

ALL ABOARD FOR BRAZIL WITH TOM MERRY & CO.!

THE
GEM
2^d

The
MAN
from
BRAZIL!





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. He is candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Bull himself! But keep your letters **SHORT**, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned.

"Cricketer," of Kensington, Johannesburg, South Africa, writes:

1. What is the average height of the Shell?
2. Are there any left-handed bowlers or batsmen in the St. Jim's Junior XI? If so, who?
3. What was Figgins' batting average last season?
4. Who, else besides Wynn was successful in the bowling department?

ANSWERS:

1. About 5 foot 5 in.
2. No; but I can bat or bowl right or left-handed.
3. 29.14.
4. Harry Noble bowled very well, and I trouble a fair amount myself. Give, your country, showed good form, too.

T. P., of Portreath, Redruth, Cornwall, writes:

Where could I get the script of any "Popoye" film? Where could I get the Plymouth Argyle team's autographs? Which is tallest—yourself, Manners, D'Arcy, Lowther, Tom Merry, Digby, Herries? Are you afraid to play Rigger? How many boys are there in the London-Land's End road? Why is the fattest boy at St. Jim's one of the worst liars?

ANSWERS: 1.—You couldn't; I don't think the studio would let you have such a thing. 2.—Plymouth Argyle might oblige if you asked nicely. Why not write direct and see? 3.—Tom Merry and Lowther are both 5ft. 5½ in. 4.—Are you afraid to play Soccer? 5.—Veece counted the heads; but if you must know, why not count them yourself? 6.—He isn't—Wynn is fattest, and a stickler for the truth. You're thinking of Frankie. Yes, you're right in your estimate of Baggybust!

"Curious," of Malvern, Johannesburg, South Africa, writes:

Which of Glyn's inventions has ever been successful? Who was the most successful bowler in the Junior XI last season? Also, the most successful bat—and his average? Sorry I've no photo.

ANSWERS: None of them permanently. But he's still hoping! Fatty Wynn—by a long chalk. Tom Merry averaged 32. Not bad, do you think? What about a snap of yourself taken at the crease—or don't you stop trees long enough to be photographed?

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A. Seal, of Iver, Bucks, writes:

I think a Geofriars film is a darned good idea, so carry on with the good work. Oh, why do Tom Merry & Co. wear their "Etons" on holiday? Are the stories of Frank Richards at school time, by the way?

P.S.—Manners can come and snap me if he likes—at his camera's risk!

ANSWER: Yes, it's a great idea, but the film has been shelved for the present. We only wore our Etons as far as Paris. Frank Richards' schoolboys are based on fact. Manners says you want it handed to you on a "plate"—can't you get a friend to risk his camera—or are you looks too "black" and uninviting?

Fred Kirby, of Beaconsfield, Bucks, writes:

To his Highness Lord Blake of St. Jim's School, nr. Wayland. Please would you answer these:

1. How old is St. Jim's?
2. Ditta Dr. Holmes?
3. " Mr. Raillon?
4. " Mr. Ratcliff?
5. " Mr. Selby?
6. " Lovison minor?
7. When is your birthday?
8. How many boys at St. Jim's?
9. How many boys in the Fourth and Shell, and who are they?

ANSWERS: 1. About 400 years. 2. Less than 400 years. 3. Much less than 400 years. 4. Not much less than 400 years, some say. 5. No, not as much as 400 years. 6. 13. 7. The 4th of the 7th month after the 2nd eclipse of the 14th solar equinox. 8. About three-quarters of 400; 9. About 65. Lists have been published—and will be repeated before another 400 years have passed. His Highness Lord Blake presents his compliments, and hopes it keeps fine for you!

C. G., of Durham, writes:

Puzzle for you. Change SOIL into LAND, changing one letter at a time, in four moves.

ANSWERS: Coming down to earth, it's not so hard. SOIL, SAIL, SAID, SAND, LAND. Without looking in the back of the book, either!

BREAKING-UP DAY AT ST. JIM'S FINDS GUSSY INVOLVED IN A STRANGE MYSTERY—AND TOM MERRY & CO. BOOKED FOR A TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA!



The Man from BRAZIL!

GUSSY COMES FACE TO FACE WITH HIS FOE!

THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

“WHAT’S the worry?”

Tom Merry asked that question. Tom, in flannels, with a bat under his arm, was looking in at the doorway of Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim’s.

He was looking in to round up Arthur Augustus D’Arcy of the Fourth for cricket practice.

But he quite forgot cricket as he beheld the swell of St. Jim’s.

Arthur Augustus was seated in the armchair with a letter in his hand. He was gazing at that letter with an expression of astonishment on his noble face that amounted to bewilderment.

So fixed was Gussy’s attention on that letter that he did not see the captain of the Shell in the doorway and did not seem to hear Tom Merry’s voice.

He gazed at that letter as if hypnotised by it.

“Bai Jove!” Tom heard Gussy’s murmuring voice. “Whintevah can he mean? Is he cwacked? He must be cwacked! Bai Jove!”

“Wako up, Gussy!” roared Tom Merry.

“Oh!” ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

He heard Tom Merry then, and gave a jump. His eyeglass dropped from his eye, and he hastily clutched it and replaced it, and stared at Tom.

“What on earth’s up?” demanded Tom.

“Up?” repeated Arthur Augustus vaguely. “I don’t know that anythin’s up, Tom Mewwy.”

“Is that a letter from your tailor?” asked Tom sympathetically. “Won’t he let you have the new trousers till you’ve paid for the last waistcoat?”

“Weally, Tom Mewwy—”

“You’re looking fearfully worried! Do you ever worry about anything but trousers?”

“Wats!”

“If it’s a bill, old bean, I’ve dropped in at the right moment!” said Tom, laughing. “I’ve had some holiday tips. How much?”

“Thank you vewy much, deah boy, but it’s not a bill. I weally cannot undahstand it!”

“Somebody written you a letter in words of more than one syllable?”

“Weally, you ass—”

“Well, what—”

Tom Merry broke off as he noticed an envelope lying on the study table,

Opening Yarn of a Super New Holiday Series by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

from which, apparently, Arthur Augustus had taken the letter that seemed to perplex and puzzle him so much. That envelope had foreign stamps on it, and a foreign postmark.

Letters from foreign parts were rather unusual in junior studies at St. Jim's. Tom could see the word "Rio." The letter that was puzzling Gussy had arrived, it seemed, from South America.

"Didn't I hear that your brother, old Conway, was on a trip in South America?" asked Tom.

"Yaas."
"Well, if that's a letter from him, hand out the news, old bean! How's he getting on among the Brazilians and the Brazil nuts?"

"I weally do not know, Tom Mewwy."
"Hasn't he told you?"

"No."
Tom Merry's face became grave, and he stepped into the study. Tom Merry & Co. were well acquainted with Gussy's brother, Lord Conway, the eldest son of Lord Eastwood. If anything had happened to him in the wilds of Brazil it was a matter of general concern.

"Not bad news, Gussy?" he asked.

"No."
"Good news?"

"No."
"Then what's the news?"

"There isn't any!"
"Just a note to say he's arrived somewhere?"

"No."
"Then what does he tell you?"
"Nothin'!"
"Well, no news is good news!" said Tom with a smile. "I'm not inquisitive, Gussy, but we all like old Conway, and if anything's gone wrong, we—"

"Nothin' that I know of, Tom Mewwy! Unless—" The expressions of worry and perplexity deepened on Gussy's face. "Unless—"

"Unless what?"
"I believe it's feahfully hot in Bwazil," said Arthur Augustus. "A fellow might get a touch of the sun. That would account for it."

"For what?" asked Tom, in astonishment.
"Oh, nothin'!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. Tom Merry gazed at the swell of St. Jim's. It was obvious that the letter from his elder brother in Brazil caused Arthur Augustus deep worry and distress. There was apparently something in it which he could only account for by a theory of sunstroke, or something of that kind.

But if Lord Conway—an extremely sensible and level-headed young man—had written a letter to his brother at St. Jim's which gave an impression that he was "cracked," it was very remarkable and rather alarming.

"Anything private in the letter, Gussy?" asked Tom at last.

"Oh, no!"
"Then you can show it to a pal?"
"Yaas, but—"

"But what?"
"I think pewwaps I had better not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "If poor old Conway has gone cwacked, I wathah think that I had better not mention it, even to you, old fellow."

Tom Merry chuckled.
"Weally, it is not a laughin' mattah, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Suppose you had a bwathah—"

"I haven't, worse luck!"
"And suppose he was in Bwazil," continued Arthur Augustus. "Suppose he was on a twip on the wivah somethin' or othah in the back country of Bwazil—"

"Suppose away!" agreed Tom.
"And suppose he wote you a letter, what would you expect to find in it?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Something about Brazil nuts, and Indians, and alligators, and revolutions and things!" answered Tom.

"Yaas. And suppose—"
"Go it!"

"Suppose he said nothin' whatevah about Bwazil, but only mentioned a Chwistmas game—some sort of conjuwin' twick or othah—"

"Eh?"
"Some game or othah we played at Eastwood House last Chwistmas—"

"What?"

"Somethin' that I have quite forgotten, you know—he does not say what sort of thing it was! And suppose that was all—"

"Nothing else in the letter?"

"No."
"Oh, my hat!" said Tom blankly.

"Except that he says I'm to keep the lettah," said Arthur Augustus. "Nothin' else at all. Would that make you think he must have gone cwacked, Tom Mewwy?"

"But it's impossible, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Why the thump should a sensible chap like old Conway write an idiotic letter like that from a foreign country thousands of miles away?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's feahfully upsettin', old chap! It must be a touch of the Bwazilian sun, I think. Poor old Conway!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wemembah, when he started, I told him he had better put it off till the long holidays, you know, so that I could go with him and see that he came to no harm. He laughed—

I don't know why. And now—"

"You've read the letter upside down, or something, Gussy!" said Tom. "You know what an ass you are, old chap!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Better show it to Blake and Herries and Dig when they come in, and see what they think," suggested Tom.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No feah!" he answered. "If poor old Conway has gone cwacked I shall not say a word about it. P'wady don't ask me anythin' about the lettah, deah boy. On the whole, I think it would be wise to keep it absolutely dark."

"Oh, do!" gasped Tom. "Coming down to the cricket, Gussy?"

"Not just now, deah boy! I am feelin' too feahfully wowwied for cricket."

And Tom Merry left the study—leaving Arthur Augustus gazing at that strange and mysterious letter again, with puckered brows, evidently quite unable to make head or tail of it.

SOMETHING LIKE A SHINDY!

"COME on!" said Monty Lowther.

"What's the hurry?" asked Tom Merry.

"We want to get in before dark!" explained Monty.

"Shut up, you ass!" hissed Manners.

Monty Lowther never could resist a jest—and he did not always stop to think before perpetrating the same.

Monty meant no offence to a stranger. Monty never meant any offence. But sometimes he gave offence without meaning to—owing to that irresistible propensity for cutting little jokes in and out of season.

The Terrible Three of the Shell were walking

along Rylcombe Lane towards the school. The summer holidays were just at hand, and most St. Jim's fellows were thinking of them. But Tom Merry and his friends, just then, were discussing another matter—the strange case of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

For several days past—ever since, in fact, he had received that curious letter from Brazil—Arthur Augustus had not been his usual serene and equable self.

Arthur Augustus was worried.

All his friends knew that he was worried, and why. Gussy's inimitable way of keeping a secret was equivalent to shouting the same from the housetops.

His friends had no doubt that if he showed them the letter from Brazil, they would be able to explain what puzzled and worried him—for, so far as they could see, there could not possibly be anything in a letter from old Conway to puzzle or worry anybody who had as much sense as a bunny rabbit.

Gussy's friends agreed that Gussy hadn't!

Indeed, Jack Blake declared that he had had white rabbits that were monuments of intellect in comparison with his noble chum.

But Gussy declined to show the letter. He was keeping the whole thing dark—in his own remarkable way.

As friends of Gussy's, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were quite concerned about it. But Monty Lowther forgot all about Gussy and his mysterious worry, at the chance of cutting a little joke. It is sad to relate that he forgot his manners also!

Ahead of the three juniors, as they walked up the lane, was another pedestrian.

Even by a back view, they could see that he was a foreigner. His garments had a foreign cut, and the immense shady hat on his head hinted of the wide sunny savannahs of Western lands.

Drawing nearer, they had a sight of his face—which was not merely dark, but almost black.

He was not a black man. He might have been Spanish or Portuguese. But there was obviously a strong admixture of the black element. He was a rather big man; he walked with a jaunty swagger, and he twirled in his hand a cane with a heavy knob. His manner indicated that he had quite a good opinion of himself. Perhaps he came from some country like Brazil, where the "colour bar" is disregarded—the United States of Brazil being very much ahead, in that respect, of the other United States.

Nobody at St. Jim's cared a bean whether a man was white or black, red or yellow, or a mixture of all four. A man's colour was his own affair, which concerned nobody but himself.

Monty Lowther would never have dreamed of rude remarks on such a subject. But his besetting sin found him out—and as the three juniors came along by that dark-complexioned gentleman, Monty cut his little joke about "getting in before dark."

He did not mean the dark gentleman to hear, of course. But the dark gentleman seemed to have very keen ears, and he did hear. He not only heard, but evidently understood the allusion.

He turned towards the three juniors with a most unpleasant expression on his face.

"Que e-isso?" he exclaimed in sharp, angry tones.

Monty Lowther coloured to the roots of his

hair. Tom Merry and Manners both looked extremely uncomfortable.

Monty was ashamed of himself—now that he saw that the dark man had heard and taken offence.

The dark man did not look a nice man. He had black, glinting eyes, scowling, heavy brows, and a scar from a knife-cut on his cheek, which did not add to his good looks.

He looked, indeed, the kind of man who was always ready for trouble, and more likely to welcome it than avoid it.

"Oh! Sorry!" stammered Lowther. He was feeling as if he could have bitten off his tongue for that unlucky jest. "Please excuse me—I did not think you could hear me—only a joke, sir!"

Really, he hardly knew what to say. There was, in fact, no excuse to be made for such a breach of good manners.

"You make one joke, to insult a gentleman of Brazil!" exclaimed the dark man.

"Not at all, sir! Sorry I spoke!" said Lowther, with great humility.

"Sir," with humility added, ought to have set the matter right.

But it did not set the matter right. The Brazilian, as he was speaking, advanced towards Monty, who backed away.

"Please don't take offence, sir!" urged Tom Merry, trying to pour oil on the troubled waters. "No offence intended."

"This chap is a silly ass, and can't help it!" explained Manners.

Really, that ought to have satisfied the foreigner—and no doubt would have done—had he been a man easy to satisfy. But it was quite plain, on his looks, that he was quarrelsome and bullying—and it was no use trying to placate a man who liked to give rein to a savage and bullying temper.

He came closer to the three, gripping his cane, with the evident intention of laying it round the unlucky jester.

The three juniors, anxious to avoid trouble, backed and backed, till the hedge stopped them, and they could back no farther.

Monty Lowther's eyes gleamed. He had been to blame—but he had done all he could to set the matter right. And he was not going to be bullied—still less was he going to let the man handle that stick.

"Look here, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "I've said I'm sorry—and that's enough! Now clear off and chuck it!"

A swipe from the cane was the answer.

It caught Monty Lowther across the shoulder, and he uttered a yell. It was not merely a lick—it was a heavy blow, and it hurt. And it was clear that the dark man was going to follow it up with others.

But that swipe was more than enough for Monty! He made a leap forward, and grasped the dark man's right arm, to stop the use of the cane.

"Will you chuck it, you hooligan?" he roared. "Nao! Nao! I will beat you to one jelly!" snarled the dark man, and he wrenched his arm loose and struck again.

"Oh!" yelled Lowther as he got it—across the head this time. His straw hat crunched under the heavy swipe.

That was more than enough for his friends. The three rushed at the dark man and charged him over.

The man from Brazil was a big and powerful fellow. But that charge bowled him over!

The cane flew from his hand, the immense hat from his head, and he sprawled on his back in the dust of Rylcombe Lane, yelling with rage.

Monty Lowther set his straw hat straight. He rubbed his shoulder.

"The rotten ruffian!" he grunted. "Let him try it on again, by gum!"

The Brazilian sprawled, yelling—but he rolled over towards the fallen cane, and clutched at it—evidently intending to carry on. Tom Merry made a jump at the cane, and got there first. He clutched it up and sent it spinning over the hedge with a swing of his arm, to fall in the meadows a dozen yards away.

"You can go after that if you want it!" he snapped. "Come on, you fellows—let's get out of this!"

The dark man bounded to his feet. He had been aggressive to begin with—now he was in a towering rage. He did not go after the stick that had disappeared over the hedge—he came at the three juniors with enraged face and clenched powerful fists.

"Look out!" gasped Manners.

The three stood up to the charge. Monty Lowther went spinning under a terrific jolt on the chest. But the dark man had time for only one punch—the next moment Tom Merry and Manners had him in their grasp and were rolling him over.

Lowther staggered up, panting. He rushed into the fray, getting a grip on the struggling, yelling man, and helping to roll him. The ditch on one side of the lane was dry in the summer heat, and into that ditch the dark man was rolled headlong, to get shut of him.

There was no water in the ditch, but there were stinging nettles in abundance.

