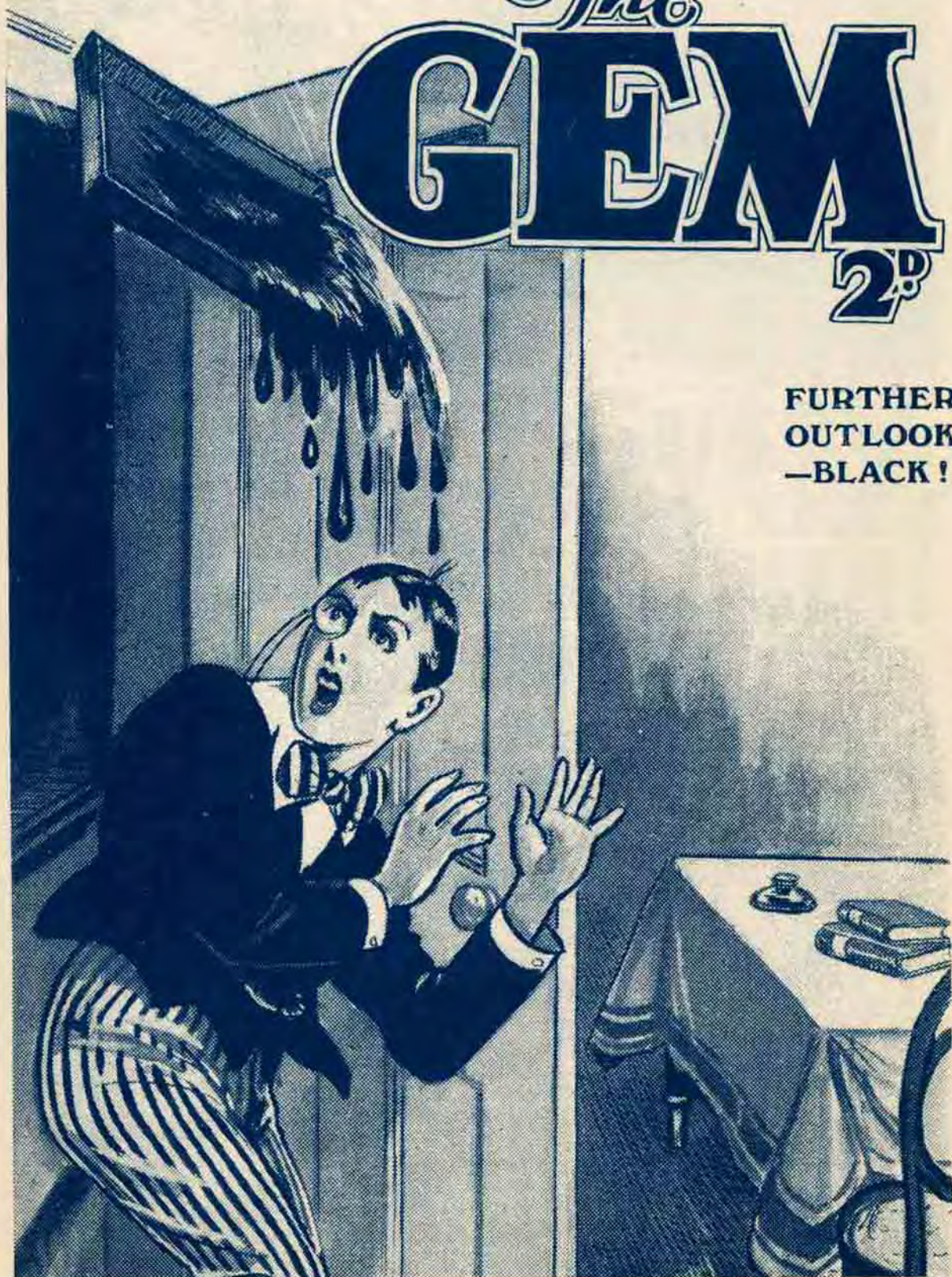


**"GUSSY ON THE WARPATH!"** SPARKLING NEW EXTRA-LONG YARN  
OF SPORT AND JAPING AT ST. JIM'S.

# *The* **GEM** 2<sup>d</sup>

**FURTHER  
OUTLOOK  
—BLACK!**





# 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 Blunt himself! But keep your letter **SHORT**, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned.

C. E., of Oxford, writes:

Have a crack at this:

"QZXP YOZPV RH EVIB XOVEVI ZG  
NLWVH DV SLKV!"

Good luck for the year A.D. 2,000. (If you are still alive. You may be; who knows?)

P.S.—If you played table tennis with a champion it would be a champ versus a chimp! Nerts! Bow-wow! Miaow!

ANSWER: Stand back:

"**JACK BLAKE IS VERY CLEVER AT CODES, WE HOPE!**"

Oh, it only took two ticks, with my vast Secret Service organisation working at full speed. Amazing, isn't it? Good luck to YOU for A.D. 2,001. Maybe you'll have invented a code I can't do by then! Note that I'm giving you an extra year!

P.S.—I am the table tennis champion of Study No. 6. I'd like to play you some time, old chimp! (Well, you asked for it!)

G. Hershkovitz, of Tel-Aviv, Palestine, writes:

I wonder why the Editor allows you to fill up this 'ere page with such rubbish? Better chuck it afore I come to yer rotten ole school and punch yer nose! Yer say yer can answer questions? How long is an elephant's hair?

P.S.—Send yer nose over 'ere by air male, so it'll be less trubble for me to punch it!

ANSWER: Sick language! What can you be a-thinkin' of, hold feller? Surely you ain't gone far to copy Syd Walker's style o' speakin', 'are you, now? Mercy me, wot a way you'd be, if you was actually funny, like which you ain't, if you asks me, if you kind of hunderstands wot I'm a-drivin' at, hif you've the brains, hand the hintellect, which I doubts, hif I may take leave to say so! Har, har, har! That's one fer yer knob, ain't it?

P.S.—I berlieve H've put a haitch on where I shouldn't 'ave someheres, but wot's a haitch more or less between friends? I asks yer!

Joy, of Crook, Co. Durham, writes:

How's this for the longest word in the English language? **DISPROPORTIONABLENESS**. Twenty-one letters! Kind regards to Gussy, Figgins, and Talbot. Who is the tallest chap at St. Jim's, and the tallest junior? Yours till fishes waddle.

ANSWER: The Gold Challenge Cup previously held by A. S. W., of Chingford, for **INTERCOMMUNICABILITY** is hereby awarded to you—**THE GEM LIBRARY**.—No. 1,637.

till somebody finds a twenty-two letter word! Your kind wishes reciprocated. Kildare is, I think, our tallest representative, though Langton is lanky, too. Lankiest of the juniors is George Figgins, five feet seven and a half inches. But please don't accuse old Figgys of "disproportionableness"! Yours till elephants fly!

F. S., of Toronto, Canada, writes:

Do you get a long lie-in on Sunday morning? My three favourite characters are Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Jack Blake (that's you!).

ANSWER: Not so long as Baggy Trimble would like, for one. You yourself are now a favourite character with Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Jack Blake (that's me!).

L. C., of Manor Estate, Sheffield, writes:

**HONORIFICABILITUDINITY**, meaning honourableness (twenty-two letters), beats both you and A. S. W., of Chingford. The Latin is twenty-seven letters, **HONORIFICABILITUDINITATIBUS**, the ablative plural of **HONORIFICABILITUDO**. See supplement at back of Chambers' Dic. I always thought your letters were fakes. If I see this I'll believe they're not.

ANSWER: Jever hear the ref. whistle for offside at footer? I'm whistling now. Words with a Latin derivation, like your winner, are more college professor's language than English. So, though technically you're a goal-scorer, I'm going to observe the spirit of the game and rule your effort out. Anybody disagree with me? Well, I'm glad to have heard from you, anyhow. I don't doubt your honorificabilitudinity for a moment!

## BRIEF REPLIES.

D. Forbes, of Bath.—Glyn did invent a mechanical line-writer once, but a keen eye could spot that the "lines" weren't separately written. I'd hate to land you into trouble with the beaks! Can't get a photographer to take you? Oh, my hat! Charles Gouge, of Maidstone.—Remarks noted, but GEM readers reckon to run their own clubs. Sorry! Grace Deacon, of Catford, S.E. 6.—"St. Jim's" is a colloquialism, "St. James's" sounding far too stiff and severe. Talbot is considered quite handsome.

**FUN, CRICKET AND JAPING AT ST. JIM'S COMBINE TO MAKE THIS SPARKLING  
EXTRA-LONG STORY ONE THAT YOU'LL SIMPLY REVEL IN!**



# GUSSY ON THE WARPATH!

As Figgins & Co. turned to stare up the gloomy passage a figure loomed up. **SLOSH!** A tin bucket swept in the air, and a gallon of mixed furniture stains shot out of the bucket, landing fairly on the New House raiders. "Oh!" "Ooogh!" "Gooogh!"

## CHAPTER 1.

**Sold!**

"**A**ND a plum cake, Mrs. Taggles—"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"And a seedy cake—"

"Yes."

"And a dozen cweam puffs—"

"Yes."

"And a dozen doughnuts—and thwee dozen jam tarts—"

Dame Taggles, in the school shop at St. Jim's, was busy with pencil and paper, taking it down. It was quite a shipping order! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form seemed to be rather spreading himself.

"And a tin of toffees," went on Arthur Augustus, "and a box of chocolate cweams—one of those large boxes!"

Fatty Wynn of the New House was in the tuck-shop.

Fatty listened to this, with his eyes shining from his plump face, and his mouth watering.

The mere list of such attractive things was music to Fatty's ears. The

music of the spheres was nothing to it. Plum cake, seed cake, cream puffs, doughnuts, jam tarts—it was like a grand, sweet song!

In break that morning, Fatty was expending ninepence on refreshments, liquid and solid, in the school shop! Fatty was expending the exact sum of ninepence, because his total wealth consisted of a sixpence, two pennies, and two half-pennies.

And here was Gussy of the School House running into pounds!

"And a dozen gingah-pop!" went on Arthur Augustus. "The fellows will like gingah-pop in this warm weathah, aftah cwicket." Gussy paused to reflect for a moment. "No! Two dozen gingah-pop, Mrs. Taggles."

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

Fatty Wynn finished the tart over which he had been lingering, making the most of it.

"Standing a spread in your House, D'Arcy?" he asked affably.

Arthur Augustus glanced round. He had been so busy giving his order that he had not noticed the New House junior there.

*It's just like Gussy to walk into a  
booby-trap set for someone else!  
And again, when he goes on the  
warpath, it's just like him to get  
revenge on the wrong party!*

by

**MARTIN CLIFFORD**

"Yaas, wathah!" he answered. "It's a celebration, you know."

"What are you celebrating?" asked Fatty, rather puzzled. "Anything special happened?"

"Bai Jove! Have you forgotten that it is the House match to-day, Wynn?" asked Arthur Augustus. "You see, I have had a fivah from my patah, so I am goin' to stand a spweed to celebrat' beatin' the New House."

Fatty Wynn blinked at him.

The junior House match was due that Wednesday afternoon. Figgins & Co. of the New House had no doubt that they were going to win that House match, very likely with an innings to spare. Tom Merry & Co. of the School House had no doubt that they were going to win that House match, very likely with an innings to spare!

But really, this was counting one's chickens rather early.

"You think you're going to beat us at cricket?" asked Fatty.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not even a spot of doubt about it?" inquired Fatty, with gentle sarcasm.

"In the cires, no, deah boy," explained Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy has agreed to let me open the innings for the School House. A good start means a lot in cwicket, you know! I may not put up a centuwy—"

"Oh!" gasped Fatty. "No, you mayn't!"

"But fifty or sixty will be vewy encouwagin' to the othahs, and, of course, I shall top the centuwy if I can."

"I can see you doing it!" gurgled Fatty. "Why, I shall be bowling the first over for our House."

Fatty Wynn was the champion junior bowler of St. Jim's. If Arthur Augustus was opening for the rival House, Fatty regarded the first School House wicket as in his pocket already! But that did not seem to be the view of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Vewy glad to heah it, deah boy," he answered amiably. "You're about the best of the New House bunch, and it will be vewy encouwagin' to the othah fellows to see your bowlin' knocked all ovah the shop!"

Leaving Fatty speechless with that remark, Arthur Augustus turned to Mrs. Taggles again.

"I was forgettin' the jam," he said. "Thwee pots of jam, please!"

Fatty Wynn walked out of the tuckshop.

He waved his hand outside, and Figgins and Kerr, who were in the offing, came up. Fatty's plump face was full of excitement. His comrades looked at him inquiringly.

"What's on?" asked Figgins.

"Call some more New House men!" gasped Fatty. "We mustn't run any risk! D'Arcy may come out any minute now."

"My dear chap, never mind House rags to-day," said Kerr. "We're going to beat them at cricket this afternoon—"

"Fathead! Gussy's ordering nearly everything in the tuckshop!" breathed Fatty. "What do you think? He's standing a spread in his study after the match to celebrate the victory."

Figgins chuckled.

"Jolly sporting of a School House man to celebrate a New House victory!" he remarked.

"He will come out loaded!" breathed Fatty, thrilling with excitement. "We collar him when

he comes out, and bag the lot, see? It will come in jolly useful for celebrating in our study in the New House, what?"

"Good egg!" grinned Figgins.

"I heard him giving his orders—he will be loaded up to the neck," said Fatty. "Cake, and jam, and doughnuts, and jam tarts, and—"

"We'll be ready!" said Kerr, laughing.

"Wait here while I gather up the clan!" said Figgins, and he cut off in haste.

Fatty Wynn and Kerr remained on guard near the door of the school shop. By great good fortune, no School House men were near at hand.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther could be seen at a distance, talking cricket over by the School House. Blake, Herries, and Digby could be seen strolling by the elms. In another direction, Talbot of the Shell could be seen speaking to Levison of the Fourth. But not one of them was near. It looked like a clear field for a New House raid.

Figgins was hardly a minute gone.

He came back with Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence at his heels. All of them were grinning with happy anticipation.

There were now six New House juniors waiting outside the school shop for Arthur Augustus to emerge. They were ready to rush the moment he walked out into the quadrangle with that enormous supply of tuck. Never had the stage been better set for a successful House raid. A swift rush would upend Gussy—and six New House men would be off with the plunder long before there was a spot of a chance of rescue.

Figgins & Co. waited—joyously!

"Here he comes!" gasped Fatty.

An elegant figure appeared in the doorway of the tuckshop and walked elegantly out. Figgins & Co. rushed.

But they stopped suddenly.

"Oh!" gasped Fatty.

"Sold!" murmured Kerr.

Arthur Augustus was coming out. But he was not coming out heavy laden. He was not laden at all!

A fellow who had been giving such orders as Fatty Wynn had heard might have been expected to emerge, as Fatty put it, loaded up to the neck. But Arthur Augustus was not carrying so much as a bun!

The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass on the New House crowd in surprise. Why six New House fellows suddenly rushed up to him, and as suddenly halted, appeared to puzzle him.

"What's up, deah boys?" he inquired.

"You—you—you image!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Where's the tuck?"

"The tuck!" repeated Arthur Augustus in surprise. Then he grinned. "Oh! The tuck is goin' to be delivahed in my study aftah dinnah! Did you think I was goin' to cawwy it? Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" trilled Arthur Augustus.

He walked away laughing. He left Figgins & Co. gazing after him with expressive expressions. He joined Blake, Herries, and Dig, and a minute later Figgins & Co. had the pleasure, or otherwise, of seeing those cheery youths laughing also.

Figgins laughed, too.

"What a sell!" he said.

But Fatty Wynn did not laugh. Fatty was

thinking of plum cake, seedy cake, doughnuts, and jam tarts, cream puffs and chocolate creams—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream!

## CHAPTER 2.

### Merely a Misunderstanding!

**TOM MERRY** ran his fingers through his curly hair—a way he had when he was perplexed.

"It's too thick!" he said.

"It is," agreed Monty Lowther. "Much! Thickest in the House—if you're really going to open the House innings with Gussy!"

"Eh—what are you talking about, ass?"

"Your head!" answered Monty affably. "Weren't you?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, old chap!" said Tom. "It's getting altogether too thick! Can't you find that camera, Manners?"

"No!" roared Manners.

After third school that morning the Terrible Three of the Shell were in their study—No. 10. Manners had gone up for his camera. And a yell that sounded like a particularly ferocious Red Indian on the warpath announced that Manners could not find his camera, and drew his comrades to his aid.

Manners was rooting about the study, with an expression on his face that was positively dangerous.

Harry Manners was a quiet and patient fellow. He seldom got shirty. But if anything could get Manners' goat it was larking with his camera.

Manners of the Shell took photography seriously. He was as keen on handling a camera as Tom was on handling a bat or Monty Lowther on handling a jape. Manners was not in the junior House eleven that afternoon; but he was going to take snaps of the game, which really he liked better. He could play cricket, but he was a past master in the photographic line.

And his camera had disappeared!

Manners had been going to load it all ready, and it was gone. The effect on Manners was equally dismaying and infuriating.

Of course, it was not gone for good. It was only some silly ass larking. But Manners of the Shell had absolutely no use for larks in connection with his precious camera.

"It's that mystery ragger again, of course," said Tom. "I'm getting fed-up with that sweep!"

"Must have been Racke," said Manners at last.

Tom shook his head.

"Racke isn't that mystery ragger, old man. He ragged Study No. 6 the other night, but he's not the man who's been carrying on these idiotic rags for weeks."

"Somebody's shifted my camera!" hooted Manners. "It's not a House rag. It must have been shifted in the night; all those rags happen at night. The New House can't get in at night. It's a School House man who's set out to rag the House. Well, it was Racke once, as we jolly well found out."

"Let's have another look for it," said Tom Merry pacifically. "I dare say it's in the study somewhere."

"I've looked everywhere!" roared Manners.

"Well, it must be in the House—"

"Do you want me to go all over the House with a small comb; combing it for my camera?" roared Manners. "Ten to one it was Racke—"

"I tell you Racke isn't the secret ragger. Think

he'd have nerve enough to rag a House prefect—as that swab did once?"

"I know he ragged Blake's study one night."

"Yes; but—"

"Well, I'm going to see Racke," declared Manners. "I expect he's in his study smoking, the swab! I'll give him smoking!"

Manners rushed out of Study No. 10. Tom Merry and Lowther rushed after him as he headed for Study No. 7.

It was quite an exasperating state of affairs. Some mysterious ragger was ragging the House—this was his latest. Nobody knew who it was. Nobody could even guess.

Manners, in calmer moments, did not think that it was Aubrey Racke of the Shell. But at this especial moment he was not calm; he was infuriated. And Racke was a smoky swab, anyhow.

But at the door of Study No. 7 Tom Merry and Monty Lowther grabbed the excited Manners by either arm and stopped him. Aubrey Racke might be a smoky swab and a rank outsider; but, really, that was not sufficient evidence on which to find him guilty of bagging Manners' camera.

"My dear chap—" said Tom.

"Look here—" said Lowther.

From Study No. 7, which belonged to Racke and Crooke, a voice was heard. It was the voice of Aubrey Racke:

"I'm going over to Wayland this afternoon for a film."

Manners jumped as he heard that.

So did Tom and Monty.

Never once, so far as they knew, had Aubrey Racke ever displayed any interest in photography, or been known to possess a camera. Now they heard him say that he was going over to Wayland for a film. What did he want a film for unless he had suddenly come into possession of a camera?

Manners jerked himself away from his friends and hurled the study door open. He rushed in.

Two startled exclamations blended into one, and Racke and Crooke jumped to their feet. Both of them were smoking cigarettes, and the sudden hurrying open of the door was startling.

Racke dropped his cigarette promptly and put his foot on it. Crooke was not so lucky. His cigarette slipped into his mouth as he jumped. His startled exclamation was followed by a frantic howl. The business end of that cigarette seemed to be hot!

"Oh! Ow! Oh!" roared Crooke.

