to understand when you speak my language so well, monsieur!"

"Bai Jove! You are vewy flattewin'," said Arthur Augustus, while his comrades gurgled. "But weally, I am bound to say that you speak English quite as well as I do Fwench, monsieur."

"Help!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Monsieur flattes me!" said the Frenchman gravely. "But if you desire simply to see the rooms, I will conduct you through."

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"Thank you vewy much—I mean, mercy bang!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Merci bien, monsieur!" said Tom Merry.

"Suivez-moi!" said the Frenchman. "Please follow me!" And he politely guided the schoolboys into the rooms.

The atmosphere was heavy in the long hall with its row of roulette tables. Every table was surrounded; all the chairs taken by punters, and others standing behind the chairs, reaching over their shoulders to place stakes on the green cloth.

"Faites vos jeu, messieurs!" came from one table.

"Rien ne va plus!" came from another.

Hardly a glance was cast at the schoolboys, unaccustomed sight as they must have been in such a place. At each table all eyes were fixed on the ivory ball spinning in the revolving wheel, till at last it came to rest in one of the numbered sockets, and the winning number was announced.

"Le cinq, rouge et impair!" came from one table.

"Le dix-huit, rouge et pair!" from another.

"Zero!" from another.

"Bai Jove! It's feahfully intewestin', deah boys!" murmured Arthur Augustus. He glanced at Tom Merry. "Anythin' the mattah?"

Tom Merry caught his breath.

Manners had nudged him to draw his attention to a crowded table where high play was going on.

In one of the chairs at that table sat a portly man, the light from above gleaming on the bald spot on his head.

He did not look up, and did not see the juniors. In amazement Tom gazed at the face of the perfect Pawson!

That was where Pawson was spending his afternoon!

He was too intent on his game to think of looking up. The schoolboys were at a little distance; but had they been touching him, Pawson would not have seen them! He had eyes only for the whirling ball in the spinning bowl—ears only for the droning voice of the croupier. He was living, breathing roulette; insensible to everything else in the world. The intent passion of the habitual gambler was written in every line of his face.

Tom Merry's face clouded.

As Arthur Augustus spoke, Tom made a movement to place himself between D'Arcy and the place where Pawson sat. He had had a painful shock, and he did not want Arthur Augustus to have one also.

"Come on!" muttered Tom.

They moved on after their polite conductor. Arthur Augustus had seen nothing of Pawson—and the other fellows had been looking another way. Only Manners had spotted him, and drawn Tom's attention to him.

Tom glanced back as a droning voice came from the table they had left.

"Le dix-sept, noir et impair!"

He saw Pawson rise.

Evidently Pawson had not backed seventeen. Evidently, also, he was at the end of his resources; the last spin of the wheel had cleared him out. For a moment Tom's eyes rested on a drawn face—a face that he hardly knew as Pawson's, so changed was its expression from its usual portly urbanity. The next moment Pawson had turned away and was gone.

(Continued on page 36.)

"Yaas, wathah! I must get a wash and bwush-up before we go anywhah! I am feahfully dustay—"

"Something else we must do first," said Blake. "We've got to find a shop and buy a chain—"

"What do you want a chain for, Blake?"

"To put on you, old bean, to lead you about Monte Carlo and keep you out of mischief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "Pway come along to the Cafe de Pawis, deah boys—I can get a wash and a bwush-up there."

Arthur Augustus being in a dusty and untidy state, there was evidently nothing else to be done, until Arthur Augustus was restored to his pristine spotlessness. So the juniors headed for the Cafe de Paris, and while Tom Merry & Co. sat down to coffee and cakes at the tables of the cafe, Arthur Augustus was able to undergo repairs in the hotel adjoining. When he rejoined his chums he was spotless once more, and his noble mind at rest.

Then the St. Jim's party walked across to the casino and ascended the steps. Plenty of people were going in and coming out—the former probably better provided with cash than the latter!

"Staggah in, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably they will let us look ovah the place if we ask them politely. Leave it to me to speak to them in Fwench."

The juniors passed through the outer doors into the hall within. Beyond were the swing doors that led into the roulette rooms.

An official in uniform glanced at them—and stopped to look again, probably surprised to see visitors of such youthful years, who, of course, were not admitted into the gaming rooms.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on him. The official was a plump Frenchman with a Semitic cast of countenance; and he was smiling—probably at the sight of a party of schoolboys butting into the casino.

"Pwobably that's the chap to ask," said Arthur Augustus. "Leave it to me to speak to him in Fwench! He looks wathah a nice man, and he has a vewy pleasant smile."

The Frenchman's very pleasant smile broadened considerably. Evidently—to Tom Merry & Co.—he understood English. That did not occur to Arthur Augustus. He took off his hat very politely.

"Pway excusez-moi, monsieur!" he said. "Nous want to voir le casino—pas pour play roulette, you know—I mean vous savez, but just to look wou—"

That speech in French caused the Frenchman's smile to extend almost from one ear to the other.

"Comprency?" asked Arthur Augustus, still in French. "Nous will be tres much obliged if you donnez the permission to voir wou. Gottez-vous cela, monsieur? Comprong?"

"Quite!" said the Frenchman, bowing. "I understand perfectly, monsieur! No one could fail to understand when you speak my language so well, monsieur!"

"Bai Jove! You are vewy flattewin'," said Arthur Augustus, while his comrades gurgled. "But weally, I am bound to say that you speak English quite as well as I do Fwench, monsieur."

"Help!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Monsieur flatters me!" said the Frenchman gravely. "But if you desire simply to see the rooms, I will conduct you through."

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"Thank you vewy much—I mean, mercy bang!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Merci bien, monsieur!" said Tom Merry.

"Suivez-moi!" said the Frenchman. "Please follow me!" And he politely guided the schoolboys into the rooms.

The atmosphere was heavy in the long hall with its row of roulette tables. Every table was surrounded; all the chairs taken by punters, and others standing behind the chairs, reaching over their shoulders to place stakes on the green cloth.

"Faites vos jeu, messieurs!" came from one table.

"Rien ne va plus!" came from another.

Hardly a glance was cast at the schoolboys, unaccustomed sight as they must have been in such a place. At each table all eyes were fixed on the ivory ball spinning in the revolving wheel, till at last it came to rest in one of the numbered sockets, and the winning number was announced.

"Le cinq, rouge et impair!" came from one table.

"Le dix-huit, rouge et pair!" from another.

"Zero!" from another.

"Bai Jove! It's feahfully intewestin', deah boys!" murmured Arthur Augustus. He glanced at Tom Merry. "Anythin' the mattah?"

Tom Merry caught his breath.

Manners had nudged him to draw his attention to a crowded table where high play was going on.

In one of the chairs at that table sat a portly man, the light from above gleaming on the bald spot on his head.

He did not look up, and did not see the juniors. In amazement Tom gazed at the face of the perfect Pawson!

That was where Pawson was spending his afternoon!

He was too intent on his game to think of looking up. The schoolboys were at a little distance; but had they been touching him, Pawson would not have seen them! He had eyes only for the whirling ball in the spinning bowl—ears only for the droning voice of the croupier. He was living, breathing roulette; insensible to everything else in the world. The intent passion of the habitual gambler was written in every line of his face.

Tom Merry's face clouded.