Frantic yells from the dark man announced that he had found the stinging nettles, and found them uncomfortable.

"Come on!" said Tom breathlessly.

The three Shell fellows went on towards the school. They did not run—but they walked quickly, anxious to have no more of that stinky with the disgruntled foreigner.

Perhaps the stinging nettles gave the dark man as much as he wanted to think about. At all events, he did not follow them farther—and they walked in at the gates of St. Jim's, glad to have done with him.

DRASTIC MEASURES!

"NOW, you ass—"

"Now, you fathead—"

"Now, you chump—"

Blake, Herries, and Digby of the St. Jim's Fourth all addressed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy together.

They were worried about Gussy. Likewise, they were fed-up. They had found Arthur Augustus in the study, reading over, for the umpteenth time, that mysterious letter from Brazil, which certainly he ought to have known by heart by that time.

—This sort of thing had gone on for days. Study No. 6 had decided that it had gone on long enough.

There were plenty of other things to think about as well as that letter post-marked Rio de Janeiro. Break-up for the summer holidays was at

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hand, and Study No. 6 had not yet settled what they were going to do with the holidays. There were Figgins & Co. of the New House to be kyboshed before they left for the vacation. It was time for Gussy to tell his pals what the trouble was, and let them clear it up for him.

"Now, look here, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "Cough it up! Read that letter out to the study, and we'll explain anything you don't understand."

Arthur Augustus shook his head. "I'd wathah not, in the circus, Blake," he answered. "It is so vewy odd, and so vewy upsettin', that I think I had better keep it to myself."

"Are you going to stop mooning over it?"

"I was not aware that I was moonin' ovah it!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "It is wathah upsettin' and distwessin'."

"You've had a face as long as a fiddle for days!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Have you put it to your pater?" asked Dig.

"I don't want to wovwy the patah with it. It would wovwy the patah no end to get the ideah into his head that old Conway had gone cwacked."

"So you think your big brother has gone off his chump?"

"I would wathah not say, Dig."

"Does it run in the family?" asked Herries.

"Pway don't be an ass, Hewwies."

"It doesn't!" declared Blake. "Gussy's minor, young Wally, is a sensible kid. His brother Conway has his head scrowed on the right way! Only Gussy is batchy in the whole family."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hand it out, Gussy! That letter practically belongs to the whole study—so whack it out, same as if it were a tip!"

"Wats!"

Jack Blake went to a corner of the study where a cricket stump stood. He picked up the stump.

Arthur Augustus eyed him warily. Herries and Dig nodded hearty approval. Stumping, in their opinion, might meet the case.

"I twust, Blake, that you are not goin' to play the goat!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Like to hand that letter round?" asked Blake.

"No!"

"All right! I'm going to puncture you with this stump till you do. Say when!" said Blake, lunging.

Arthur Augustus jumped back just in time to save his beautiful waistcoat.

"You uttah ass!" he roared.

Blake followed him up.

"Keep that stump away, you fwightful ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. With the letter clutched in his hand, he backed towards the window. The business-end of the stump followed him.

"Go it!" grinned Herries.

"Carry on!" chuckled Dig.

"Will you keep off!" howled Arthur Augustus. With his back to the open window, Gussy could retreat no farther—unless he went through, and dropped into the quad, which was not an attractive prospect.

"Not at all," answered Blake affably. "We're fed-up, old bean! You're going to confide the trouble to your pals. We can't have you mooning over that blinking letter all through the hols. Stop that one!"

He lunged.

It was rather a gentle lunge. Jack Blake did not really want to puncture his aristocratic pal. But it made Gussy gasp.

"Ooogh!"
"He, he!" came a cackle from the doorway, and Blake & Co. glared round at the grinning face of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

Baggy seemed amused by the scene in Study No. 5.

"I say, what are you fellows rowing about?" asked Trimble. "You're a jolly quarrelsome lot in this study."

Blake gave him a glare.
"Who's rowing?" he roared.
"Aren't you?" grinned Baggy.

Really, a disinterested spectator might have fancied that a row was going on in that study. Blake & Co. did not seem to regard it in that light, however. It was not a row. They were displaying a friendly and pally concern for Gussy, that was all! Gussy was being lunged with a cricket stump entirely for his own good.

"Squash that fat beetle, some of you!" growled Blake. "Now then, Gussy, have another, or—"

"If you put that stump neah me again, Blake, I shall punch your cheeky head!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to show you this lettah! I wefuse to allow anyone to see this lettah! I'm keepin' it stwictly dark, and I wepeat— Yawwooh!"

The stump lunged again.
"He, he!" echinnated Baggy. "He, he!"
"Will you fellows squash that beetle?" roared Blake.

Thus adjured, Herries and Digby gave their attention to the intrusive Baggy. They jumped at him together.

Baggy turned to flee. Two boots reached him as he fled! Baggy's fat giggle changed into a loud yell.

He disappeared towards the study landing at great speed. Herries and Dig came back into the study. Blake was giving Arthur Augustus his third dig! Gussy was spluttering.

"Say when!" said Blake. "I'll keep this up exactly as long as you like, Gussy! I'm not tired, if you're not."

"Stoppit!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.
"Have another?"

"Certainly not! You are a weckless young wuffian, Blake! You are wuinin' my waistcoat! I shall stwike you if you don't stoppit!"
Blake lunged again.

Arthur Augustus staggered back and tottered against the window. He threw out both hands to save a fall, and from one hand the letter flew.

It flew out of the open window and floated away on the summer breeze.

Arthur Augustus uttered a howl of consternation.

"My lettah—"
"Well, you howling ass!" gasped Blake.
"What have you chucked your letter out of the window for?"

"It dwopped from my hand, you uttah ass! It was all your fault!" howled Arthur Augustus.
"Stop playin' the goat—I must wecovah that lettah at once! Some fellow might pick it up and wead it, and then it would get wound—that old Couway has gone ewacked!"

Arthur Augustus rushed to the study doorway. Blake dropped the stump.

"Jever see such a born idiot?" he appealed to Herries and Dig.

"Never!" said Herries.

"Hardly ever!" said Dig.
"May as well get tea," said Blake. "We'll tackle Gussy again when he comes in. If he doesn't to the line, we'll pour some tea down his neck! That may work the oracle."

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Herries and Dig.

And the three proceeded to prepare tea in the study—expecting Arthur Augustus back in a few minutes with the letter. There was little wind that hot July afternoon, and they had no doubt that Gussy would find the letter lying where it had dropped, under the study window.

No doubt Gussy would have done so; but as he reached the foot of the staircase, Kildare of the Sixth called to him.

"D'Arcy!"
"Yaas, Kildare!" Arthur Augustus looked round. "Pway excuse me, I am in wathah a hawwy—"

"Housemaster's study!" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Does Mr. Wailton want me?"

"I suppose he does, as he's asked me to send you to him," answered the Sixth Former, staring. "I am wathah pweessed for time, Kildare. Would you mind tellin' Mr. Wailton that I will come as soon as I can?"

"Eh? What? Yes, I should, rather!" gasped Kildare. "Instead of that, I'll smack your head if you don't out off this instant."

"Weally, Kildare—"
Smack!

"Bai Jove!"
Arthur Augustus decided that he had better go to see what his Housemaster wanted before he looked for the lost letter. And he went.

THE LOST LETTER!

"OH!" ejaculated Tom Merry.
"What—" asked Manners.
"Look!"

The Terrible Three were strolling in the quad. Monty Lowther, every now and then, gave a little wriggle. It was more than an hour since he had had those swipes from the dark gentleman's stick in Rylcombe Lane, but the effect was far from worn off yet.

Tom Merry gave a nod towards a big open window on the ground floor of the School House. A man stood there, looking out into the sunny quadrangle.

That room was the visitors' room. And the man was the dark man with whom the Shell fellows had had that shindy in the lane!

"That rotter!" growled Monty Lowther.
"Oh gum!" said Manners. "I never imagined that he was coming to the school. What the dickens does he want here?"

"Can't be a jolly old parent or relation," said Tom, puzzled. "Nobody at St. Jim's from Brazil that I've ever heard of."

"Must have come to see one of the fellows, as he's waiting in that room," said Manners. "Better not catch his eye; we don't want another row here."

But it was too late to avoid catching the eye of the man from Brazil. The eye was already on them, and the dark scowl that came over the dusky face showed that the man recognised the three at once. The black, glinting eyes glittered at them from the window.

"Come on!" said Tom hastily.
Monty Lowther groped in his pocket.

"I've got an apple here," he said. "I could get him a treat—right in the middle of that ugly mug!"

"You howling ass, do you want to be up before Railton for buzzing an apple at a visitor to the school?" exclaimed Tom, in alarm. "Chuck it!"

"He's a rotten brute and a ruffian and I'm going to get him."

"You're jolly well not!" said Tom Merry and Manners together. And they grasped Monty Lowther by either arm and fairly dragged him away from the spot. The dark man at the window scowled after them as they went.

Evidently he was waiting in that room to see some St. Jim's fellow, though whom the Shell fellows had not the faintest idea.

Monty Lowther's pals walked him off to a safe distance. It was true that the dark man had acted like a ruffian in that shindy in the lane. But another row within the walls of St. Jim's was not to be thought of. Monty had to abandon the idea of "getting" him with that apple.

"What the thump is going on here?" asked Manners, as the Shell fellows, having marched Monty across the quad, came on a group of juniors under one of the old elms.

Baggy Trimble was the centre of that group.

Mellish of the Fourth and Racke, Crooke, and Clampe of the Shell stood round him. Baggy had a letter in his hand, which he was reading out and which seemed to surprise and interest his friends. He gave the Terrible Three a fat grin as they came up.

"Here, you listen to this, you fellows!" he called out. "See if you can make it out. Blessed if I can make head or tail of it."

"Carry on!" said Tom Merry. He was not interested in Baggy Trimble or in his correspondence, but if Baggy wanted him to hear he was willing to hear.

Baggy read it out:

"Do you remember a trick I showed you last Christmas? I hope you do. Keep this letter."

"Well?" said Tom, mystified.

"Well, that's all," said Baggy. "See any sense in it?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Racke.

"Can't say I see much!" said Tom, puzzled. "But I suppose you know what your own letters are about, Trimble."

"He, he! This isn't my letter!" explained Baggy cheerfully. "It's D'Arcy's."

"What?" roared Tom.

"He dropped it out of his study window and I picked it up," explained Baggy Trimble. "It's the letter he had nearly a week ago with a Brazil postmark, you know, that he keeps in his pocket and keeps on taking out to read. Lots of fellows wondered what it could be about; his pals have been having a row with him about it."

"You fat scoundrel!" roared Tom. "Have you been reading another fellow's letter?"

"Eh? Well, if D'Arcy doesn't want a letter to be seen he shouldn't drop it about the quad," said Baggy. "I picked it up for him, I say, isn't it jolly weird for a man to write piffle like that all the way from South America?"

Baggy evidently saw no objection to reading a letter when he picked it up. On that subject Tom Merry's views were quite different from Baggy's.

He realised that this must be the letter from

Brazil that he had found Arthur Augustus looking so astonished and worried over in his study a few days ago.

Certainly it was an astonishing sort of letter for a fellow to receive from a traveller in South America.

Indeed, if that was all that there was in it, it was no wonder that Arthur Augustus suspected that his elder brother had had a touch of the sun!

"You—you—you—" gasped Tom. "Give me that letter at once!"

"Eh? You can read it if you like," said Baggy. "I've read it out, though; there's nothing else in it except 'Dear Arthur' at the beginning and 'Conway' at the end. I'm not going to give it to you. Other fellows would like to see it as well as you, Tom Merry."

"You dishonourable toad!" roared Tom. "Nobody's going to see it; I'm going to give it back to D'Arcy. Hand it over at once!"

"Look here, you know—Yarrah!" spluttered Baggy, as Tom Merry grasped his collar and banged his head on the trunk of the elm. "Oh crikey! Ow! Leggo! You can have the letter! Wow!"

Tom Merry grabbed the letter from his fat paw and thrust it into his pocket without looking at it.

"Give him another bang!" said Manners.

"Give him a dozen!" said Lowther.

"Oh crikey! Oh jiminy!" roared Trimble. "I say—Ow! Wow, wow! Leggo my neck—Ow! Oh, my napper! Oh, my nut! Ow!"

"I don't think you ought to bully Trimble, Tom Merry," said Racke.

Tom Merry turned on Aubrey Racke.

"You worm!" he hooted. "What do you mean by standing round and listening to that fat toad reading out another fellow's letter?"

"You heard it, too!" sneered Crooke.

"I didn't know—and you did! You're a pair of rotters," exclaimed Tom, "and if you say another word I'll give you the same as Trimble."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" grunted Racke.

"That's five words," said Monty Lowther.

"Carry on, Tom!"

Tom Merry carried on. He grasped Racke and Crooke together, one in either hand. Racke and Crooke struggled—but that did not prevent their heads from coming together with a resounding crack!

"Oh!" roared Racke.

"Ow!" yelled Crooke.

Tom Merry walked away, the letter in his pocket, followed by Manners and Lowther. Racke and Crooke were left rubbing their heads, Mellish and Clampe grinning, and Baggy wailing dolorously.

"Seen D'Arcy?" asked Tom, as he met Talbot of the Shell at the doorway of the School House.

"He's with Railton, I think," answered Talbot.

"Oh, blow!" said Tom.

The Terrible Three went up to their study to tea. That letter remained in Tom's pocket, to be handed over to Arthur Augustus as soon as he saw him.

TWO OF THEM!

M R. RAILTON laid down his pen as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived in his study.

"You sent for me, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, D'Arcy! A man who gives the name of Rabeira—a Brazilian—has called here and desires



Racke and Crooke struggled—but that did not prevent Tom Merry bringing their heads together with a resounding crack!

to see you," said the Housemaster. "Is that name known to you, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir," answered Arthur Augustus, in wonder. "I have nevah heard it befoah."

"Is it a fact that your elder brother is now travelling in Brazil?"

"Yaas, sir."

"I do not wholly like the man's looks," said Mr. Railton. "But he states that he has news of your brother, Lord Conway, in Brazil. It seems a little odd that a man should have been sent all the way from South America with news that might have been written in a letter."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. He was lost in wonder. "But I shall be vevy glad to heah news of old Conway, sir."

"No doubt," said the Housemaster. He rose from his chair. "I will take you to him, D'Arcy. He is now waiting in the visitors' room."

"Vevy well, sir."

Arthur Augustus walked along with his Housemaster to the visitors' room. Mr. Railton opened the door, and Gussy followed him in.

A man who was standing at the window, staring out with a scowling face, turned as they entered. The scowl vanished from his dark face

as he turned. His big shady hat lay on a chair, and his thick, oily black hair gleamed in the sunshine.

Arthur Augustus gazed at him rather blankly as he ducked his head with rather awkward politeness, showing a fine set of white teeth in a grin that was doubtless intended for a polite smile.

He did not wonder that his Housemaster had not wholly liked the looks of Senhor Rabeira. Arthur Augustus did not like his looks, either.

"Sim, sim, O irmaozinho!" exclaimed the dark man, looking keenly at Arthur Augustus as if he knew him, though Gussy was quite certain that he had never seen him before.

"Bai Jove! The chap seems to know me, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"That is scarcely possible," said Mr. Railton. "Senhor Rabeira, this is Master D'Arcy."

"Sim, sim! Yes, yes! He is like," explained Rabeira. "He is the irmaozinho—the little brother."

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He realised that "irmaozinho" was a Portuguese word signifying the "little brother." It

was by his likeness to his elder brother that the Brazilian knew him.

That was satisfactory evidence that Rabeira had seen Lord Conway in Brazil.

"Sim, sim, yes, I know," said the dark man. "Bons dias, little senhor! If you wish, I tell you of the brother in my country. I travel with that noble senhor on the Araguaya."

"Yaas, I remember that was the name of the wivah in Bwazil that old Conway was goin' to explore," said Arthur Augustus. "He was goin' up the Awaguaya with canoes and Indians and things, the last we heard at home."

"Sim, sim!" agreed the Brazilian.

He sat down, and Mr. Railton, after a rather keen look at him, left D'Arcy in the visitors' room with him, and went back to his study.

Arthur Augustus was neither suspicious nor very observant, but he observed that the dark man from Brazil seemed relieved when the Housemaster went.

"You have news of my bwothah?" asked Arthur Augustus. "It is a vewy long time since we heard news fwom him."

The dark man leaned forward, his keen, glinting black eyes searchingly on the schoolboy's face.

"You have no letter?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, I had a lettah last week, but there was no news in it," explained Arthur Augustus. The black eyes glittered.

"You have a letter, and there is no news!" exclaimed Rabeira. "Perhaps, in your kindness, you let me see the letter from that noble senhor."

"Weally, I see no reason why you should see my bwothah's lettah," answered Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "As a mattah of fact, I could not show it to you, as I have lost it, and have not found it yet."

The Brazilian sat upright.

"Ah! He is lost!" he exclaimed. "That is to be sorry—sim, sim! Perhaps, little senhor, it was a letter like this letter that I show."

He drew from an inner pocket a leather case, opened it, and took out a letter. He held it up for Arthur Augustus to see, but out of reach, really as if he feared that the schoolboy might snatch it.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in utter amazement. His eye almost popped through his eyeglass at that letter. It ran:

"Dear Arthur,—Do you remember a trick I showed you last Christmas? I hope you do. Keep this letter.