Had it been a master or a prefect, as the two black sheep for the moment dreaded, they would have been given quite away. Luckily for them, it was neither.

"What the thump—" howled Racke angrily, as Manners rushed in.

He had no time for more.

Manners' grasp was on him, and he went whirling about the study, with Manners gripping his head in chancery and thumping his features.

"Oh, oh! Ow! Oh! Wow!" yelled Crooke, hurriedly ejecting the cigarette. "You silly idiots! I'm burnt! Ow!"

"Yaroooh! Whoop!" roared Racke, struggling frantically. "Have you gone mad, Manners? Let go! Drag him off, you fellows! Yoo-hoop!"

"Where's my camera?" roared Manners.

"Ow! Oh crikey! Leggo!"

"Where's my camera? I'm going to punch

your cheeky face till you cough up my camera! Hand it over!"

"Ow! Help!"

"My camera——"

"Wow! Help!"

"Give him a chance, Manners, old man!" gasped Tom Merry. "He can't hand over the camera while you're pushing his face through the back of his head, old chap!"

"I'll smash him for bagging my camera!"

"Yoo-hoop! Draggimoff! Help!"

Tom Merry grasped Manners and dragged him off. Aubrey Racke staggered backwards and collapsed, sitting down in the fender with a crash and a clang.

"Oh! Ow! Oh! Ow!" he spluttered. "You mad ass! Are you off your rocker? I'll go to Railton about this! Ow! Oh! Ow!"

"Hand over my camera!" roared Manners.

"You mad idiot! Who's got your camera? What do I know about your silly camera? Ow!" howled Racke.

Manners struggled in Tom Merry's grasp.

"Let me get at him!" he panted. "I'll slaughter him! Making out that he hasn't got my camera when we know he has!"

"I haven't!" shrieked Racke. "If your rotten camera's gone I don't know anything about it; and I hope you'll never find it! Ow!"

"I'll smash him!" roared Manners. "Let me get at him, will you, Tom, or I'll punch your silly nose! I'm going to have my camera back before it gets damaged!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom. "Look here, Racke, Manners' camera has been taken from our study. You've got it——"

"I haven't, you blockhead!"

"Then what do you want a film for?" roared Manners. "If you haven't got a camera all of a sudden, what are you going over to Wayland for to buy a film?"

Racke blinked at him from the fender.

"Who's going to Wayland to buy a film, you silly idiot?" he hooted. "I'm not. I wouldn't be found dead taking photographs! Lot of rot, I call it! I wouldn't take your rotten camera as a gift!"

"We heard you as we came to the study!" exclaimed Tom. "You told Crooke you were going over to Wayland for a film——"

"You potty idiot!" yelled Racke. "So I am—the film at the Wayland Picture Palace!"

"Wha-at?"

"You silly chumps!" gasped Crooke. "Racke's going to the pictures! Why shouldn't he go to Wayland for a film if he wants to?"

"Oh!" gasped Manners.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "There are films and films, Manners, old bean! You've taken all that trouble to alter Racke's features for nothing!"

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Tom.

Evidently there had been a misunderstanding. Racke was going over to Wayland for a film, but it was not a film to put into a camera; it was quite a different sort of a film.

Aubrey staggered to his feet, his face red with rage, his hands clasped to a redder nose.

"Get out of my study!" he bawled. "Get out of it, you dunderhead! Get out of it, you mad idiot! Get out of it, you dangerous maniac! Blow you and your silly camera! Get out!"

"Well, if you haven't got it——" said Manners.

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"You've given him that nose for nothing, you ass!" said Tom.

"Blow his nose!" grunted Manners. "I want my camera! I——"

Aubrey glared round and made a clutch at the poker in the grate. Tom Merry and Lowther hastily barged Manners out of the study. Racke kicked the door savagely shut after them. And the camera was still missing when the dinner-bell rang.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Fatty On His Own!

"LOOK here, Figgy——"

"Feeling fit?" asked Figgins.

"Fit as a fiddle! But I say——"

"Sure you didn't scoff too much at dinner?" asked Figgins anxiously. "I warned you to go easy."

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"That's all right! I never had enough!" he said. "A fellow never gets really enough with Ratty's eyes on the table. I believe I should bowl better this afternoon if I'd had another helping of pie."

"Getting hungry?" asked Kerr sympathetically. "It's nearly a quarter of an hour since dinner!"

"Well, a fellow likes enough," said Fatty. "What I was thinking of is this—that stock of tuck that D'Arcy ordered in break this morning——"

"Never mind that!" said Figgins. "We've got cricket to think of now."

"But I do mind it, Figgy! I'm not thinking specially of the grub. But think what a kyboosh it would be to raid it from those School House swabs!"

"Bow-wow!" said Figgins.

"Do listen to a chap!" urged Fatty. "It's been carted into the School House and landed in D'Arcy's study. Well, we know how to get into that House; and ten to one everybody will be out of doors. Lots of time before the match to nip over to the old tower and cut along the secret passage and drop into the School House and——"

Fatty Wynn broke off as George Figgins fixed an expressive glare on him.

"You fat oyster!" said Figgins. "Let me catch you raiding tuck till we've beaten the School House at cricket!"

"But we can't raid it afterwards!" urged Fatty. "They'll be back in the House then."

"Bother the tuck!" roared Figgins. "Think of cricket!"

"Yes, all right, but——"

"Think of it all the time!" said Figgins. "What sort of bowling do you fancy you'd put up with jam tarts and cream puffs crammed in up to your neck? Forget all about it."

"But I say——"

"You say tuck again and we'll boot you!" roared Figgins. "We're not going to use that secret passage in the daytime and give ourselves away. Blow the tuck! Bother the tuck! Chuck it!"

"Time we got changed," said Kerr.

"Come on, Fatty!" hooted Figgins. And George Figgins and Francis Kerr went to get changed. Fatty Wynn followed them slowly, but he did not follow them far.

Fatty, as a rule, followed the lead of the great Figgins without question. Likewise, he had great respect for the judgment of his canny Scottish



"Oh crikey!" gasped Fatty, as he emerged from under the table. He gazed at the locked door, forgetting even the mountain of tuck on the table of Study No. 6. He remembered only the cricket match—just about to start! And he was locked in a study in the School House!

chum Kerr; but Fatty could think for himself, and he could be obstinate.

Fatty's thoughts ran on that mountain of tuck now safely conveyed to Study No. 6 in the School House.

In that study it was safe, unless some School House grub hunter like Baggy Trimble got after it. It was beyond the machinations of the New House enemy. That, at all events, was the view of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his friends.

But nobody in the School House knew the secret known to Figgins & Co. of the secret passage that led from the old tower to a hidden door in the School House. Had that secret been known the mystery ragger of the School House would not have remained much of a mystery.

Often and often since they had discovered that secret passage had Figgins & Co. raided and ragged the rival House; but only once had they used it in the daytime, and then they had had a narrow escape. So Figgins had laid it down that that secret passage should be used only by night—and that, Fatty Wynn agreed, was only prudent.

But circumstances alter cases. That cargo of tuck in Study No. 6 was worth a spot of risk, Fatty thought.

Stumps were not going to be pitched for half an hour yet. There was ample time. Most of the School House men would be far from the studies. It was quite possible that the coast would be clear. Fatty Wynn, for once regardless of his comrades, determined that he was going to carry on. They would be glad enough when they heard of his success—when he told them that that mountain of tuck had been conveyed to the

old tower, ready for collection and transference to the New House.

Fatty Wynn cut away, dodged round the quad, and reached the little gate that gave access to the yard round the old ruined tower. It was a quiet corner of the old quad, and no one was at hand. Quickly the fat Fourth Former whipped over the gate and ran for the entrance of the ancient tower.

He was out of bounds now, the spot being strictly prohibited to juniors. But in a few moments he was out of sight—as well as out of bounds—in the shadowy interior of the old tower. He did not halt there; he hurried down the steps into the crypt.

It was as black as a hat in the crypt, and Fatty had no light, but he waded his way well enough in the dark after so many visits to that secluded spot.

He groped across the shadowy crypt to the alcove in the old wall where the tipping stone gave access to the tunnel below.

In a few minutes he was in the tunnel.

It was blacker, if possible, than the crypt, but he had only to walk on; he had traversed it often enough by this time.

He reached the narrow, spiral stair which led upward through the thickness of one of the ancient walls of the old School House. Up went Fatty, groping in the dark, the thought of that pile of tuck in Study No. 6 attracting him and drawing him on like a magnet.

He stood at last at the summit, where one of the oaken panels in the wall of the Fourth Form passage in the School House opened like a door.

Cautiously Fatty Wynn pushed that panel open

about half an inch and peered out into the study passage.

Nobody was in sight.

As Fatty had sagely predicted, all the fellows were down from the studies on a half-holiday. Most of them were thinking of cricket, and the cricketers were already changing for the match. The Fourth Form passage was absolutely deserted.

Fatty, with a satisfied grin, pushed the panel open and stepped through. He shut the panel after him and cut along the passage to Study No. 6.

A minute more and he was in that study with the door shut.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Fatty, his eyes beaming.

On the table stood the mountain of tuck. It had been delivered in that study after dinner, and there it was to wait till after the cricket match, when the School House cricketers were going to celebrate. Not, however, now that the fat New House raider was there!

Figgins was an ass! Kerr was an ass! It was safe as houses! Fatty had only to load himself and cut back to the secret passage. Safe as houses—and perfectly easy.

Staying only to jam a jam tart into his mouth to go on with, Fatty looked round for something in which to convey the tuck which was in many packets and parcels. He quickly sorted out an attache-case and started packing packets and parcels in it.

He had little time to spare. It was necessary to get off the scene as quickly as possible, not only for safety's sake, but because it was getting very near time for the cricket match to begin.

But as Fatty started packing he gave a sudden jump. A bawling-voice echoed along the passage outside.

"Gussy, you ass, where are you going?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Have you forgotten the cricket, fathead?"

"I am not likely to have forgotten the cwicket, Blake."

"Then where are you going, ass?"

"Only to the study."

Fatty Wynn caught his breath. He ducked swiftly under the table.

Why Arthur Augustus was coming up to the study just before cricket was a mystery; really it was a thing that no fellow could have foreseen. But the Falstaff of the New House hunted prompt cover. Gussy, after all, hadn't the faintest idea that anybody was there, and was far from likely to look under the study table.

There was a hand on the door-handle, and the door opened. But it opened only about a foot. Arthur Augustus did not step in. He seemed to be fumbling with the lock, so far as the puzzled Fatty could make out.

"Look here! Buck up, Gussy!" came Blake's shout from the stairs. "What the thump do you want in the study?"

"Nothin', deah boy."

"Then what the dickens—"

The door shut again. Fatty, to his surprise, heard a key turn. Then he heard Arthur Augustus' voice again:

"All that tuck is in the studay, Blake, and that fat wottah Twimble has been nosin' about. I have locked the studay door, deah boy, and I am goin' to take away the key. If that gwub-waidin' wottah Twimble comes nosin' along while we are at the cwicket, he will find the door locked."

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"Oh, good egg! But hurry up, old bean!"

Footsteps scuttled away down the passage to the stairs.

Fatty Wynn emerged from under the study table. He did not need cover. Nobody was coming to the study. Nobody, in fact, could with the door locked on the outside, and the key in Gussy's pocket.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Fatty.

He gazed at the locked door.

He forgot even the mountain of tuck on the table. Plum cake and seedy cake, jam tarts and doughnuts and cream puffs—he forgot them all. He remembered the cricket match—just about to start. And he was locked in a study in the School House.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Fatty.

He jumped to the door. He wrenched at the door-handle. In desperation he thumped at the door.

Discovery, the loss of the tuck, and a School House booting—all these were better than cutting the cricket.

But Blake and D'Arcy were gone, and there were no ears to hear. Figgy and Kerr had been right, after all—that dawned on Fatty's brain now. But it dawned on him rather too late to be of much use.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Man Missing!

"FIRST knock," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom, having performed successfully the first duty of a skipper by winning the toss, elected to bat, which was thoroughly approved by Arthur Augustus, who was very keen to get going on that century. It was a glorious June day. It was a perfect pitch, and everything in the garden was, so to speak, lovely. Only Figgins, junior skipper of the New House, seemed worried and perturbed, and even wrathful.

"That ass—" hissed Figgins.

"That goat!" sighed Kerr.

"Where's Fatty?" asked Redfern.

"Where?" hooted Figgins. "That's what I want to know—where?"

Tom Merry and D'Arcy were ready to go out to the wickets, but Figgins & Co. did not seem ready to take the field.

"Mind waiting a few minutes, Tom?" called out the worried Figgy.

"As many as you like," answered Tom politely.

"Lost one of your men?" asked Monty Lowther cheerily. "If you're looking for Fatty Wynn—"

"Seen anything of him?" asked Figgins.

"Well, I saw something like him," said Lowther. "Round at the back of Taggles' shed."

Figgins stared.

"You saw Fatty at the back of Taggles' shed?" he exclaimed.

"I'm not sure," confessed Lowther. "It might have been Fatty Wynn, or it might have been the water-butt."

"What!" yelled Figgins.

"They're so much alike, you know," explained Monty. "Same size and shape, and—"

"You School House dummy!" roared Figgins; and he stamped away.

The School House cricketers smiled. The New House cricketers did not. Fatty Wynn had not

turned up. It would not have mattered so much if the New House had taken first knock. But with the School House batting, it mattered very much. Fatty Wynn was wanted to bowl. Fatty's bowling was a tower of strength on the New House side. He was almost equally useful in the field. And he was not there.

"Where is that fat ass?" hissed Figgins. "By gum, I'll boot him! I'll scalp him! Here, you men, cut off and see if he's in the House!"

Several New House juniors who were not in the eleven cut off. It was almost unimaginable that Fatty Wynn had forgotten a cricket match. He was as keen on cricket as any man at St. Jim's. But where was he?

"By gum!" whispered Kerr. "Can he have gone—"

"Where?" breathed Figgins.

"After D'Arcy's tuck in the School House—"

"Oh, that's it, I suppose!—The fat chump! The fooling ass! Bet you he's stopping to scoff it, and forgotten the game!" hissed Figgins. "Still, if that's it, he won't be long."

The messengers came back from the New House. Fatty Wynn was not there. But now that Kerr had made the suggestion, Figgins had little doubt where Fatty was. Fatty had gone on his own by the secret passage—after the tuck in Study No. 6. In the presence of a mountain of tuck, Fatty was rather likely to forget time and space—so he might have forgotten cricket.

If that was the case, obviously he would remember before long. He would soon blow in. Meanwhile, the New House had to begin without him.

"Man still missing?" asked Tom Merry, as Figgins came over to him.

"Yes. Fatty's been delayed somehow," said Figgins. "Mind if we play a substitute in the field till he blows along?"

"Right as rain!"

"Bai Jove, I'm sowwy Wynn hasn't turned up, Figgins!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "He is your best bowlah, old chap, and I was goin' to knock his bowlin' all ovah the shop. I am sowwy he has not turned up."

"You'd be sorrier if he had," granted Figgins. "Weally, Figgins—"

Figgins & Co. went into the field, with a substitute to keep Fatty's place warm for him till he came. But the demon bowler of the New House was not available, and Redfern went on to bowl against Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus did not realise that this was a tremendous stroke of luck for him. But the rest of the School House team did.

With Tom Merry at the other end, Gussy faced the bowling. How he would have handled Fatty's deadly bowling was, perhaps, a question. But he could handle Redfern's. Arthur Augustus smiled genially when that over gave him 8. And the next over, with Kerr bowling, gave Tom Merry 9, and left him at the batting end to deal with Redfern.

Figgins, on the cricket field, generally had eyes only for the game. But now Figgy's eyes were continually wandering.

Every minute he hoped to see his fat bowler come cutting down to the field.

But over succeeded over, and Fatty Wynn did not appear. Tom Merry went out for 24, and Talbot of the Shell took his place. And Talbot proceeded to put up a firework display.

Runs mounted. The New House bowling seemed to have no more effect on Talbot than water on a duck. And Arthur Augustus was

getting beautifully set. Between them they were making the fur fly. And Figgins' eyes swept the horizon in vain for Fatty. Fatty was the man who was wanted—and there was no sign of Fatty.

It was quite mysterious. Even if Fatty had penetrated to the rival House by way of the secret passage, even if he had stopped to scoff as much of the tuck as he had room for, there was no reason why he should not have come back by this time. That Arthur Augustus, quite unconsciously, had locked him in the study, naturally never occurred to Figgins. He began to doubt whether Fatty had gone to the School House at all. But if he hadn't, where had he gone? He must be somewhere.

Worried as he was, and often as his eyes wandered, Figgins was watchful for chances in the field, and it was Figgy who caught Talbot out at last. And Monty Lowther, who followed him in, fell to Kerr's bowling, and Blake had no better luck, going out for 2. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still wielding his handsome bat, and looked like staying in for ever. And when Herries came in, he put up some solid stone-walling, while Arthur Augustus made the running, and the runs went up and up.

"Where can that fat chump have got to?" Figgins hissed in Kerr's ear, as the field crossed after an over.

Kerr shook his head.

"Can't be in the School House all this time," he said. "Goodness knows!"

"But he can't have gone out!"

"Blessed if I know what he's done! I know I'll scalp him!"

"So will I!" hissed Figgins.

Herries went at last, and Levison of the Fourth came in. The School House score stood at 90

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by that time, of which 36 belonged to Arthur Augustus. Gussy was well on his way to his 50 or 60, if not to his century. And he was still going strong. So was Ernest Levison. Up and up went the runs.

Never had David Llewellyn Wynn been so sorely needed by his House. Never before had he let down his comrades in cricket, or anything else.

Now he was letting them down—with a bump! And Figgy had only the sad consolation of the prospect of scalping him after the match.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Manners Makes a Discovery!

**THUMP!**

Manners jumped.

Thump!

Somebody inside Study No. 6 in the School House was thumping at the door.

Which was surprising.

All four members of the study were in the junior House team. So neither Blake nor Herries, Digby nor D'Arcy, could possibly be there—and if they were there it was hard to guess why they should be thumping on the door!

Manners of the Shell was having a busy afternoon.

He had intended to snap the House game. But without his camera snapping the House game was off. Manners had forgotten the House game. His thoughts were concentrated on his missing camera.

He wanted that camera. He was fearfully afraid that it might sustain damage in the hands of some fatheaded practical joker. Almost as much as he wanted the camera he wanted to find the fellow who had snaffled it and change the whole aspect of his features.

Somebody had it—that was certain. Somebody had hidden it for a jest on Manners. It was, no doubt, the mystery ragger whose peculiar exploits had caused so much excitement and mystification in the School House of late. It was not a jest by foes from the rival House—it was that unknown blighter who was so mysteriously ragging his own House. Manners wanted to find the camera, and he wanted to find the ragger, and he was putting in his half-holiday on the search.

While his friends were playing cricket, Manners, who was a methodical fellow, was making a methodical search for that missing camera.

He did not even know that a cricketer was missing also. Missing cricketers were a mere trifle compared with missing cameras, in Harry Manners' estimation, and he would have given such a trifle no thought if he had known.

Manners had searched study after study in the Shell. Everybody was out of doors, so there was no one to say him nay.

The camera was somewhere. That could hardly be doubted. But Manners drew all the studies in the Shell blank.

Then he started on the Fourth.

And then he heard that thumping from Study No. 6.

He jumped—and he stared!

"Here, let me out!" came a roar from the study, and to his astonishment Harry Manners recognised a New House voice.

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"Is that Wynn?" he called out.

"Yes. Who's that?" came a gasping voice. "I heard somebody—who is it?"

"It's Manners."

"Let me out of this, old chap! I'm late for the cricket—fearfully late! I say, let me out!"

"What the thump are you doing in this House, you New House sweep?" demanded Manners. "And why can't you let yourself out?"

"The door's locked on me!"

"Is it? The key's not here."

"That blithering owl D'Arcy took it away! I say, go and get the key off him and let me out!" implored the unseen Falstaff of the New House.