As Arthur Augustus spoke, Tom made a movement to place himself between D'Arcy and the place where Pawson sat. He had had a painful shock, and he did not want Arthur Augustus to have one also.

"Come on!" muttered Tom.

They moved on after their polite conductor. Arthur Augustus had seen nothing of Pawson—and the other fellows had been looking another way. Only Manners had spotted him, and drawn Tom's attention to him.

Tom glanced back as a droning voice came from the table they had left.

"Le dix-sept, noir et impair!"

He saw Pawson rise.

Evidently Pawson had not backed seventeen. Evidently, also, he was at the end of his resources; the last spin of the wheel had cleared him out. For a moment Tom's eyes rested on a drawn face—a face that he hardly knew as Pawson's, so changed was its expression from its usual portly urbanity. The next moment Pawson had turned away and was gone.

(Continued on page 36.)

THE HAUNTED MINE!

Neither Frank Richards nor his chums believed that Bailey's bonanza was haunted . . . until they explored the old gold-mine and saw the ghost!

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

Injun Dick in Luck!

"OUTSIDE!"

Kern Gunten rapped out the words. Frank Richards & Co. glanced round. The chums of Cedar Creek had ridden over to Gunten's store at Thompson to make some purchases, Gunten's store being the great emporium in that section of Thompson Valley.

It was Saturday, and lessons were off, and Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy of Cedar Creek, was serving in the store.

Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc each had purchases to make, and they kept Gunten quite busy for a time. At school they did not pull well with Gunten, but in the store the Swiss schoolboy was all agreeable smiles.

The purchases were finished at last, and Frank and his chums were getting their goods together when a new customer came in. It was then that Gunten rapped out "Outside!" in sharp tones.

"By gum! It's Injun Dick," said Bob Lawless.

Injun Dick it was, the coppery-faced old Apache, who generally adorned with his person

the post outside the Red Dog Saloon. With great dignity, wearing his old blanket with as much pride as if it were an ermine robe, Injun Dick stalked into the store.

"Outside!" repeated Gunten, pointing to the door. "No hoboos wanted hyer, Injun Dick! Vamoose the ranch!"

Frank Richards frowned. Gunten had the right, or at least the power, to speak as he liked in his father's store, but it jarred upon Frank to hear him slang the old Redskin in that way. Injun Dick was a loafer, and a "soaker" undoubtedly, but he had been a great chief of his tribe in far-off days.

The Apache drew himself up and stared at Kern Gunten with black, scintillating eyes. He was evidently offended.

"Injun come buy," he said loftily.

Gunten laughed.

"You can't buy fire-water here. Get round to the bar if you've got the dust," he said. "Not that I believe you have, you old fraud!"

"Injun plenty dust. Look!"

Injun Dick's dusky hand groped under his blanket, and he tossed something on the bench in front of him that landed with a thud. In the



"Bob!" breathed Frank Richards, as the daylight at the opening of the mine was partly blotted out. "What the thunder —" Bob Lawless broke off, his heart thumping. Something was between the schoolboys and the opening, blocking their way to the open air.

sunlight shining in at the store windows the little object on the counter gleamed and glittered. "Gold!" ejaculated Bob Lawless.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" said Gunten.

He picked up the nugget. It was half the size of an egg, and not pure gold, but three-quarters of its bulk was certainly of the precious yellow metal. Gunten knew enough about metals to know that.

"By gum, that's the real goods!" he remarked. "Where did you get it, Injun Dick?" Gunten's manner was much more respectful now. "You've struck a lode in the hills—hey?"

"Injun find," replied the Redskin.

"Near Thompson?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Three days' journey," said the Apache.

"You want to sell this?" Gunten asked, eyeing the nugget. "I'll take it to my popper, if you like!"

"Injun come buy," said Injun Dick, with dignity. "New blanket, husky new boots, same as white chief, tip-top fixing, you bet!"

"Take a seat!" answered Gunten quite civilly.

With much dignity the Apache sat down on a stool handed him by the polite Gunten. He was a person to be treated with civility now.

Frank Richards & Co. were looking over a new lot of books that had come up from the railway with the store-wagon, and while they were so engaged Injun Dick's wants were supplied.

Old Man Gunten came into the store, and he was as civil to the Indian as his son was. He priced the nugget at forty dollars, a price to which Injun Dick assented with a single nod of the head. The Swiss was swindling him out of at least ten dollars, if not twenty; but the Apache did not even think of haggling.

Injun Dick spent thirty dollars in the store. The remainder he was probably keeping for a "bender" at the Red Dog. He was provided with a new blanket of gorgeous design, and boots like a white chief, and other articles.

Frank Richards & Co. left the store with their purchases, and fastened the packages on their saddles. They left Injun Dick still spending his money, with the Guntens, father and son, bowing and smiling round him like the most accomplished shopwalkers in Chicago.

Bob Lawless indulged in a snort.

"That poor old Injun is getting skinned!" he remarked. "They wouldn't skin him so close as that in the Red Dog, I guess. Those Guntens are pesky swindlers!"

Frank and Beauclere nodded assent; they had no doubt on that point.

As the chums mounted their horses Injun Dick came out of the store. Still in his tattered old blanket, he stalked away towards his own shack down the street, and Kern Gunten was following him, laden with bundles and packets.

The chums grinned as they rode away. Injun Dick was a great man that day, and evidently a man whom the Guntens delighted to honour—so long as his "dust" lasted.

The Haunted Mine!

"BAILEY'S bonanza is for sale!" Chunky Todgers made that announcement in the playground at Cedar Creek School. Todgers generally had all the local news.

"The haunted mine for sale!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Who's selling it?"

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"Sheriff," said Chunky Todgers. "Now Bailey hasn't been heard of for five years, the mine's going to be sold—if they can find a buyer!" Chunky grinned. "I guess that buyer will want trailing down some!"

"I guess so," agreed Bob Lawless, laughing.

"It won't go," said Tom Lawrence. "Nobody wants to put his spondulicks in a haunted mine."

Frank Richards was looking curious. He had been some time at the Lawless Ranch and Cedar Creek School now, but there were still many items in local history and topography that he had not heard of. Bailey's bonanza, otherwise the haunted mine, was one of them.

"Haunted!" repeated Frank.

"Well, they say it's haunted," said Lawrence.

"Old Bill Bailey is supposed to haunt it. He worked at it for years, and he disappeared at last. Whether he's alive or dead nobody knows."

"Is the mine worked now?" asked Frank.

"Nope. It's played out."

"But who says it's haunted?"

"Lots of folk," said Bob Lawless, laughing. "I dare say they've heard the wind howling in the old adit, and took it for ghosts shrieking!"

"Where is the mine, Bob?" asked Frank Richards, as he strolled away towards the schoolhouse with his chums.

"In the gulch outside Thompson," answered Bob. "I remember going over it last year. Like to see it, Franky?"

"I was just thinking so," said Frank. "I've never been over a gold-mine, and a haunted mine into the bargain is rather attractive."

"There isn't much of it," explained Bob. "Bill Bailey drove a tunnel into the hill—what miners call an adit, you know—and he picked up some gold, but not enough to pay him grub-stakes on his work, I've heard. He believed there was a tremendous lode, but he never found it. Some say that he drowned himself in the creek through disappointment."

"Poor chap!" said Frank.