"Your brother,

"CONWAY."

It was a facsimile—word for word with the letter Arthur Augustus had dropped out of the window of Study No. 6.

It was not the same letter. Gussy's letter was in the quad—this letter the Brazilian had in his pocket. It was written in Lord Conway's hand, which D'Arcy knew as well as his own. There was no doubt about that.

But what this could possibly mean was a bewildering mystery to the swell of St. Jim's.

The letter, in the first place, seemed to have no sense or meaning. But even that was not so surprising as the fact that Lord Conway, in far-off Brazil, had written two letters, word for word the same, one of which had been put in the post at Rio, the other of which was in the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

pocket of this dark, black-browed man from South America.

Why he should have written one of the letters was a mystery. Why he should have written both was a staggering mystery.

"Tudo o mesmo?" asked the Brazilian. "It is all the same?"

"Yaas!" gasped the astounded D'Arcy. "That lettah is word for word the same. I weally fail to undahstand this."

"And you lose that letter?" grinned the Brazilian. "Bom! Even if you do not lose him, what do you think?"

"I thought it a vewy odd lettah for my bwothah to write fwom Bwazil," said Arthur Augustus. "But pway give me that lettah, Mr. Wabeiwah! It was written to me, and I don't undahstand how it came into your hands. Did my bwothah give it to you to bring to me?"

"Nao, nao!"

Rabeira replaced the letter in the leather case, and restored the case to his pocket.

Apparently he did not intend to part with the letter. All he had wanted to do was to ascertain whether it was the same as the letter D'Arcy had received by post. Why, was simply a puzzle. Neither letter, so far as Arthur Augustus could see, could be of the slightest consequence.

"Weally, my deah sir, I must insist upon your givin' me that lettah, as it was written by my bwothah, and addressed to me!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

Rabeira shook his head.

"What is a value?" he asked. "It is nothing; nao, nao!" He rose from his chair, his white teeth gleaming as he grinned from one dark ear to the other. "Muito obrigado, little senhor—much to oblige."

Arthur Augustus fairly blinked as the Brazilian picked up his big hat and walked to the door.

Apparently he was done with D'Arcy now.

He had not come with news from Lord Conway, in Brazil. That was his excuse for the interview. For some utterly inexplicable reason, he had wanted to know whether D'Arcy had received a letter similar to the one he carried in his pocket. He had wanted to see that letter, but was evidently satisfied to hear that it had been lost. Now he was going, grinning all over his dark face, as if his visit to the school had been an absolutely complete success.

Arthur Augustus had already wondered whether his brother Conway had gone cracked. Now he wondered whether this man from Brazil was cracked, also. Really his actions seemed hardly sane. Possibly both of them had had a "touch of the sun" on the Rio Araguaya in the back-lands of Brazil.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, jumping up.

"It is to finish, little senhor. Did you not say that a letter is lost?" grinned Rabeira. "Then it is no matter."

He put his hand to the door-handle.

"Nevah mind the lettah I have lost," exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That lettah in your pocket belongs to me. It is of no value, but it was written to me by my bwothah, and I insist upon your handin' it ovah!"

The Brazilian laughed, and opened the door.

Arthur Augustus grabbed him by the arm. He gave him so powerful a tug that Rabeira spun round. Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed anger and indignation at him.

"Give me that lettah at once!" he exclaimed.

The Brazilian did not answer. The grinning good humour vanished from his face as if wiped off by a duster. The glare of ferocity that came into the dark face startled Arthur Augustus.

But he kept his grip on the man's arm for a moment. Then a heavy fist struck him on the chest, and he went spinning across the room.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. He crashed on the floor. Rabeira gave him a glare, and hurried out of the room. Arthur Augustus remained on the floor, knocked out by that terrific jolt.

He sat up at last, gasping for breath. "Oh cwombs!" he gasped. "Oh cwikey, what a feahful wuffian! Oh, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus tottered to his feet, still gasping and panting.

He tottered out of the room, and to the doorway of the House. Talbot of the Shell was standing there, talking to Levison.

"Has that wottah passed you, deah boys?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Who?" asked Talbot. "A foweign beast, with a black face and a big hat—"

"Oh, yes! He passed us a few minutes ago. What—"

Arthur Augustus hurried out into the quad, leaving Talbot and Levison staring.

But the Brazilian was gone. Arthur Augustus, still in a rather breathless state, went to look for the lost letter under the window of Study No. 6. As that letter was reposing in the pocket of Tom Merry, in Study No. 10 in the Shell, Gussy did not find it.

SOME PROBLEM!

"YOU uttah ass!"
 "My dear chap—"
 "You fwightful chump—"
 "Did any fellow here ask Gussy to chuck that letter out of the study window?" demanded Blake. "If he does these things—"

"You howlin' ass—"
 Three Shell fellows grinned as they looked into Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. There were sounds of excited altercation in that celebrated study.

Blake and Herries and Dig were finishing tea. Arthur Augustus, heedless of tea, was telling Jack Blake what he thought of him—with emphasis.

"Anything up, you men?" asked Tom Merry.

"No—down!" answered Blake. "Gussy chucked a letter down from the window—"

"I did not chuck the lettah down!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, in almost frenzied tones. "It dwopped from my hand when you were lungin' at me with that beastly stump, and it fell from the window—"

"Lost a letter?" asked Monty Lowther. "Yaas—that lettah from Bwazil—"

"What does it matter—you know it by heart by this time, the number of times we've seen you reading it!" said Herries.

"It mattahs a lot, Hewwies! My bwothah Conway specially asked me to keep it—I don't know why, but I am bound to respect his wishes."

"Your own fault!" said Blake. "You shouldn't keep secrets from your old pals. You've been worrying this study for days on end with that fathheaded letter. I was going to

stick you with that stump till you read it out to the whole study—a fellow couldn't do more! Then you chuck it away—"

"I did not chuck it away!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I wepent—"

"Anyhow, it's not far away, old bean," said Tom Merry, slipping his hand into his jacket pocket. "But I'm afraid you can't keep it a secret much longer. You see, Trimble picked it up—"

"Oh cwombs! Twimble is cad enough to wead it if he picked it up!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It will be all ovah the House! Bai Jove! I must get it away from Twimble at once."

Arthur Augustus rushed to the door. "Hold on!" exclaimed Tom, catching at his arm.

"Pway do not stop me, deah boy—the soonah I get that lettah away from Twimble the bettah—"

"But—"
 "Wats!"

Arthur Augustus shook off Tom's detaining hand and rushed out of the study.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Tom. "Gussy! Stop, you howling ass! I've got the letter here." "Oh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy revolved on his axis, and came back to the study. Tom Merry took the letter from his pocket and handed it over.

"You see, I bagged it from Trimble," he explained. "But as the fat chump was reading it out to half a dozen fellows, there isn't much of a secret about it now! Sorry we heard it, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!"
 Jack Blake pointed to Arthur Augustus with his teaspoon, with an expression on his face more of sorrow than of anger.

"That's how Gussy treats his pals!" he said. "He keeps things dark from them, and then confides the whole bag of tricks to Trimble! If we want news of old Conway in Brazil, we had better ask Baggy."

"Pway don't be a howlin' ass, Blake! It is wathah wotten for the thing to become public pproperty like this!" said Arthur Augustus. "I will give that fat boundah Twimble a feahful thwashin'. But that won't set it wight! Did you fellows heah it when Twimble wead it out?"

"Couldn't help it," answered Tom. "We thought, of course, that the fat ass was reading out a letter of his own—till he told us it was yours! I banged his head on a tree—if that's any comfort."

"Now half the House knows what's in the letter, are you going to tell your pals?" asked Blake sarcastically.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath. "You heard what was in this lettah, Tom Mewwy?" he asked.

"Sorry, yes—every word."
 "Could you make head or tail of it?"

"Well, it sounded rather weird!" confessed Tom. "But perhaps if your pals looked over it together, they might make out what it means."

Arthur Augustus laid the letter on the table.

"Wead it, deah boys!" he said. "It would have been bettah to keep it dark—as it weally looks as if old Conway has gone cwacked. How-ewah, I shall be glad to have your opinion."

"Sure you've made up your mind about it?" asked Blake. "I don't mind handling the stump again!"

"Pway don't be an ass! Wead the lettah."

"Oh, all right!"

Blake and Herries and Dig read the letter together. Three faces registered blank and utter amazement.

The three had had no doubt that Gussy had misunderstood that letter from his brother in Brazil, and was making a mountain out of a molehill. But now that they read it themselves, they had to admit that it was rather a remarkable letter for a traveller in a far country to dispatch over thousands of miles of sea and land.

They read the letter. They stared at it. They blinked at it. They fairly goggled at it.

The Terrible Three, who already knew what was in it, thanks to Baggy Trimble, were as perplexed as Study No. 6.

"This—this letter came from Brazil?" stammered Blake.

"Yaas!"

"What on earth did old Conway write from Brazil for to ask you about a Christmas game?" gasped Herries.

"I give that one up, Hewwies."

"And why does he want you to keep the letter?" exclaimed Dig. "What's the good of it?"

"I weally do not know, Dig!"

Six fellows looked at that letter—now free for inspection.

On the whole, they rather admitted that Gussy had reason for keeping it to himself—now that they knew what was in it. For, if Lord Conway had not had a touch of the tropic sun in Brazil, it was quite difficult to guess what he could possibly have meant by that amazing letter.

"There's no address on it!" said Manners. "You can't answer it."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"He asks you a question in it," said Lowther.

"But if you remembered the thing he mentions, you can't tell him so, as you can't answer the letter. And what can it possibly matter, anyhow?"

"I have no idea!"

"Well, it takes the cake!" said Tom Merry. "Was there anything special about your Christmas games last year?"

"Not that I wemembah, deah boy! I wemembah old Conway showed me some conjuniv' twicks, that's all—nothin' special that I know of."

"Well, this beats the band!" said Blake.

"It does—it do!" agreed Lowther.

"But—now that you know all about it—I had better tell you the west," said Arthur Augustus. "It is feahfully mystewious. A man called to see me—a black-faced boundah named Wabeiwah—"

"That sportsman in the visitors' room!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas! Well, he showed me a letter w'ritten by old Conway, word for word the same as this! Old Conway must have w'ritten two lettahs—just the same—one weached me by post, and that Bwazilian chap got hold of the othah somehow. What do you fellows think of that?"

Tom Merry & Co. did not tell Arthur Augustus what they thought of that. They fairly gaped at him.

"It is weally vevy wemarkable!" went on Arthur Augustus, and he related what had happened in the visitors' room—his friends listening in utter astonishment.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

"This beats Banagher!" said Jack Blake. "I can't make out how the Brazil nut comes into the picture at all—but—what on earth can have made Lord Conway play the goat like that?"

Not a fellow could begin to make head or tail of it. Every head in the study was shaken. Lord Conway, perhaps, had had some reason for writing those two remarkable letters from the wilds of Brazil. But if he had, nobody in Study No. 6 could guess what the reason was.

Arthur Augustus folded the letter and placed it carefully in his wallet. He could no more understand why his brother wanted him to keep it than why his brother had written it at all. Nevertheless, he was going to keep it with the greatest care, as Lord Conway had asked him to do so.

"I feah," said Arthur Augustus, "as he put the wallet into his pocket, 'that this can only mean a touch of the sun—that poor old Conway has gone a little ewacked!'"

And the other fellows were silent. If that letter did not mean that Lord Conway, far away in Brazil, had gone off his chump, not a fellow in Study No. 6 could guess what it did mean.

GUSSY'S BIG IDEA!

"TAKING your camera?"

"Don't be an ass!"

Monty Lowther asked the question. Harry Manners made the answer. That answer, apparently, implied an affirmative. Manners' camera was, as Monty had remarked, like Mary's little lamb—everywhere that Manners went, that camera was sure to go.

"But wasn't it going to be a holiday?" asked Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Shut up, Monty!" he said. "Hallo, Gussy! Trickle in, old bean!"

It was the day before breaking up at St. Jim's. The Terrible Three were sorting out things in Study No. 10 to pack. The study was in a rather dismantled state when Arthur Augustus' eyeglass gleamed in at the door.

"You fellows feahfully busy?" asked Arthur Augustus, as he trickled in. "Bai Jove! What am I t'wandin' on?"

"Only some of Manners' films!" answered Lowther.

There was a roar from Manners.

"What silly ass knocked those films off the table? D'Arcy, you thundering idiot, take your hoof off my films!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Will you take your hoof off those films?"

"Yaas, certainly, but I weally wish you wouldn't wonch at a chap, Mannahs. It thwows a fellow into a fluttah. Weally, I— Yawwoh!"

Arthur Augustus did not seem to think of taking his foot off the films while he was making his remarks. But a shove on his noble chest caused him to remove that foot, and he tottered backwards across the study, caught his knees on the armchair, and sat down suddenly and hard.

"Ow! Ow ewikey!" roared Arthur Augustus. He had sat on something harder than the seat of an armchair. "You uttah ass, Mannahs! I have sat down on somethin'—there is somethin' in this beastly chair—"

"Only Manners' camera!" said Lowther.

Another roar from Manners!

"Weally, Mannahs, it is twighfully careless to stick a camewah into an armchair for a fellow to sit on!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Bai Jove! What is the mattah now, Mannahs?"

Manners did not explain what the matter was. He grasped Arthur Augustus by the shoulders and whirled him out of the armchair. Manners, it seemed, did not want his camera sat upon.

Arthur Augustus staggered across the study and collided with the table. He clutched at the table for support, and it rocked. An inkpot flew over, and a stream of ink shot over a heap of papers.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You wuff ass, Mannahs! Bai Jove! Look at that ink! I twust those papahs are not of any value, deah boys."

"None at all!" said Manners. "Only Lowther's holiday number of the 'St. Jim's News.'"

"You blithering owl!" roared Monty Lowther. He clutched at his precious manuscripts and shook ink from them. "You clumsy chump—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"
"You dangerous maniac—"
"Order!" said Tom Merry. "Sit on the table, Gussy! Shut up, Manners—shut up, Lowther!"

Manners collected films and camera, grunting. Monty Lowther dabbed manuscripts with blotting-paper, snorting. It was left to Tom Merry to uphold the reputation of that study for hospitality and good manners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat on the table. All the chairs were occupied with heaps of books or other articles in the process of sorting and packing. He turned his eyeglass severely on Manners, and then on Monty Lowther.

"I am sowwy if I have damaged your camewah, Mannahs!" he said, with dignity.

"Fathead!"
"I suppose you can write all that stuff out ova again, Lowthah?"

"Idiot!"
"Weally, you fellows—"
"Fixed up for the hols, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I came heah to speak about the hols," explained Arthur Augustus. "Have you fellows made your awrangements?"

"Oh, yes! We've fixed up a cruise," said Tom. "Our respected elders are going to sturap up the cash for the tickets—a cruise on the briny—"

"Bai Jove! That sounds all wight!"
"Right as rain!" said Tom.

"I suppose you would not like to chuck it up, deah boys, and make some othah awrangements?" asked Arthur Augustus. "Um! Not quite!" said Tom. "Why?"

"I am takin' Blake and Hewwies and Dig on a twip!" explained Arthur Augustus. "That ass, Blake, makes out: that he is takin' me—but that's all wubbish, of course. I shall be in charge of the partay, and if you fellows decided to come, you could wely on me to look aftah you, and see that you did not land in twouble, and all that."

Tom Merry chuckled.
"Three chaps will be enough for you to look after, Gussy!" he said. "You'll have your hands full with Blake and Herries and Dig."

"Yaas, pewwaps so!" admitted Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Still, we were all togethah at Eastah, you know, and I had the whole lot to look aftah, and I managed all wight! What are you gwinnin' at, Tom Mewwy?"

"Oh, nothing! Have a good time, and mind you look after Blake and Herries and Dig!"
"Yaas, wathah!" asserted Arthur Augustus innocently. "I shall be vewy careful about that,

of course. I have fixed it up with the patah, you know, and he is standin' the tickets—and I have to let him know how many to take. I thought I would ask you fellows—I should weally like you to come. But if you've fixed up a cruise—"

"That's it!"
"All wight, then!" Arthur Augustus slipped from the table and navigated his way among scattered articles towards the door. "If you won't change your minds—"

"Why not change yours, and come on the cruise?" asked Tom Merry.

"I should be vewy glad to do so, deah boy, but in the cires, you see, it is imposs!" explained Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah wowwied about old Conway."

"Conway?" repeated Tom blankly.
The Terrible Three stared at Arthur Augustus. They were quite aware that Arthur Augustus was worried about his brother in Brazil, since he had received that inexplicable letter from him. But they could not quite see the connection between his worry on the subject of Lord Conway and the school holidays.

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, I have not told the patah I am wowwied about him—no need to wowwy the patah, too," said Arthur Augustus. "But the fact is, I am vewy uneasy about the old chap! I am jolly well goin' to see whethah anythin's the mattah."

"Eh?"
"What?"
"How?"
The chums of the Shell ejaculated together.

"It's two or three months since he w'ote home from the Plantahs' Hotel at Wio!" said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, if he has gone up or down the Awaguaya with canoes and Indians and things, there may be difficulty in w'tin'. Still, I got that lettah from him, though I cannot make head or tail of it. I am jolly well goin' to see whethah old Conway is all wight."