"Don't be an ass!" answered Manners. "You shouldn't have butted in there if you didn't want to stay there! Serve you jolly well right!"

"Look here——" yelled the hapless Fatty.

"I've no time to bother with New House wasters!" grunted Manners. "I'm looking for my camera! Some cad has snaffled my camera——"

"Blow your camera! I say, I can see D'Arcy at the wickets from the window. He must have left the key in his pocket when he changed. You can get it as easily as anything——"

"If D'Arcy locked you in his study, I expect he wants to keep you there! Wait till he comes in!"

"He never knew I was here!" wailed Fatty. "I say, old chap——"

"Rats!"

Manners went into a Fourth Form study to continue his search.

He was not likely to give up that search or account of a New House man who, evidently, had been on a House raid when he had been unexpectedly caught in a trap. If New House mer raided the School House they could take what was coming to them. Manners concentrated on his camera.

But there was no sign of it in that study, and he emerged after about ten minutes, having almost forgotten the prisoner in Study No. 6 by that time.

But Fatty Wynn had not forgotten him. He was Fatty's one hope now. As he was heard in the passage again, Fatty gave another desperate thump at the inside of the door of Study No. 6.

"That you, Manners?" he shouted.

"Yes; don't bother. I'm looking for my camera."

"Will you go and get that key?" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"How can I go and get keys when I'm looking for my camera? Don't be an ass, Wynn, if you can help it."

Fatty Wynn thumped. He thumped and banged.

"Manners! I say, Manners, you let me out of this, and—and—I—I think I can help you find your camera, if you're particular about it!" he gasped.

"Rot!" answered Manners.

"I—I think I could, really——"

"Rubbish! You know nothing about it. I was snaffled last night from my study—don't be an ass!"

"But I say——"

"Bosh!"

Manners went into another study. Again he was busily occupied for ten minutes or more and again he failed to find any trace of a hidden

camera. Once more he emerged into the passage and once more Fatty heard him and yelled desperately:

"I say, Manners!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"I know where your camera is!" yelled Fatty.

"Rats!"

"You silly School House swab, I know where it is, because I hid it last night!" yelled Fatty Wynn. "Now do you understand, you chump?"

Harry Manners came to a halt.

He could not quite believe that statement—for how could a New House man have got at his camera in his study in the School House and hidden it after lock-up? But the remotest prospect of finding that missing camera was sufficient to interest Manners.

"What's that?" he rapped.

"Look here, will you get the key and let me out if I find your camera for you?"

Fatty Wynn was desperate now. The House match had been going on for more than an hour. What Fatty was feeling like at his absence Fatty hardly dared to think. He had to get out of that study at any price.

"I'll let you out to find my camera—if you can find it!" retorted Manners sceptically. "But you can't gammon me, you New House swab! How could you have hidden my camera last night after lock-up?"

"Well, I did——"

"You didn't! Can it!"

"I can tell you where it is!" shrieked Fatty Wynn. "Don't go away—I say, listen—I'll tell you where your camera is, you dunder-head!"

"Oh, all right! Where is it?"

"You'll let me out if I tell you?"

Manners laughed.

"I'll let you out when I find it!" he retorted. "I'm not letting you out for trying to pull my leg."

"You'll let me out when you've found it?" yelled Fatty.

"Oh, yes!"

"Honour bright!" gasped the fat prisoner of Study No. 6.

"Bright as a new pin!" answered Manners. "If you've got anything to say, get it off your chest—my time is valuable, if yours isn't!"

"It's in your study——"

"Try again!" jeered Manners. "I've searched my study all over——"

"Have you searched in your silk hat?"

"In my silk hat?" roared Manners. "No!"

"In the hatbox on the shelf——"

"Why, you New House blighter, have you jammed my camera into my topper?" yelled Manners. "I never looked in my silk hat, of course! Who'd have thought of looking in a hat for a camera? And I don't believe it's here, either!"

"I put it there!" roared Fatty. "We meant you to find it on Sunday when you got your topper out. Go and look there and you'll see."

"I'll go and look there!" said Manners. "If the camera's there, all right—if it isn't, don't jaw any more; I shan't answer."

"Go and look in your topper, fathead!"

Harry Manners hurried back to Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Certainly, he had never thought of looking inside a hat for the missing camera. He had supposed, after looking round the study for it,

that it had been removed by a jester—and it had not occurred to him that that jester might have concealed it in his own study.

He did not quite believe, it now—in fact, he doubted until he lifted the hatbox down from the shelf and took out the silk topper. He gasped at the sight of his beloved camera packed therein.

He grabbed it.

It was his camera—parked in his hat, which in all probability he would not have wanted till Sunday. That was Figgins & Co.'s little jest on Study No. 10.

But how had they done it?

"By gum!" gasped Manners.

It was a surprising and startling solution of the mystery of the mystery ragger that had puzzled the House for a couple of weeks! Figgins & Co.—that was evident now, as Fatty Wynn had known where the missing camera was hidden! New House raiders all the time—but how?

Manners had to give that up.

He went back to Study No. 6 in the Fourth. Fatty Wynn was thumping on the door again, wild with impatience.

"Manners, you dawdling ass——" he roared.

"Here!" said Manners.

"Have you got your silly camera, you dummy?"

"I've got my camera! I'd like to know how you New House ticks got into the House after lock-up, too!"

"Get that key!" roared Fatty. "You promised—honour bright——"

"I did!" agreed Manners. "Hang on while I get the key!"

Fatty Wynn hung on; he had no choice about hanging on. But he fairly foamed with impatience while he waited for Manners to come back to Study No. 6 with the key!

It was more than ten minutes before Manners arrived. But he arrived at last, and the key was slipped into the lock. The door opened.

Fatty Wynn shot out like an arrow from a bow. Manners was standing in front of the doorway. Fatty had no time to go round him—or perhaps he didn't want to go round him. He crashed, and Manners went backwards across the passage as if a cannon-shot had hit him.

"Oh!" gasped Manners, as he bumped on the opposite wall. "Oh! Why, you New House rotter, I—I—I'll—— You wait a tick—I'll——"

But Fatty Wynn did not wait. Fatty was doing the staircase three at a time. In the twinkling of an eye, Fatty was gone!

## CHAPTER 6.

### Not Out!

"OH!" gasped George Figgins

"Oh!" repeated Kerr.

"Oh!" came from five or six New House men in the field.

That chorus of "Oh's!" was caused by the sight of a fat figure in flannels that flew on the junior cricket ground, red-faced and panting.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was getting the bowling from Redfern again. Levison of the Fourth was out, and Digby was in. The score stood at 109, and Arthur Augustus was over his forty, and still batting. At the moment, he was knocking up runs off Redfern's bowling, when that flying fat figure came scudding down to the field.

Fatty Wynn had had a distant view of the

cricket field from the high window of Study No. 6 in the School House. So he had a fairly accurate idea of how matters stood.

Matters were bad, but not so bad as they might have been. Had the New House taken first knock, and gone all down, Figgins would have had to replace Fatty, and he would have been out of the game. So things might have been worse. Fatty was late; but it was better late than never.

Figgins' eyes danced at the sight of him.

He forgot that he was going to scalp Fatty after the match. He forgot that he had sworn solemn swears to burst him in the quad, boot him all over the New House, slay him in the study, and slaughter him generally! He forgot everything except that his champion bowler had turned up at long last.

"Hallo! Where did you spring from?" exclaimed Tom Merry as Fatty came panting up to the pavilion.

"Remembered there was a match on?" asked Blake sarcastically.

Fatty Wynn spluttered for breath.

"I was locked in a study!" he gasped. "The world's biggest idiot locked me in a study! Blow him! I'll jolly well take his wicket for it!"

"Pull up your socks!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Figgins will be glad to get you—he's been fielding a substitute so far."

"That's 46 for old Gussy!" said Blake, at the end of the over. "I say, Gussy's in fine form to-day!"

"Best of the bunch, and no mistake!" said Talbot. "I shouldn't wonder if he's not out at the finish!"

Snort, from David Llewellyn Wynn!

"Wouldn't you!" he hooted. "You wait a bit! You wait till I get going on that blithering owl, who locks fellows in studies without knowing they're there!"

"You ass!" was Figgy's greeting to his fat chum as Fatty scudded away from the pavilion after the over.

"You chump!" said Kerr.

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Fatty. "I couldn't help it! I was locked in a study. Think I could squeeze through the keyhole?"

"Oh, my hat! Hardly!" gasped Kerr. "The doorway's none too wide for you!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Kerr! Am I going on, Figgy?"

"Yes, ass! Get on, and if you don't put up the hat-trick, I'm going to leave your remains strewn in small pieces all round the crease!" said Figgins impressively.

Fatty grinned and grasped the ball. He went on to bowl against Digby's wicket for the next over. Arthur Augustus, at 46, rested on his laurels while Dig took the bowling from the late arrival.

School House were six down for 109. There were four men yet to come, and one of them, at least—Kangaroo of the Shell—was a mighty man with the willow. He was next on the list to Dig. He had not long to wait!

Fatty Wynn was in a slaughterous mood. His imprisonment in Study No. 6 did not seem to have impaired his form. Neither—which was more surprising—had the innumerable snacks he had taken from the mountain of tuck to while away the weary minutes.

Robert Arthur Digby of the Fourth Form was a fairly good bat. But Robert Arthur Digby never knew how his wicket went. All he knew was that it went—and that it went rapidly!

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"Man down!" grinned Figgins.

"Bravo!"

"Good old Fatty!"

The New House fans who were watching the game bucked up and roared as a wicket went down to Fatty's first ball. The progress of the House match, so far, had not cheered them. But now, as the poet remarks, a change came o'er the spirit of their dream!

They cheered and roared.

"Look out for that barrel of lard, Kangy!" said Tom Merry to the next man in; and Kangaroo of the Shell nodded, resolving to look out with all his eyes.

The Australian junior did look out, but it booted him not. It was hard luck on Kangaroo, who was a good man and true; and, in fact, twice the batsman that the elegant cricketer waiting at the other end was. But Kangaroo had the bowling, and Arthur Augustus hadn't; and it was Kangy who got it where the chicken got the chopper. And he took his bat sadly home for a duck's egg.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Fatty!"

"Good old Falstaff!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This is beginnin' to look wotten! I weally wish I had the bowlin'!"

Fatty Wynn had the same wish. But neither of them was to have that wish gratified! There was not going to be any bowling left for Arthur Augustus.

"Man in, Cardew!" said Tom Merry.

Cardew of the Fourth took Kangaroo's place. Ralph Reckness Cardew, on his day, was a brilliant bat. Perhaps this was not his day. Anyhow, the next ball rooted out his leg stump; and Cardew, giving the wrecked wicket a whimsical look, walked out gracefully with his unused bat.

"Man in!" said Tom, while New House men all over the cricket ground roared and yelled and cheered the hat-trick.

"Last man!" said Monty Lowther. "This is a procession! Clivey, old man, stop just one if you can!"

Sidney Clive made a grimace.

"I'll try!" he said.

But Clive of the Fourth did not stop even one. Fatty Wynn was, so to speak, shooting to kill! The ball that had been too much for Kangaroo was much too much for Clive, and his wicket went west.

Figgins roared.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Fatty!" yelled Kerr.

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came off, with the satisfaction, at least, of being not out. "That was wathah a wapid finish, deah boy! It was a feahful pity that I did not deal with Wynn's bowlin'—what?"

"Didn't you want to be not out?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

"That fat man can bowl, and no mistake!" said Tom Merry. "But we'll beat them all right! Hallo, Manners, old man—we're 109, Gussy not out, 46—"

"Are you?" said Manners. "I've found my camera!"

"Your what? Oh! I—I mean, I'm jolly glad you've found your camera!" Tom Merry tried rather unsuccessfully to conceal the fact that he had forgotten all about that missing camera.

Manners laughed. He was in the best of tempers again now that his beloved camera was restored.

"I've found out something else, too," he said. "I know now who those jolly old mystery ragers are."

"Do you?" said Tom. "That's fine! D'Arcy made forty-six off his own bat, and had the jolly good luck to be not out! Something seems to have kept Figgy's best bowler away. The other bowlers are not up to much—"

"Guess who they are!" said Manners, alluding to the mystery ragers, whom he had spotted at last.

"Redfern and Kerr," said Tom, alluding to the New House bowlers, cricket being uppermost in his mind. "They can bowl, of course—especially Kerr, but Fatty Wynn is the real goods—"

"Fathead! I was speaking of the mystery ragers!" hooted Manners.

"The who? Oh, yes. But fancy old Gussy being not out—"

"Look here—"

"I mean, he was first man in, and not out," explained Tom. "Gussy was the goods, old chap. Did you watch his innings?"

"How could I when I was looking for my camera?"

"Your what? Oh, yes. Did you say you'd found it?"

Manners wisely left it at that. Evidently it was not much use to tell Tom Merry about discoveries of missing cameras and mystery ragers till the House match was over!

## CHAPTER 7.

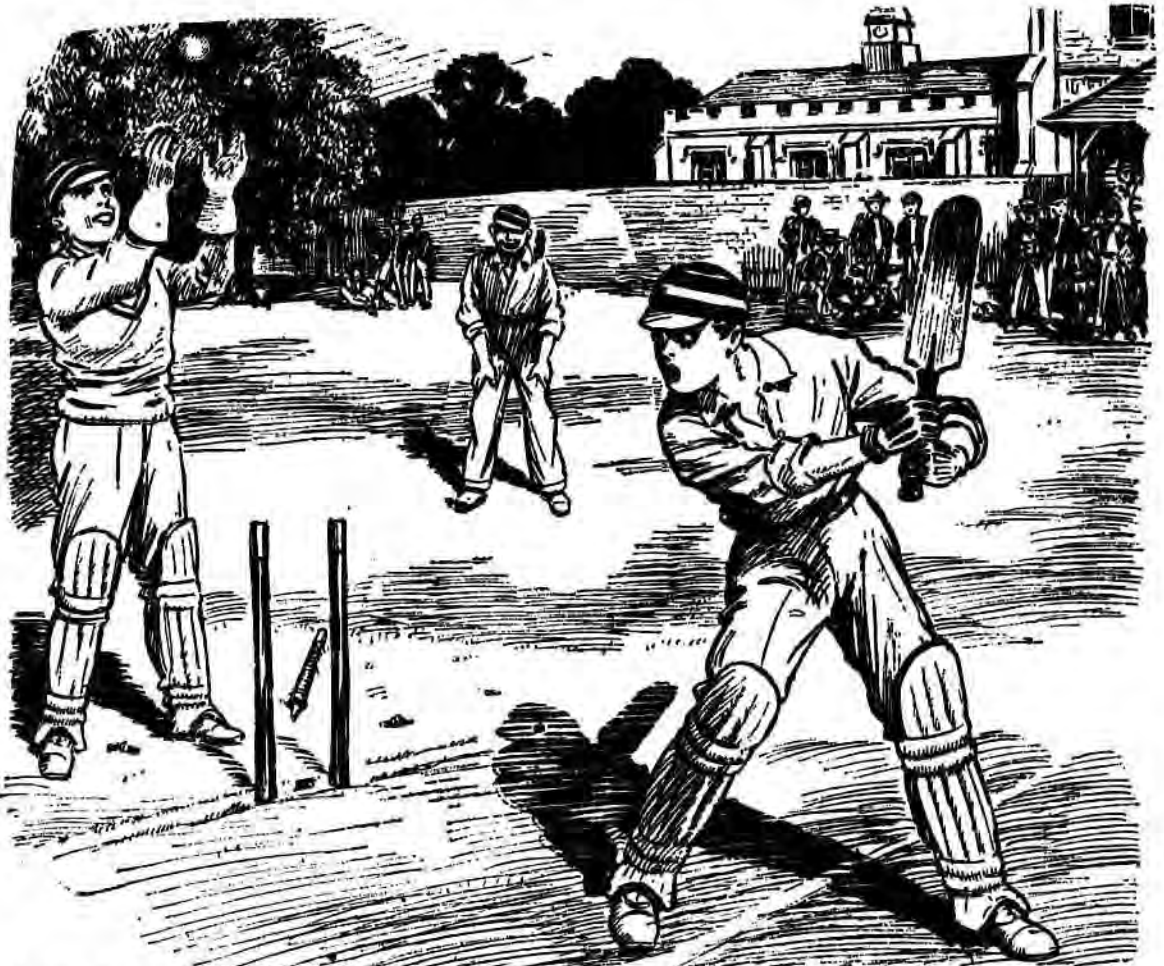
O!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY buckled on his pads. Then, jamming his eyeglass into his noble eye, he glanced round and bore down on Harry Manners, who was standing by the pavilion with his camera under his arm, waiting for the innings to begin, to put in some photographic work.

Figgins & Co. had made seventy in their innings.

Even Figgins & Co. admitted that this was not an exciting thing to write home about, as School House made 109.

Nevertheless, Figgins & Co. were going to win that House match. Fatty Wynn was in the ranks for the School House second knock. They weren't going to make 109 this time. Far from it!



Arthur Augustus swiped at the ball, but unfortunately his bat didn't establish contact. Clack! "Oh, bal Jove!" he exclaimed, gazing at his wicket. He seemed hardly able to believe that the toothless-looking object, with the middle stump rooted out, was his wicket!

Fatty was at the top of his form. Likewise, he was on his mettle. Fatty hardly dared to think of the consequences if that House match proved a defeat.

He had disregarded his great chief and leader in making that raid on the School House, and had had to let the side down through almost the whole of the innings. And he had only ransomed himself from his captivity, as it were, by revealing the fact that New House raiders had snaffed Manners' camera and hidden it in his hat in his hatbox. That was giving away a large part of the secret Figgins & Co. had hitherto kept so carefully. It was worth it, for the House match came first. But if the School House pulled it off—They couldn't, and wouldn't, and shouldn't! They simply mustn't!

Seventy for the New House innings did not look fearfully hopeful. New House did not look like winning on their batting. But they were going to pull it off on their bowling. At least, Fatty hoped so.

No such thought was in the noble mind of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he strolled over to Manners of the Shell.

Gussy was opening the second innings for his House, as he had opened the first; and this time he had the added satisfaction of Fatty Wynn bowling to him—the happy prospect of knocking the best bowler in the New House all over the field. It would, Gussy thought, put a lot of heart into the School House side to see the champion bowler of the New House contributing nothing but runs!

"Mannahs, old chap," he remarked, "we're just going to begin. Takin' some snaps—what?"

Manners nodded.

"Right-ho!" said Arthur Augustus. "I should wathah like you to snap me handlin' Wynn's bowlin', deah boy. They're sure to put him on for the first ovah now he's turned up. It would make wathah a good picture to hang up in the study."

"I'll get you all right!" promised Manners.

"How many films have you got in that camewah, Mannahs?"

"Eight."

"Well, look heah, what about usin' up six for my knock?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

Manners grinned. He did not feel so sure as Arthur Augustus that six would be required.

"Snap ewwy ball in the ovah—see?" said Arthur Augustus. "Unless I change ends with Tom Mewwy, you know. But the fact is, I am goin' to hit a sewies of boundawies if I can, just to put the wind up the New House."

"Do!" said Manners. "I'll put the lot on record."

"That's wight, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I may not hit a boundawy ewwy time. But a few thwces—"

"And a couple of dozens!" suggested Manners gravely.

"Bai Jove! I don't expect to put up dozens, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus in surprise. "Not a dozen off a single ball, you know."

"Not?" asked Manners.

"Hardly, my deah chap! You know more about photogwaphy than cwicket, Maunahs. Pewwaps a sixah or two—"

"I'll snap all the boundaries, fours and sixes," assured Manners. "It won't run me into a lot of films, I expect."

"Man in, Gussy!" called out Tom Merry.

"Weady, deah boy!"

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Manners' last remark had puzzled Arthur Augustus a little. However, he dismissed it from his noble mind as he went out to the wickets.