"Another yarn is that he's taken to stock-raising down in Saskatchewan," said Bob, laughing. "Anyway, he's vanished; and there's a yarn that his spook haunts the mine."

"I'd like to have a look at it," said Frank.

"We'll ride over after lessons, then," said Bob. "It's only a few miles out of Thompson. What do you say, Cherub?"

"Count me in," answered Beauclere.

"Good!" said Frank.

The chums went in to lessons. But Frank Richards was thinking a good deal about the haunted mine while he was receiving instruction from Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress. The story that the deserted mine was haunted interested him, naturally, and gave a spice of adventure to the forthcoming visit to the spot.

Frank wondered what had become of Bill Bailey—whether he had really drowned himself in the creek, or taken to stock-raising in Saskatchewan—or whether he was still pursuing the golden phantom in another locality. He felt a sense of compassion for the man he had never seen, and never would see.

Miss Meadows' voice interrupted his reflections.

"Richards!"

Frank started.

"Yes, ma'am?" he stammered.

"I have spoken to you twice!"

"I—I am sorry, ma'am. I—I didn't hear!" stuttered Frank.

Miss Meadows gave him a sharp look.

"Very well, Richards, please give me your attention!" she said severely.

"Yes, Miss Meadows."

And Frank Richards dismissed the unfortunate Bill Bailey and his bonanza from his mind for the remainder of lessons.

When school was dismissed, Frank Richards & Co. led their horses out of the corral, and mounted in the Thompson trail.

Kern Gunten and his friend Keller passed them at a gallop on the same trail, their homes being in Thompson. The two Swiss disappeared ahead as the three chums trotted on.

"How far is it, Bob?" Frank asked.

"We turn off on the hill trail just before Thompson," answered Bob. "Then it's a couple of miles."

"Lots of time, then," said Frank.

"Lots," said Bob cheerily.

A quarter of an hour later they came in sight of Gunten and Keller again. They had dismounted, and their horses stood cropping the grass in the trail. Gunten and Keller were kneeling beside what looked like a body. The three chums stared at them as they rode up.

"What the dickens are they up to?" exclaimed Beauclerc. "Looks like a man in a faint. He's not moving!"

"My word!" murmured Bob. "Gunten playing the Good Samaritan! I guess I never expected to see that!"

"It's Injun Dick!" exclaimed Frank Richards, as he caught a clearer view of the man lying motionless in the grass under the shadow of the larches.

The three chums rode up and halted, and looked down at the Indian lying on the grass, and the two Swiss by his side. And a glance then was sufficient to show them that Gunten was not playing the Good Samaritan.

The Good Samaritans!

INJUN DICK was evidently unconscious. His eyes were closed, and his breathing was jerky. But he was not in a faint, as Beauclerc supposed. It was the white man's fire-water that was the cause of the Apache's unconsciousness.

Gunten looked up.

"Hallo, you galoots! This chap's as drunk as anything!" he grinned. "We're decorating him a bit. Looks a picture, doesn't he?"

The chums could not help laughing. Gunten had taken coloured crayons from his pocket, and was ornamenting the Indian's face with streaks of colour. Injun Dick's coppery complexion was disappearing under stripes of blue, green, and white.

"Rather a surprise for him when he wakes up!" chuckled Keller.

"I say, it's too bad!" said Frank Richards.

"What rot!"

The Indian stirred and grunted, and Gunten drew back for a moment. But there was no chance of Injun Dick awakening. The "tangle-foot" at the Red Dog was too potent in its effects, and the Redskin had evidently indulged in it not wisely but too well.

"Oh, he's safe enough, Kern," said Keller. "Give him some more. Lend me your knife and I'll get on with his mop!"

"Here you are!"

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"Cut his hair," grinned Gunten. "We'll send him home as bald as a Chinaman."

Frank slid from his horse. Keller had taken a handful of the Indian's thick, matted hair and was sawing at it with a clasp-knife.

"You're jolly well not going to do anything of the kind!" exclaimed Frank angrily. "Let the poor chap's hair alone!"

"Rot!" said Keller.

"Look here, Keller—"

With a laugh Keller sawed away with the knife, and a thick strand of black hair dropped in the grass. The next instant Frank Richards caught him by the collar and dragged him back from the insensible Redskin. Keller rolled on his back with an angry yell.

"Let go, you fool!" he shouted.

"You'll let the man alone," answered Frank. "I guess so," chimed in Bob Lawless. "Colouring his face is one thing, but cutting a man's hair off is quite another matter. Let him alone!"

Keller rose to his feet, savage and sullen. Frank Richards stood between him and the Indian with his fists clenched, and Keller tossed the knife back to Gunten. Gunten caught it with a fierce look.

"Mind your own business, Richards!" he shouted. "I'm going to shave the Indian till he's not got a hair left on his cabeza, so I tell you."

"You're not!" answered Frank Richards coolly.

"Who'll stop me?" yelled Gunten.

"I will!"

Gunten gritted his teeth.

"Oh, get on your way!" he snapped. "I'll let his top-knot alone, then."

"Can't trust you," answered Frank. "You'd do it after we were gone. You two can get off."

"Look here—"

"Nuff said!" interrupted Bob Lawless. "Can't trust a coyote like you, Gunten. Get on your gee and vamoose."

"I guess I won't!"

"Guess again!" grinned Bob. "If you're still there in another minute you'll have a prize nose to carry home with you."

Keller was already climbing on his horse. Kern Gunten hesitated for a moment or two, and then, with a muttered exclamation of anger, he jumped on his pony and rode up the trail after Keller.

The three chums remained with the unconscious Indian. Bob Lawless gave his English cousin a rather whimsical look.

"Well, we've cleared off those coyotes," he remarked. "Too rotten to cut off the poor chap's top-knot. Better hang around a little, in case they come back."

Frank Richards reflected.

"Can we leave him here?" he asked.

"Why not?"

"Well, suppose we take him home?" suggested Frank.

"Oh, by gum!" said Bob. "You want to do the Good Samaritan act, hey?"

"Well, we can ride over to the haunted mine any day," said Frank. "Let's take the poor chap home. After all, he's not so much to blame for this. They ought not to sell fire-water to Indians."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"You agreeable, Cherub?" he asked.

"Certainly!" answered Beauclerc.

"Then it's a cinch."

Injun Dick was lifted up and placed on Vere Beauclerc's horse, the most powerful of the three, and the Cherub mounted behind him, to hold him there. Frank and Bob rode one on either side, to lend a hand. Thus they rode at a leisurely pace up the trail to Thompson, which they reached at last, in the red sunset.

Bob Lawless knew where Injun Dick's shack was situated, and when they arrived there he jumped down and opened the door of the hut. Injun Dick was carried in and laid upon the heap of straw and rags that served him as a bed. Frank Richards placed a bundle of rags under his head, to serve him as a pillow.

The Redskin was still quite insensible when they left the shack.

"Too late for the haunted mine now," said Bob as they rode away. "Never mind, to-morrow's just as good."

And the chums of Cedar Creek rode homeward, quite satisfied with the way they had spent their time.

Haunted!

"NOW for Bailey's bonanza!" exclaimed Bob Lawless, when Cedar Creek School was dismissed on the following day.

"I guess I'll come with you galoots," said Chunky Todgers.