"How?" howled Tom Merry.
"By goin' to see, old chap! That's the only way. I'm feahfully sowwy you fellows can't come—I should have thought you'd have liked a twip to Bwazil—"

"Brazil!" yelled the Terrible Three.
"Yaas! Blue Line steamah to Wio da Janeiro, you know—"
"You're going to Brazil for the hols!" gasped Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! I am takin' Blake and Hewwies and Dig, and it would be a weal pleasnah to take you chaps also, if you could only come. I should wathah have thought you would like the ideah—"

"You howling ass!"
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
"Why didn't you say you were going to Brazil?" roared Tom.

"Eh? Didn't I mention that?" asked Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps I didn't! It's wathah a long twip—about a fortnight out, and, of course, the same back—but we should have time to see somethin' of the country; and I suppose you fellows are not afraid of alligators, and Indians, and bolas and things! I am weally sowwy you can't come—"

Tom Merry laughed.
"You can cut out the sorrow and turn on joy," he said. "We're coming!"

"We are!" said Manners.
"We is!" said Lowther.
"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus' face beamed.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

"If you fellows weally don't mind cuttin' out that cwaise—"

"You howling ass, we'd cut out a dozen cruises for a trip to Brazil! You might have guessed that one, even with a brain like yours."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"By gum! I shall be able to take some ripping snaps in Brazil!" said Manners, his eyes glistening. "I shall get a snap at an alligator."

"Mind the alligator doesn't get a snap at you!" remarked Lowther.

"Rolling down to Rio!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy, old man, you're a prize packet! You're the goods! You're it!"

"I'm feahfully glad you will be able to come, deah boys! I will let the patah know about bookin' the cabins at once," said Arthur Augustus. "The steamah goes next week—fwom Tilbuwy or somewah! In thwee weeks fwom now, deah boys, we shall be in Bwazil—"

"But mind," said Monty Lowther solemnly, "we shall expect you to look after us, Gussy. We shall have to tell our parents and guardians that we are in good hands."

"Wely on that, deah boy!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "I shall take charge of the party and I shall look aftah you fellows as much as I look aftah Blake and Hewwies and Dig!"

"And we shall let you do it—just as much as Blake and Herries and Dig!" promised Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus ambled away down the passage, beaming with satisfaction. He left great satisfaction behind him in Study No. 10. A trip to Brazil was "some" trip, and Tom Merry & Co. were going to have the time of their lives.

UNEXPECTED!

"C DECK," said Arthur Augustus.

"Easily!" answered Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused on one of the innumerable staircases of the steamer Blue Star and turned his eyeglass on Lowther in surprise.

"Bai Jove! What do you mean by that, Lowthah?" he inquired.

"The visibility is good," said Monty. "I can see decks to the right of us, decks to the left of us, decks in front of us—"

"You see, I did not say 'see deck'! I said C Deck. I mean that our cabins are on C Deck."

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We're going to C, you fellows," said Monty Lowther.

"Of course we are goin' to sea, Lowthah. We could hardly get to Bwazil without goin' to sea," said Arthur Augustus. "Has it weally only just occurred to you that we are goin' to sea?"

Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. As Monty's loyal chums it was their friendly duty to chuckle when Monty perpetrated a pun. It was their duty and they did!

But Arthur Augustus looked puzzled. Blake and Herries and Dig looked at Monty Lowther in surprise.

"Well, my hat!" said George Herries. "Mean to say you didn't know we were going to sea, Lowther, when we've come here to take this steamer?"

"How should I know we were going to C till Gussy said so?" asked Lowther. "We might have been going to A, B, or D, or anywhere else along

the alphabet. This afternoon I expect we shall be going to T."

"Oh cwikey! Is that one of your wotten puns, Lowthah?"

"But are we really going to take this steamer, Gussy?" asked Lowther, as the St. Jim's party emerged on C Deck.

"Yaas, wathah! What do you think we have come on it for?"

"Oh, all right! I thought perhaps the steamer was going to take us," explained Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

The Blue Star was a buzzing hive of activity, getting ready for sea. The July sunshine streamed down on the Thames and the decks. Seven faces were as bright as the sunshine.

Lord Eastwood's secretary had conducted the party to London and seen them safely bestowed on board the liner. After that they were in charge of the captain until the arrival at Rio de Janeiro. At Rio they were to be met and conducted ashore, a cable having preceded the party to make the necessary arrangements.

In the meantime, the juniors were on their own, with fifteen days at sea before them. They were going to enjoy every day of the fifteen—at least, that was the programme.

"Cabin No. 6," said Arthur Augustus. "I wemembah the numbah because it is the same as the studey at St. Jim's. That is a four-berth cabin. And Cabin No. 8 is for thwee—that is for you chaps! Cabin No. 7 was already booked when the tickets were taken. Steward! Where's that steward?"

"Here're the cabins!" said Blake. "Never mind the steward! Here're our bags in them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Study No. 6 stopped at Cabin No. 6. The Terrible Three went on to Cabin No. 8—passing, naturally, Cabin No. 7.

The doorway of that cabin was wide open and the scent of a strong cigar floated out, a potent and pungent scent. The passenger in that cabin was not afraid of sea-sickness, judging by the hefty smoke he was putting on just before the steamer pulled out.

As the three Shell fellows passed, a sudden, startled exclamation came from within:

"O qual E possivel?"

That exclamation in the Portuguese tongue rather startled Tom Merry & Co. They glanced in at the cabin doorway.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Oh!" ejaculated Manners and Lowther.

They stared blankly at a dark, almost black face, with glinting black eyes, under an immense hat.

The St. Jim's fellows had rather forgotten the man from Brazil, Rabeira. His visit to the school, and his strange interest in the letter Arthur Augustus had received from Lord Conway, had mystified them—and still more, the fact that he possessed a facsimile of the letter. But mystifying as it was, they had dismissed it from their minds, and certainly they had not expected to see Rabeira again.

And there he was—sitting in Cabin No. 7 on the Blue Star, staring at them from under his big hat, with astonishment in his dark face, astonishment mingled with suspicion and anger.

"Os rapazes!" he exclaimed. "Os rapazes! The boys!"

He started to his feet.

"You!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Rabeira stepped out of the cabin.

"Oh, bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy, as he caught sight of him. "That wottah."

"That what?" asked Blake. "Did you leave your manners in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What the dickens are you calling the man names for?" asked Herries. "Can't you be civil to strangers, Gussy?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Looking for a row?" asked Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Well, what do you mean, imago?" demanded Blake. "Ever seen the chap before?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's that blightah who called at St. Jim's and knocked me ovah in the visitors' room."

"Oh, my hat!"

Blake and Herries and Dig had not seen the Brazilian before. They looked at him now with great curiosity.

Rabeira scanned the St. Jim's party, and his eyes fixed on Arthur Augustus. He came towards the swell of St. Jim's, his manner hostile and threatening.

Arthur Augustus faced him with contemptuous scorn in his aristocratic face. The other fellows promptly gathered round.

That the man was some sort of a desperado in his own country they had no doubt. They could easily imagine him playing the part of a bandit on the forest-clad banks of the Rio Araguaya. His row with the Shell fellows in Rylcombe Lane, and what had happened in the visitors' room at the school, showed that he was little accustomed to keeping his ferocious temper in check.

But if he were hunting for trouble on C Deck of the Blue Star, Tom Merry & Co. were ready to give him all the trouble he wanted and a little over.

"You! You tell me one lie when I speak at a school!" exclaimed Rabeira, his black eyes gleaming at the swell of St. Jim's, his dusky hands clenched.

"Pway do not have the cheek to address me, you wottah!" answered Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you with uttah contempt!"

"It is one lie!" exclaimed Rabeira. "You tell me that a letter is lost! I believe that a letter is lost—I do not think that a foolish schoolboy tell me one lie! But it is false. A letter is not lost!"

"Is that chap potty?" asked Herries, in wonder. "What the dickens does he mean?"

"I am not intewested in what the wascal means!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wefuse to speak a word to him!"

"For what are you here?" exclaimed Rabeira. "This steamer, he go to Rio—on this steamer, you go to Rio, is it not?"

"Why shouldn't we be going to Rio?" asked Tom Merry in wonder. "What has it to do with you, in any case?"

"You go to Rio?" exclaimed Rabeira. "You do not stop at Madeira, at the Canaries, no—you go to Brazil?"

"Yes, certainly."

Rabeira's eyes fixed on Arthur Augustus again. It was plain that he was startled and enraged, and, it seemed, alarmed, by the sight of the St. Jim's party on the liner bound for Brazil. The sight of "os rapazes" on C Deck of the Blue Star had almost made him jump out of his dusky skin.

"You do not lose a letter?" His voice came in a hiss. "You say that you lose a letter, and it is false."

"I wefuse to ansawah you!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to address a single syllable to you, you wascally! You have a lettah that belongs to me, and you are a wascally wottah not to hand it ovah."

"You do not lose a letter!" howled Rabeira. "If you lose a letter why are you on a ship that goes to Brazil?"

The juniors gazed at him in wonder.

They could realise that Rabeira's visit to England, and to the school, had been on account of that mysterious letter, utterly inexplicable as it was to them. It seemed that he had been satisfied by the statement that the letter was lost, and was going back to his own country relieved in his mind on that subject—till he saw the party on C Deck.

It was not much of a coincidence that he was sailing on the same steamer as the juniors. Both parties had booked on the next steamer to sail for Rio de Janeiro. But the encounter on board was a surprise to both parties.

"A lie—a lie!" hissed Rabeira.

Arthur Augustus disdained to reply.

"You silly ass!" said Jack Blake, replying for him. "D'Arcy told you the letter was lost because it was lost when he told you. It was found by another fellow, and he got it back. What the thump does it matter to you?"

The Brazilian stared at him.

It seemed to dawn upon his angry, savage mind that he had not been deceived, for he nodded after a moment or two.

"Entendo!" he said. "I understand! A letter was lost—and it was found—entendo! And because of that letter you go to Brazil?" He came a step nearer to Arthur Augustus, his eyes gleaming at him. "Speak, you—it is because of that letter that you go to Brazil?"

"I wefuse to weply!"

The dark face of Rabeira worked with rage. "Speak, fool! But I know—sim, sim, I know! You read a letter, and you go to Brazil. Sim! Yes! Oh, yes! Now I know that you read and understand a letter! Yes. You shall understand him, yes?"

"Of course I undahstand my bwothah's lettah," answered Arthur Augustus blankly. "What the dooce do you mean?"

"And because of that letter you go to Brazil?"

"Yaas."

The Brazilian clenched his dusky hands. He came another step nearer to the swell of St. Jim's, his manner savage and threatening.

Arthur Augustus did not recede an inch. His eyoglass gleamed scorn at the savage dark face.

Tom Merry & Co. closed round, ready for trouble. It was plain in the bravo's face that he could scarcely restrain his fury, though the cause of it was quite unknown to the schoolboys.

"You go to Brazil!" said Rabeira hoarsely.

"Little senhor, it is dangerous in Brazil. Death lurks on the banks of the Araguaya—death haunts the footsteps of the stranger who treads in the sertao! Listen to me! There is time to go back. You step off a ship, you stay in your own country, and it is well for you!"

"Wats!"

"If you would live, stay in your own country," said Rabeira. "In my country you will not live many days."

"Wubbish!"

"There are many in Brazil who fear Joao Rabeira," said the Brazilian. "There are many

who have ceased to fear him, because there was a knife. Do you understand, little senhor?"

"If you think I am afraid of you, you wotten wuffian, you had better go to sleep and dream again!" answered Arthur Augustus contemptuously. "Now shut up and cleah off. I've had enough of you, bai Jove!"

"Look out!" gasped Blake.

Rabeira was grasping at the swell of St. Jim's, his rage breaking out of all restraint.

Tom Merry & Co. closed round him like one man. They were quite ready to handle the savage, reckless ruffian.

Innumerable hands grasped Joao Rabeira, and he was spun off his feet and pitched headlong along the deck.

He went down on his back with a crash and a yell.

"Bai Jove! What a wotten wildcat!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, staring at the sprawling, panting ruffian. "Does he think he can cawwy on heah as if he was in his slum at Wio?"

"If he does we'll give him something to cure all that," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Have some more, you black-faced monkey?" demanded Jack Blake, glaring at the sprawling bravo. "Lots more, if you want it."

"Boot him along the deck!" exclaimed Herries.

Rabeira staggered to his feet.

His dark face was convulsed with rage. But evidently he realised that he could not carry on on board a British steamer as he was accustomed to do in his native land. A steward was hurrying to the spot, passengers were staring round at him, and it was borne in on his savage mind that he was asking for more trouble than he could handle.

He muttered curses in his own tongue, slouched into Cabin No. 7, and slammed the door shut.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

"Well," said Tom, with a deep breath, "this is a go!"

"Is the man cwacked, do you think?" said Arthur Augustus. "What can it possibly mattah to him whethah we go to Bwazil or not?"

"Goodness knows."

"There's something behind this that we don't get on to," said Manners. "There's more in that letter than meets the eye, Gussy."

"But what, deah boy?"

"I give that one up! But I fancy that black-faced blighter knows, and he thinks you know!"

"Bai Jove! That sounds to me like talkin' in widdles, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows have all wead Conway's lettah; there's nothin' in it, that I can see!"

"Rotten luck to have the brute on the same steamer all the way to Rio!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! But, bai Jove, if he twice any of his wuffianly twicks again we will weport him to the captain and have him turned off at the next stop!"

The Brazilian's door remained shut. Tom Merry & Co. saw no more of him as the Blue Star pulled out of the Thames and started on her long voyage for distant South America.

THE STRENUOUS LIFE!

"IT'S hot!" said Dig.

"Warmish!" agreed Blake.

"Beastly hot!" said Herries.

"What's the odds, so long as you're happy?"

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yawned Tom Merry. "We're taking it rather easy!"

It was hot; there was no doubt about that. The Blue Star was well on her way into the South Atlantic. The steamer had touched at Lisbon and then churned on south by west for Madeira. And in African latitudes the St. Jim's fellows expected it to be hot—and were not disappointed.

There was equally no doubt that they were taking it easy. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reclined in a deck-chair in an attitude that a novelist might have described as one of unaffected grace. There was a cushion behind his noble head—a nice, soft cushion. His elegant legs were stretched out, his elegant feet resting on two other chairs. A beautiful straw hat shaded his face from the sun.

An open book lay on his knees. It was a large book—a very large book. Since he had sat down, after lunch, Arthur Augustus had glanced at it twice! Two glances seemed enough for him.

The book was a Portuguese dictionary. Arthur Augustus, as he was going to Brazil, had decided sagely to pick up some knowledge of the language of the country. He had supplied himself with a dictionary, a grammar, several phrase-books, and other aids to knowledge. Unluckily, all except the dictionary had somehow got packed in trunks labelled "Not required on voyage." So Arthur Augustus had to do the best he could with the dictionary by itself. There was a perfect mine of knowledge in that dictionary, but it was probable that Gussy had not dug very deep, so far.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther sat in a row in deck-chairs. Blake leaned lazily on the rail. Herries and Dig sat on the deck, with their backs to the rail.

Nobody, looking at the party just then, would have guessed what strenuous fellows they really were! They did not look strenuous.

Arthur Augustus sat up a little, adjusted his eyeglass in his noble eye, and surveyed his friends with a rather severe glance.

"Bai Jove! You look a lazy lot!" he remarked. "If Figgins & Co. could see you now, they would say that the School House was a slack House."

Six fellows looked at Arthur Augustus.

They freely admitted that they looked—and were, at the moment, a lazy lot. But as Arthur Augustus looked the laziest of the lot, this remark from the swell of St. Jim's struck the general company as superfluous.

"Buck up!" suggested Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "I weally do not like to see School House men slackin' about like this, even in this hot weathah. It will probably be much hottah in Bwazil, and what will you do then, if you've got into the habit of lyin' around like a lot of tired snails?"

Six looks, fixed on Gussy, became more expressive.

"You burhling chump!" said Jack Blake.

"What are you doing at the present moment?"

"I am studyin' the Portuguese language, Blake!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Somebody will have to speak to the natives when we get to Wio!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twerst I shall have picked up enough to act as interpretah to the partay. You get feahfully swindled in a foweign country if you cannot speak the language."

"How much have you learned already?" asked Monty Lowther, with deep sarcasm.

"I am pickin' it up, Lowthah! I am gettin' quite a list of words swom memowry, and if I can wemembah what they mean, they will come in vewy usefuhl. It is wathah wotten to see you fellows slackin' wound like this, while I am hard at it! Laziness gwows on a fellow!" said Arthur Augustus, with a serious shake of his noble head. "Don't slack woud like Twimble, you know."

"Fathead!" said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Ass!" said Lowther.

"My deah chap—"

"Chump!" yawned Tom Merry.

"I am only speakin' to you fellows for your own good!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "Pway make an effort, and buck up a little. What about a spot of deek tennis, Blake?"

"If you're game, I'm on."

"I mentioned that I was studyin' Portuguese, Blake! I do not want to intewwupt my studies, even for the pleasuah of a weally stvenuous game. You and Hewwies and Dig—"

"Is he wound up?" asked Dig.

"I wogard that as a wude wemark, Dig, when a fellow is speakin' to you for your own good!" said Arthur Augustus with dignity. "Mannahs, deah boy, are you too lazy even to take photographs?"