Gussy hoped that he would keep the bowling all through the over. It would make such a handsome series of pictures to hang up in Study No. 6. Say, a couple of threes, to begin with, then a boundary or two, and some more threes—perhaps a happy "sixer." A set of photographs like that would be worth keeping—more especially as he would be dealing with the best bowler the New House could put up against him.

It was a very pleasant prospect, and there was a genial smile on Gussy's aristocratic face as he took his stand at the wicket.

There was a rather grim smile on Fatty Wynn's face as he gripped the round red ball.

Fatty's programme was quite different from Gussy's. It remained to be seen which would be carried out.

Figgins & Co., in the field, looked on anticipatively. Tom Merry, at his end, waited with less confidence than Gussy. Manners, in a favourable position at a distance, focused his camera, prepared to snap Gussy's deeds of derring-do—or otherwise!

Fatty Wynn took his little run, and turned himself into a plump catherine-wheel, and the ball went down. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy swiped it for a boundary.

A boundary, probably, it would have been had the gleaming willow established contact with the whizzing ball.

Unfortunately, it didn't!

Why it didn't Arthur Augustus did not quite know. He was quite surprised. Cricket, of course, was an uncertain game. Its uncertainty had never been so unpleasantly evident as now.

Clack!

"Oh! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at his wicket. He really seemed hardly able to believe that that toothless-looking object, with the middle stump rooted out, was his wicket! He just gazed!

The camera snapped! Manners was keeping his compact. But, as he had predicted, Gussy's knock was not going to run him into a lot of film!

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

Slowly, in almost a dizzy state of astonishment, Arthur Augustus travelled home.

"Hard luck, old man!" said Talbot of the Shell, passing him on the way out.

"Wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus. "Vewy wemarkable!"

It seemed difficult for Gussy to realise that he had a big round nought to his credit.

"Did you fellows see that?" he inquired as he joined the waiting batsmen at the pavilion. "Duck's eggs are cheap!" remarked Blake.

"The pwospect looks wathah wokey now, I feah!" said Arthur Augustus sadly. "Not much chance for you fellows, I am afwaid."

"Oh, we'll try to stop one or two," said Blake sarcastically.

"Yaas, wathah! Twy your hardest, old chap!" said Arthur Augustus. "Nothin' like twyin', at any wate, even if it isn't any good."

Leaving Blake rather speechless, Arthur Augustus ambled away to Manners. It was clear now that the series of photographs would never adorn the walls of Study No. 6 in the School

House. And Arthur Augustus was not anxious for that toothless wicket to be put on record. He rather wished, after all, that he had not made that arrangement with Harry Manners.

"You did not snap that ball, Manners?" he asked.

"Of course I did," answered Manners. "Didn't I say I would?"

"Oh! Pewwaps you had bettah take that film out of the camewah and chuck it away," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"I've got other snaps on the roll, fathead! That was number three."

"Does it mattah if you chuck them away?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

Manners did not answer that question. There was only one way, really, for an enthusiastic amateur photographer to answer such a question—and that was by knocking the questioner down with the camera.

Manners refrained from that extreme course, however, and walked away. Arthur Augustus gazed after him in surprise.

"Mannahs! I was speakin' to you!" he called out. "Bai Jove! What evah is the mattah with Mannahs? Walkin' off like that when a chap was askin' him a question! Mannahs!"

But Mannahs was gone. Arthur Augustus rejoined the waiting batsmen, and watched the innings. There was not much comfort in seeing other wickets go down almost as fast as his own.

The batting was good. Runs came off Redfern and Kerr's bowling. But Fatty Wynn was out to kill. Before long the New House were roaring over the hat trick. After which it was a procession, and the School House were all down for the inglorious total of thirty-one.

Which left Figgins & Co. another seventy to get to equal, and seventy-one to win. And when Figgins & Co. put up seventy-one with a wicket to spare the New House crowd roared themselves hoarse—and Fatty Wynn at last breathed freely.

## CHAPTER 8.

### How!

"BUT how——"

"Yes, how——"

There was a study supper in Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus had made extensive preparations for celebrating the victory in the House match. There was no victory to be celebrated—cricket being such an uncertain game, and O's turning up so unexpectedly. Nevertheless, the preparations were not wasted. There was no triumphant celebrations—but Tom Merry & Co. gathered to supper in Study No. 6, with plenty of satisfaction.

A series of snacks taken by Fatty Wynn during his imprisonment in that study had rather diminished the supplies. But there was plenty left to go round, and over supper Manners told his tale.

It was heard with amazement and incredulity.

"How——"

"How the dickens——"

"How the dooce——"

"I don't know how," said Manners. "But it's the fact. The mystery raggars are those New House sweeps. That's a fact."

"But the rags happen at night!" said Tom Merry. "It was in the middle of the night that

Knox of the Sixth was ragged in his study by three fellows——"

"I know the names of the three now!" said Manners.

"It was at night that the Shell dorm was raided," said Lowther.

"And this study," said Blake.

"Everything has happened at night," said Tom. "The New House ticks can't get into the House after lights out, Manners."

"If they could, we should have thought of them first thing," said Blake. "But they can't—and that's that!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot see how those New House boundahs could bwing it off."

"Impossible!" said Herries.

"Rot!" said Dig.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Fatty Wynn knew where my camera was hidden," he answered. "He told me he hid it last night. And he must have. If a School House man had hidden it in my hat in my study, how could Wynn have known anything about it?"

That seemed unanswerable.

"Well, it beats me!" said Tom.

"It is vewy odd that Wynn was in the study at all," remarked Arthur Augustus. "You fellows wemembah that I locked the door in case that fat tick Twimble waided the gwub. Wynn must have been inside then and I must have locked him in!"

"Exactly!" said Manners.

"I did not see him in the study, but it is vewy remarkable that he was able to get in without bein' spotted," said D'Arcy. "There was nobody about upstairs, pewwaps, but there were plenty of fellows about downstairs. How did that fat boundah walk in without bein' spotted?"

"He didn't," said Manners. "They've got some way of getting in that we don't know of. Some window that they know how to get open, I suppose."

"In the daytime, perhaps," said Tom. "But windows are fastened at night, as well as doors. If they burgle us at night, it beats me."

"Well, they do," said Manners. "There's no mystery about those raiders now—they're Figgins & Co. They've been ragging us, and not letting on, just to mystify us and pull our leg. Whatever their way in may be, Wynn used it to-day—and that means that it's upstairs—if it was downstairs he would have been spotted by somebody."

"An upstairs window," said Tom thoughtfully. "There's that window on the study landing over the porch—fellows have used that for breaking bounds at night—I know Racke's been out that way. But——"

"But it's fastened at night," said Monty Lowther. "A chap could open it from inside—not from outside."

"I don't see how anybody could," agreed Tom.

"I know that window," said Manners. "It's just a simple catch—might be forced open with a pocket-knife."

"Um!" said Tom doubtfully.

He could not quite picture New House raiders perched on the high, ivy-covered porch, negotiating a window-catch with a pocket-knife. Figgins & Co. were the fellows to take risks in carrying out a jape on the rival House; but he could not imagine them clambering up the porch in the late hours of darkness, and forcing open a window. He shook his head.

"Anyhow, we know who they are now," said Manners. "They're the New House sweeps—and we've got to catch them at it."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is feahfully mystewious how they get in, but it looks like it, as Wynn owned up to it. It was wathah lucky he was locked in this study, as it turns out—it is through that that we have found the wottahs out!"

"But how—" said Blake.

"How the dickens—" said Dig.

But—unless it was that landing window—Tom Merry & Co. could not guess the how. If the mystery raggars were no longer a mystery, their method of ingress and egress was as mysterious as ever.

The School House juniors discussed it over supper as long as supper lasted. When the Terrible Three left after supper Arthur Augustus followed them into the passage, and tapped Manners on the arm.

"Have you taken that woll out of your camewah yet, Mannahs?" he asked.

"Not yet," answered Manners.

"I do not wish that snap to be pweserved, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I pweferr it to be destroyed."

Mannahs chuckled.

"Isn't it worth keeping?" he asked. "If you like, I'll have it printed, and give you a copy to stick up in your study. You could label it, 'Don't count your chickens before they are hatched!' What about that?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on Manners with a freezing stare.

"I wegard that suggestion as widiculous, Mannahs!" he said coolly. "And I insist on that snap bein' handed ovah to me. I will come with you to your study now and you can hand it ovah."

"Can't be done, ass!" said Manners. "It will have to be developed with the other pictures on the roll."

"I don't see why," said Arthur Augustus.

Snort from Manners.

"Don't you know the first thing about photography?" he demanded. "The roll of film has to be taken out of the camera and developed and fixed; then the pictures can be cut separately."

"Oh, all wight, I am willin' to take your word for it, Mannahs, as you understand that wubbish—"

"That what?"

"Wubbish! But I wequest you to do that developin' at once; if it is weally necessaw to do it before you can cut that picture off the woll."

"I haven't finished the roll, fathead! Two more pictures to be taken before the eight are used up."

"Does that mattah?"

"Does it matter?" hooted Manners. "Think I'm chucking away films at the present price? I may use up those other two to-morrow or the next day—"

"Wats! I want that widiculous snap handed ovah to me at once."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Rats!"

Manners walked away to end the argument. He is not likely to waste a film because Arthur Augustus, after all, did not want to preserve that snap of his exploit at the wicket in the House match. Manners was not going to shift that roll of film from his camera until every section of it

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had been duly used. Gussy really did not realise what he was asking.

Arthur Augustus went back into Study No. 6 with a gleam in his noble eye behind his eyeglass. Blake, Herries, and Dig were still discussing the mystery raggars—really more mysterious than ever now that they were known to be from the New House—but Arthur Augustus interrupted the discussion.

"I want you fellows to back me up," he said.

"How, what, and which?" asked Blake.

"That uttah ass Mannahs took a snap of my wicket fallin' to-day," explained Arthur Augustus. "I asked him to take it, intendin' to knock Wynn's bowlin' all ovah the shop, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What are you cacklin' at?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus testily. "I do not see anythin' to cackle at. Look heah, he wefuses to give me that sillay snap because of some wot about the film not bein' used up, or something. I am not goin' to allow that widiculous picture to remain in existence. Pway come with me to his studay."

"If he won't chuck away his film for you, he won't for us," said Herries.

"You fellows can collah those thwee Shell boundahs and sit on them while I get that film out of the camewah," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, what are you laughin' at now?" demanded Arthur Augustus hotly. "Can't you be sewious for a moment?"

"Well, those Shell bounders might sit on us instead," grinned Blake. "How would you get on then?"

"Um! I nevah thought of that," admitted Arthur Augustus. "But I am goin' to have that wotten snap. I will not allow Mannahs to keep that widiculous picture of my wicket goin' down. It is not the sort of thing, you know, that a fellow wants to keep on wecord."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cacklin', you asses! I have got to get hold of that wotten snap somehow. Pewwaps I had bettah go and thwash Mannahs, and then he will give it up."

"Lots of perhaps about that!" grinned Blake. "Take his other arm, Dig."

"Welease me, you ass! I am not goin' down till I have thwashed Mannahs, and made him hand ovah that wotten snap!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You are!" assured Blake.

And Arthur Augustus did. With Blake taking one arm, and Dig the other, and Herries shoving from behind, he really had not a lot of choice about it.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Rough Luck for Figgins!

"OH!" roared George Figgins.

Figgy was taken quite by surprise.

It was the following day, after morning class. Figgins had been kept behind for a few minutes by his Form-master, Mr. Lathom, and he was walking across the quad on his lonely own when three fellows suddenly rushed.

Before Figgins of the Fourth quite knew what was happening, he was whirled off his feet and borne, with arms and legs flying wildly in the air, behind the elms. There he was dumped on the cold, unsympathetic earth, where he sat and

gasped for breath while Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther smiled down at him.

"Oh!" gasped Figgins. "What—"

"Don't get up," advised Tom Merry.

"Why not, you School House dunderhead?" gurgled Figgins.

"Because we shall squash you down again if you do," explained Tom Merry.

Figgins, in spite of that friendly warning, did scramble to his feet. Immediately he was squashed down again, and this time Monty Lowther took a seat on his chest to keep him out of further mischief.

"You—you—you—" gasped Figgins. "What's this game? What do you School House swabs fancy you are at?"

"Just want to ask you a question, Figgy," explained Tom Merry. "When you've answered it you can cut. Until you answer it we're going to bump you!"

Figgins eyed him suspiciously.

"What's the question?" he demanded. "Want to know how to win cricket matches? Learn to play cricket like the New House. It's the only way."

Tom Merry laughed.

"My dear man, we've forgotten more about cricket in the School House than you ever learned in the New House," he said. "We want to know how you New House burglars get into our House after lock-up."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"Just map out the route," said Manners.

"We want to get to the 'route' of the matter, you see," explained Monty Lowther. "We're rooting after the route!"

"Find out," suggested Figgins. "I've a jolly good mind to boot that fat rabbit for giving it away, and so I would if he hadn't taken a handful of wickets for us yesterday. Now you know it was us, you can find out the rest for yourselves—see?"

"That's my idea, too," agreed Tom. "We're going to. Bump him!"

"Look here!" roared Figgins. "Oh, my hat! Yarroop!"

Figgins was swept off the earth, and landed thereon again with a concussion. He roared as he landed.

"Cough it up Figgy!" grinned Tom Merry. "We're really anxious to know, you know. Get it off your little chest!"

"Go and eat coke!" gasped Figgins.

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop! Rescue, New House!" yelled Figgins. "Oh, my hat! Rescue!"

"Going to cough it up, Figgy?"

"No!" yelled Figgins.

Bump!

"Oh crikey! Ow!"

"Coughing it up?"

"Ow! No! Ow! Wow! No!"

Bump!

"Oh gum!" gasped Figgins. He struggled frantically, but he struggled in vain. He was powerless in the hands of the Amalekites.

Bump!

"Oh! You School House rotters! Ow!"

"We'll keep this up as long as you do!" chuckled Lowther. "Do you burgle our House by the landing window?"

"Ow! Find out! Wow!"

"We're trying to find out! Bump him!"

Bump!

"Oh crikey! You jolly well won't get a word

out of me!" gasped Figgins. "We'll jolly well rag you bald-headed! Go and eat coke!"

Bump!

"Ow! Wow! Ow!" gasped the hapless chief of the New House. "You swabs! Ow! You rotters! Wow! You ticks! Yow-ow-ow!"

Bump!

"Oh crumbs!"

Bump!

"Wow!"

"Confess, my young friend," urged Monty Lowther. "We're really quite curious about it, you know! Make a clean breast of it. We can't go on bumping you for ever. We shall damage the quad, at this rate. Own up!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"You New House ticks get into our House somehow," said Tom Merry. "We know that now. Won't you tell us how, Figgy?"

"No, blow you!"

Bump!

"Won't you cough it up now?"

"Ow! No!"

Bump!

"Yoo-hoo-hoop!"

"Well, of all the obstinate goats, you take the cake, Figgy!" said Tom Merry. "It doesn't seem much good bumping him. Still, a fellow can only do his best. Give him a few more."

Bump! Bump!

"Ooooooogh!" spluttered Figgins, wriggling wildly. "Wooooogh! Oh crikey! Oooooogh!"

"Cave!" hissed Manners suddenly, as a long, lean figure appeared in the offing.

Three Shell fellows vanished like ghosts at cock-crow as Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, came on the scene.

But Figgins, breathless and gasping, was not able to vanish.

Figgins was gurgling for wind when Mr. Ratcliff came up and regarded him with great astonishment and displeasure as he tottered to his feet.

"Figgins! Is that you, Figgins?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

"Urrrgh!"

"What?"

"Gurrgh!" gurgled Figgins. "Yes, sir! Uuurg!"

Seldom or never, was a New House man pleased to see Mr. Ratcliff. But Figgins, at that moment, was distinctly pleased by the arrival of his Housemaster. Figgy was quite determined not to reveal the secret, but there was no doubt that bumping was a very unpleasant process. Possibly the secret might have been bumped out of Figgins in the long run.

He had escaped from the hands of the School House enemy, but it was rather like an escape from the frying-pan into the fire. Mr. Ratcliff glared at him.

Figgins was ruffled and crumpled, he was dusty and dishevelled. He did not look a credit to any House at that moment.

"Figgins! You are in a shocking state!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "You are dirty! You are untidy! You are a slovenly boy, Figgins."

"Oh!" gasped Figgins. "I—I—"

"I have never seen a boy of my House in so disgusting a state!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "Figgins, you will go into the House at once, and make yourself presentable! You will take two hundred lines. Go!"

Figgins went, with feelings almost too deep for words.

After tea that day, Figgins was busy in his study, instead of going down to the nets—with two hundred lines to write for Ratty. But Figgy had a consolation. That night the New House raiders were going on the warpath again, and that bumping behind the elms, and Ratty's two hundred lines, were going to be avenged!

## CHAPTER 10.

### Ready for Figgins!

"MANNAHS!" "Prep!" said Manners. "Nevah mind pwep, Mannahs!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye gleamed through his eyeglass into No. 10 in the Shell. "Are you goin' to give me that snap?"

"Eleven!" said Manners. "Bai Jove! What do you mean by eleven, you ass?"

"I mean that this is the eleventh time you've asked me, fathead! For the eleventh time, I'm not going to take that roll of film out of my camera until it's used up! Now hook it!"

"Weally, Mannahs—" "Cut!" said Tom Merry. "Prep, you know!" "Weally, Tom Merry—" "Take your face away, old bean," urged Lowther. "It worries a chap at prep."

"Mannahs—" "Travel!" said Manners. "Vewy well!" said Arthur Augustus. "I shall not ask you again, Mannahs. I shall take the mattah into my own hands!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving the Terrible Three to their prep. Manners gave a grunt.

"Silly ass!" he remarked. "Fancy any chap being goat enough to think that a fellow would take a roll out of his camera before it was finished? Must be batchy, I think."

With which Manners dismissed the subject, and Gussy, from his mind—the matter being not nearly so important in Manners' estimation as it was in Gussy's.

No. 10 study sat down to prep, which was duly dismissed. There was a lurking grin on the face of Monty Lowther, which was certainly not caused by anything hilarious in the section of the "Æneid" that the Shell fellows were preparing for Mr. Linton. Other matters, it seemed, were in Monty's mind, as well as the adventures of the "pius Æneas."

"Hold on, you men!" said Monty after prep. "Something to be done here before we go down."

"What—" asked Tom. "What on earth—" asked Tom. "What the dickens—" said Manners.

Monty Lowther chuckled. "Don't you think it's jolly likely that after the bumping we gave Figgy to-day, the mystery ragers may crop up again to-night?" he asked. "Jolly likely!" agreed Tom. "I was thinking that we might cut down from the dorm and keep an eye on that landing window. I can't imagine any other way they can get in."

"They'll pick this study if they show up," said Lowther.

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"Sure to!" said Manners. "But what—" "Well, my idea is to have a little surprise ready for them if they do," explained Lowther. "They won't get my camera again," said Manners. "I've parked that in the dark-room downstairs—it's locked at night."

"Blow your old camera! I mean, I'm frightfully glad your camera is safe, old chap. I shouldn't be able to sleep a wink to-night if your camera wasn't safe!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! What's that dish for?" "Figgins!" "Figgins!" repeated Manners, blankly.

"Yes, I'm going to leave it here for him."

going to be full of ink, with a spot of soot to give it a body!" "Oh!" exclaimed Tom and Manners together. "A booby-trap!"

"Got it at last?" smiled Monty. "That, my beloved 'earers, is precisely the big idea! Any man who walks into this study in the dark will get such a slish on his napper that I feel sure he will feel deeply and sincerely sorry for himself!"

Tom Merry laughed. "Good egg!" he said. "Go ahead! But you'll want a thumping lot of ink to fill that dish?"

"That's why I pinched a quart bottle from the

Form-room cupboard after class!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I've got it here."

Monty Lowther laid the flat dish on the study table, uncorked the annexed bottle of ink, and poured it into the dish. Tom Merry and Manners watched him, with grinning faces.