"What about the ghost?" grinned Bob. "Suppose we meet a grisly spook, Chunky, with hoofs, horns, and tail?"

"Rats to that!" answered Todgers. "I've thought, a lot of times, of looking into the old mine and seeing if there was any gold left. Only—only—"

"Only you were afraid of the ghost!" roared Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not exactly afraid of the ghost," said Chunky cautiously. "Of course, a galoot doesn't believe in ghosts. But I guess I'd rather not go alone."

"You don't like the ghost, Chunky," said Bob, "but I'll eat all the ghosts we meet."

Chunky Todgers climbed on his fat little pony, and the four schoolboys rode away together. They passed within sight of Thompson and turned into the hill trail. From this point the ground was rougher and more broken, and they trotted on at a leisurely speed till they came to a gulch.

"Here we are!" said Bob, a few minutes later.

The riders halted, and Frank Richards looked around him with interest. It was a solitary spot in the lower foothills of the Thompson range, and there were many signs around of abandoned mine workings. The old tunnel of Bailey's mine opened direct into the hillside, and dark and gloomy enough it looked. Outside lay rough rock and sand in misshapen heaps, where it had been pitched by the miner, some of it blasted with gunpowder and some hewn away with the pick.

Frank Richards & Co. tethered their horses and advanced on foot to the old adit. The hoof-beats of the four horses had rung loudly on the rocky ground, and echoed far away down the gulch, but now there was deep silence, broken only by the sigh of the wind in the pine-trees.

The sun was deep down in the west, and long shadows of the pines lay across the gulch. Perhaps it was the solitude of the spot, and perhaps the remembrance that the deserted mine was supposed to be haunted; at all events, the schoolboys became very silent as they approached

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the tunnel, and they were conscious of a slightly eerie feeling. They halted in the opening and stared about them.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob suddenly in suppressed tones

From the black depths of the tunnel there came a strange wailing sound, as of a cry of anguish. The schoolboys started and looked quickly at one another, their faces growing suddenly pale.

"Wha-a-at's that?" muttered Frank, taking a step backwards.

"I—I s-say, it's the g-g-ghost!" stuttered Chunky Todgers. "I—I say, let's gerroff!"

"Hush!"

The schoolboys listened intently; Chunky with his mouth wide open and his eyes dilated. But no sound came from the black tunnel.

"It—it was the wind," said Bob Lawless at last, though his lips were trembling a little as he spoke.

"How could it be the wind?" mumbled Chunky. "The wind doesn't blow at the end of a tunnel, you jay! It wasn't the wind!"

"There are other adits farther in," said Bob. "Old Bailey struck off right and left looking for the lode, so the men say. There may be another outlet along the hill, and in that case the wind would blow through."

"Of course!" said Frank in relief.

"I—I say, don't you think it was the g-g-ghost?" faltered Chunky.

"Nope, you jay!" grunted Bob. He spoke very gruffly, perhaps because he was feeling a secret uneasiness in his own breast.

The sound they had heard was very strange and eerie, even if it was produced by the wind wailing in the old tunnels that penetrated the rocky hillside.

"You—you're going in?" stammered Chunky, with a longing look towards the tethered horses.

"We came here to go in, I guess," said Bob, with a look at his chums.

"We're going in!" said Vere Beauclerc firmly. "There's nothing to be afraid of, and if there was we'd go in all the same."

"Good man!" said Frank. "Let's get going."

The three tramped into the tunnel, and Chunky Todgers followed nervously. From the black depths came a weird, prolonged wail, so close and so startling that the chums of Cedar Creek jumped back into the daylight, as if moved by the same spring, and Chunky Todgers, with a yelp of affright, dashed away towards the horses.

The Ghost of the Mine!

FRANK RICHARDS & Co., outside the old mine, stood rooted to the ground, as it were. They did not lack nerve, but their faces were pale now. What did that strange, ghostly wail in the depths of the old mine mean? "Come on!" shouted Chunky Todgers, looking back from the spot where the horses were tethered.

Bob Lawless set his teeth.

"We're not coming!" he called out. "You can vamoose if you like, you gopher! We're going into the mine!"

"I'm with you, Bob," said Frank Richards.

"Same here," said Vere Beauclerc quietly. "It can't be the wind: but what it is I'm blessed if I can guess. Could it be somebody playing ghost?"

Bob knitted his brows.

"It might be," he said. "But—but what's he

doing here if that's so? Nobody knew we were coming here. We saw nobody on the trail, or in the gulch when we arrived. It's miles from the nearest cabin. How could there be anybody here?"

"It doesn't seem likely," admitted Beauclerc. "Somebody exploring, same as we are," suggested Frank. "Might be here by chance, same as us."

"It's possible—it would be a dashed long coincidence, wouldn't it? That—that horrible howl is what other galoots have heard here," said Bob. "The same somebody must have happened to be here when others visited the mine."

"That's rather steep," said Frank. "Then what on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"It's the ghost!" howled Chunky Todgers. "Look here, don't you leave me here alone, you jays!"

"Then come in with us."

"The ghost—"

"Oh, rot!"

Bob Lawless had brought a lantern, and he lighted it. He did not believe in the ghost, but he preferred to have a light when he entered the old mine again.

Chunky Todgers rejoined the three. All his desire to explore the old mine had evaporated, but still less did he desire to be left alone in the lengthening shadows in the gulch.

"I—I say—" he murmured.

"Shut up!" growled Bob.

"I—I say, I'm not scared!" stammered Chunky.

"I—I'll come in with you fellows, you know. I—I'm a brav as a lion really."

"As brave as a gopher, you mean!" grunted Bob. "Dry up!"

Chunky Todgers dried up, casting uneasy looks into the dark and gloomy opening of Bill Bailey's bonanza.

The lantern was burning now, and Bob cast the light before him into the tunnel and stepped in boldly. In his other hand he grasped his riding-whip, ready for use as a weapon if it was needed. Frank and Beauclerc followed him in, Chunky Todgers bringing up the rear. Chunky's eyes wandered about him with uneasiness, and he gasped at every clink of a loose stone under the tramping boots.

The floor of the tunnel was level, but very rough and broken, and the explorers had to pick their way. On either side rose the walls of the adit rough and chipped from the pick, gleaming here and there as they caught the lantern light. Overhead was the solid rock.

On either side, too, were shadowy openings, where cross-adits had been driven by the miner in his determined endeavours to find the lode which he had been sure existed.

Bob flashed the light into each opening as it was passed, but the lantern did not penetrate far. Keeping their eyes well about them, the school-boys tramped on up the tunnel, till a wall of rock rose ahead of them and barred further progress. They had reached the termination of the old adit.

Bob flashed the light over the rock. Here and there was a gleam of quartz, and sparkles came from the rough, chipped fragments of rock that lay about their feet.

The chums of Cedar Creek had come there to explore the mine and to look for traces of gold, if such there were; but, as a matter of fact,

(Continued on the 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! Three weeks have slipped by since I last had a word with you, but doubtless you have guessed the reason for my absence from the old paper. Yes, Martin Clifford's new, extra-long St. Jim's yarns squeezed me out of my place. Each story has been so good that everything else in the GEM has had to give way for it, so to speak. I am sure readers are revelling in the longer St. Jim's yarns, especially as Mr. Clifford is in such great form with the writing of them.