"What is there to photograph here, fathead?" asked Manners. "Think I want to use up my films on the sky and sea? If I had a movie camera now I could take a picture of a silly ass with his jaw in perpetual motion."

"Wats! Tom Mewwy, what about a wun wound the deek—a little twot to keep you fit?"

"Blitherer!"

"Well, what about a walk, if you are too lazy to wun? Weally, it makes a fellow tired to see you chaps sittin' about doin' nothin', and yawnin' your heads off, like a lot of Baggy Twimbles. I am glad that I have energy enough not to follow your example, at any wate."

And Arthur Augustus rearranged the soft cushion at the back of his noble head, and leaned back on it. The big dictionary slipped from his knees and thumped on the deek. It remained there. The energetic and strenuous Gussy did not exert himself to the extent of picking it up again.

Jack Blake detached himself from the rail. Comparison with Baggy Trimble did not seem to have had a gratifying effect on Blake. Neither did the way Arthur Augustus was studying the Portuguese language seem to strike him as an example of strenuousness.

"A run round the deek isn't a bad idea!" he remarked.

"That's wight, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I am vewy glad to see that my wemahs have fallen on fwuifuhl soil."

"Too jolly hot!" said Dig.

"Not for a really strenuous chap!" said Blake.

"Buck up, Dig, and follow Blake's example, deah boy! You will feel all the bettah for a little stvenuous exhahise!"

"We'll do this deek, and then A Deck, and then B Deck, and all the jolly old decks, one after another!" said Blake. "All over the decks, and up and down the stairs, what?"

"Wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus with hearty approval. "Buck up, Dig! Buck up, Hewwies! Set those Shell slackahs an example."

"Never mind Dig and Harries," said Blake. "You're coming, Gussy! Get out of that chair!"

"I am studyin' Portuguese, deah boy! Othahwise—"

"A change will do you good!" said Blake. "You can't keep on swotting like that all through the voyage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake stepped round behind Arthur Augustus' deck-chair. Arthur Augustus did not rise from that chair.

"Coming?" asked Blake.

"Not at pwesent, deah boy! You see—"

"Yes, I see!" agreed Blake. He stooped behind the deck-chair and jerked at it. It flattened out suddenly, and there was a startled howl from Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove! What—"

Bump!

"Ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he sat suddenly on the deek. "Gwent Scott! What is the mattah with that beastly chair? The steward cannot have fixed it pwopahly. Oh cwumbahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus, no longer a picture of lazy comfort, sat on the collapsed deck-chair and glared round at Blake. "You uttah ass, you are playin' twicks with my chair? You have let me down, you howlin' ass—"

"That's all right—I'm going to pick you up again!" said Blake cheerfully, and he grasped Gussy's right ear for the purpose. "Kim on!"

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You feahfuhl wuffian, let go of my yah!"

"If anybody here feels as strenuous as Gussy, he might get hold of the other ear and lend me a hand!" said Blake.

Herries, grinning, grasped Arthur Augustus' other ear. They pulled together, and Arthur Augustus fairly bounded to his feet.

"Now come on!" said Blake.

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"Will you let go of my yahs?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Are you coming for a run?"

"Certainly not! I—"

"Then we're not letting go of your ears! Come on, Herries! Race you to D Deck!"

"Go it," said Herries

"Yawwooh! Leggo! You uttah wuffians—oh cwikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and Herries—not looking at all lazy now, but quite strenuous—started to race for D Deck. As each of them was gripping an aristocratic ear in an iron grip, Arthur Augustus had to race also. His ears were going—and Arthur Augustus had to accompany them. A parting would have been very painful. Arthur Augustus roared as he went. But he put on quite a good speed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the rest of the party, as Blake and Herries flew along the deck with Arthur Augustus yelling between them.

"Go it, Gussy!" howled Dig.

"Put it on, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yawwooh!" floated back from Arthur Augustus as he put it on. "Blake, you wuffian—Hewwies, you hooligan—welease my yahs! Will you welease my yahs, or will you not welease my yahs, you wuffians?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The strenuous party disappeared from C Deck. Sounds of laughter from other quarters indicated that the passengers of the Blue Star were deriving entertainment from the race! Sounds from Arthur Augustus—not of laughter—indicated that he was not enjoying the strenuous life!

It was ten minutes before Arthur Augustus reappeared on C Deck. He came at a rapid run, with Blake and Herries close behind. He had got his ears away at last—but his friends seemed anxious to recapture them. The deck-chair party greeted him with a roar of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With his straw hat on the back of his head, his eyeglass streaming at the end of its cord, and his noble face streaming with perspiration, Arthur Augustus charged along C Deck, amid howls of laughter. He headed for the open doorway of Cabin No. 6, darted in like a rabbit into a burrow, and banged the door shut.

Blake set up the deck-chair again and dropped into it, and fanned his heated face with his straw hat. Herries mopped a streaming brow with a handkerchief. From Cabin No. 6 was heard a sound of breathless gasping. Blake chuckled.

"Nothing like a strenuous life!" he remarked. "Gussy didn't seem so keen on it as a fellow might have fancied from what he was saying—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ready for another race when you come out, Gussy?" roared Herries.

"Wats!" came back from Cabin No. 6.

Arthur Augustus did not come out.

TOO FUNNY!

"OH!" ejaculated Manners. He gave quite a jump in his bunk. A sleepy voice came from below:

"Whassup?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

"Dashed mosquito, I think!" grunted Manners.

He rubbed his ear, and settled down again.

It was a glorious night, but it was hot. Bright stars were reflected in a sea of the deepest, darkest blue. The Blue Star's engines throbbed, her lights gleaming far out on the shadowed sea as she churned on for Madeira.

The doorway of Cabin No. 8 was wide open to let in the air—what air there was. There did not seem to be much. Most other doors were open also. The St. Jim's party had left warm weather behind them in England; but now they were getting into the tropics, they were finding it warmer and warmer. But they had not so far been bothered by tropical insects.

There were two bunks on one side of Cabin No. 8; one on the other. Manners had the upper, Tom Merry the lower, on the double side; Monty Lowther had the single side to himself. There was a glimmer of starlight on the deck, and a spot of it penetrated into the cabin by the open doorway.

Tom Merry sat up in the lower bunk.

"Did you say a mosquito, Manners?" he asked.



"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the rest of the party.

Augustus

"Eh—yes! Must have been; it stung my ear."

"My dear chap, you must have been dreaming. Do mosquitoes come as far off the land as this?"

"Well, it was something!" grunted Manners.

"Dreaming, old bean!" said Tom. "I think—Ow! Wow!"

Tom Merry clapped his hand to his ear, jumped, banged his head on the upper berth, and roared.

Manners, who was dropping into slumber again, started out of it.

"What's that row about?" he asked.

"Ow! Something stung me!" gasped Tom.

Manners laughed sarcastically.

"Dreaming, old chap!" he said. "Mosquitoes don't come so far off the land as this!"

"Fathead!" grunted Tom. "It must have been a mosquito! What else could it have been?"

"Well, I said so. I said—Ow, ow! Wow!" Manners gave a howl.

"Is that another?" gasped Tom.

"Ow! Yes! Right in my neck! The cabin seems alive with them!" exclaimed Manners.

"Perhaps we oughtn't to leave the door open. That black blighter next door keeps his shut, and he knows the clinato."

"Well, it would be fearfully stuffy with the door closed. They don't seem to be bothering Monty," said Tom. "You awake, Monty?"

There was no answer from Monty Lowther's side of the cabin. Monty had seemed rather sleepless from the heat when the Terrible Three turned in. Now, however, he appeared to be bound fast in slumber's chain. At all events, there was no sound from his bunk.

"Can't be a lot of them, really," said Tom. "I—Ow!"

Smack!

"Wow!"

"Smacking your own silly head, or what?" asked Manners, peering over from the top bunk.

"I think I got that one!" gasped Tom. "I smacked right on the spot as it stung! I've nearly smacked my nose off, too! Ow!"

"Better get up and shut the door, I think," said Manners. "Can't sleep with putrid mosquitoes buzzing in the cabin. We'd better ask for mosquito-nets to-morrow. Oh crikey!"

Smack!

"Oh gum!" howled Tom Merry. "Better shut the door; they seem to be coming in in myriads! We must be nearer the land than I thought."

"Sure you're not dreaming?" chuckled Manners.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Tom Merry stepped out, shut the door, and returned to his bunk. As he was getting in there came a sudden sting in the back of his neck, and, a second later, another behind his ear.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

"Oh!" roared Manners. "Look here, we can't stand this! Fat lot of good shutting the door with the cabin full of 'em! Put on the light, and we'll get out and smash 'em. We've got some newspapers here."

"All right!"

Tom Merry groped for the lighting switch beside the bunk and turned on the electric light. He scrambled out again, and Manners scrambled down. There was a yawn from Monty Lowther's side of the cabin.

"You fellows getting up? It's not light yet."

"We're being bitten by mosquitoes," said Tom.

"Haven't you had any?"

"Not that I've noticed."

"Well, you're jolly lucky; we're getting them right and left."

Tom Merry folded a newspaper to wield as a weapon, and Manners folded another, and they glared round for the enemy.

"Where the dickens are they?" grunted Manners. "I can't see them."

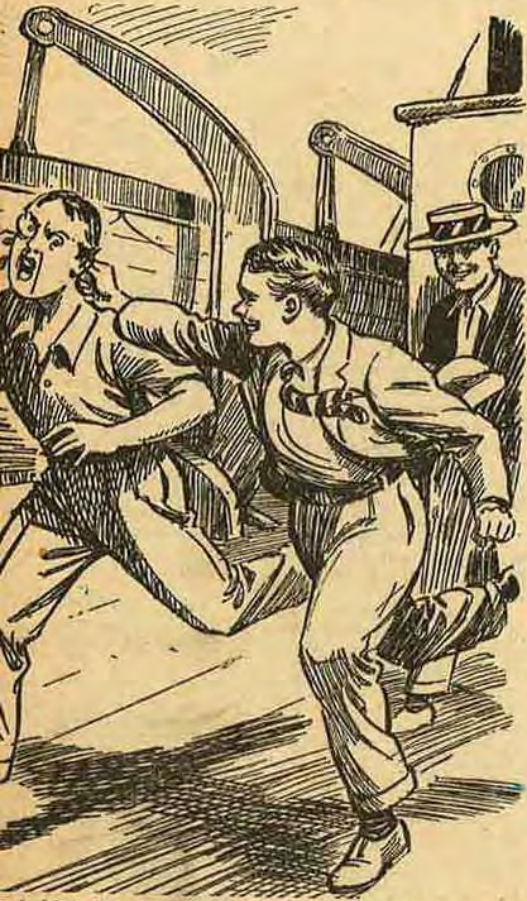
"Well, the little beasts are jolly small," answered Tom. "Listen for the buzz. You can always hear them buzzing."

They listened, but there was no sound of a buzz. In the bright light nothing was to be seen of insects. The weapons were ready to swipe, but there was nothing at which to swipe.

"Must have gone by the window," said Tom at last. "The light may have driven them away. What about leaving it on?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" came from Lowther's bunk. "How's a chap to sleep with the light on in the cabin?"

"Oh, all right!"



and Herries raced along the deck, with Arthur between them.

Tom Merry and Manners clambered back into their bunks, and Tom switched the light off.

Hardly a minute later, as the two unfortunate victims were settling down to sleep again, there came a sudden howl, followed by another. The first came from Tom Merry; the second from Harry Manners.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

"Anything the matter?" came from Lowther's bunk across the cabin.

"Ow! Yes, a mosquito!"

"Wow! Yes, I've been stung!"

"Well, that's jolly queer!" said Monty Lowther. "Look here, couldn't you fellows be stung quietly and let a chap go to sleep?"

"You blithering idiot!"

"You dunderheaded dummy!"

"That sounds as if you fellows are getting shirty!" said Lowther. "What are you getting shirty about?"

"Do you think we like being stung by mosquitoes, you footling fathhead?" hissed Manners.

"Well, a chap can get stung by mosquitoes and still keep his temper!" said Monty Lowther.

"Not when there's a silly idiot in the same cabin gabbling blithering imbecility as if he'd just got out of a home for idiots!" said Manners.

Evidently Harry Manners was very shirty.

"Ow!" howled Tom Merry. "There it is again—right in my ear! No good trying to sleep through this!"

He switched on the light again.

As the cabin was suddenly illuminated there came a roar of wrath from Harry Manners, echoed by a yell of fury from Tom Merry. That sudden illumination did not reveal mosquitoes; it revealed Monty Lowther sitting up in the opposite bunk, with a pea-shooter to his mouth!

They gazed at him; they glared at him. The mystery of the mosquitoes was suddenly and unexpectedly explained.

"You—" roared Manners.

"You—" howled Tom Merry.

They bounded from their bunks. They hurled themselves at the other bunk. It was Monty's turn to roar as two pairs of infuriated hands grasped him, and he came down on the cabin floor with a terrific bump.

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Monty. "I—I say—Leggo! Chuck it! Yaroooh! Only a joke—Yoo-hoop! Can't you take a jig-jog-jug-joke—Urrggh!"

"Bump him!" howled Manners.

"Pillow him!" hooted Tom.

"I say—Holy smoke! Chuck it! Stoppit! Oh crikey!" howled the too-playful Monty, as his exasperated chums fell on him and smote him hip and thigh. "Haven't you any sense of—yaroooh!—humour? Can't you tut-tut-take a jog-jig-joke? Oh, my hat! Whoo-hoop!"

"Pillow him!"

"Swipe him!"

Monty Lowther rolled and roared under swiping pillows. They swiped and swiped and swiped. The funny man of St. Jim's Shell had been, in the opinion of his comrades, altogether too funny. Pea-shooting in the middle of the night was distinctly a thing to be discouraged.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Oh crikey! Will you stoppit?" howled Lowther. "Oh crumbs! You howling maniacs, stoppit! Oh! Yaroop!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

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Monty Lowther rolled to the door, got it open, and rolled out on the deck. The door banged after him.

"That's that!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Let him come in again, that's all!" said Manners ferociously. "By gum, let him come in again!"

The door opened a few inches.

"Look here, you chaps—"

"Come in!" hissed Manners.

"I say, is it pax?"

"We're going to smash you! Come in!"

"Look here, I can't stay out on deck all night!" howled Lowther.

"Don't! Come in! Come right in! We want you to come in! Jolly glad if you do! Why don't you come in?" roared Manners.

Monty Lowther did not come in. The tone in which the invitation was given hinted that he would not find much repose in Cabin No. 8. Monty had exercised his peculiar gift of humour not wisely, but too well. For the present, Cabin No. 8 was about as safe for Monty to enter as a lion's den. Monty Lowther drifted away from the door, reflecting sadly on the inability of some fellows to see a really good joke.

MORE MOSQUITOES!

"BAL Jove! It's hot!"

Monty Lowther grinned.

That murmuring voice came from the open doorway of Cabin No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was stirring in his sleep.

Monty still had his pea-shooter. He had a supply of peas in the pocket of his pyjama jacket. He had sagely decided to give Tom Merry and Manners time to settled down to sleep, before he ventured back into Cabin No. 8. In the meantime, he was unemployed, and genuinely seeking work. For which reason, he hovered round the open doorway of Cabin No. 6.

Tom Merry and Manners had entirely failed to appreciate the little joke of those imaginary mosquitoes. It was quite probable that Blake & Co. would fail also. But, out on the deck, the funny man of the Shell was out of reach of pillows—so that was all right.

He glanced round C Deck. Nobody was about. Some of the cabin doors were open, some were shut. Nobody seemed to be stirring, except Monty. He tiptoed towards Cabin No. 6.

Then he stopped suddenly as the door of Cabin No. 7 opened quietly. A black-browed, dark face looked out into the starlight.

Monty Lowther stared at the black man from Brazil.

Joao Rabeira gave a sudden start at the sight of him, and his eyes glinted. Evidently he was startled to see one of the St. Jim's party up at that hour of the night.

During the days they had been on board the Blue Star, the St. Jim's fellows had seen a good deal of the Brazilian; pacing the decks, loafing by the rail, and continually smoking his thick, black Brazilian cigars. But they had not exchanged a word with him, or taken any notice of him. And Joao, on his side, had avoided contact. Only every now and then his black eyes turned on the party with a hostile glitter in them.

But if he was still feeling savagely hostile, as undoubtedly he was, he appeared to understand that it would not be a paying proposition to let loose his ferocity on board the liner. He

had given no sign of active hostility since the shindy on the day the steamer had pulled out of the Thames.

Now, as he stepped softly and stealthily from his cabin, there was something in his aspect that made Monty Lowther stare at him hard, with a faint thrill of uneasiness.

But, after the first glare of surprise, the Brazilian's dark face became indifferent.

"Ah! It is that you do not sleep, little senhor," he said. "You walk on a deck because you do not sleep. Yes, it is very hot for English."

"Very," answered Lowther, watching the man curiously.

He concluded that Rabeira was coming out of his cabin for fresh air in the stuffy, hot night.

But if that had been Joao's intention, he changed it when he found that one of the St. Jim's party was up. He stepped back into Cabin No. 7 and shut the door.

"Silly ass!" murmured Monty.

If Joao did not want his company on deck, he certainly did not want Joao's, and he dismissed the black-browed ruffian from his mind.