It was quite a bright idea. It was quite certain that any raider who got a quart of ink suddenly on his head would feel extremely sorry for himself.

"Might shove in a little gum," remarked Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "And a spot of treacle would do no harm. And some soot—that's sootable, you know."

Gum and treacle were added to the ink. Then Monty Lowther raked in the chimney with a shovel, and a considerable quantity of soot was added. Monty stirred it with the shovel.

"Exactly! Well, that door is going to be ajar to-night, after we've left—and this dish is going to be beautifully balanced on top of it. And it is

"You're going to leave that dish in the study for Figgins?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What on earth for?"

"Figgins is going to be dished," explained Monty. "And this is the dish he's going to be dished with! I think very likely Figgy will get tired of ragging a fellow's study in the wee small hours, after he's got this dish!"

"Wandering in your mind?" asked Tom. "Got one to wander in?" inquired Manners.

"Listen, while I explain in words of one syllable suited to your limited intellects, my young friends!" answered Monty. "Do you remember the ancient riddle—when is a door not a door?"

"When it's a jar," said Tom. "What—" "Exactly! Well, that door is going to be ajar to-night, after we've left—and this dish is going to be beautifully balanced on top of it. And it is

Bump! "Oh crumbs!" howled Figgins, as the Terrible Three bumped him. Bump! "Ow!" "Confess, my young friend," urged Monty Lowther. "We want to know how you New House ticks get into our House. We can't go on bumping you for ever. We shall damage the quad, at this rate!"

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"Listen, while I explain in words of one syllable suited to your limited intellects, my young friends!" answered Monty. "Do you remember the ancient riddle—when is a door not a door?"

"When it's a jar," said Tom. "What—" "Exactly! Well, that door is going to be ajar to-night, after we've left—and this dish is going to be beautifully balanced on top of it. And it is

Bump! "Oh crumbs!" howled Figgins, as the Terrible Three bumped him. Bump! "Ow!" "Confess, my young friend," urged Monty Lowther. "We want to know how you New House ticks get into our House. We can't go on bumping you for ever. We shall damage the quad, at this rate!"

Form-room cupboard after class!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I've got it here."

Monty Lowther laid the flat dish on the study table, uncorked the annexed bottle of ink, and poured it into the dish. Tom Merry and Manners watched him, with grinning faces.

It was quite a bright idea. It was quite certain that any raider who got a quart of ink suddenly on his head would feel extremely sorry for himself.

"Might shove in a little gum," remarked Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "And a spot of treacle would do no harm. And some soot—that's sootable, you know."

Gum and treacle were added to the ink. Then Monty Lowther raked in the chimney with a shovel, and a considerable quantity of soot was added. Monty stirred it with the shovel.

"Exactly! Well, that door is going to be ajar to-night, after we've left—and this dish is going to be beautifully balanced on top of it. And it is

"You're going to leave that dish in the study for Figgins?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What on earth for?"

"Figgins is going to be dished," explained Monty. "And this is the dish he's going to be dished with! I think very likely Figgy will get tired of ragging a fellow's study in the wee small hours, after he's got this dish!"

"Wandering in your mind?" asked Tom. "Got one to wander in?" inquired Manners.

"Listen, while I explain in words of one syllable suited to your limited intellects, my young friends!" answered Monty. "Do you remember the ancient riddle—when is a door not a door?"

"If they don't come, I'll shift it first thing in the morning, and keep it for to-morrow night," he remarked. "But I fancy Figgy will be on the warpath to-night. He seemed rather shirty over that bumping we gave him. I hardly think he will bother about ragging the study after getting this. Most likely he will feel like getting a wash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty opened the study door. By that time, most of the Shell had gone down after prep and the passage was deserted. A chair was borrowed from an adjoining study, and Monty placed it outside the door.

His friends watched him, in the passage. Monty mounted on the chair, the dish of mixture in his hands; handling it very carefully, for it was full nearly to the brim. He lifted it inside the doorway, just over the height of the door.

"Now pull the door under it, Tom," he said.

"Careful with that dish—"

"That's all right—you pull the door!"

Tom Merry took the door handle to pull the door under the dish. It seemed, however, that Monty was not holding the dish quite high enough.

"Careful!" he gasped as the door knocked on the dish.

"Ooooooogh!" spluttered Tom Merry, as the dish tilted, and a stream of mixed ink, gum, treacle, and soot shot over the corner of it.

"Look out!" gasped Manners.

"Urrrrgh!"

It was rather too late for Tom Merry to look out. He jumped away, his face streaming. He gurgled, and dabbed ink, gum, treacle, and soot with his handkerchief.

"You blithering ass!" he gasped. "Look what you've done!"

"All right—there's lots left!" said Monty comfortingly.

"Why, you howling idiot—"

"You can get a wash later! Pull the door!"

"I'll watch it!" gasped Tom. "I've had enough, thanks!"

"You pull the door, Manners! I'm waiting."

"You can wait!" remarked Manners. "I'll watch you from here—I'm not coming any nearer!"

"Now, look here, don't be an ass!" urged Lowther. "I—yoooooogh! Ooogh! Oh crikey! Oooooh!"

"What's up—"

"I've tipped some of it up my sleeve—" gasped Monty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly owls, what is there to cackle at in a chap tipping ink up his sleeve?" howled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Manners seemed to fancy that there was something to cackle at. At all events, they cackled!

"Look here, you dummies, will you pull that door to, or won't you pull that door to?" hissed Monty.

"No fear! Keep that mixture for Figgins," answered Manners. "I don't want any of it."

"And I've had all I want," said Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther glared down at his chums. But both of them were keeping at a safe distance from that dish of mixture. Monty proceeded to lodge it on top of the door and pull the door towards him.

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There was another sudden howl as a jet of the mixture went up his other sleeve.

"Ooooooh!"

"You won't have a lot left for Figgins, at any rate," said Manners.

"You're wasting it, old chap!" said Tom.

"I've a jolly good mind," said Monty, in concentrated tones, "to chuck what's left over you two blithering owls!"

The two blithering owls, grinning, promptly backed out of range.

Monty Lowther gave them a glare and proceeded with his delicate task of balancing the dish on top of the door.

Another jet of the mixture landed on his waistcoat. Another caught him in the neck. But he got it right at last.

The door was left nearly a foot open, the dish nicely balanced between the top of it and the lintel over the doorway. Monty, breathing rather hard, descended from the chair in a rather inky and sticky state.

"O.K.!" he said.

"Left any for Figgins?" asked Manners.

"Fathead! Ass! Chump!"

There was a lot of that mixture on Lowther and some on Tom Merry. Both were in need of a wash. Still, there was plenty left for any night-prowler who put his head into Study No. 10. Nearly a quart of that horrible mixture remained—quite enough to make any raider sorry for himself. The Terrible Three could only hope that Figgins & Co. would come—and would select that study for a rag!

## CHAPTER 11.

### First Come, First Served!

"COMING down, Gussy?"

"Not yet, deah boy!"

"What are you waiting for?" asked Blake. "Going to stick in the study doorway?"

"Yaas!"

"Well, why?" demanded Herries.

Prep was over in the Fourth, as in the Shell. Blake, Herries, and Dig were ready to go down. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, it seemed, was not. Though why he was going to stick in the study after prep his friends did not know.

"I am waitin' for the coast to be cleah!" explained Arthur Augustus. "When those sweeps in Study No. 10 in the Shell have gone down, I am goin' there to bag that woll of film out of Mannahs' camewah."

"Manners will kick up a fearful row if you mess about with his camera," said Herries.

"I am quite indiffent to any wov that Mannahs may kick up, Hewwies," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "I am quite pwepared to thwash Mannahs if he asks for it! I shall certainly not allow him to keep that widiculous snap of my wicket goin' down. I am goin' to take that woll of film fwom his sillay camewah."

Other fellows were going down from the studies. Blake, Herries, and Dig were in the passage—but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained in the doorway of Study No. 6. From that doorway he had a view down the passage to the study landing, and could see fellows from the Shell quarters as they went to the staircase.

Arthur Augustus' noble mind was made up. He had asked for that snap, according to Man-

ners, eleven times. Now he was going to bag it, and that was that. Gussy's determination on that point was as fixed and unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He waited—leaning gracefully in the doorway of Study No. 6—and his friends waited in the passage.

There seemed to be some delay before Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther went down. Other Shell fellows passed in view—Talbot, Gore, and Skimpole, Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn, Kangaroo, Dane, and Bernard Glyn, and others—but the Terrible Three did not appear.

"Oh, come on!" said Blake. "They must be sticking in their study—lines for Linton, perhaps. No good waiting, Gussy."

"I am goin' to wait, deah boy! I am quite wresolved to wemove that woll of film fwom Mannahs' camewah."

"Ass!" said Blake.

"Fathead!" remarked Digby.

"Chump!" observed Herries.

These remarks passed Arthur Augustus by like water on a duck! He waited—and his friends waited for him. They were rewarded at last by the sight of the Terrible Three—crossing the landing towards the staircase.

"There they go!" grunted Blake. "Now buck up, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther disappeared down the staircase. The coast was clear now, and Arthur Augustus was free to carry on without interruption from the owners of Study No. 10 in the Shell.

He detached himself from the study doorway and walked elegantly away. At the corner of the Shell passage his friends waited for him, while he walked on to Study No. 10.

The passage was lighted; but the studies were in darkness now that their occupants were gone. The Terrible Three had been the last to go—not a man was left in the Shell studies. That suited Arthur Augustus, who did not want to be interrupted if he had to search for that camera.

"Buck up!" called out Blake.

Arthur Augustus reached the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell. It stood ajar, and he pushed it open and stepped in. At that door all was ready for New House raiders. But it was a case of "first come first served!"

Splash! Swoosh!

Slooooooh!

"Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus did not quite know what was happening. He forgot all about Manners' camera. He forgot all about the obnoxious snap in that camera. He tottered in the doorway of Study No. 10, spluttering wildly and gurgling frantically.

"Oooogh! Woooogh! Gwoooogh!" floated along the passage. "Gewogh! What the dooce—Wooooogh!"

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Blake in wonder. "What—"

"Oh crumbs! Look!" gasped Herries.

"Gussy!" stuttered Dig.

They gazed along the passage. A strange, weird figure tottered from the doorway of Study No. 10. They could hardly believe that it was the swell of St. Jim's. In complexion it looked like a Hottentot. Horrid sounds came from it as it tottered.

"Yurwoooogh! Gwoooogh! Whoooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake.

The three juniors cut along the passage. They gazed at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They gazed at a fallen tin dish and a sea of inky mixture in the doorway of Tom Merry's study.

Arthur Augustus dabbed at ink and gum and treacle and soot, and gasped and spluttered.

"Oooooogh! Bai Jove! What has happened, deah boys! Gwoooogh! Somethin' fell on my head, I think—Wooooogh!"

"Something did, I fancy!" gasped Blake. "Oh crumbs! Did you tell Manners you were coming after his camera?"

"Gwoooogh! No! Ooogh!"

"Looks as if he must have guessed, then!" grinned Blake. "I suppose they left that booby-trap for you, Gussy! Oh crikey! You look a picture!"

"Urrggh! Bai Jove, it is ink—My m-m-mum-mouth is full of ink! It is stickay, too! I am all stickay—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoogh! What are you laughin' at, you uttah asses! Look at me!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, wildly dabbing ink, gum, treacle, and soot.

His friends looked at him. They were sympathetic. But they could not help grinning. Gussy's aspect at that moment might have made a stone image grin.

"Bai Jove! I will thwash them all wound for this!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I will go down aftah them at once and give them a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"Hold on!" gasped Blake.

"I wefuse to hold on! I—"

"You can't go down like that!" yelled Blake. "You're leaving ink all over the shop! Do you want to go down looking like the Wild Man from Borneo?"

"Oh!" Arthur Augustus paused. "Pewwaps I had bettah get a wash and a change first. Oh cwikey! I will thwash them aftahwards! Gwoooogh! Bai Jove, my hair is all stickay—I have ink in my yabs—I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Blake. "I—I mean, it's too bad, old chap. Never mind those Shell-fish now. What you want is a bath-room, and hot water and soap—lots of both. Ha, ha!"

"Lots and lots!" gasped Herries.

"And lots!" gurgled Dig.

Arthur Augustus was led away by his grinning but sympathetic friends. He was led into a bath-room, and Blake turned on the hot water for him, and Herries sorted out soap, and Dig cut off for a change of raiment.

Gussy's pals stood by him like good men and true. They helped him to rub and scrub, and to scrub and rub. He needed quite a lot of both.

They were quite tired when the ink, the gum, the treacle, and the soot had finally disappeared under their combined ministrations. Arthur Augustus was more than tired. And by that time it was dorn. Arthur Augustus tottered away to the Fourth Form dormitory with deep feelings.

Reprisals on those iniquitous sweeps in Study No. 10 had to wait. But they were not going to wait long. When Kildare of the Sixth saw lights out for the Fourth, Arthur Augustus did not close his eyes. He was not going to close them till those unspeakable swabs in the Shell had been made to sit up for their sins.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Gussy on the Warpath!

BANG! "Who—"

"What—"

"Don't make a wow, deah boys!"

Jack Blake sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory. Five or six other fellows awakened, and blinked round in the dim light from the high windows.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Blake.

"It's all wight, Blake."

"Gussy, is that you, you ass?" grunted Herries. "What are you doing out of bed, you fathead?"

"At the pwesent moment, Hewwies, I am gettin' my twousahs on."

Half a dozen fellows sat up and stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was nearly eleven o'clock—an hour at which all St. Jim's was, or should have been, fast asleep.

"Is that Gussy?" came Cardew's voice. "Oh gad! Gussy on the ran-dan in the small hours! Oh, Gustavus!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Look not upon the wine when it is red, or the billiards-table when it is green," said Cardew. "Be a good boy, Gussy."

"You uttah ass, Cardew! Do you suppose that I am goin' out of bounds aftah lights out?" hooted Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"What is it, then?" asked Cardew. "Merely early rising."

"If it's early rising, you're overdoing it," chuckled Levison of the Fourth. "It's the middle of the night, Gussy."

"He, he!" came from Baggy Trimble's bed. "Fancy D'Arcy going out on the tiles, like Cardew and Racke! He, he!"

"Bai Jove! If you imply that I am goin' out on the tiles, Twimble, I will woll you out of that bed, and wallop you!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"But what's the game, you howling ass?" hissed Blake. "What have you woke us all up for?"

"I did not mean to wake you up, Blake. I think I must have knocked against that chair as it fell ovah. I was bein' vewy quiet—"

"Gussy has his own ways of being quiet," murmured Cardew.

"You fellows had bettah go to sleep," said Arthur Augustus. "For goodness' sake don't make a wow, and bwing a pwefect up heah!"

"But what's the game?" hooted Blake.

"I am goin' to wag those wottahs, Blake! That uttah wottah Mannahs and his fwiends fixed up a booby-trap to catch me when I went aftah that beastly camewah, and I was smothahed with ink! I am goin' to give them some of the same, now that the pwefects have gone to bed."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I was dwenched with ink!" said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with indignation. "I was smothahed and dwenched fwom head to foot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle and wake up the House! I was wubbin' and scwubbin' for an houah befoah I got that beastly ink off, and there is still some in my hair!"

A chuckle ran from bed to bed. Arthur

Augustus was in a state of burning and boiling wrath and indignation. But other fellows seemed to think there was something amusing in the incident.

"You can cackle!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "I dare say Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah have been cacklin' ovah it, too. Bai Jove, they won't cackle when they get what I am goin' to give them!"

"But what—" exclaimed Blake.

"I am goin' to dwench those wottahs, as I was dwenchd in their wotten booby-twap! And I wathah think they will have more wubbin' and scwubbin' to do than I had when they are dwenchd in mahogany stain!"

"In what?" gasped Blake.

"I am goin' down to Glyn's studay in the Shell to bowwow his mahogany stain. If he wants it, he can scwape it off Tom Mewwy, Mannahs, and Lowthah." And Arthur Augustus chuckled—a vengeful chuckle.

"Oh crumbs!"

Arthur Augustus' friends gazed at him in the dim starlight. He was putting on his slippers. His face was grimly determined; his expression like that of the Alpine climber in the poem; his brow was set; his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath. Arthur Augustus was on the warpath—relentlessly on the trail of vengeance.

"Oh scissors!" murmured Dig.

Glyn of the Shell, who dabbled in wood-carving and wood-polishing, was known to keep all sorts of stains and polishes in Study No. 11 in the Shell. Arthur Augustus had evidently thought of that in turning over in his mind ways and means of avenging that inky booby-trap.

That that booby-trap had been fixed up in Study No. 10 to catch him if he went after Manners' camera, Gussy did not doubt for a moment. Really, it looked like it, in view of what had happened.

He was going to give the Terrible Three some of the same—only more so!

Lowther had annexed a quart bottle of ink from a Form-room; but the Form-rooms were locked at night, and no such supply was available for Arthur Augustus. But a bottle of Glyn's furniture stain would answer the purpose even better. Gussy had had a lot of washing to do; but it was certain that fellows drenched in mahogany stain would have a lot more to do—a fearful lot. They were likely to be busy till morning getting it off.

Such was the indignant Gussy's deadly purpose.

"Look here, old bean, leave it till the morning!" urged Blake.

"Do you think Tom Mewwy, Mannahs, and Lowthah would let me throw a pail of furniture stain ovah them in the mornin', Blake?" inquired Arthur Augustus sarcastically. "Can you see them standin' wound while I do it?"

"Um! No; but—"

"I shall catch them in their dorm," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall take the tin bucket that Glyn uses for mixin', and fill it to the bwim with mixed stains, and cawwy it up to the Shell dorm. I shall mop it ovah each of them in turn—about a quart each!"

"Oh crikey!"

"And I wathah think they will have some washin' to do aftahwards," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "As much as I had, and some ovah—what?"

"But—" said Blake.

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"But—" said Herries and Dig together.

"It's no good buttin' at me like billy-goats! I have told you what I am goin' to do, and now I am goin' to do it," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Don't you fellows make a wov and bwing a pwefect up. I don't want to be caught out of the dorm. Keep vewy quiet!"

Bang!

"Oh cwikey! There goes that chair again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway keep quiet, you fellows! I weally wish you would not make so much wov!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus testily. "It is necessary to be vewy cautious in waidin' a dorm at night. I—"

Crash!

"Bai Jove! I have dwopped my torch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do be quiet, you sillay asses!"

Arthur Augustus fielded his torch and crept away to the door of the dormitory.

"Look here, Gussy, old man—" urged Blake.

There was no reply. The dormitory door closed; Gussy was gone. His friends could only wait anxiously for his return.

Arthur Augustus crept quietly down passages and stairs. He did not need a light in the glimmer of summer stars from the windows. Not till he reached Study No. 11 in the Shell passage, and entered that study and closed the door, did he turn on his torch.

Then he flashed the light round Glyn's study.

In a few moments he found the tin bucket in which Glyn did his mixing. Then he sorted out bottles of various stains.

There was a quart bottle of mahogany stain. Gussy had noticed that in the study, and remembered it. He poured every drop into the bucket.

That, however, was not enough for his purpose.

Gussy had had about a quart of ink, with gum and treacle and soot added. He was going to repay that loan with interest.

A bottle of oak stain, and another of walnut stain, were poured into the bucket. Bernard Glyn sometimes experimented with mixing stains to produce new effects. Now Gussy was experimenting in the same way, and the effect he was going to produce was likely to be startling.

But even yet he was not finished.

Bernard Glyn had a good supply. Gussy sorted out most of it. By the time he had finished, there was a good gallon in the tin bucket.

Even Gussy thought that that was enough, vengeful as he was! There was more than enough to go round among three fellows.

Gussy grinned serenely, and shut off his torch.

All he had to do now was to convey that bucket upstairs to the Shell dormitory. Then—slosh, slosh, slosh!—a slosh each for Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. If that did not make them tired of catching fellows in inky booby-traps, nothing would!