In next Wednesday's story:

"THE SECRET OF THE BLACK BOX!"

the St. Jim's flyers are still enjoying themselves on the Riviera, but at the same time, they are still being menaced by Giuseppe Fosco. The mysterious little black box which Gussy has had entrusted to him has had many narrow escapes from falling into the Italian's hands, and in next week's thrilling yarn the dago makes another determined attempt to get hold of it.

Gussy is rendered helpless by the cunning Pawson, who is on the point of stealing the black box himself, when Fosco appears on the scene. He has only to overcome the manservant to secure the prize for which he has pursued the St. Jim's juniors across France. Will he get away with it? And what does the box contain? You'll find the answers to both these questions in the next super new long story.

"THE GHOST HUNTERS!"

As you have read in this week's powerful yarn, the mystery of the haunted mine is giving Frank Richards & Co. something to think about. But though they have been frightened off by the ghost for the present, they resolve to get to the bottom of the ghostly manifestations in Bailey's bonanza, and lay the ghost. The chums of Cedar Creek pay another visit to the old gold-mine, and what happens there makes a thrilling yarn that will keep you enthralled from first word to last.

"THE STOWAWAY!"

There is great excitement on the Benbow when the school-ship at last reaches Barbados, and the juniors all enjoy a run ashore after so many weeks on the water. But to Jack Drake the arrival at Barbados means saying good-bye to Tin Tacks, to whom he has grown attached since rescuing him from the sea. Tin Tacks, however, has other ideas—and when the Benbow puts to sea again, bound for Trinidad, it carries a stowaway!

Chin, chin!

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their thoughts were now fixed far more upon the wailing they had heard, and their ears were on the strain.

"Well, Chunky, here's the place for nuggets!" said Frank, with a rather faint smile.

Chunky gasped.

"Bother the nuggets! I'd rather be outside!" he muttered.

Frank looked back the way they had come. In the distance was a patch of light, marking the place where the adit opened in the hillside. As Frank looked the daylight was suddenly partly blotted out. He started and caught Bob's arm.

"Bob!" he breathed.

"What the thunder——"

Bob Lawless broke off. His heart was thumping. Something or somebody was between the schoolboys and the opening of the tunnel, blocking their way to the open air.

For a moment they stood in heavy silence. Their eyes were fixed on the spot where the daylight showed, and a creepy sensation ran through their limbs as they watched. The obstruction suddenly disappeared, and all the patch of daylight was visible again. But not a sound came to their ears.

"It—it's somebody!" muttered Bob.

There was a groan from Chunky Todgers.

"The—the g-g-ghost!"

"It's somebody playing a trick!" muttered Beauclerc, setting his lips. "Come on! Let's see who it is!"

"Come on, then!" said Bob desperately.

Flashing the lantern before him, he ran back towards the opening, his companions with him. There was a sudden yell of terror from Chunky Todgers, who was labouring behind.

"Yah! Oh, help!" shrieked Chunky.

"Chunky, what——"

"Help! He's got me! Help!"

The three raced back. Chunky Todgers was squirming on the ground close by the opening of one of the cross-adits. But he was alone; there was nothing near him but the broken rocks.

Frank Richards caught him by the shoulder and dragged him up.

"Chunky, you ass——"

"It—it touched me!" yelled Todgers.

"What did?" shouted Bob angrily.

"The ghost!" stammered Chunky. "It—it touched me on the back! Oh dear! Let's get out!"

"You funky ass, it's your silly fancy!" exclaimed Frank.

"It isn't! It wasn't!" panted Chunky. "It touched me!"

"There's nothing here to touch you, Chunky," said Beauclerc soothingly. "You brushed against the rock, most likely."

"I tell you it did!"

Bob Lawless set his teeth.

"Cut for it, Chunky!" he said. "We're staying. I'm going to find out what this means, if we meet a hundred dashed ghosts! Oh crumbs!"

Bob broke off as a loud, long wail rang through the tunnels of the mine. The sound did not cease as before; it rose and swelled till the tunnels were full of hideous, echoing wailing. The schoolboys stood close together with blanched faces, listening.

"Look!" panted Frank. He pointed towards the distant opening.

Once again the daylight had been partly ob-

scured as something passed. Bob Lawless, with a fierce exclamation, rushed along the tunnel, the light flashing before him. But the shadow passed again, and he halted.

"What—what is it?" he muttered. "Come here, you fellows. Stick to me as I've got the light."

Frank Richards ran to join him, and as he did so, from the blackness behind, a light touch fell upon his neck. It was a cold touch, as of an icy finger. He spun round with a startled cry, his hands flying out instinctively in defence. But they swept only the empty air.

"Cherub, d-d-did you touch me?" panted Frank.

"No. Where are you, Frank?"

"Did you, Chunky?"

"No. It's the ghost!" yelled Chunky. And he tore away for the opening, heedless of everything but of escaping from the gloomy depths.

Bob Lawless rejoined his chums, and the light, gleaming on Frank's face, showed it pale and startled.

"Frank, what happened?"

"Something touched me"—Frank shuddered—

"just as— as Chunky said. I—I don't know what it was."

Bob flashed the light round in a circle. To the startled and excited imaginations of the schoolboys the surrounding gloom was full of phantom hands stretching out to them. There was nothing to be seen, save the gleaming rocks and the black openings of the cross-adits.

Silence as of the tomb had descended on them. They could almost hear their hearts beating as they looked and listened.

Suddenly, close at hand, there was a wild, echoing yell that rang eerily in the tunnels of the mine. It startled the three, and with one accord they ran for the exit.

Without stopping to think, they ran till they reached the daylight and stumbled breathlessly out of the mine. In the dim twilight of the gulch they stood panting. The sun was below the hills now, and the gulch darkening rapidly.

All three faces were pale and tense. From the depths of the mine came an echoing wail, and then all was still.

Chunky Todgers was frantically untethering the horses.

"Come away!" he yelled. "I'm going!"

And Chunky threw himself upon his pony and started.

Frank Richards & Co. exchanged a glance, and then went to their horses. They had had enough of the haunted mine. The three chums mounted and rode after Chunky Todgers and soon overtook him.

In silence they rode through the gathering darkness, but their thoughts were busy.

Chunky left them on the Thompson trail to go to his home. The three chums rode homeward together. Bob Lawless broke a long silence at last.

"I guess it's a trick!" he muttered. "It—it isn't a ghost, you fellows."

"N-no," said Frank.

Beauclerc shook his head.

"And—and we're going to try again," said Bob. "We'll jolly well find out what it is, and who it is!"

And Bob's chums assented, not for the moment with enthusiasm, however. For the time the mystery of the haunted mine remained a mystery.

Next Week: "THE GHOST HUNTERS!"



The negro was only a few feet from the Benbow's quarter when, exhausted from his swim, his efforts ceased and the waters closed over his woolly head. Without stopping to think, Drake put his hands together and dived into the sea.

Ship in Distress!

“LAND!”

There was a rush of the Benbow fellows towards Jack Drake as he pointed to a low blue bar in the golden west.

Most of the fellows had enjoyed the run across the Atlantic, and agreed that the school at sea was a great improvement on St. Winifred's on shore. But the sight of land was very welcome after many a long day at sea. The Benbow had encountered a tropical “blow” as she approached the Antilles, and the sea was still running high.