From the deck, after Rabeira's door had closed, Monty peered into Cabin No. 6. The glimmer of starlight that fell in at the open doorway was enough for his purpose. Grinning, he prepared his ammunition, and put the pea-shooter to his mouth.

"Ooooh!" came a sudden, startled gasp from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; and Monty promptly popped back out of sight.

"Wharrer marrer?" came a sleepy yawn from Blake's bunk.

"Oh owikey! Somethin' stung me on the nose and woke me up! What the dooce could have stung me on the nose, Blake?"

"Nothing, fathead! Go to sleep!"

"I wepeat that somethin' stung me on the nose, Blake!"

"Bosh!"

"Weally, Blake, I suppose I ought to know whethah somethin' stung me on the nose or not!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Bow-wow! Oh!" roared Blake. "What's that?"

"What's what, Blake?"

"Somethin' stung me in the ear!" howled Blake.

"What are you fellows yelling about?" came a grunt from Herries' bunk. "Can't you keep quiet in the middle of the night?"

"Shurrup!" mumbled Dig.

Blake rubbed his ear.

"What the thump was it?" he exclaimed. "Can't be a mosquito? But something jolly well stung me."

"Yawwoh!"

"Don't wake all the ship, Gussy!"

"Oh owikey! Something stung me again!" howled Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! There are some howwid insects about, or somethin'."

Arthur Augustus sat up in bed, rubbing his nose with one hand and his ear with the other.

Monty Lowther, having backed safely out of sight beside the doorway, grinned with silent enjoyment. He was not sorry, after all, that his friends had shut him out of Cabin No. 8. He was finding the time pass very entertainingly while he waited for them to go to sleep.

He waited a minute, and then leaned round the open doorway again.

Arthur Augustus gave a jump.

He could not see Monty Lowther. But, to his

surprise, he saw a moving shadow on the floor between the bunks. Monty had rather overlooked the fact that, standing at the doorway, he barred the starlight that fell into the cabin.

"Oh owikey!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Somebody's there. Who is that? Somebody's at the door!"

He jumped from his bunk.

Monty Lowther backed swiftly as an eye and an eyeglass gleamed from the doorway. But he had no time to get into cover. In the tropical starlight he was clearly revealed, pea-shooter in hand, to Arthur Augustus.

"Lowthah!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"What?" yelled Blake.

"That funnay idiot Lowthah, with a pea-shootah!" howled Arthur Augustus. "That howlin' ass playin' pottay twicks in the middle of the night! Bai Jove, I will give the sillay ass a feaful thwashin'!"

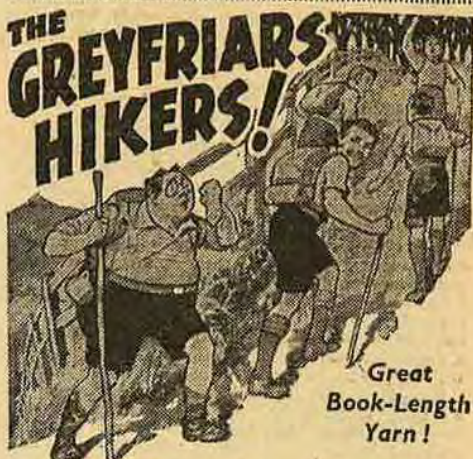
Monty Lowther faded into the shadows of the night. Arthur Augustus rubbed his nose and his ear; and breathed wrath. Monty had disappeared; but the swell of St. Jim's had spotted him before he vanished, and there was no doubt on the subject. It was the funny man of the Shell—pea-shooting in at the doorway of the cabin.

"Is he gone?" grunted Blake.

"Yaas; but I am suah it was Lowthah," answered Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, I will be weady for the howlin' ass when he comes back! Where did I put that dictionary, Blake?"

"Oh, my hat! Are you going to sit up and do Portuguese at night?"

"No, you ass; I am goin' to buzz it at that fathead Lowthah when he comes back with that beastly pea-shootah!"



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"Oh, good! It's somewhere about."

Arthur Augustus groped round the cabin for the Portuguese dictionary. It was a large, heavy, and hefty volume, and seemed a suitable sort of thing for greeting the practical joker of the Shell when he returned to the attack.

Monty Lowther allowed a full five minutes to elapse before he tiptoed back to the door of Cabin No. 6.

Excellent as that joke with the pea-shooter was—from Monty's point of view, at least—he realised that the Fourth Formers in Cabin No. 6 would not see eye to eye with him on the subject. He was going to make sure that they had settled down again before he carried out.

As he silently approached the doorway a whispering voice from within reached his ears.

"It's all right! I've found that dictionary! I am going to sit heah and watch the doorway and get him wight on the nose with it as soon as he comes back! Bai Jove, that will be wathah a surprise for the sillay ass!"

Monty Lowther backed away again, suppressing a chuckle.

Forewarned was forearmed, and he did not want a Portuguese dictionary right on his nose. Pea-shooting exploits for that night were over, but it was rather entertaining to think of Arthur Augustus sitting up on the watch, with the dictionary ready to hurl. Monty, as he tiptoed away to his own cabin, wondered how long Arthur Augustus would keep it up.

He pushed open the door of Cabin No. 8 cautiously.

"Pax, you fellows!" whispered Monty.

Only a sound of regular breathing answered him. Tom Merry and Manners were asleep again, Monty Lowther crept quietly to his bunk and turned in.

As he laid his head on the pillow he thought of Arthur Augustus sitting up on the watch in Cabin No. 6, and there was a cheery grin on his face as he dropped off to sleep.

THE PERIL OF THE NIGHT!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY grinned. Herries and Dig had gone to sleep again. Blake was nodding. But Arthur Augustus was wide awake—and on the watch!

He was not, in point of fact, very sleepy; the tropical heat of the night made him rather wakeful. But if he had been ever so sleepy he would not have closed his eyes—until he had got Monty Lowther! A fellow who thought it funny to pepper fellows with peas from a pea-shooter in the middle of the night was a fellow who required a lesson, in Arthur Augustus' opinion. And he was sitting up to give him one.

Happily unaware that Monty had heard his whisper, and was acquainted with his intention and had gone back to bed, Arthur Augustus waited. He had no doubt that Monty would come back, and he was ready for him when he did.

He sat in the dark of the cabin with the big dictionary on his knees, in his grasp—all ready!

But for the fact that Monty Lowther had caught that whisper from Cabin No. 6, and sagely decided to go back to bed, he certainly would have shown up again, and would undoubtedly have got that dictionary.

As it was, the minutes passed and there was no japer, and Arthur Augustus began to wonder whether he was, after all, going to carry on.

The Gem Library.—No. 1,641.

Then, as a stirring shadow caught his eye in the clear starlight on deck, he grinned.

That shadow loomed outside the open doorway of Cabin No. 6. Someone was there, silent and stealthy, approaching the doorway without a sound.

Grinning, Arthur Augustus rose silently to his feet, the big dictionary in both hands, and lifted the hefty volume over his head, all ready to hurl.

A figure blocked the starlit doorway. It stood there, in full clear view in the starlight, with head bent a little to listen—listening whether the fellows within were asleep, of course!

Arthur Augustus could hardly have asked for an easier target. The big volume swung in his hands.

He put all his beef into it as he hurled it. It whizzed across the cabin and crashed fair and square on the head that was bent in the doorway.

Crash!
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Arthur Augustus, in great glee.

The figure in the doorway spun over backwards. The crash of the heavy volume fairly swept it off its feet. Down it went with a terrific crash on the deck outside.

A startled yell of fury howled through the silence.

"Nossa Senhora! O que—que e isso?" came the startled yell, and Arthur Augustus, ceasing to laugh suddenly, jumped.

"Oh cwikey!" he gasped. "That isn't Lowthah! Oh cwombs!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Blake. He rolled out of his bunk. Herries and Digby called out together.

"Bai Jove! It's not Lowthah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I thought it was Lowthah comin' back with his pea-shootah; it is that wotten wascal Wabejwah!"

Blake leaped out on the deck. Arthur Augustus jumped out after him, with Herries and Dig at his heels.

From the door of Cabin No. 8 three startled faces stared—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had been awakened by the crash and the fearful yell that followed.

"That blighter!" exclaimed Tom. "Rabeira!"

The man from Brazil was sprawling on his back on the deck in the starlight. The dictionary lay beside him.

He was gasping, spluttering, and howling, evidently knocked completely out of his self-possession by that sudden and unexpected crash.

He raised himself on one elbow, staring round him dizzily. His eyes blazed at the St. Jim's juniors. He almost spat with rage as he glared at them.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Manners.

"By gum!" breathed Monty Lowther, his face very startled.

Half a dozen heads were put out of cabin doors and voices called and exclaimed. The steward of C Deck came hurrying to the spot. He stared at the sprawling Brazilian and at the startled, staring faces of the St. Jim's juniors.

"What's the row here?" he demanded.

Rabeira staggered to his feet. He made a fierce movement towards Arthur Augustus, but checked himself as the steward stepped promptly between.

"That wottah was pokin' his nose into our cabin," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, "and I bowled him ovah with that die! I thought it was a sillay ass playin' twicks, but it was that wottah—"

The steward eyed the black-browed man suspiciously.

"What were you going into the cabin for, you?" he demanded.

Joao Rabeira panted.

"Nao, nao! I walk on a deck because it is hot and I do not sleep. I pass a door—and something is throw!" he gasped. "The young fool—he throw something—"

"That is a wotten untwath, you wottah!" said Arthur Augustus hotly. "You stopped at the door and put your cheekay head in. Serve you wight to get the dic on it."

"Looking for a chance to pinch something while we were asleep, very likely!" grunted Herries.

"Yans, wathah!"

"I say I walk on a deck—I pass a door!" snarled Rabeira. "Then I am struck with something that is throw." He panted with rage.

"Bah! I waste no words on you, young fool!" He stamped into his cabin and banged the door. The steward stared after him and then glanced round at Arthur Augustus.

"Sure he was pushing into your cabin, sir?" he asked.

"I don't know whethah he was comin' in, but he stopped at the door and put his cheekay head in," answered Arthur Augustus. "Then I bowled him ovah."

"I'll speak to the purser about it in the morning, sir. Perhaps you'd better keep your door shut to-night."

"Yans, wathah!"

The steward went back to his room, and passengers who had put their heads out withdrew them. But the St. Jim's juniors remained in a

group round the door of Cabin No. 6. They were startled and alarmed, and Monty Lowther's face was quite pale.

"You're sure, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry slowly.

"I am quite suah, deah boy! I thought it was that silly ass, Lowthah, comin' back with his silly pea-shootah, and got him with the dic! But now I know it was that black bigwah, I have no doubt that he was goin' to catch the cabin."

"If they'd been asleep!" muttered Monty Lowther. "Oh crumbs! If Gussy had been asleep—"

He gave a glance at the starlit sea rolling under the rail and shuddered.

"Monty, old man!" exclaimed Tom. "You don't imagine—"

"I don't imagine—I know!" said Monty Lowther, in a low voice. "That blighter came out of his cabin when I was on deck, and there was something in his look—" Lowther shivered.

"He went back when he saw me on the deck; but he was only waiting for the coast to be clear. I know that now. He told us the day we sailed what Gussy had to expect from him if he kept on for Brazil!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom, his face white.

"You think—"

"I tell you, I know! It was in his face. I know that now! He's been watching for a chance and the doors being left open gave him one. And I tell you if Gussy had been asleep—it's only a step to the rail, and a hand over his mouth—"

Monty Lowther broke off.

(Continued on page 36.)

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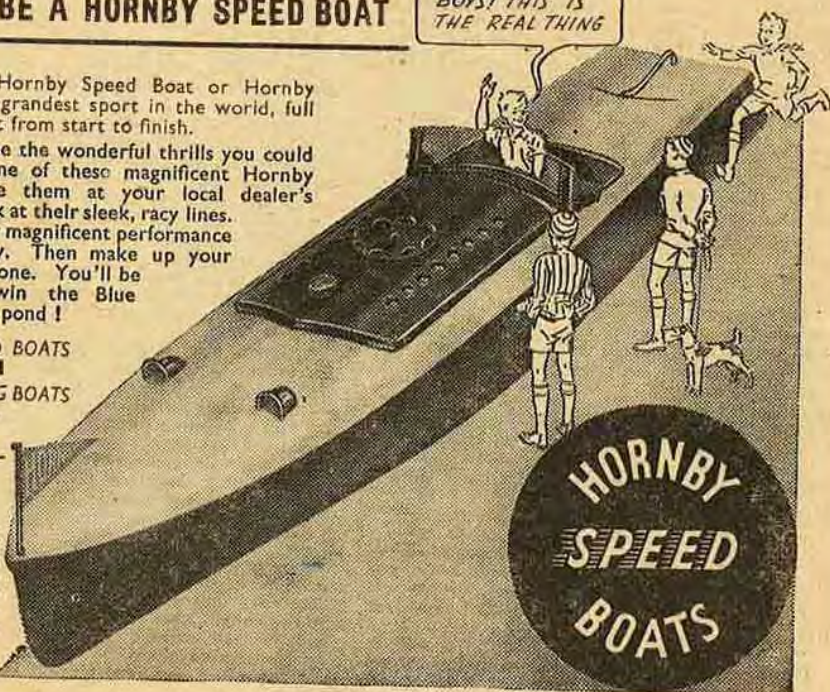
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THE SCHOOLBOY GOLD-SEEKERS!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE WAY OF THE CHINEE.

"BY gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked down the valley, his brow growing very grim.

"What's up?" asked Frank Richards.

"Look!"

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclere followed his glance. The three chums of Cedar Creek had been looking for game, and they were returning to camp for dinner. Chunky Todgers and Yen Chin had been left in charge of the camp, which the schoolboy explorers had pitched by a mountain stream, high up in the Cascade Mountains.

They were still at a distance from the camp, where a fire of logs and pine chips smoked, and the horses and pack-mule lay resting by the stream.

"The young bounders!" exclaimed Frank Richards, as he saw what had caught Bob's keen eyes in the distance.

Chunky Todgers and Yen Chin ought to have been doing the "chores" while the others were looking for game. But they weren't. They were seated on opposite sides of a log, and each of them held a hand of cards, and they were evidently deep in the game. A little heap of coins on the log glistened in the sun. The heap was on Yen Chin's side, and it looked as if the Chinese had had all the luck.

"Well, my word!" exclaimed Beauclere, in astonishment. "That's rather a new game for Chunky, isn't it?"

"It's that blessed heathen!" growled Bob Lawless. "My hat, I'll give him the end of the trail-ropel! He's led that fat jay into it, of course! He's like all blessed Chows! They'd gamble the shirt off their backs. But we'll put him up to a wrinkle about playing poker in our camp!"

The three schoolboys hurried their steps towards the camp. Yen Chin had his back to them as they came up, and did not observe them; but Chunky looked up with a start as he heard footsteps thudding on the rocky ground close at hand.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Yen Chin spun round. It did not need the looks of Frank Richards & Co. to tell him that they were wrathful. He knew their opinion on the subject of gambling. In a second he whipped his cards out of sight.

"Velly glad see handsome old Flanky again!" he said. "Nicee old Bob leady for dinner?"

"You young scamp!" roared Bob Lawless.

"No savvy. Whattee pool li'l Chinee doee?" asked Yen Chin innocently.

"As for you, Chunky, you young rotter—"

Chunky's face was crimson.

"It—it was only a lark!" he stammered defensively. "I—I never really meant to play, you know! I guess you see—"

"Yes, I guess I see!" growled Bob Lawless.

"Have you got dinner?"

"I—I'm just going to."

Chunky backed away to the camp-fire to get

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on with the neglected cookery, and the chums surrounded Yen Chin.

"Now, you young rascal—" began Frank.

"Chinee no lascal!" murmured Yen Chin.

"Velly good boy!"

"You made the fat duffer play cards with you!"

"No playee cards!"

"What?"

"No can," said Yen Chin.

"Wall, of all the lying young villains!" gasped Bob Lawless. "He's denying that he was gambling with Chunky when we saw him doing it!"

"No could see. P'llaps optical delusion," suggested Yen Chin. "Tinkee see, and no see!"

"Why, there's some of the cards on the log!" said Bob, pointing to the "hand" Chunky Todgers had hurriedly thrown down.

Yen Chin glanced at the cards as if he saw them for the first time.

"Velly stlange!" he said. "No see cardee before! How comee hele? P'llaps Chunkee know!"

"You—you pigtailed gopher!" ejaculated Bob. "Don't you know it's wrong to tall lies?"

"Nevvee tellee lie! Flozen thuth!" answered Yen Chin.

"I'll give you frozen truth, you young rascal!" said Bob; and he caught the Celestial with one hand, and laid on the trail-ropel with the other.

Whack, whack, whack!

Yen Chin uttered an ear-splitting yell.

"Yow! Ah! Oh! No whackee pool li'l Chinee! No playee cardee! Chinee good li'l boy! Yah! Oh! Beastly ugly old Bob! Oh!"

Whack, whack!

Yen Chin roared with anguish. His yelling was so terrific that Bob desisted before he had given him what he considered enough. Yen Chin sat on the log and sobbed spasmodically.

Bob looked rather contrite.

"You know you asked for it, you young heathen!" he said.

Yen Chin sobbed.