Gussy picked up the bucket, and moved to the door. Then he gave a sudden start as a sound from the passage without came to his ears!

It was a faint sound, but it was rather startling in the silence of the night.

Who was there?

Arthur Augustus turned the door-handle without a sound, opened the door a few inches, and peered into the passage.

It was unlikely and unusual for any Shell fellows to come down to their studies in the middle of the night. Arthur Augustus had not

expected anything of the kind for a moment. But that was what it seemed like.

It was rather disconcerting to a fellow who was all ready to creep away with a pail of mixed furniture stains.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus silently.

Three moving figures loomed dimly in the shadowy passage. Arthur Augustus stood quite still.

By sheer ill-luck, three Shell fellows had come down. Nobody else, so far as Gussy knew, could have any business in Shell studies. If by some utterly unfortunate and unforeseen chance they happened to be Glyn, Dane, and Kangaroo, they would catch him in their study. And they were coming right up the passage from the landing!

Hardly two or three yards away, they stopped. They stopped at the door of Study No. 10.

Gussy breathed more freely. They were not coming to Study No. 11, in the doorway of which he stood motionless. They had stopped at Study No. 10. They were, therefore, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—for who else could they be?

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

It was not an unlucky chance, after all. It was a stroke of luck. He would not have to carry that bucket of mixed stains up to the Shell dormitory. He would not have to pick out three separate beds for a slosh each. Here were the three—and one tremendous slosh would swamp the lot.

And, with gleaming eyes, Gussy stepped out softly into the passage, with the tin bucket grasped in his hands for that tremendous slosh!

## CHAPTER 13.

### Slosh!

"QUIET!" whispered Figgins.

"All serene!" murmured Kerr.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

Figgins & Co. peered out of the hidden door in the old panelled wall of the Fourth Form passage. There was a pale glimmer of starlight in that passage, but it was very shadowy.

"Can't be too careful," murmured Figgins. "You remember we found Racke up one night when we came—"

"Nobody up now," said Fatty Wynn.

"Can't be too careful," repeated Figgins. "You see, they know now that the jolly old mystery ragers come from the New House! I shouldn't be surprised if some of them kept watch one night—"

"If they did, they'd be watching that landing window!" chuckled Kerr. "They don't know anything about the secret passage."

Figgins chuckled, too.

"Yes—they asked me if it was that landing window," he said. "They can keep on thinking so as long as they like. All the same, be jolly careful—if anybody's up, we've got to cut, and cut quick! There'd be a fearful row if fellows were copped in the wrong House at this time of night."

The New House trio stepped one after another through the open panel into the passage.

All was dark and silent.

"O.K.," said Figgins. "There'll be another surprise for them in the morning! I fancy those Shell swabs will think twice about collaring a

fellow and bumping him when they see their study again! Got the paint, Kerr?"

"Think I'd forget it?"

"And the brush?"

"Think I'd forget that either?"

"I say, what about dropping into Study No. 6 first?" whispered Fatty Wynn.

"Never mind Blake's study," answered Figgins. "We've come here to paint Tom Merry's study blue and green—never mind Study No. 6."

"Oh, yes, but—"

"But what, ass?"

"I mean, they generally have something in the study cupboard, and—"

"Kill him!" said Figgins.

"Well, I think—" murmured Fatty.

"Dry up!"

"But if they've got a lot of tuck there, I think—"

"You say the word tuck again, and I'll paint you instead of Tom Merry's study!" hissed Figgins. "Shut up, and come on!"

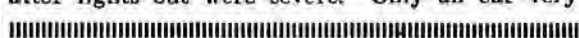
The New House trio trod softly to the study landing. There they cautiously peered at the window over the porch, by which some of the School House fellows suspected that they made their mysterious entrance. But if any of the School House juniors had thought of keeping watch there, they were not doing so on this particular night. The coast was quite clear.

"All serene!" murmured Figgins.

"Right as rain!" agreed Kerr. "Come on!"

Softly, the raiders trod up the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study.

It was necessary to be fearfully cautious, for the penalties of being caught out of their House after lights out were severe. Only an ear very



## THE BOY THEY COULDN'T TRUST!

A curious mixture of bad and good is Ralph Reckness Cardew of St. Jim's, and a fellow not to be wholly trusted. But when he develops into a demon bowler Tom Merry gives him a chance in a big cricket match—only to find Cardew missing at the eleventh hour!

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near at hand could have detected those cautious footfalls.

There was a cheery grin on Figgins' face in the shadowy gloom.

He had had a record bumping and two hundred lines from Ratty. In return for which he was going to decorate Tom Merry's study. Undoubtedly the Terrible Three would jump in the morning when they found their study freshly painted in blue and green. It was quite a pleasure to think of their faces when they looked into that newly decorated study.

Figgins & Co. reached the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Figgy groped for the door-handle.

Kerr gave a sudden start.

It seemed to him that he heard a sound. He turned to stare up the gloomy passage. Figgins and Fatty Wynn did the same.

As they did so a figure loomed!

Slush!

A tin bucket swept in the air, upending as it swept. A gallon of mixed furniture stains shot out of the bucket, landing fairly on Figgins & Co. Three startled faces disappeared under a sea of mixed stains.

"Oh!"

"Ooogh!"

"Gooogh!"

Three startled, suffocated gasps came from Figgins & Co.

They were taken utterly by surprise. They had no chance of dodging that sudden torrent. It swept on them, it drenched them, it swamped them, it smothered them! They gasped, and gurgled, and tottered.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a sudden howl of laughter.

"Got you, you wottahs!"

"Gooogh!"

"Ooogh!"

"Woogh!"

"Sowwy I've no more, deah boys! You've had the lot! Ha, ha, ha! I wathah think you will want a wash aftah that! Ha, ha, ha! Pewwaps you will be wathah sowwy about playin' twicks on a fellow! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerrrrroogh!"

"Oooogh!"

"Ouuuuch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a patter of departing feet. Figgins & Co. were left staggering, tottering, gurgling, and guggling! They clawed mixed stains from their faces, and peered at one another.

"Ooogh!" gurgled Figgins. "Was—oogh—was that—groogh—D'Arcy—oogh! Must have been watching—oooogh—for us—yooogh!"

"Oogh! I—I'm smothered!" moaned Fatty Wynn. "What is it—not ink—it smells horrid—groogh!"

"Oh crikey! Ooogh! I'm drenched!" gasped Kerr. "I—I— Ooogh! I've got some in my—woooh!—mouth! Oh crumbs! Let's get out of this!"

"Urrh!"

"Oh scissors! Woooogh!"

"Ooo-er! Oh lor'! Oooogh!"

Gasps and gurgles died away in the direction of the secret door in the Fourth Form passage—and at the same time a grinning and triumphant Gussy crept back into the Fourth Form dormitory chuckling.

"You fellows awake— Ha, ha!" trilled Arthur Augustus. "I say— Ha, ha!"

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"Well?" hooted Blake.

"Did you get them?" asked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! I got them all wight! I didn't have to go to their dorm; they came down to their studay for somethin', and I got them at the door of Study No. 10!" chortled Arthur Augustus. "I got them all wight— Ha, ha, ha! Bai Jove! I fancy they will have to do a lot of washin' to get off a bucketful of mixed furniture stains! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus turned in and chuckled himself to sleep, with the happy knowledge that the three ragers had enough washing to do to last them till morning—but blissfully unconscious of the fact that that extensive wash was going on not in the School House, but in the New House!

## CHAPTER 14.

### Just Like Gussy!

TOM MERRY stared.

"Somebody got it!" he said. "But——"

"But——" said Manners, quite puzzled.

"Blessed if I quite make this out!" said Monty Lowther.

Very soon after rising-bell in the morning the Terrible Three arrived at Study No. 10 in the Shell to ascertain whether that booby-trap had made a catch overnight.

Plainly it had!

But something else seemed to have happened, too. Inky stains were visible in the doorway; but outside the doorway were many more stains, not of ink or of gum. It looked as if somebody had upset a lot of furniture polish over the old oak planks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a trill along the passage.

"You fellows had a good wash? Ha, ha, ha!"

The three looked round.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came cheerily up, his face irradiated with smiles. Blake, Herries, and Dig followed him, grinning.

"You fellows know anything about this?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" chortled Arthur Augustus. "Ha, ha! Pewwaps you'll think twice, or even thwee times, befoah you catch a fellow in an inky booby-twap again! Ha, ha!"

"You got the booby-trap?" yelled Lowther. "You silly ass, what did you butt into a booby-trap for that I took all that trouble to fix up for the New House blighters?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! Didn't you fix it up for me?" he ejaculated.

"You!" howled Lowther. "No, you ass! No, you dummy! What the thump did you barge into the study for?"

"Oh cwikey! I thought you fixed it up for me, guessin' that I was comin' aftah Mannahs' camewah—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Didn't you?" howled Blake.

"No!" roared Lowther. "It was for Figgins & Co. if they came——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! I am awfully sowwy, you fellows!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You see, I was quite suah that you had fixed it up for me and dwenched me in ink, and that was why I dwenched you with Glyn's furniture stains last night——"

"You did—what?" gasped Tom Merry.

(Continued on page 36.)

# FOES OF THE FOOTHILLS!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

*Handsome Alf's "gratitude" to Frank Richards & Co. for saving his life was to be a menace to them on their holiday trip. But the "bad hat" of the mining camps reckoned without little Yen Chin, the Cedar Creek Chinese!*

## Shaken Off!

"**T**HAT blessed Chinese!" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards & Co. drew rein. The four schoolboys of Cedar Creek were riding up a rocky path in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. On their right great bluffs rose almost like a wall, patched here and there with spruce and pine. On the left the hillside fell away in an abrupt precipice. The rocky ledge upon which the trail ran was not more than a dozen feet wide.

Bob Lawless was riding ahead, and next to him came Frank Richards; then Vere Beauclerc, followed by Chunky Todgers. The laden pack-mule brought up the rear.

Amid the rocks and pines below lay the winding trail they had been following upward, and Bob Lawless' keen eyes spotted the diminutive figure on the trail below.

Following the trail, the rider was at least two miles behind the party, but the upper ledge was only about fifty yards above the lower ledge.

The Cedar Creek party stopped on the trail and followed the direction of Bob's finger with their eyes.

"Yen Chin!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "That pesky heathen!" growled Chunky Todgers.

Vere Beauclerc smiled.

"He's still sticking to us," he remarked. "We shall have Yen Chin on our trail all through the North-West."

Bob gave a grunt.

The Chinese had followed the holiday party across the plains from the Thompson Valley, but Bob had expected to shake him off in the rocky hills. Yen Chin was not to be shaken off evidently.

He glanced up from the lower trail, catching sight of the party on the ledge above. He waved a hand to the chums of Cedar Creek, and called out. His voice floated up in the clear mountain air.

"Stoppee for me!"

Frank Richards burst into a laugh. The pertinacity of the little Celestial was amusing, as well as rather exasperating.



Speaking hurriedly, desperately, Frank Richards endeavoured to keep Carson's attention riveted on himself as Yen Chin, silent as a snake, crept closer and closer, a heavy billet of wood grasped in his right hand.

Yen Chin had settled it for himself that he was to accompany the holiday party into the North-West, but the chums felt, not without reason, that the little Chinese would be out of place there; neither did they enjoy the prospect of Yen Chin's impish tricks.

The Chinese had a rather misdirected sense of humour, which earned him more kicks than halfpence, so to speak, at Cedar Creek School. But Yen Chin had declined to take their refusal seriously. For many a long mile he had followed them, and he had played more than one trick on the adventurers at their camps—that apparently being his way of trying to get himself included in the party.

"Stoppee for me, nice old Flanky!" called out Yen Chin, looking upward. "Me comee along—oh, yes! You waitee!"

"We're not going to stop!" roared Bob Lawless.

"Me comee allee samee."

"You're to go back!"

"No tinkee!"

Bob Lawless slid from his horse with a determined expression on his sunburnt face. He groped on the trail and picked up a couple of "rocks," each about the size of an egg. Standing on the very edge of the ledge, he raised his right hand.

"Look here, you heathen coyote," shouted Bob, "you'll take the back trail at once, or I'll heave rocks at you! Savvy?"

"No takee back tla!"

"Then look out for your cabeza!"

"No flingee looks at pool li'l Chinese."

"I'll poor little Chinese you!" growled Bob. "I'll give you one minute to get moving!"

"Bob Lawless ugly old lascal!"

Whiz!

The stone hurtled downwards from the high ledge to the lower trail, and crashed on the ground within two feet of Yen Chin's pony. The chums of Cedar Creek grinned. Bob's aim was unerring, and they knew he could have landed the "rock" on the Chinese if he had wanted to.

But Yen Chin was not aware of it, and the stone came so close that the Chinese gave a yell of alarm.

Crash!

The second stone landed, knocking up splinters of basalt at the feet of the Indian pony.

"Stoppee!" yelled Yen Chin. "No chuckee! Bob ugly old lascal! No peltee pool li'l Chinese!"

"Go back, then!"

"No goey back!"

Bob caught up a couple more stones.

Crash, crash!

The missiles landed close by the halted pony below, knocking up splinters, one of them almost grazing Yen Chin's hat. The little Chinese howled.

"Ow! No knockee pool li'l Chinese's blains out! Me goey!"

He whirled round the pony and started down the back trail at a rapid trot. He vanished from sight round a great bluff of basalt, and was lost to the eyes of Frank Richards & Co.

Bob Lawless remounted, and the Cedar Creek party rode on. They kept their eyes open on the back trail for Yen Chin, but the pigtailed youth did not appear in sight again. It really looked as if he had been shaken off at last.

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## Treed!

"**H**ALT!" sang out Bob Lawless about an hour later.

The chums of Cedar Creek had reached the end of the perilous trail, and they rode out upon a wooded plateau in the heart of the foothills. After the waste of wild rocks they had traversed, the sight of trees and herbage and water was welcome to their eyes.

They halted where a cool spring, glistening in the burning sunlight, bubbled up under the trees.

"I guess this will suit us to camp," said Bob, as he jumped from his horse. "Water and fodder, and I reckon there's game in the timber—plenty."

Ohunky Todgers looked round rather uneasily.

"And b'ars, perhaps," he remarked.

"Very likely," answered Bob cheerfully.

"We're in the home of the grizzly bear now, Chunky, and we may find him at home—"

Bob Lawless suddenly broke off as from the thick timber there came a faint call.

"Help!"

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

The wooded plateau had looked so silent and solitary that the Co. had not dreamed that anyone but themselves was there. They started and stared towards the timber as that sudden call reached their ears.

"Help!"

"A white man!" said Beauclerc. "And in trouble. He's seen us, though we can't see him."

"Come on!" said Bob. "You stay with the horses, Chunky."

Bob caught his rifle from his saddle, and Beauclerc followed his example. Frank Richards seizing an axe, and they rushed towards the timber.

"Look out!" came the call from the trees.

"B'ar!"

"Ware grizzly!" murmured Bob.

As they came among the trees they saw the man who had called. He was clinging to a high branch, thirty feet from the ground, and his hat and rifle lay on the greensward below. Close by the trunk was crouched a huge grey form—a grizzly bear, in the act of climbing the tree.

The man on the branch looked down at the newcomers, whom he had evidently spotted from his high perch, though the foliage had hitherto hidden him from their sight. He was a lithe and active fellow, clad in cowboy outfit, with curly black hair.

Frank Richards uttered a surprised exclamation. He remembered the man. He was no stranger to the chums of Cedar Creek School.

"Alf Carson!" exclaimed Frank.

"Handsome Alf, by gum!" shouted Bob Lawless.

Handsome Alf stared down at them. A glitter shot into his eyes as he looked more closely at the schoolboys and recognised them.

"You!" he muttered.

Then a look of despair came over his face. The grizzly was climbing the thick trunk, and Handsome Alf's rifle lay in the grass, discharged, thirty feet under him. He was gripping a hunting-knife, but that weapon was not likely to serve him at close quarters with his terrible enemy.

It was as foes that Handsome Alf had met Frank Richards & Co. On their previous brief excursion into the North-West they had prevented him from robbing a gold-miner of Last Chance Camp.

It was evident that the swarthy adventurer

did not expect help from the chums of Cedar Creek, now that he recognised them as old foes. But in that he was mistaken.

The dusky rascal had been their enemy, and was doubtless still their enemy; but Frank Richards & Co. had no intention of leaving him to the mercy of the grizzly. Without a second glance at the "treed" man, Bob Lawless hastily examined his rifle and threw it to his shoulder.

The bear, aware of the arrival of the newcomers now, ceased to climb, and his red, evil eyes looked over his shaggy shoulder at them from the trunk.

Crack!

Bob Lawless pulled trigger, and there came a patch of red on the shaggy fur as the bullet struck home. There was a growl from the bear as he dropped from the trunk to the ground.

"Go it, Cherub!" muttered Bob, as he rammed home a fresh cartridge.

The grizzly had turned his attention from the man in the tree. All his fury was directed against the newcomers now, and the great brute lumbered towards the schoolboys.

Frank Richards gripped his axe hard, while Bob was hurriedly reloading his rifle. Vero Beauclerc had his rifle to his shoulder, and it was as steady as a rock as he glanced along the barrel.

The grizzly was a dozen feet away when he fired. The bullet tore through the thick hide—and there was a spurt of red and a wild howl from the bear. But he came on, though more slowly.

The schoolboys leaped back and separated, and the bear, growling with rage and pain, paused for a moment or two, undecided which to pursue.

The pause gave the riflemen their chance, and two more bullets crashed into the shaggy body. With a hideous howl, the grizzly leaped towards Bob Lawless, and the Canadian lad jumped round a tree just in time. But his foot caught in a root, and he stumbled forward, his empty rifle flying from his hand.

The grizzly was only a couple of feet behind him. A second more, and the claws would have been tearing the Canadian schoolboy, but in that second Frank Richards rushed in, and the keen edge of the axe came fairly on the bear's skull, with all the strength of Frank's strong arm behind it.

It was only his chum's danger that had enabled Frank to strike with so much force. The axe-edge was deep in the thick skull of the grizzly, and the handle was torn out of Frank's grasp as the animal reeled.

The huge brute rolled on the ground, and Bob Lawless scrambled out of reach of the lashing claws. His face was white.

"By gum!" he murmured breathlessly. "That was a close call!"

He caught up his rifle quickly and rammed in a cartridge. The bear was rolling on the ground, too hard hit at last to attack again, Beauclerc fired twice, and Bob joined in, and the gigantic limbs stretched still at last upon the ground.

Bob squeezed his English cousin's arm.

"Frank, old chap!" he faltered.

That was all Bob said, but his look was eloquent. He knew what would have happened to him had not the axe struck in time.

"All serene, old son!" said Frank breathlessly.

"My hat! What a fearful brute!"

There was a scrambling on the rough tree-trunk, and Handsome Alf dropped to the ground and the three chums turned towards him.

### Handsome Alf's Threat!

HANDSOME ALF had his hand upon his knife, and there was a strange look in his dusky face. The chums of Cedar Creek had saved his life, but one look at the swarthy adventurer was enough to tell that that made no difference to Alf Carson. He had been their bitter enemy, and he was their bitter enemy still. But the chums had nothing to fear from the ruffian; the odds against him were too heavy for that.

Bob Lawless slipped a fresh cartridge into his rifle.

"So you're here, my pippin!" he said.

"I guess I owe you something," said Handsome Alf. "The b'ar had me fairly treed. I guess I was glad when I saw you riding up."

He stepped towards his rifle, but Bob interposed.

"Hold on a bit!" he said. "Leave that shooter alone for the present, Carson! We've saved your life, and we don't want to have to blow your brains out afterwards!"

Carson's eyes glittered.

"I guess I let up on you!" he said. "The b'ar would have had me sure. You did me once, and I own I was mad with you. I let up."

"I wish I could believe you," answered Bob Lawless. "But I reckon I know your sort, and I'm not the kind of jay to leave himself open to a bullet in the back."