“It's Barbados,” said Drake.

“How do you know it is?” asked Sawyer major.

“Because I heard Captain Topcastle say so,” answered Drake, with a smile. “We're going to put in there, I think.”

“And we'll get a run ashore,” remarked Dick Rodney. “That ought to mean a day off from lessons.”

“Oh, good!” said Tuckey Toodles. “If it means that, I hope we put in there.”

“Hallo! What's up?” exclaimed Drake suddenly.

The course of the Benbow was altered and the blue line on the sea, which had been almost directly ahead, now lay on the starboard bow.

Captain Topcastle, on the quarter-deck, was staring to the south-west through his binoculars. “Something up!” said Rodney.

The juniors glanced at the captain, and then in the direction in which his glasses were turned.

Nothing but the rolling sea met their gaze. But as the Benbow, under full sail, swept onward, they made out at last an object that rose and fell with the motion of the sea.

SAVED FROM THE SEA!

By Owen Conquest.

“It's a ship in distress!” said Rodney.

“Looks like a giddy wreck,” said Drake. “I suppose the skipper's bearing down on it to give them help.”

The juniors watched eagerly. The recent storm had not hurt the old Benbow, but it had evidently had more serious results for the vessel that rolled and pitched on the rough sea in the distance. It was a dismasted brig, that came more clearly into sight as the Benbow sailed nearer. It had been a three-masted vessel, but all the masts were gone and the bowsprit hung down like the broken wing of a bird, in a tangle of torn rigging. From the stump of the main-mast a signal of distress floated in the wind.

“She's had it pretty bad,” remarked Rodney. “She won't get into port without help.”

“It's an American,” said Daubeny of the Shell. “There's the Stars and Stripes.”

The Benbow drew nearer and nearer to the American brig, and the juniors observed a boat

Why did the negro dive overboard from the distressed ship when rescue was at hand? That question would have remained a mystery had not Jack Drake saved the negro from the sea!

drop into the sea from the dismasted vessel. They watched it as it pulled towards the school ship.

A tall, lean man, with an unlighted cheroot sticking in the corner of a wide mouth, sat in the stern.

The Benbow lay-to at a short distance from the brig, and the American skipper was helped aboard. He glanced rather curiously over the Benbow fellows, who were all looking at him, and then walked up to Captain Topcastle.

“Say, cap'n, I guess I want your help,” he remarked.

“You are welcome to it,” said Captain Topcastle.

“I'm Cap'n Potiphar G. Potts, and my ship's the Mary Selencia Sanders, of Baltimore, jest out of Barbados under cargo,” said the visitor. “I ain't asking you for a tow. I guess I can do without that. If you can lend me a spar to rig up a jury-mast I calculate I'll manage.”

“I can do that, and you are welcome,” replied Captain Topcastle.

“Sure!” Captain Potts chewed his cheroot for

a moment or two, eyeing his interlocutor with his sharp, twinkling grey eyes. "And how much do you reckon you're goin' to stick me for the jury-spar, cap'n?"

"Nothing."

"Eh?"

"You are welcome to our assistance, sir, without payment," said Captain Topcastle.

"I guess you're the real white article——" began the American trader. But he broke off suddenly as there came the sound of a sudden splash from the brig, and to the amazement of the Benbow fellows a black face appeared in the water—the face of a swimmer, striking out for the Benbow!

In Peril!

ALL eyes turned upon the black man, who was swimming desperately through the rough sea, tossed and buffeted by the water. The waves were still running high from the recent wind, and it seemed impossible for a swimmer to live in such a sea.

"The awful duffer!" muttered Rodney. "What on earth has he jumped overboard for?"

Captain Potts' interview with Captain Topcastle broke off on the instant. The American captain ran to the side and shouted to the seamen in his boat.

"Stop that scallawag! Pick him up! Knock him on the head if he gives trouble."

The boat pulled out.

"Only a durned mutinous nigger, cap'n," said Potiphar G. Potts, turning back. "I guess he wants to desert, but I calculate he won't—not much!"

"I should not take a deserter on board my ship," answered Captain Topcastle coldly.

Jack Drake had secured a coil of rope and stood ready to throw it to the swimmer if he came near enough. The brig's boat was pulling to intercept him, and it looked as if the black man would be cut off.

"What the thump does that mean?" muttered Drake. "The man's risking his life in that sea. He wouldn't do that unless——"

"He's got a jolly good reason for getting out of the brig!" said Rodney.

"Hallo! They've got him!" said Sawyer major.

The boat, lifted on a wave, swamped down on the swimmer, and it seemed inevitable that he would either be run down or seized. But before he was reached the black man disappeared under water. The boat floated where his woolly head had last been seen.

"There he is again!" exclaimed Rodney. "He's dived under the boat!"

The woolly head came up again between the boat and the Benbow. The negro was still swimming hard, though it could be seen that his strength was going.

Potiphar G. Potts yelled to his boat. In his excitement he had quite forgotten Captain Topcastle and his business with him.

"After him, you silly skunks!" he howled. "Can't you see he's getting away?"

The boat swept round, almost capsizing in the rough sea. A flood of water came over the gunwale, and the boat's crew were in difficulties for some minutes, during which time the desperate swimmer drew nearer to the Benbow.

Captain Potts' hand slid into his hip pocket. It came out with a revolver in it. He leaned over

the rail and brandished the weapon at the black face of the swimmer.

"Stop, you pesky nigger! Git aboard that boat, or by hokey I'll send you to the bottom! Spry, low!"

A grip of iron was laid on the American's shoulder, and he was spun round, to face Captain Topcastle.

"Put up that weapon!"

"I guess, cap'n——"

"Put that weapon away. Do you hear?"

Potiphar G. Potts muttered a curse and slid the revolver back into his hip pocket.

"I guess you ain't letting one of my hands desert to your ship, sure!" he exclaimed furiously.

Captain Topcastle did not answer that. His eyes were fixed anxiously upon the swimmer. The hapless black man was safe from the boat now but the long swim in the rough sea had exhausted him, strong as he evidently was. He was only a few feet from the Benbow's quarter when his efforts ceased and the waters closed over his woolly head.

Splash!

Without stopping to think, Jack Drake tossed the coil of rope he held to Rodney, put his hands together, and dived into the sea.

Drake struck the water and disappeared, but he came up in a few seconds, swimming strongly. He was only a few feet from the woolly head, which was sinking again, and he reached the negro in time. His grasp closed on the thick wool of the black man.

"Bravo, Drake!" yelled Rodney.

"Hurrah!"

The Benbow fellows shouted and cheered as Drake swam strongly, supporting the exhausted negro.

The brig's boat was pulling for them, but it did not reach them. Dick Rodney cast the rope and Drake caught it, and with his burden he was pulled to the side of the Benbow.

"Hang on!" panted Drake in the ear of the black man, and the latter held on to the rope.

"Pull!" shouted Rodney.

Twenty pairs of hands were on the rope on the deck of the Benbow. Three or four seamen grasped it as well as the juniors. In a couple of minutes more Jack Drake and the rescued man were dragged on board.

The Free Coloured Gentleman!

JACK DRAKE staggered to his feet. He stood panting in a pool of water, breathless, but little the worse for his plunge in the turbulent sea.