"No whackee pool li'l Chinee!" he wailed.

"Well, I'm not going to whack you any more."

"No whackee any mole?"

"No."

"Allee light!" said Yen Chin, suddenly ceasing his pitiful sobs and grinning up at the chums. "Allee light, old Bob! If no whackee, no cly."

Bob Lawless stared speechlessly at the Chinese.

"You spoofing little villain, you're not hurt!" exclaimed Frank.

Yen Chin nodded calmly.

"No hurt," he agreed. "Howlee loudee to makee old Bob stoppee! Oh, yes! Allee light! Now stoppee!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"By gum!" gasped Bob Lawless. "I've a jolly good mind to boot you all round the camp, you deceiving heathen! Look here, Yen Chin, if you're caught gambling again you'll get the trail-ropel in real earnest!"

"No catchee again."

"You won't do it any more?" asked Frank.

"No catchee!" answered Yen Chin, with a grin.

"Don't you know it's wrong?" asked Beauclerc.

"Me know. Likee allee same."

There was really no reply to be made to that, unless it was with the trail-ropo. Frank Richards & Co. felt that the Chinese was really a little too much for them, and they turned their attention to dinner instead.

THE SCHOOLBOY PROSPECTORS.

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. had had no luck with game that day, and dinner was rather meagre in the camp. Chunky Todgers felt that most severely, but he did not venture to complain. He was very silent for once. He felt that he was under a cloud, and he made himself as inconspicuous as possible.

Yen Chin was silent, too. Not that he was feeling repentant like Chunky. The Chinese did not seem to feel any need of repentance after wrongdoing. Yen Chin had his good points, but they all came from Nature, and not cultivation.

As soon as dinner was over he rose from the log and glanced down the valley.

"Chinese goos for lide," he remarked.

"Look out for grizzly-bears, then," said Frank, with a smile. "Don't go too far and get lost."

"Nevee losee nicee old Flanky!" said Yen Chin reassuringly.

And he trotted away down the valley on his little wiry pony.

Vere Beauclerc looked after him very curiously.

"What's that young bounder's game?" he

remarked. "This is the third afternoon he's toddled off by himself."

"Perhaps he plays cards all on his lonesome when he's out of sight!" said Bob Lawless, with a laugh. "It's a disease with him; he can't help it. I'm going to try to cure him with the trail-ropo, though."

"Cheer up, Chunky!" said Frank Richards, catching the clouded look upon Chunky's podgy brow.

Chunky looked lugubrious.

"I guess I don't want to put it on Yen Chin," he said shame-facedly, "but—but I'm really blowed if I know how I got playing with him. He was showing me card tricks to begin with. Your fault for bringing a blessed heathen along!"

"Well, he really brought himself along," said Bob. "But he's been jolly useful once or twice; there's no denying that. You fellows coming along the stream? There's a lot of wildfowl."

Chunky Todgers stretched himself in the shade of a rock.

"I'm not going to sleep," he said defensively. "I'm going to—to keep a look-out. Just as well for one fellow to stay and look after the hosses."

Frank Richards & Co. grinned as they went down the stream. They were well aware that Chunky's eyes would be sealed before they were out of sight of the camp.

The upland valley in which the schoolboys had camped was solitary, and the wildfowl there had rarely been disturbed. The nearest settlement was twenty miles away, in a gulch lower down the range, known as Tucker's Bar.

The stream was a shallow one, rippling over rock and sand, though in winter-time it was



Gunten sprang to his feet in alarm as Frank Richards, Beauclerc, and Bob Lawless came riding down the ravine.

probably a rapid torrent. Bob Lawless was watching the stream as the chums went along the rocky bank, and his brows were knitted in thought. He made the pace, and they proceeded at a leisurely rate.

"This doesn't look much like supper, old scout," said Frank Richards at last. "It's getting towards sundown, Bob."

"I've been doing some thinking, Franky."

"Any result?" asked Frank, with a smile.

"We came up through Tucker's Bar," said Bob. "You noticed the diggings there—all placer mining. This stream flows down into the river at Tucker's Bar. I've been wondering if there's pay-dirt in this creek."

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "Gold, do you mean?"

"Well, it looks like it to me," said Bob. "I've been over the placer claims at home in the Thompson Valley many a time. I know the look of pay gravel when I see it. It struck me when we camped here three days ago, and I've been thinking about it since. What do you fellows say to sticking here for a few days and looking for pay-dirt?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"No objection," he answered; and Beauclerc nodded assent.

Bob Lawless halted. Close at their feet was a bed of sand, shining in the sun, which had been covered with water when the creek was swollen by rains. Now it lay dry as a bone, crunching under the tread.

Bob Lawless knelt, and his chums watched him curiously as he ran handfuls of shining sand through his hands. They guessed that Bob had noted that spot before, and borne it in mind, intending to make an examination of it for pay-dirt.

"Well, what results?" asked Frank, as the rancher's son looked up at last.

"I guess it wants looking at," said Bob. "If we could wash out some of this stuff I'd jolly soon see whether there was pay-dirt. If you chaps want to help, lend me a hand making a cradle."

"Great Scott!"

"Only a rough-and-ready one, of course! There's a bank of osiers along the creek, and I can show you how to do it."

"Right-ho!"

Bob led the way to the osier bank, and with their hunting-knives the three schoolboys cut down a quantity. Under Bob's direction they plaited them together, making a kind of wicker basket, which was to serve the purpose of a miner's cradle.

They sat down cheerfully to work in the reddening sunset. When it was finished it was carried back to the bed of sand, and as spades were not available they scooped up the sand with their hands, loosening it with their knives where necessary.

In a short time the wicker basket was half-full, and was slid down the sandy bank into the stream for washing. Frank and Beauclerc were growing interested by this time.

With their sleeves rolled up, the three schoolboys proceeded to wash out the mud and sand for pay-dirt.

Bob Lawless' face was growing excited.

The sun was sinking beyond the mountains to the far Pacific, and shadows were lengthening in the upland valley when the wash out was finished.

Bob Lawless carefully scraped up a residuum of golden grains.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

"Pay-dirt?" asked Frank.

"Gold!" said Bob laconically.

"Phew!"

"How much is that lot worth?" asked Beauclerc.

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"A couple of dollars," he answered.

"Oh!"

"But it shows it's there," explained Bob. "I guess if we could uncover a part of the stream-bed we should find pay-gravel in plenty. What do you say? We've got lots of time, and it's fun, anyway. Camp here for a few days and build a log dam, and see what it's worth."

"Any old thing!" said Frank Richards. "By Jove, it would be ripping if we could stake out a claim—"

"We'll stake out the claim, right enough, if it's worth it," said Bob. "It only means riding down to Tucker's Bar and registering it. I guess we'll get back to camp now, and start fresh in the morning."

"Good!"

And the explorers returned to camp, where they found Chunky Todgers wide awake, and eagerly waiting for them.

"Where's the game?" demanded Chunky.

"Still on the wing, old scout," said Bob. "Biscuit and beef will do for once. But we've struck a claim, Chunky!"

Chunky Todgers jumped.

"Gold!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"You bet!"

"I—I say, Bob, is it worth a million dollars?" asked Chunky.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Not quite."

"Half a million?"

"Less, old son."

"Well, how much?" asked Chunky, disappointed.

"Two dollars, so far."

The expression on Chunky's face was extraordinary, for a moment.

"You jay!" he said at last. "You pesky ass! Yah!"

And Chunky went about getting a cold supper, and displayed no more interest in Bob's gold-mine.

SEEKING GOLD!

"WHERE'S that pesky heathen?" exclaimed Bob Lawless as the party sat down to supper in the glow of the pine-chip fire.

"He hasn't come back yet," said Chunky.

"The little duffer's lost himself, I suppose," said Bob restively. "I suppose we shall have to trail after him. Lucky there's a moon to-night."

But before supper was finished Yen Chin rode into the camp. He looked rather tired, and not cheery, as usual, as he sank down on a log by the fire. His pony began to crop the herbage by the stream, looking as if it had covered a good distance.

Yen Chin gave no explanation of where he had been, and he sat silent on the log and did not ask for any supper.

"Aren't you hungry, kid?" asked Bob.

"No hungry."

"Where have you been?"

"Lidce."

"Yes, I know you've been riding, fathead! Did you lose your way?"

"No lose way."

"Well, what are you looking down in the mouth for?" asked Frank.

"No can tinkee, Allee light."

The chums regarded Yen Chin rather anxiously. He was a little mysterious, and they could see that he was tired and depressed.

"You haven't fallen in with Gunten and Keller by any chance?" asked Bob. "I believe they're still in these hills."

"No see Guntee."

"Well, something's wrong with you. What is it?"

"Allee light."

The little Chinese evidently did not intend to explain. The chums of Cedar Creek were puzzled, but they gave up questioning him. Yen Chin sat in silence for a long time.

When Bob and Beauclerc went towards the horses, to see them settled for the night, the little Chinese moved at last, and sidled towards Frank Richards.

"Nicey old Flanky!" he murmured.

"Hallo! What do you want?" asked Frank, smiling.

"You lendee me mouce."

"Eh?"

"Pool li'l Chinese losee money," said Yen Chin pathetically.

"How did you lose your money?" asked Frank, with a sudden suspicion.

It was two or three days since the chums had seen Gunten and Keller, their old enemies of Cedar Creek School, who were camping somewhere in the mountains, and Frank wondered whether Yen Chin knew where they were, and had visited them to play poker.

"Me losee in tlaif," said Yen Chin, watching Frank's face as he spoke. "Fallee off pony and dloppee all money; no findee. Me got no money. Pool li'l Chinese cly."

"But you don't need any money here," said Frank, reassured by that explanation.

"No lendee pool li'l Chinese ten dollee?" asked Yen Chin sorrowfully.

"I'll lend it to you if you want it," said Frank in perplexity. "But I'm blessed if I see what you want cash for here."

"No likee be stonee bloke," said Yen Chin. "Likee have cashee in pockee. Oh, yes! Payee Flanky when home."

"Oh, all right!" said Frank.

Frank had a good supply of cash for his holiday, and the chums had spent very little money. He took out a couple of five-dollar bills, and gave them to the little Chinese. Yen Chin's eyes glistened as he took them.

"Flanky good sport," he said.

Frank laughed.

"It's all right," he said. "But if you remember the place where you lost your money, kid, we'll get along and look for it to-morrow."

"No lemembel," said Yen Chin, with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "Flanky no findee. Allee lostee."

As Bob and Beauclerc came back, the little Celestial rolled himself in his blanket to sleep. He was soon fast asleep, or affecting to be so.

The weather was fine, and the chums of Cedar Creek slept in their blankets under the stars, round the sinking fire. As was their custom, they took turns to watch during the night; Chunky and Yen Chin being exempted from the duty as unreliable.

Yen Chin did not turn out in the morning with the rest. His journey the previous day had

evidently tired him, and he was still sleeping, rolled in his blanket, long after the rest were up and doing. Bob Lawless awakened him at last by rolling him over with his boot.

"Going to sleep all day?" he demanded.

The Chinese blinked at him drowsily.

"Me gettee up," he said. "Gooee lidee."

"Oh, you're going riding again, are you?"

"Mo tinkee."

"And where are you going?"

"Lookee for gamee."

"Br-r-r!" said Bob at that untruthful answer, for it was pretty plain that it was not the truth.

Yen Chin vouchsafed no further information, however, and after the midday meal he mounted his pony and rode away. He had heard the chums discussing the "strike" in the creek, but he showed lack of interest in it. Some other matter, it was plain, was engrossing the thoughts of the little Chinese, but what it was Frank Richards & Co. could not guess.

The "claim," however, took all their attention that day. Having decided to give it a trial, they set to work with hearty good-will to put Bob's theory to the test.

Where the creek made a bend they banked up a dam with thick logs hewn by their own axes, and strengthened it with wattles and mud. The work occupied the four of them most of the day.

Towards sundown they had succeeded in uncovering an expanse of the sandy bed of the creek, and in the fading light Bob Lawless proceeded to "pan" it. His chums sat on the log embankment and watched him at work. Bob's eyes were glistening when he showed them the result.

"Good?" asked Frank.

"Tip-top—all O.K., I guess," said Bob.

"Pardners, I O.K. we've struck ile! I reckon we can take two hundred dollars a day out of this claim, as long as it lasts."

Frank Richards opened his eyes.

"That's a real strike!" he exclaimed.

"You bet!"

The chums of Cedar Creek returned to camp in great spirits. Yen Chin had not yet returned, and they sat down to a cold supper without him, eagerly discussing the strike.

"I guess we shall have to stake out the claim," said Bob. "Any prospector may come mossying along, and if the claim's not yours legally he can chip in and wash out gold. One of us can ride down to Tucker's Bar in the morning and register it in five names. We go shares in the concern, eh?"

"Equal whacks all round," agreed Frank Richards.

"Then that blessed heathen will have to take a hand in the work," said Chunky Todgers warmly.

"By the way, where is Yen Chin?" exclaimed Bob. "He's getting too jolly mysterious. He must have some reason for clearing off every day like this."

"Can he have fallen in with Gunten?" asked Beauclerc.

Bob knitted his brows.

"It's possible. I believe Gunten's still hanging about the hills somewhere. I'll jolly well make Yen Chin explain when he comes back."

But it was long before Yen Chin came back. The chums wanted to turn in early, for they were tired by a hard day's work. But as the darkness settled down, and night advanced, there

was no sign of the Chinese, and they grew rather anxious.

"I hope the young ass hasn't run into a grizzly!" muttered Bob.

"We can't turn in till he comes back," remarked Beauclerc.

"I guess I can!" said Todgers emphatically, and he did.

But Frank and Bob and Beauclerc waited up, their anxiety deepening. There was a step on the rocks at last.

"Hallo! Here he is," exclaimed Frank in great relief.

It was Yen Chin at last. He came into the camp on foot, and threw himself wearily down on a log to rest. And the three chums surrounded him at once.

YEN CHIN'S CRIME!

YEN CHIN did not look up. He was plainly riled out and in a black mood, which contrasted curiously with his usual cheery spirits.

"Where's your horse, Yen Chin?" asked Bob.

"Losee on trail."

"Have you had to hoof it home?"

"Oh, yes!"

"That's jolly queer!" said Bob Lawless suspiciously. "Where's your knife? I see it's not in your belt."

"Losee."

Frank Richards clapped the Celestial on the shoulder. Frank was more than suspicious now.

"Have you lost the ten dollars as well?" he asked grimly.

"Dloppee on trail, and no findee," replied Yen Chin.

"You want us to believe that you've lost your horse, your knife, and your money by accident on the trail?" exclaimed Frank.

"Allee true!"

"You've lost them playing poker!" roared Bob.

"No playee poken. No can."

The three chums looked at one another in exasperation. There was no doubt that their suspicions were well-founded. It was only at cards that the Chinese could have lost his property. How to deal with him was a mystery.

"The pesky young villain!" said Bob Lawless at last. "What are you going to do without a horse?"

"No savvy!"

"Anyhow, we won't let you go off again by yourself," said Bob. "I guess I'll take good care of that!"

"Me wantee go to-morrow."

"What?"

"Flanky lendee me some dollee. Flanky nicee old boy! Me goee to Tuckee-Bar and buy hoss. Oh, yes!"

"Catch me trusting you with money after this!" growled Frank Richards.

"Nicee old Flanky!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Dear old Bob lendee money."

"I'll 'dear old Bob' you!" grunted Bob Lawless. "You try to leave the camp again and I'll skin you!"

"Old Bob velly ugly! No-likee ugly Bob!"

"Never mind whether you likee me," grinned Bob. "You're going to help work on the claim to-morrow. We'll buy you a new horse at Tucker's Bar out of the profits when we break camp. You won't want a horse till then."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

"Findee gold?" asked Yen Chin, his almond eyes glistening.

"Look at that," said Bob.

He held out the little buckskin bag in which the chums had placed the grains of gold washed out from the placer.

"Goldee!" ejaculated Yen Chin, almost gasping with excitement. "Hundred dollee."

"There's a good hundred dollars there," assented Bob. "And when we've finished we'll buy you a new horse, if you behave yourself, and take your share of the work."

"Me velly good boy. Workee velly muchee. Oh, yes!"

"I guess we'll keep you to that. Now, turn in."

Yen Chin obediently rolled himself in his blanket; but his almond eyes remained open, fixed upon Bob Lawless. There was a glitter in his eyes that would have aroused Bob's suspicions if he had noted it, but he gave no further heed to the Celestial. He thrust the buckskin bag into his pocket, and sat on the log to keep the first watch while his comrades slept.

When his watch was over he lay down to sleep near the dying fire, and Frank Richards took his place on the log.

Frank watched the little valley drowsily in the glimmer of the moonlight. He started a little as Yen Chin rose from his place and glided silently towards him.

"Go to sleep, kid," said Frank.

"Me healee somet'ing," murmured the little Chinese.

"What can you hear? Only the wind in the pines," said Frank.

Yen Chin shook his head.

"Man walkee by creek," he said. "Velly quiet. Man comee."

Frank Richards started to his feet and looked towards the creek through the trees. He could hear nothing but the sigh of the wind in the foliage.

"Are you sure, Yen Chin?" he asked.

"Me tinkee Flanky goee see; me watchee hee."

"Right-ho! I think you're mistaken," said Frank.