The Canadian schoolboy set his foot on the rifle as Handsome Alf made another movement towards it. The man drew his hand back, his eyes glittering. His look left little doubt as to the use he would have made of the firearm if he had regained possession of it.

"I guess it can't be done," said Bob Lawless decidedly. "You'll have to hoof it 'way back home without a gun, Carson. You're too snaky to be trusted."

"I guess I can't take my skin safe home without a rifle," said Handsome Alf sullenly.

"Bosh!" replied Bob. "You're not likely to meet another grizzly, and your gun wasn't much use to you when you did. You've got your knife; you can keep that. No good chewing the rag. I know you, Carson, and you're not going to snipe us when our backs are turned and steal our horses after you've laid us out. That's your game, and you're not going to play it!"

Carson gave a sneering laugh.

"They bring up their boys to be cute in this country," he said. "Keep the rifle! I guess I'll make you sorry for yourselves another time."

"Hoof it back to Last Chance," said Bob. "That's fifteen miles, and you can do it before dark, if you choose. We shall be along there later, and we'll leave your rifle for you at the store. It's safer in our hands for the present."

Alf Carson shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll go," he said quietly; "but you'll see me again."

"Bad for you if we do, I reckon."

Handsome Alf did not answer; he turned and strode away.

"That man's a bad egg," said Bob Lawless. "The worst kind of critter I've ever struck, I reckon. But I guess we've drawn his teeth."

"We may be sorry some day that we saved him from the grizzly," said Vere Beauclerc grimly.

Bob picked up Handsome Alf's rifle. It was a fine weapon, mounted in silver. Handsome Alf had expensive tastes.

"Same calibre as our guns," said Bob. "This gun may come in useful before we hand it over at Last Chance. We should have been fools to let him have it."

Chunky Todgers came through the trees. He had watched the scene from a distance, not being near enough to help in dealing with the bear.

"I've staked out the hosses," he said. "I guess we're going to have bear-steak for dinner. This is luck and no mistake!"

And Chunky, who was a great hand at cooking, drew his knife and began to skin the bear and cut the bear-steaks, the prospect of which delighted him.

"You shouldn't have left the hosses, duffer!" exclaimed Bob; and he ran out of the timber.

Handsome Alf had swerved from his path and was making for the unguarded spot where the horses and the mule were staked out. Evidently the thought had come to him to "lift" the belongings of the Cedar Creek party.

"Let up!" shouted Bob Lawless, putting his rifle to his shoulder. "Another step, Carson, and down you go!"

Handsome Alf looked round. He set his teeth as he saw the rifle-barrel bearing on him and struck off in his former direction. In a few minutes more he disappeared on the mountain trail.

### In the Shadow of Death!

**C**HUNKY TODGERS did not lose time. He was engaged upon a congenial task, which the other fellows, as a matter of fact, did not envy him.

Big bear-steaks were soon grilling over the fire of pine-chips and cones, and a savoury odour pervaded the camp. Chunky's fat face smiled and glowed over the fire.

The other three attended to the horses, and fetched water and stacked firewood for future use, the explorers intending to remain on the wooded plateau for a few days, hunting and exploring.

They were hungry after the long morning ride, and they sat down with keen appetites to the dinner prepared by the worthy Chunky. The fat youth beamed at the praises which were showered upon his skill as a chef.

Chunky admitted that he wouldn't have been "great shakes" at killing the bear, but at making use of the carcase he had no equal.

Todgers paid himself the compliment of making a tremendous meal on his own cookery, and when he rose at last his movements were slow and laboured, and his eyes had a glassy look, and he breathed very hard.

Bob Lawless looked at him with a grin.

"Overdone it, Chunky?" he asked.

"Mmmm-no!" mumbled Chunky. "Not at all. I'm a little sleepy, that's all. Long ride this morning, you know."

"You don't think you've eaten about fifteen pounds too much?" grinned Bob.

"Br-r-r!"

"Take a nap and sleep it off!" said Bob.

"I guess I will," said Chunky; and he rolled

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in the grass, with his big stetson hat over his face, and was soon snoring. Chunky Todgers needed a sleep after his feed, but the other three were not in the same state; they were feeling quite active.

Bob Lawless sat down to mend some harness, being a good hand at that kind of repairs; and Vere Beauclerc mounted his horse for a trot round the plateau, to survey the lay of the land. Frank Richards remained chatting with Bob for some time, and then strolled away from the camp to look for wild fruits in the wood.

High up as the plateau was, the heat of the Canadian summer was very great, and it was agreeable and refreshing in the cool, green shade of the wood. Frank was careful to take the shotgun with him, in case he should meet with game.

He followed the bank of the little stream, threading his way through trees and thickets, not caring to go out of sight and sound of the water, which was his guide back to the camp. The English schoolboy was not so skilled in woodcraft as his Canadian cousin, though he had learned a good deal from Bob.

The thought of Handsome Alf came into his mind as he wandered on quietly and contentedly in the green shade. He wondered what the man had been doing in that secluded recess of the foothills.

Handsome Alf was what is called in the West a "sport"—that is, an adventurer who generally lived by playing cards with miners and stockmen—in other words, a professional gambler. He was not likely to have taken up hunting or trapping, and if he ever did any honest work, it was likely to be in the line of prospecting for gold, a business at which every dweller in the Cascade Mountains tried his hand sooner or later.

Frank wondered whether it was that that had brought the ruffian to the wooded plateau at the end of so steep and difficult a path. The thought made him keep his eyes about him, for, to some slight extent, he shared Chunky Todgers' hope that the party might "strike" during their wanderings in the North-West.

Frank knew little about mining operations, and he was quite likely to walk over a gold-mine without knowing that it was there; but he thought that he could at least spot a "placer" if he came across one. For that reason he scanned the stream every now and then, looking for traces of the precious golden grains in its sandy bed.

Sand and mud were all that rewarded his glances, however, and occasionally a fish, flashing in the sunlight as it sported in the waters.

Suddenly Frank Richards halted. In the grass under the trees he caught sight of a track—the imprint of a boot in the sward. The size of the boot was a good deal too small for it to belong to one of the Cedar Creek party, and, besides, the spot was a couple of miles from the camp, and Frank was the first who had wandered in this direction.

Frank looked at it keenly, wondering to whom it could belong, and whether it was the track of some Indian who used the white man's foot-gear.

At a short distance he also discovered the track of a horse or pony.

"By Jove!" murmured Frank. "We haven't got the place to ourselves, after all. That chap, whoever he is, has got small feet—as small as Yen Chin's."

Then he uttered an exclamation. That thought was enough to enlighten him.

"My only hat! That blessed little Chinese is

hanging about again!" he murmured. "He followed us up the mountain, after all!"

A few steps farther on he lost the track of the pony and the boots in a stony patch of soil. He returned towards the stream, smiling a little. The obstinate pursuit of the little Celestial was as amusing as it was provoking.

He pushed his way through a thicket to reach the bank again, and as he did so there was a sudden rustle in the underwoods. He spun round, and, thinking at that moment of Yen Chin, he did not think of taking the shotgun from under his arm.

But the figure that suddenly loomed before him from the underbush was not that of the Chow of Cedar Creek. Frank caught a glimpse of a swarthy face, and as he started back, Handsome Alf was upon him with the spring of a panther.

Frank made a desperate grasp at his gun, but he was borne backward in the flash of an eye, and came down heavily on his back in the grass. The next instant the knee of Alf Carson was planted on his chest, and a bare blade flashed before his eyes.

A sickening feeling came over him, and he closed his eyes involuntarily. For a moment it seemed to him that the ruffian was about to drive the hunting-knife home; and death in all its horrors froze him at that fearful moment. But the blow did not fall.

The low, mocking, not unmusical laugh of the half-Spanish adventurer sounded in his ears.

"My turn now!" said Handsome Alf. "You reckoned I had lit out, I guess!"

"Yes," gasped Frank.

"Keep still, my bucko!"

Carson made a threatening motion with the knife.

"One thrust and you know the rest!"

Frank shuddered.

"I guess I didn't light out!" grinned Carson.

"My horse bolted when that grizzly tackled me, and I didn't reckon on moseying on foot back to Last Chance. No, sir! And I reckoned I'd a score to pay before I lost sight of you galoots!" Handsome Alf's black eyes scintillated. "I told you you'd see me again!"

"We saved your life," said Frank Richards quietly.

Carson laughed.

"There's an older score than that," he said. "The Good Samaritan act doesn't pay in the foothills of the North-West!"

Frank Richards had already realised that.

"Your pard was a piece too cute for me," continued Carson, with a mocking grin. "If he'd let me have my rifle, I'd have hung about your camp, and potted you one after another from the rocks. I guess your hosses and pack-mule would be worth a galoot's while, without counting the old score. Do you know how long you've got to live?"

Frank Richards pulled himself together with an effort. The murderous intention of the ruffian was only too plainly to be read in his swarthy face.

His plan was marked out—to rob the four explorers of their horses and baggage, worth hundreds of dollars, and a valuable prize to any adventurer down on his luck. He did not intend to leave it in their power to denounce him in the camps as a horse-thief. His own safety and his revenge combined to make him merciless.

Frank looked up steadily at the swarthy face above him, gathering all his courage to face the terrible peril that impended. The ruffian watched his face, grinning, but evidently surprised and

perplexed that he did not speak.

"You first," he went on, as Frank was silent. "Then the others! Handsome Alf is a bad man to cross. But for you I should have jumped Bill Lomax's claim, and I'd have been a rich man now. You've got to pay for that."

Frank Richards cast a wild glance round him, and Carson laughed as he saw it. There was no hope in the boy's heart. But, as his wild glance swept round, his eyes suddenly gleamed.

Behind Handsome Alf, as he knelt on the school-boy's chest, a slim, little figure had emerged from the timber. And Frank Richards' heart throbbed almost to suffocation as he recognised Yen Chin, the Chinese of Cedar Creek.

### Saved by the Chow!

YEN CHIN had stepped from the trees with the silent stealthiness of a cat. He was directly behind the kneeling ruffian, and, without turning his head, Handsome Alf could not see him, and naturally did not dream of his presence. He had known nothing of Yen Chin's pursuit of the Cedar Creek party.

The Chinese caught Frank's eye as the boy looked past his captor, and instantly put his finger to his lips. Frank understood. It required presence of mind and a great effort to keep his face from betraying what he had seen. But Frank made the effort, and he succeeded.

Life itself depended on the next minute or two, and, under the strain of that fearful peril, his brain worked with strange clearness and swiftness. To keep Carson from discovering the silent, creeping figure behind him—that was Frank's instant thought. And almost in the same moment that he discerned Yen Chin, he began to speak, so quickly did his mind act at that terrible moment.

"Hold your hand!" he exclaimed hurriedly.

"We saved your life, Carson. But for us——"

"Ha, ha!" roared Handsome Alf.

He laughed uproariously, evidently gratified at having, as he supposed, forced the English boy into asking for mercy—which he did not intend to grant.

"And that isn't all!" panted Frank, cudgelling his brain for some pretext to keep the ruffian talking, if only for a minute. "If you kill me you will not find the placer——"

He had touched the right cord. Handsome Alf's black eyes gleamed as he scanned the schoolboy's pale face scrutinisingly.

"The placer?" he repeated. "What placer?"

"You knew there was a placer here," said Frank. "I guessed that you were looking for it when we came upon you."

"That's true, I guess. You have found it?" he exclaimed, his black eyes snapping. "You have found the placer?"

The knife still threatened the prostrate boy, but the ruffian was not thinking for the moment of using it. He had been hunting for gold in the foothills when the grizzly attacked him, and the mention of a placer had awakened all his greed.

He had no scruple about extracting all the information he could from the helpless schoolboy before he silenced him for ever. That Frank Richards knew nothing of a placer mine, and was striving only to gain time, he had no means of guessing.

It was only moments that were wanted. Yen Chin, silent as a snake, was creeping up behind Carson, and in his right hand was grasped a

heavy billet of wood. If he came within striking distance before he was observed, Frank Richards was saved. Frank was speaking hurriedly, desperately, in his tense anxiety to keep the ruffian's attention riveted to himself and to keep him from glancing backward.

"The placer," he repeated—"you will never find it. You can kill me, if you like, but you will never find the placer!"

Carson set his teeth.

"I guess you'll be my guide!" he answered mockingly. "By thunder, what a chance! I've moseyed round these hills for a week hunting the placer, and you drop in by sheer chance! Fool's luck, by thunder! But I guess that placer's mine, and you're going to guide me to it!"

"What if I do?" panted Frank. "Will you let—"

He said no more; there was no need. Yen Chin was close now.

The little Chinese's right hand was raised, and even while Frank was speaking, almost at random, it descended, and the heavy billet of wood struck Handsome Alf on the side of the head.

It was a heavy blow. Taken utterly by surprise and almost stunned, Handsome Alf reeled sideways, falling on one elbow in the grass. Even then, with his senses reeling, he made a savage effort, and hacked towards Frank Richards with the knife.

But Frank was alert, and he was wrenching himself away while Handsome Alf was falling, and the blind blow with the knife only sawed in space. Carson had no time for another attempt. Yen Chin was upon him with a tigerish spring, striking again.

The ruffian was struggling to rise blindly when the second blow caught him on the forehead, and he went down like an ox under the poleaxe. With a faint groan, he collapsed in the grass.

Frank Richards scrambled to his feet. Yen Chin hurled himself on the fallen ruffian, and the heavy billet crashed again on Handsome Alf's unconscious head. The blow would have been repeated yet again, but Frank caught the Chinese's arm and dragged it back. Villain as the man was, Frank did not want his schoolfellow to beat out the ruffian's brains.

"Hold on, Yen Chin!" he gasped.

"No holdee! Killee!" exclaimed Yen Chin. "Velly bad man! Wantee killee pool old Flanky! Me killee!"

Frank's grasp tightened on the little Celestial's arm, and he pulled him back, much to Yen Chin's disappointment and exasperation.

"You must not kill him, Yen Chin," he said.

"Flanky old duffee!" said Yen Chin discontentedly. "Supposee him see me; him killee plenty quick—oh, yes!"

"I'm afraid so. But—"

"Allee light," grinned Yen Chin. "Me do what Flanky wantee. Me velly fond of silly old Flanky. Comee on holiday with nicey old Flanky—oh, yes!"

Frank Richards did not answer. He stood leaning against a tree, breathing hard and deep, almost giddy from the strain he had undergone. He had been in peril before, but never had the King of Terrors been nearer him. Now that he was safe, he could scarcely realise it, and he was feeling almost sick with the reaction.

Handsome Alf Carson lay unheeded in the grass, with a crimson streak oozing from under

his thick dark hair where Yen Chin's blows had fallen. The ruffian was stunned, and it was likely to be a long time before he came to his senses again.

Yen Chin glanced anxiously at Frank.

"Fcelee bad?" he asked.

"Yes," murmured Frank. "Rotten, old chap! Never mind; it's all right. Thank you for what you've done, Yen Chin! You stepped in just in time!"

"Velly glad sance old Flanky!" said Yen Chin. "Flanky wantee me comee on holiday now—oh, yes! Tell ugly Bob me comee."

Frank Richards smiled faintly. The little Chinese was sticking to his desire to join the Cedar Creek party in the North-West, and, after what had happened, he could scarcely be refused. Frank Richards, at all events, was not in a mood to refuse him anything he asked.

"Come back with me, kid," he said. "Let's get back to the camp. I'm feeling a bit sick."

"Me solly! Leavee bad man alive?" asked Yen Chin, with a regretful glance at the motionless figure of Handsome Alf.

"Yes, yes!" said Frank hastily.

"Allee light!"

Yen Chin disappeared into the thickets, and came back in a few minutes leading his pony. Then he contentedly trotted on by Frank Richards' side on the way back to the camp.

Frank was recovering from the shock now, but he was still pale when he reached the camp by the spring. Vero Beauclerc had returned from his ride, and Chunky Todgers was brewing coffee at the fire.

The three schoolboys uttered an exclamation as Frank came up with his companion.

"The Chow!"

"Me comee with old Flanky," said Yen Chin.

"You young rascal—" began Bob Lawless. Then he broke off. "What's the matter, Frank? You're as white as chalk!"

"I've been through it!" muttered Frank.

"What's happened?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Frank Richards explained in a low voice, shuddering a little at the vivid recollection of the peril he had passed through.

"Well, by thunder!" said Bob Lawless at last. "Yen Chin, you heathen rascal, you've turned up trumps, and no mistake! You're welcome to stick if you want to stick."

"Yes, rather!" said Beauclerc. "We'll be jolly glad to have you, kid!"

"I guess you can count me in on that!" added Chunky Todgers.

After what Yen Chin had done, the Chow of Cedar Creek was a fellow whom the whole party delighted to honour.

The little Chinese beamed.

"Allee lightee!" he exclaimed. "Oh, yes! Me tinkee! Likee comee with handsome Bob and nicee fiends! Oh, yes!"

"It's a cinch!" said Bob, laughing. Then his brow grew stern. "As for that rogue, he's got to be dealt with. We'll rope him on a horse and tote him down to Last Chance, and hand him over to the sheriff there."

"Good!" said Frank.

No time was lost by the party in hastening to the spot where Carson had been left. But they found it vacant. Grim stains of red on the sward showed where Handsome Alf had lain, but the ruffian was gone.

**Next Week: "THE MENACE OF THE MOUNTAINS!"**



The juniors laid hold of the rope, and with a dead-lift effort the unfortunate Tuckey was extracted from the pitch like a cork from a bottle. "Ow! Wow-wow-wow!" he spluttered.

### Toodles Is Very Kind!

"IT'S one of the wonders of the world!" said Tuckey Toodles impressively.

"Give us a rest!" suggested Jack Drake. "Everybody who comes to Trinidad sees it—"

Drake yawned. "Mr. Packe's put up a notice in the Common-room," continued Tuckey Toodles, unheeding the yawn. "He says that fellows are to put their names down—"

"Bow-wow!"

"All the fellows who want to go by steamer to-morrow to see the Pitch Lake," said Toodles.

"I tell you it's one of the wonders of the world. Everybody's heard of the Great Pitch Lake of Trinidad—"

"We've heard enough for the present," remarked Dick Rodney. "Go and tell Sawyer major about it."

"But I want you fellows to come," urged Toodles. "You simply can't afford to miss it. Next week, I believe, we're going on to the Orinoco, and the Benbow won't come back to Trinidad any more. This is your only chance of seeing the Great Pitch Lake."

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

Drake and Rodney yawned together. In spite of the earnestness of their fat studymate they seemed quite unimpressed by the wonders of the Great Pitch Lake.

"You yawning asses!" exclaimed Toodles. "Here you are within forty miles of one of the wonders of the world, and you don't want to take the trouble to see it! Besides, it's a lovely run across the gulf from Port of Spain to La Brea, where the Pitch Lake is. You fellows would enjoy it no end. We're going to take lunch-baskets, too. We go up to the lake in a mule cart from

# TUCKEY'S BLACK DAY!

By Owen Conquest.

La Brea. It's no end of a sight. You fellows simply must come!"

There was a chuckle in Cabin No. 8 on the Benbow. As a rule, Tuckey was not anxiously concerned for the benefit of others, but undoubtedly he was very anxious now that his study-mates should not miss seeing that wonder of the world, the Great Pitch Lake of Trinidad.

Probably the fat junior had his own reasons for being so anxious on account of his chums.

"You must come!" urged Toodles. "I'm not going to let you off. I shouldn't enjoy it without you. I should think of what you were missing, you know."

"That's awfully kind of you," chuckled Rodney. "Well, I'm a kind-hearted chap," chuckled Toodles. "That's me all over—kindest friend and

*When the boys of the Benbow take a trip to the Pitch Lake of Trinidad it turns out a black day for Tuckey Toodles!*

noblest foe, you know, like the chap in the poem. You fellows are coming, aren't you? Remember, it's no lessons to-morrow if you come, and that means no prep this evening. But the names have got to be taken in to Packe before seven. Now, say you'll come. Will you come along with me to Packe's cabin now?"