The black man sat on the deck, streaming water and gasping. He was clad only in a dirty cotton shirt and trousers, which clung to his wet skin. Captain Potts came striding towards him with a furious face.

"You black hound——"

The skipper's heavy sea boot was drawn back, evidently to kick the hapless black man, but Dick Rodney ran between and shoved Potiphar G. Potts back.

"Let him alone, you brute!" the junior exclaimed indignantly.

Five or six fellows gathered round the rescued man and helped him to his feet, and stood round him to protect him.

Mr. Potts turned savagely to Captain Topcastle. "That nigger's a deserter from my brig!" he

exclaimed. "I claim to have him put into my boat and taken back."

"We shall see."

"I guess you're not going to harbour a deserter?"

"I'm going to hear what he has to say before sending him back to your ship, Captain Potts. Let him get breath."

The black man was still panting; it was some minutes before he could speak.

"Now, my man, can you give me an account of yourself?" asked Captain Topcastle, when the black man had recovered a little.

"Yes, sar!" gasped the rescued man.

"Why have you swum from the ship you belong to?"

"No belong to brig, Mass' Cap'n!" panted the negro. "Me free Barbadian coloured gentleman."

"What?"

"No belong to brig—me shanghai'd at Barbados!" panted the negro

"Oh!" said the captain grimly.

"Me well known in Barbados," said the black man. "Ole Potts take me to work in ship, and kick me if I no work. No belong to ole Potts; free coloured gentleman of Barbados. Name Tin Tacks. Me ship's carpenter."

Captain Topcastle smiled. The free coloured gentleman was evidently in earnest.

Captain Potts was gnawing his stubby lip with anger. He scowled as Captain Topcastle turned to him.

"Well, what have you to say to that?"

"I guess it ain't a noo thing for a skipper to shanghai a nigger when he's short-handed," answered the trader sullenly.

"It mayn't be a new thing," said Captain Topcastle, "but it's an illegal thing, and the man is entitled to the protection of the British flag."

"I guess you ain't going to keep my nigger, sir!" roared Potiphar G. Potts in great indignation.

"Then you guess wrong," answered Captain Topcastle coolly. "That man will remain on board my ship till we reach Barbados, where I shall land him."

"I guess—"

"Me thank you, sar," said Tin Tacks. "Me work on dis ship all time till come to Barbados."

"You ain't going to keep my nigger!" repeated Potiphar G. Potts. "I tell you I'm short-handed. I've lost four niggers with fever, and—"

"You should look after your hands a little better, then," said Captain Topcastle. "You won't be allowed to kidnap British subjects for your brig. That is enough."

Potiphar G. Potts set his yellow, tobacco-stained teeth, with a deadly look at the free coloured gentleman. But that gentleman only grinned.

"Send the man forrard, bo'sun, and let him be rigged out in some better clothes," said Captain Topcastle. "Now, Mr. Potts—"

"I guess—"

"That matter's ended," interrupted Captain Topcastle. "If you want to talk to me about spars—"

And the two captains went aft together, Mr. Potts with a savage scowl on his face. Angry as he was, however, he did not neglect to secure what he wanted from the English captain, and the spare mast was transferred to the brig; and when the Benbow was again put before the wind, Potiphar G. Potts and his men were left busy rigging the jury-mast.

An Offer of Service!

"**MASSA JACK!**"

Jack Drake looked up. He was alone in Cabin No. 8 when Tin Tacks, the free coloured gentleman of Barbados, looked in. Dick Rodney and Tuckey Toodles were gone to the canteen for supplies for tea.

Drake smiled and nodded to the black gentleman. He rather liked the man's round chubby face, black as the ace of spades, and full of honesty and good-humour.

"Hallo! Trot it., old top!" said the junior. "How ar' you feeling after your swim?"

"Fust chop, sar!" grinned Tin Tacks. "Me tough ole carcass, Mass' Jack. Me come tank you for hab save my life."

"All serene, old son!" answered Drake. "Jolly glad I was able to lend you a hand."

"Young massa feel all right now?"

"Right as rain!" said Drake, with a smile.

"You save ole Tin Tacks' life," said the black man. "Tin Tacks nebber forget dat—nebber. Tin Tacks do any'ing for young massa."

"Don't worry about it," said Drake. "I'm glad you're safe on board and finished with old Potts. I suppose you'll be glad to get to Barbados?"

"Massa Jack go to Barbados?"

"We touch there for a few days, I think."

"And after that?"

"We go on to the mainland of South America."

Tin Tacks looked thoughtful.

"You like ole Tin Tacks?" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, certainly! You're one of the best, I'm sure."

"Ole Tin Tacks berry clobber ole feller," said the black man seriously. "Me ship's carpenter by trade; sometimes work in port and sometimes in English ship. Me hab work on plantation, and work in fishin'-boat. Me hab been servant to berry grand gentleman."

"Sort of Jack of all trades," said the junior, wondering what on earth the free coloured gentleman was driving at.

"Ole Tin Tacks blush clothes, clean shoe, cook and scrub, and any'ing," pursued the black gentleman. "No care much about wages—only be treated like free gentleman."

"I—I see," said Drake, who did not quite see, however.

"Suppose you want fust-class servant, you hab ole Tin Tacks."

"Eh?"

"Me berry glad to serbe young massa," said the Barbadian.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the junior. "You're looking for a job—is that it?"

Tin Tacks shook his head proudly.

"No look for job—me find plenty work on shore," he answered. "Me want serbe Mass' Jack, if Mass' Jack hab ole Tin Tacks for servant."

Drake smiled.

"I'd be jolly glad, Tin Tacks," he said; "only it wouldn't be allowed. The fellows aren't allowed to keep servants on the ship."

The black man's face fell.

"Besides, I couldn't pay you much wages out of my allowance," added the junior, with a smile.

"Tin Tacks no want wages. You treat Tin Tacks like one gentleman. Dat all right."

"I'm afraid—"

Rodney and Tuckey Toodles came into the cabin

at this point, the former with a steaming can of coffee, the latter with a bag of comestibles.

"Hallo! Got a visitor?" asked Rodney, with a nod to the Barbadian gentleman.

"Yes," answered Drake, smiling. "I say, let's have Tin Tacks to tea."

"Good!"

"Here, I say!" exclaimed Tuckey Toodles. "A blessed nigger—"

"Shut up, you fat pig!" said Drake angrily. "Where are your manners, you apology for a German sausage?"

"That's all very well—" began Toodles warmly.

"If you say another word I'll let you have some of this coffee down your neck, you porker!" said Rodney. "Will you stay to tea, Mr. Tin Tacks?"

"Mass' Jack want ole Tin Tacks to stay?"

"Certainly!" answered Drake.

"Me stay, den."

An extra stool was borrowed from the Common-room, and Mr. Tin Tacks sat down to tea with the chums of Cabin No. 8.

No Chance for Toodles!

TIN TACKS proved to be quite an entertaining guest in Cabin No. 8. In his peculiar dialect he told the juniors a great deal about his island home, and they learned much about Barbados from him. But Tin Tacks knew the world beyond the limits of the Antilles. He had been in Florida and Yucatan, and he had sailed on several voyages as ship's carpenter. But he dwelt chiefly on the great abilities he had displayed as servant to a very grand gentleman, evidently with a view to impressing upon Drake that this was a chance too good to be lost.

His offer of service to Drake was mentioned at the tea-table, and it made Rodney smile. But Tuckey Toodles looked more serious over it.

"Rot, of course," said Toodles. "You don't want a servant, Drake."

"Quite so," assented Drake.

"It's different with me," said Toodles. "I'm accustomed to plenty of servants at home, you see. I regard this life as roughing it. At home I've always got a butler and footmen at my beck and call."

"I don't think," murmured Rodney.

"You're a poor bounder Rodney, and you don't know what our mansion is like," said Toodles. "At home I never lift a finger for myself. I think I ought to keep this nigger to wait on me if I can get permission."

"My hat!"

"As for wages—"

"That would be rather a difficulty, wouldn't it, as you're so wealthy that you never have any money?" grinned Rodney.

"This chap says that he doesn't care about wages, though," said Toodles. "After all, it's an honour for him to serve a real gentleman, and he will get his rations on the ship. I think I'll try it on Mr. Packe." Tuckey Toodles turned to the black gentleman, who was staring at him open-eyed. "Can you look after a gentleman's clothes, Tin Tacks?"

"Berry good, sar."

"And wait on him?"

"Me tink so, sar."

"Well, I'll give you a trial if it can be worked," said Toodles. "I rather like the idea of having

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a faithful nigger. You can consider yourself my servant—for the present, at least."

"No serbe little fat lubber," said Tin Tacks.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Tin Tacks only serbe real gentleman," explained the black man. "Serbe Mass' Jack, berry glad, but no serbe little fat pig!"

The expression on Tuckey Toodles' face was extraordinary, and it made his studymates shriek with laughter.

"Why, you—you—you—" spluttered Toodles, crimson with wrath. "You—you cheeky nigger! Don't you know a gentleman when you see one?"

"Me know berry well. Mass' Jack gentleman," answered Tin Tacks. "Mass' Rodney gentleman. You fat little porker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" spluttered Tuckey.

"You asked for it, Tuckey!" chuckled Drake.

"If you call a chap a nigger, I suppose he can call you a pig."

Tuckey Toodles jumped up from the tea-table.

"Do you think I'm going to stand this cheek from a nigger?" he hooted. "I'll kick him out of the room!"

He came quickly round the table and grasped Tin Tacks by the shoulders. The black man came off his stool with a crash. Drake and Rodney jumped to their feet.

"Toodles, you ass, stop it!" shouted Drake.

"I'm going to kick the nigger out—"

"I tell you— Oh, my hat!"

Tin Tacks was on his feet in a twinkling. His black face had lost its good humour, and his eyes were flashing with rage. He grasped Tuckey Toodles and swept him off his feet, in spite of his weight.

Tuckey gave a howl of agonised alarm as he was tossed in the air in the grasp of the powerful negro. The cabin spun round him, and his fat face went white.

"Grooooooh! Help!"

"Tin Tacks!" yelled Drake in alarm.

The negro was swinging Tuckey back, apparently with the intention of hurling him through the open doorway. Had he done so, the results would have been serious for Toodles—and for Tin Tacks, too, afterwards. Jack Drake jumped at him and grasped him in time.

"Stop! Put him down!"

The black man hesitated one moment, and then he set Tuckey Toodles down on his feet, very white and shaken.

"Me berry sorry, Mass' Jack," murmured Tin Tacks. "No want make Mass' Jack jolly angry. Little fat pig call me nigger. Me free Barbadian coloured gentleman."

"Groooooh!" gasped Toodles. "I—I—I'll—Groogh!"

"You'll get out!" growled Drake; and he took Toodles by the ear and led him out of the study. "Keep out till you can behave yourself!"

"That dashed nigger— Yarooooh!"

Drake's boot interrupted Toodles' remark, and the fat junior departed hastily. The door closed on him, and tea in Cabin No. 8 finished without the fascinating society of Tuckey Toodles.

Free from the disturbing influence of their fat studymate, Jack Drake and Dick Rodney were able to benefit from the presence of their dusky guest to the extent of gaining much interesting information of that fascinating portion of the globe for which they were bound

"Barbados berry nice place," said the black



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Miss A. Murray, Manse of Dum, near Montrose, Angus, Scotland; girl correspondents, age 13-15; films, sports; New Zealand or Australia.

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Miss F. Maasch, Tintern, Ednam Road, Rondebosch, Capetown, S. Africa; girl correspondents, any age; stamps; British Gulana, Cook Islands, Falkland Isles, Ceylon, Sierra Leone, Seychelles; all letters answered.

S. Hallford, 7, London Road, Tooting, London, S.W.17; stamps; anywhere; all letters answered.

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C. Bryson, 78, High Street, Perth, Scotland; age 14-16; ice hockey, photography, and cycling; Canada.

A. Cleverly, Lower Belvedere, Devizes, Wilts; stamps and wild life; anywhere.

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PEN PALS COUPON

6-5-39

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D. Woollam, 5, Rocklands Terrace, Grimsby Road, Sea Point, Capetown, S. Africa; age 17-19; any interesting topic, especially sports; anywhere; all letters answered.

W. Partridge, 82, Wrotham Road, Welling, Kent; age 19-22; sports, films, travel, books, dancing, writing; any part of world.

A. Shillingford, 186, Lynton Road, Berrymead, London, S.E.1; any age; stamps, magazines; any country except British Isles.

Miss E. Bissell, 4, Tadmor Close, Halliford Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex; girl correspondents, age 19-22; interested in anything; anywhere.

Miss D. Redfern, 29, Gower Street, Summer Hill, New South Wales, Australia; girl correspondents, age 18 upwards; all sports, reading, stamps, travel; any country, foreign preferred.

Miss V. Miffs, 104, Ivanhoe Parade, Ivanhoe, Melbourne, Australia; girl correspondents, age 13-16; sports, reading, riding; British Isles.

S. McCoy, Dean Street, London, Ontario, Canada; age 12-16; stamps, coins, postcards, newspapers, match folders, cigarette cards, curiosities; interested in chemistry, ice hockey and general topics. Wants to purchase Nos. 1,516, 1,518, 1,531, 1,568 of The GEM, and Nos. 1,513, 1,514, 1,515, 1,516, 1,520, 1,530 and 1,545 of The MAGNET. All letters answered.

W. Sommons, 1, Somerset Lane, Franklin Town, Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies; stamps, coins, postcards; British Empire. All letters answered.

Miss J. Beck, 123, Brandon Street, Leicester; girl correspondents, age 17-19; anywhere.

man. "S'pose young massa go ashore, ole Tin Tacks act as guide and show you t'ings."

"That's jolly good of you, Tin Tacks!" said Drake. "I'm looking forward to a run ashore in Bridgetown, and it'll make things a whole heap more interesting having someone who knows the merry old place to show us round. What do you say, Rodney?"

"You bet it will!" exclaimed Rodney. "Me stay 'longside Mass' Jack all de time," averred Tin Tacks. "But no bring little fat porker."

"Oh, you mustn't take any notice of him!" said Drake. "He doesn't mean any harm. But I'm jolly sorry we shall have to say good-bye to you in Barbados."

"Not say good-bye!" said Tin Tacks. "Me no leave Massa Jack."

And already a plan for staying with the boy who had saved his life was maturing in the black man's woolly head.

Next Wednesday: "THE STOWAWAY!"

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