"Thanks, no!"

"Look here—"

"We won't keep you, old top. You go."

"Well, the fact is—" Toodles hesitated.

"Oh, now we're getting to the facts, are we?" grinned Rodney. "Well, the fact is—what?"

"Hem! The fact is—ahem!—the fellows who go have to pay their own expenses."

"Ah!"

"It depends on how many go what it comes to. And—and—somehow or other my remittance hasn't arrived at Port of Spain yet. And—and I was thinking that you fellows would like to stand my whack as you're coming with me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake and Rodney burst into a roar. Tuckey Toodles' anxiety that his chums should not miss seeing the Great Pitch Lake was explained now—not that the chums of the Fourth had been in the dark. They knew their Toodles!

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"I don't see what you're chortling at," said Toodles warmly. "I suppose I can't pay my whack when my remittance hasn't arrived, can I? You've got plenty of money, Drake. Come along with me to Packe's cabin now, and we'll all put our names down together for the trip."

"Bow-wow!"

"Won't you come to Packe?" roared Toodles.

"Nix!"

"Yah! You're awfully mean, Drake! I don't think I ever met a meaner chap in my life. I shan't take you with me now, and you can go without seeing the Great Pitch Lake. I'm going to speak to my friend Daubeny."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yah!"

Tuckey Toodles rolled out of Cabin No. 8, leaving Drake and Rodney chuckling.

### The Trippers!

THE following morning Tuckey Toodles was morose. Quite a number of the Benbow juniors had put their names down for the excursion to La Brea, to behold the wonder of the Great Pitch Lake of Trinidad.

But somehow or other nobody seemed to yearn for Tuckey's company to such an extent as to offer to pay his "whack."

Daubeny of the Shell was going with Egan and Torrence, and Tuckey had approached the bucks of the Shell with his most fascinating smile to speak on the subject; but Daubeny & Co. had only told him to go and eat coke! Sawyer major and Estcourt and Rawlings, and some more of the Fourth were going, but when Tuckey told them he would have to stay behind if somebody didn't stand his whack they were unfeeling enough to cheer.

The morning was bright and sunny, the sun blazing over the hills of Trinidad and over the fertile valleys and the rolling waters of the Gulf of Paria. Away to westward the Cordilleras of South America stood out against the blue sky. But Tuckey was not interested in tropical scenery. He was morose, and, like Rachel of old, he refused to be comforted.

After breakfast the party for La Brea had to get ready to start. From the Benbow they could see the steamer which made the journey from Port of Spain to the southern end of the Gulf several times a week. The steamer was preparing for sea. Mr. Packe, the Fourth Form master, gathered his flock on the deck of the Benbow before the usual hour of morning classes. A boat with black rowers lay beside the ship, ready to convey the trippers to the steamer.

Mr. Packe consulted a list in his hand, and counted his flock. Drake and Rodney were among them.

Tuckey Toodles eyed his cabin mates with deep reproach.

"You're going?" he ejaculated.

Drake nodded cheerfully.

"We put down our names at once," he said, "when we saw the notice in the Common-room, before you turned on your chin-music in the cabin, old top."

"Why, you rotter!"

"Toodles!"

"Eh? Oh! Yes, sir!" ejaculated Tuckey, as Mr. Packe called his name.

"Why are you not ready to start, Toodles?"

"I'm not going, sir."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Packe

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testily. "Drake put your name down with his own yesterday, and paid your charges."

Tuckey Toodles jumped.

"D-D-Drake did!" he stuttered.

"Yes!"

"Oh, I—I see!" gasped Tuckey. "You beast, Drake—I mean I'm no end obliged, old top! I'll be ready in a tick—I mean, in a minute, sir. I'm coming, of course—yes, rather!"

"Make haste, then, Toodles!"

The juniors descended into the boat. Rupert de Vere Toodles was not long behind the others. He did not mean to run the risk of being left. He dropped into the boat, his face almost invisible under the huge Spanish sombrero he wore to preserve his complexion from the sun.

The boat pulled to the steamer, and the party clambered aboard. Smoke was already pouring from the funnels.

"I knew you fellows wouldn't leave me behind, old tops," said Tuckey affectionately, as the steamer left the quay. "You wouldn't have liked this trip without me. I'll point out all the places of interest as we go along, and tell you chaps about them. I'm really as good as a guide, you know. See those flats there?"

"Do you mean the Shell fellows?"

"No, you ass—those flats ashore! They're the thungummy swamps—"

"Mangrove swamps," said Rodney.

"That's it," assented Toodles. "They extend all the way from What's-its-name to What-d'you-call-it. That cape ahead is Point Thingummy. You depend on me for information as we go along."

"I think we'd better make notes of what you tell us," remarked Dick Rodney sarcastically. "After a little more of this we could pass an exam. on Trinidad geography."

"Well, I'm fairly well up in geography," said Toodles, who was quite impervious to sarcasm. "You see that line in the sky to the west, right across the Gulf? That's the—the—I forget what it's called, you know, and it's I can't exactly remember how many miles off. T'other side of that there's a tribe of Indians called—I don't recall just this minute. And there's a town of the name of—I'll tell you when I remember it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With such stores of valuable information Tuckey Toodles beguiled the way, and by the time La Brea was sighted he was quite satisfied that, from an educational point of view, Jack Drake had invested his money well when he paid Tuckey's "whack."

### The Terrors of Toodles!

"BLACK as a hat!" remarked Daubeny of the Shell, adjusting his eyeglass to stare at the shore, as the steamer drew in to La Brea.

"Black but comely," remarked Sawyer major.

The Benbow fellows watched the shore with interest, as the steamer dropped anchor outside the surf. The overflow of pitch from the Great Lake dimmed the tropical colouring. The pebbles of the beach were black; even the tide-pools in the sand were black.

"You will prepare to take your places in the boat, my boys," came the voice of Mr. Packe.

A boat came out from the shore to the steamer, manned by black rowers, and stopped under the vessel's side. Into this the juniors piled, and the boat bumped through the surf, and the juniors landed. The beach was alive with the inhabitants

of La Brea, most of them busy on the work of transporting pitch. From the Great Pitch Lake of Trinidad comes much of the asphalt with which streets are paved in American and European cities.

"We shall proceed up the hill by mule-cart," said Mr. Packe. "You will kindly remain with me, and not wander about."

Three mule-carts arrived to accommodate the Benbow explorers, in charge of a coloured gentleman, whose name was Solomon Wellington, and whose services had been engaged as guide. Jack Drake and Rodney, Toodles and Sawyer major, Estcourt and Rawlings mounted into the first cart, which rolled off, followed by the others, with the remainder of the party and Mr. Packe.

The road to the Pitch Lake was laid with pitch from the lake itself, but the bank by the roadside was thick with pitch in its natural state, placed there by the hand of Nature.

The whole quarter was redolent of pitch; the scent of it was in the air.

Bright tropical flowers glimmered on all sides as the mule-carts rumbled on, but as the explorers pushed on up the hill, and the pitch became thicker and thicker in the soil, the vegetation became less luxuriant and more sober in hue. Jack Drake & Co. looked about them with keen interest, only Tuckey Toodles devoting his attention to the contents of a lunch-basket, and leaving the scenery to take care of itself.

"Jolly queer place," commented Jack Drake, as the mule-cart came out on what looked like a huge asphalt pavement, covering the hillside, but which was only the dried pitch from the lake farther up. Rusty-looking weeds grew in it in ragged clusters. The pitch was not all dried. Cart-tracks marked it, and here and there were pools of water covered with brown scum. A wheel splashed in one of the pools, and the cart jolted, and Tuckey Toodles nearly swallowed a mouthful of cake even more quickly than usual.

"Ooooh!" gasped Tuckey. "Wharrer marrer?" "Only the cart sinking in the pitch," answered Sawyer major cheerfully.

"What?" yelled Tuckey. "Didn't you know carts sometimes sunk into this stuff and disappeared from human knowledge?" asked Sawyer innocently. "My dear chap, you have to run risks to see a sight like this."

"I—I don't believe it!" gasped Tuckey Toodles. "You're trying to pull my leg, you beast!"

Sawyer shrugged his shoulders. "Look for yourself," he said.

Ahead of the cart was a pool of water, a few inches deep, but from its scummy covering it looked just like the solid, pitchy road. Sawyer major had noted the difference, but Toodles hadn't. Toodles watched the mule step on, and saw the animal's leg sink almost to the joint. The driver dragged at it.

"Nearly through that time," said Sawyer. "You see, Toodles, it's a sort of pitchy crust here, with bottomless depths below—"

"Ow!" "If you go through—" "Oh dear!"

"There we go again!" said Sawyer, as the mule stepped into another scummy pool. "Nearly through again. What will you fellows bet that we don't get to the top alive? Three to one we don't. Any takers?"

"No fear!" said Drake. "You'd win." "Yaroooh!"

"Hallo! What's the matter, Toodles?"

Tuckey was scrambling up, forgetful even of what remained in the lunch-basket.

"I—I'm not going to be swallowed up alive!" he howled. "Packe oughtn't to have brought us to such a dangerous place. I'm getting out."

"Pooh! Don't be funky!"

"I—I'm not funky, but I'm going back. The— the fact is, I—I dropped my handkerchief on the beach, and—and I'm going back to look for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tuckey Toodles dropped out of the back of the cart in a great hurry. He dropped into a black pool and sank over his ankles and gave a fearful yell, under the impression that he was going through the "crust" into unplumbed depths beneath.

"Yoop! Help! I'm sinking! Yaroooooh!"

"Good-bye, Toodles!" yelled Sawyer major in great delight. Sawyer had a sense of humour that often afforded him more pleasure than it afforded others. "Good-bye, old top!"

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The mule-cart rolled on, leaving Tuckey Toodles ankle-deep in warm, pitchy water, yelling. The second cart, with Mr. Packe in it, rolled up. Mr. Packe blinked down severely at Toodles.

"What are you doing there, Toodles? You foolish boy, why have you got out of your cart?"

"I'm sinking!"

"What!"

"Help!" yelled Toodles. "I'm going through!" "Through what?" ejaculated the astonished Mr. Packe.

"Through the pitch crust—"

"You utterly ridiculous boy!" exclaimed Mr. Packe. "How can you be so absurd? Do you think the hill is hollow?"

"Eh? Sawyer said—"

"Go back to your cart at once, and do not be so absurd."

"Oh!" ejaculated Toodles.

He shook a fat fist after the first mule-cart, at Sawyer's grinning face in the distance. Mr. Packe smiled slightly as he passed on in his cart. Tuckey Toodles did not feel inclined to chase his own vehicle uphill in the hot sunshine, and he essayed to mount into the third cart. But Daubeny & Co. were there, and they did not want to be crowded out by Toodles, especially in his muddy state.

"No room!" grinned Egan.

"You lemmie in!" exclaimed Tuckey indignantly. "Do you think I can walk?"

"Try!" chuckled Daubeny.

"Give a hand up, you rotters!" roared Toodles, plodding behind the slowly moving mule-cart.

Egan winked at his comrades.

"Well, give me your paw," he said, as if relenting.

"Here you are!" gasped Toodles.

Egan took the fat paw as if to lift Toodles into the cart; but, instead of lifting him, he jerked him off his feet, and Tuckey sat down. He sat in a black pool with a terrific splash.

"Yoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul! What ever is that?" exclaimed Mr. Packe, looking back from the second cart. "Has anything happened, Daubeny?"

"Only Toodles taking a rest en route, sir," answered Daub.

"Dear me! The ridiculous boy!"

Tuckey Toodles scrambled up and fielded his sombrero, which had fallen off. He shook a fat fist furiously at the grinning Shell fellows and plodded on afoot. Fortunately, the trippers were nearly at the top now, and in a few minutes more the cart topped the last ridge of the long, low hill, and the Great Pitch Lake of Trinidad was spread before the juniors of the Benbow.

### The Great Pitch Lake I

"**H**ERE we are!" said Drake, as he jumped from the cart.

"Yes, here we are again!" said Sawyer major. "Hallo! Is that you, Toodles? Didn't you fall through, after all?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" was Tuckey's disdainful reply.

"So that's the famous Pitch Lake of Trinidad," said Dick Rodney thoughtfully.

"Call that a lake?" sniffed Tuckey Toodles.

It was an odd-looking lake. It was quite at the top of the low hill, a gigantic pool of asphalt, in a more or less liquid state. Islands rose in the midst of it—beyond it was a palm forest. The tropical sun blazed down on the black lake, and the pitch glittered and glared in the sunshine.

"You may walk on it, my boys," said Mr. Packe. "But be careful not to fall into the holes."

"Walk on the lake!" ejaculated Rodney.

It was a new idea to the juniors. But they found that it was quite easy to walk on the surface of the lake. The oil that squeezed up with the pitch from the depths of the earth evaporated rapidly in the hot sunshine, leaving the pitch of a thick consistency, well able to support a heavy weight. In the softer places the feet sank a little, leaving footprints in the pitch, but that was all. The juniors made a rush for the islands, after testing the consistency of the asphalt with cautious feet first.

Mr Packe proceeded in a more stately manner, walking on planks laid down by the negro drivers over the broken channels that intersected the surface of the pitch. But the juniors preferred to jump over the channels, which were all narrow. Some of them stared down into these queer rifts, which seemed to extend to endless depths downward through the hardened asphalt.

Some of the channels ran with water, and fishes and beetles could be seen in them. Others were dry or oily. Stranger still to see were the sticks and logs stuck in the pitch, apparently having risen to the surface along with the exuding asphalt from the depths below. There was no doubt that it was a sight worth seeing, and Jack Drake & Co. were glad they had come.

Tuckey Toodles was very slow in venturing on the surface of the lake, but he followed the other fellows at last, and reached the islands. Patches of red earth, with sedge and palms growing thick, seemed to be floating on the pitch.

Jack Drake & Co. pushed farther on and jumped across a rather wider channel than usual, Tuckey halting on the other side.

"Come and help me over!" he shouted.

"Bow-wow!" retorted Drake. "Jump!"

"Yah!"

The juniors ran on, and Tuckey stood where he was. He did not care about jumping the channel, which was several feet wide and full of water. Neither did he want to walk back to the carts by himself, as there were a dozen rifts to cross, and he wanted a helping hand at each.

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So he stood where he was, and frowned after the explorers as they spread over the lake.

Under the shade of his big Spanish sombrero, Tuckey watched them, frowning, till presently he began to move, and, to his terror, found that his feet were fast.

He gave a howl as he dragged at one foot and then at the other, without succeeding in detaching either.

"Yow-ow! Help!" roared Toodles.

He had stopped, unfortunately for himself, in a spot where the pitch was soft and oily. His feet had sunk in it, and the pitch was holding his boots like glue. The thought of sinking through into the depths made Rupert de Vere Toodles quite frantic.

He howled and yelled and waved his fat arms. Some of the juniors looked back from the distance and laughed, not being aware of Tuckey's plight, only supposing that the fat junior wanted somebody to come back and help him across the water channel. Mr Packe was at a distance, making scientific investigations, and if he heard Tuckey's yells he did not heed. There was plenty of calling and shouting going on. Tuckey yelled for help, and yelled in vain.

His feet were sinking deeper, and every effort to drag them loose seemed to make them more embedded. Tuckey shrieked as the clinging pitch closed over his fat ankles.

"Yaroor! Help! Help! Yoop! Beasts! Rotters! Help! I'm sinking!"

Jack Drake glanced back across the lake.

"What a thumping row he's kicking up!" he remarked. "Why can't he jump like the others, the lazybones?"

Rodney fixed his eyes on Toodles. A rather startled expression came over his face.

"There's something wrong with him," he said. "Let's go back."

"Oh, all right!" said Drake good-naturedly.

They turned back, and as they drew nearer they distinguished Tuckey's wail of horror.

"I'm sinking! Help!"

"Rot!" called Drake.

"Yaroor! I shall be killed! Help! I'm drowning in pitch! Yow-ow!"

Tuckey was far from drowning, so far. The pitch was barely up to his knees. But certainly it was quite impossible for him to extricate himself, and doubtless, given sufficient time, he would have sunk completely out of sight, which would have been a dreadful termination to the fat career of Rupert de Vere Toodles.

"My only hat! He's really stuck fast!" exclaimed Drake, as he came nearer.

"Yow! Help! Beasts! Help!" roared Toodles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake and Rodney jumped over the channel and rejoined Tuckey. His fat knees were on a level with their feet. The juniors grasped an arm each of Tuckey Toodles and pulled.

But the fat junior was so well planted by this time that it was no light task to get him out. It was a good deal like drawing a very obstinate cork from a bottle.

Drake and Rodney tugged and panted, and perspired and tugged, but Tuckey did not come out.

The other juniors had perceived by this time that something was amiss, and they gathered round the spot. To Tuckey's intense indignation they did not realise the tragedy of the position at all. There was only a chorus of chuckles in reply to his frantic howls.

"Better get a rope from the cart," chuckled

(Continued on page 36.)



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## TUCKEY'S BLACK DAY!

(Continued from page 34.)

Sawyer. "We'll tie it round his neck, and get one of the mules to pull him out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake cut off to the carts for a rope, and when it was brought it was tied round Tuckey's waist—not his neck, as Sawyer had playfully suggested. All the juniors laid hold of it, and with a dead-lift effort Tuckey was extracted like a cork from a bottle.

He came out of the pitch and sat down, gasping.

"Ow! Ow! Wow-wow-wow!" he spluttered.

"Nice way to treat a pal! Ow! Wow! I—I say, I shall have to be carried back to the cart. I'm too exhausted to walk."

"We'll roll you," said Sawyer. "Lend a hand, you fellows!"

## GUSSY ON THE WARPATH!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Nobody's drenched us with anything that I know of!"

"First I've heard of it," said Manners.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "Did Gussy get the wrong birds in the dark? Just like Gussy, of course!"

"I got those three fellows when they came down to the study in the middle of the night."

"We never came down to the study in the middle of the night!" answered Tom Merry.

"Oh cwikey! Didn't you? Then—then who—who were the three fellows that I sloshed a bucketful of furniture stain ovah?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther gave a yell.

"Figgins & Co.!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "They must have come here, and Gussy got them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I couldn't see them vewy cleahly in the dark; I could only see that they were

Before Tuckey Toodles had made one complete roll he found that he was able to walk—indeed, to run. He bounced to his feet and fled, followed by a howl of laughter.

Tuckey did not venture on the pitch again. He had had enough of that wonder of the world. He gave his whole attention to what remained in the lunch-baskets until it was time to depart.

The sun was sinking over the Gulf of Paria when the juniors crowded into the mule-cart: again to descend the hill. As the path now lay downhill, Jack Drake and Rodney preferred to walk, and Daubeny—who seemed to have tired of Egan's society—dropped out to walk with them. The mule-carts rolled on ahead and disappeared down the road, and the three juniors tramped on behind.

"Lots of time for the steamer," Drake remarked. "We shall be at the landing-place before Packe misses us."

And the three juniors tramped cheerily down the pitchy road, little dreaming just then of what was to happen before they saw their comrades on the Bonbew again.

**Next Wednesday: "THE HURRICANE!"**

three fellows, and as they stopped at Tom Mewwy's study, of course, I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Let's go and see if the New House are out, you fellows. I should wathah like to see Figgins & Co.'s complexions this mornin'. There was a gallon of mixed stains—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed out of the House, but Figgins & Co. were not to be seen in the quad; perhaps they were putting in an extra wash. The School House fellows did not see them till the bell rang for class; then they saw them—with unusually swarthy complexions!

"Bai Jove! Who are those gipsies?" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you wash in the New House?" asked Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lathom will send them out of class to wash when he sees them!" predicted Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. were not sent out of class to wash! But it was not one of their happy mornings!

**Next Week: "GRUNDY GETS GOING!"**

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Printed in England and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.—Saturday, July 1st, 1939.