He took up his rifle and went through the trees towards the creek, keeping his eyes well about him. There was no sign of an intruder, however, and after ten minutes' inspection of the vicinity he returned to camp.

He expected to find Yen Chin sitting on the log where he had left him, but the Celestial was not there. Neither was he in his blanket. Frank Richards gazed round him in surprise, and then in anger as he realised the truth.

Yen Chin had tricked him into leaving his post while he cleared out of the camp.

"The young bounder!" exclaimed Frank Richards savagely.

He shook Bob Lawless and woke him.

"Hallo! What's up?" yawned Bob.

"Yen Chin's cleared off."

"Eh?" Bob jumped up, and Beauclerc, awakened, too, followed his example. "What on earth has he cleared off for at this time of night? It's nearly an hour to dawn yet. Why didn't you stop him?"

Frank explained rather ruefully.

"The cunning heathen!" growled Bob. "But I don't catch on. Why should he sneak away like that? He hasn't taken a horse."

"No; I should have heard him if he'd touched the horses. He's gone on foot. Blessed if I know why!"

"It would be plain enough if he had borrowed money of us," said Bob. "But he was dead broke when he came in, and he can't gamble with Gunten without any money. Lucky I had the gold-dust in a safe place."

He put his hand in his pocket as he spoke, and then he uttered a sudden yell of wrath. His hand came out empty.

"Gone!" repeated Frank, in amazement. "What's gone?"

"The buckskin bag. He's picked my pocket while I was asleep!" roared Bob.

"The awful young rascal!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "He's robbed us! And—and he's gone to Gunten, wherever he is, to gamble the dust away."

Bob set his teeth. "That's enough of Yen Chin, and of Gunten, too," he said. "We can't follow him now, but we'll pick up his trail at dawn. And I guess we'll make it hot for the whole gang if we run them down, and I calculate we will!"

And, with the first gleam of dawn on the mountains, the chums of Cedar Creek led out their horses and took the trail.

ROUGH JUSTICE!

"BY gum! That heathen again!" exclaimed Kern Gunten.

Keller grinned.

The two Swiss schoolboys were camped in a ravine, a good ten miles from the creek where Frank Richards & Co. had pitched their camp. They were seated by a camp-fire, breakfasting late in the sunny morning, when Yen Chin came in sight.

"Hallo, heathen!" grinned Gunten, as the Chinese came panting up. "I guess you've had a long walk. What have you got there?"

Yen Chin held up a buckskin bag.

"What's in it?" asked Keller curiously.

"Gold-dustee."

"Phew!" exclaimed Gunten, as Yen Chin showed the contents of the bag. "Where did you get that, John?"

"Findee."

Gunten grinned. He did not care very much where Yen Chin had found the gold, as a matter of fact.

"Playee pooke," said Yen Chin. "Oh, yes!"

"As long as you've got any dust!" chuckled Gunten.

And the three sat down to the game round a log that served as a table, and in a few minutes it was going strong under the bright sunshine. But that game of poker was destined to be interrupted.

Gunten had valued the bag of gold-dust at a hundred dollars, and Yen Chin was allowed to use "chips" representing that sum, and two-thirds of the amount had passed to Gunten and Keller when there was a ringing of horses' hoofs on the rocks of the ravine.

Gunten sprang to his feet in alarm. Frank Richards, Beauclerc, and Bob Lawless were riding down the ravine at a trot.

"So we've found you!" said Bob Lawless grimly.

"I guess you've come to our camp without being asked," growled Gunten. "What do you want?"

"First of all we want the bag of dust Yen Chin took last night," said Bob. "I see you've got it there. Take it up, Franky."

Gunten made a stride forward.

"Leave it alone!" he exclaimed. "Yen Chin's lost chips to us for sixty dollars already, and it comes out of that dust."

Yen Chin can't lose our gold to you," said Beauclerc contemptuously. "You are a scoundrel to be gambling with the poor little beggar, anyway."

"Mind your own business! Let that bag alone!" shouted Gunten.

He caught at Frank Richards' wrist. Without a word, but with a glitter in his eyes, Frank struck the Swiss full in the face, and Gunten rolled over on the rocks.

Frank slipped the buckskin bag into his pocket. Gunten scrambled up, his hand on the knife at his belt.

"You'll get hurt if you show that stoker, Gunten," said Bob Lawless quietly. And Gunten wisely did not draw it.

"Yen Chin, you young villain," said Bob, "you've robbed us, and we're fed-up, and we're done with you. There's your horse—take it!"

"That's our horse," blustered Keller. "The Chinese lost it at poker."

Thud! Bob's answer was a drive from the shoulder, and Keller went down. He stayed there.

"That's for you," said Bob. "You've got that little rascal to gamble away his money, and you can keep it; but you're not going to keep his horse. Take it at once, Yen Chin."

The Chinese obeyed.

Bob Lawless took a trail-rope and coiled it, the two Swiss watching him apprehensively. They had grounds for apprehension.

The rancher's son began on Gunten, and he laid the trail-rope on with hearty vigour. The Swiss yelled and dodged, and dodged and yelled, and fairly took to his heels at last. Keller sped after him, not escaping three or four lashes as he went.

"I guess that lets them out!" growled Bob. "Now, come along with us, Yen Chin, you heathen thief!"

"Pool h'l Chinese solly."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Bob.

The chums of Cedar Creek rode away, Yen Chin with them. Not till they were quite gone did Gunten and Keller venture to return to their camp.

The schoolboys rode on, and Bob Lawless halted at last where a trail marked by horses' hoofs led to the distant camp of Tucker's Bar. He pointed along the trail.

"That's your way, Yen Chin."

Yen Chin's face fell, and his mouth drooped pathetically.

"Pool h'l Chinese velly solly!" he pleaded. "No playee pooke any mole. No takee gold-dustee any mole. Velly good boy! Velly solly! Me cly!"

"You can cry as much as you like," answered Bob, "you heathen humbug! If you come near our camp again I'll take the trail-rope to you, and you'll remember it! Seat!"

"Me no leave handsome old Bob!"

"That's enough!"

The three chums rode away together, and Yen Chin, evidently realising that it was final, remained sitting his pony on the trail, his eyes following them. The last they saw of him he was still sitting there motionless, with a downcast face that haunted the chums for a long time afterwards.

Next Week: "THE CLAIM-JUMPERS!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

THE CHIEF BUCK OF THE BENBOW IS UP AGAINST IT IN THIS GRIPPING YARN
OF THE CHUMS OF THE SCHOOL SHIP.



IN THE TROPICAL NIGHT.

"THE niggers are going it!" Dick Rodney remarked.

"They are, and no mistake! What a thundering row!" said Jack Drake. "How long do they keep this up, Cazalet?"

Arthur Cazalet smiled.

"It's always like this after the races," he said. "They keep up the jamboree till ten o'clock. After that the police go round and clear them off, and they have to stop it. They often break out again in the middle of the night, though. They're a jolly crowd."

The tropical night had closed in on the island of Trinidad. Innumerable stars, like points of fire, gleamed in the dark blue velvet of the sky. Fireflies danced and spun in myriads amid the deep shadows of the Savannah.

From grass and shrubbery came the incessant croaking of the toads. It was the usual nightly chorus of Trinidad, but it was almost drowned now by the dull, droning beat of tom-tom and chac-chac. All over the wide Savannah groups of negroes were dancing in the starlight. The races were over, the merry-go-rounds were still, the booths were closed and their coolie proprietors gone home; but the blacks were still keeping up the jamboree. The band at the grand stand had played "God Save the King" and gone, and the blaring tom-tom reigned without a rival.

Arthur Cazalet drove the buggy along the shaded road at a good pace. Drake and Rodney watched the dark Savannah and the dim figures of the dancers that loomed up and vanished. The scene was interesting enough to the juniors of the Benbow, but their thoughts were with Vernon Daubeny of the Shell, whom they had come to seek.

On the school ship, anchored off Port of Spain, the Benbow fellows were answering to their names at call-over, but there were three who would not answer "Adsum" when Mr. Packe

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DAUBENY'S DEBT!

By Owen Conquest.

called the roll. The chums of the Fourth were well aware that they had taken a serious step in remaining away from the school ship after sunset; Mr. Packe was very severe on that point. But Jack Drake was determined that Daubeny should not be left to his fate, and Rodney would not leave his chum.

But where was Daubeny of the Shell? As he glanced round into the shadows where the fireflies whirled, Drake's heart sank.

How was he to find Daubeny?

All he knew was that Daubeny had refused to return to the Benbow, and that Egan and Torrence had parted with him on the Savannah. Seeking him there was like looking for a needle in a load of hay. Yet Drake felt that he could not abandon the rash, reckless fellow as his own chums had done.

Cazalet stopped the buggy under the trees by the roadside. The three alighted, and the young West Indian tethered the horse to one of the trees. The planter's son was looking very grave. He was prepared to do anything he could to help his friends from the Benbow, and without him they would have been helpless. But exactly what was to be done was not clear.

"It won't be easy," said Drake, knitting his brows. "Daub is somewhere about—"

"But you don't know where he's likely to have remained?" asked Arthur.

Drake shook his head.

"All we know is what you heard Torrence tell us. Daub lost money on the races to that sharper who calls himself Captain St. Leger, and he's afraid to go back to the Benbow, because the rotter would follow him there for his money—but goodness knows what he intends to do. I suppose he isn't very clear himself on that point."

"But if you find him?" asked Arthur. "Will you be able to persuade him to go back with you?"

"I hope so," said Drake. "If not—"

"Well, if not?" asked Dick Rodney.

"We'll make him. If he won't come, we'll collar him and bundle him into the buggy, and take him back to the Benbow whether he likes it or not," said Drake. "That's all we can do."

Arthur smiled.

"Well, I'll help you if I can," he said. "The fellow oughtn't to be left here. He may get into no end of trouble. There are a good many rough characters here at night after the races. It's no good driving any farther. We shall have to make inquiries—somehow—"

"Hallo! What's that?"

A cry came suddenly from the shadows by the roadside.

"Help!"

"Somebody in trouble," said Rodney, peering through the darkness in the direction of the cry.

"Help! Rescue!"

Drake started.

"That's a Benbow fellow!" he exclaimed. "It's not Daub's voice, though. Some other chap has been left behind here. Come on!"

Jack Drake started running as he was speaking. Rodney and Arthur followed him quickly, running swiftly under the trees.

"Ow! Yow! Leggo! Help!"

"Toodles!" exclaimed Drake.

The chums of the Fourth knew the voice of their fat studymate now. It was Tuckey Toodies! They had supposed that Tuckey had gone back with the Benbow party, in charge of Dr. Pankey. Evidently he hadn't!

Drake came first on the scene. In the dim light under the trees he discerned the fat junior wriggling in the grasp of a powerful-looking mulatto in seafaring garb.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!" Toodles wailed. "I'll give you my watch, you beast! Ow! I tell you—Yow! Ow!"

Drake came panting up. He flung himself on the mulatto and grasped him. The man turned on him with a savage oath.

"Oh dear!" gasped Toodles, staggering away as the ruffian released him. "Another of 'em! Oh dear! Ow—ow! Help!"

Jack Drake was struggling with the mulatto. It was fortunate for him that Rodney and Cazalet came up. The latter had his whip in his hand, and he dealt the footpad a heavy blow with the butt.

The ruffian released Drake, springing back with a fierce oath. His hand went to his belt for a weapon; but as the three closed in on him he changed his mind, backed away, and took to his heels.

His footsteps pattered swiftly down the road towards the town, and he vanished in the darkness.

The juniors turned to Toodles. The fat youth had fallen on his knees and was howling in terrified accents, too scared to realise that he was rescued.

"Help!" he yelled. "Oh dear! Keep off! You can have my watch! Ow! Yow! Help! Rescue!"

"You silly ass!" roared Drake.

Toodles jumped.

"I—I—I say, who's that?" he gasped.

"You howling ass, get up!"

"Is—is that you, Drake?"

"Yes, you dummy!" growled Drake.

He took Toodles by one fat ear and jerked him to his feet, to the accompaniment of a loud and anguished howl from Toodles.

"Yow-w-w-w! Leggo! You rotter, wharrer you pulling my ear for?" howled Toodles.

"Stop your silly row!" growled Rodney. "There's nothing to be frightened at now, you silly ass!"

Toodles gasped for breath.

"I—I wasn't frightened, of course!" he said. "In fact, I knew it was you fellows. I was only pulling your leg, you know—"

"Cheese it!"

"I say, how did you come here?" asked Tuckey. "I got left behind—I only went to buy some oranges from a coolie chap, and the beasts went off without me, you know, and I must have lost my way. And that beast Daub wouldn't give me any money to get a lift back to Port of Spain—"

Jack Drake interrupted him eagerly:

"You've seen Daub?"

"Yes, the rotter—he's in an awful bad temper. He actually kicked me. I told him it wasn't my

fault he'd played the goat and lost his money. But he kicked me! I just left him, you know. I wasn't going to stand that. It's a thing no fellow would stand. I say, is that Cazalet? Have you got the buggy here, Cazalet?"

"Yes," said Arthur.

Tuckey gasped with relief.

"But I'm here to help Drake find Daubeny," added Arthur.

"Well, Drake and Rodney can look for Daubeny, while you drive me back to the Benbow," suggested Tuckey Toodies brightly. "You see, I'm tired. I want to get in to supper, too. Yow! Ow—ow! If you don't leave off shaking me, Drake, you beast, I'll kick your shins!"

"Bump him!" growled Rodney.

"Why, you rotter— Oh, my hat! Yoop!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Wharrer you pitching into me for?" howled Tuckey Toodies. "Oh dear! Of all the rotters—"

"Where's Daub?"

FOR HIS OWN SAKE.

TUCKEY TOODLES gasped for breath. It was clear that he wasn't in the least interested in Vernon Daubeny; he was, as usual, only interested in his own worthy self. But it dawned on his fat brain that his worthy self was not to receive first consideration in this instance.

"We're here to find Daubeny," said Drake, glaring at the fat Fourth Former. "We're not going back without him. We'll take you with us when we go, but we're not going without Daub. Understand that?"

"I think you're an awful beast, Drake! After the fearful dangers I've been through—"

"You fat idiot—"

"I've nearly lost my watch—a valuable gold watch that was a birthday present from my uncle, Sir William—"

"Will you tell us where you saw Daub, and when? Or shall I wring your silly neck?" exclaimed Drake, out of all patience.

"I'm just going to tell you, aren't I? I was only mentioning that my valuable gold watch is—"

"Oh, kick him!" exclaimed Rodney.

"I'm telling you, aren't I?" howled Toodles.

"I saw Daub near the grand stand about half an hour ago, I think. I don't know whether he's there now. I dare say he isn't. I think most likely he's gone home. We'd better go, too. Where's the buggy?"

"The grand stand!" said Arthur. "We can find that easily enough. Let's start at once."

"I say, you're not going to leave me alone, are you?" yelled Tuckey Toodies.

"You can come along with us, you ass!" said Drake.

"I'm too tired to walk, you know."

"Stay where you are, then!"

"I say—"

Drake & Co. moved off in the darkness, and Tuckey Toodies bolted after them. He found that he wasn't too tired to walk, after all.

"I'm coming, dear old tops!" he gasped. "Don't hurry like that, you know! Blessed if I see what you want to bother about Daubeny for! I think he's a beast! He refused to lend me—"

"What was he doing when you left him?" asked Drake.

"Lying in the grass."

"He may be still there," said Arthur. "I know the way. We'd better put on speed, and we may find him there."

"Trot," said Drake.

"I say, I can't run—"

"Please yourself!" snapped Drake.

The juniors trotted on by the path over the Savannah, and Tuckey Toodles gasped behind them. They passed close by many groups of dancing negroes, through the deafening blare of the tom-toms and the banjo. The dancers did not even glance at them, and the juniors did not think of pausing to look on at the strange scenes.

The grand stand loomed up ahead of them against the starry sky at last.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Arthur, slackening speed.

The juniors paused.

"Oh dear!" gasped Tuckey Toodles. "I'm out of breath. Have any of you fellows got anything to eat about you? I'm hungry, you know."

Tuckey was not heeded.

"We'd better call out," said Rodney. "If Daub's here he will answer, I suppose."

"Daub!" shouted Drake.

"Daubeny! Daub!"

Jack Drake's clear voice rang far and wide through the tropical night.

"Do you remember just where you saw him, Tuckey?"

"Of course I don't!" answered Toodles peevishly. "I say I'm hungry—"

"Daubeny!"

"Daub!"

"Hallo!" A voice came from the darkness. "Who's calling me?"

"Here he is!" exclaimed Drake joyfully.

Drake had his electric torch in his pocket. He turned on the light and ran in the direction of the voice. He came suddenly on Daubeny of the Shell.

Vernon Daubeny was lying in the grass; he had raised himself on his elbow, and he stared up blankly at Jack Drake. The light, as it fell on his face, showed him pale and almost haggard.

"You, Drake!" he muttered. "What are you doing here at this time of night? It's past nine."

"What are you doing?" exclaimed Drake.

"Camping out!" answered Daubeny, with a bitter grin. "I'm staying here. No business of yours, I suppose?"

"We came to look for you," answered Drake, taking no notice of the Shell fellow's manner.

"How the thump did you know I was staying out, then?"

"We met Torrence and Egan on their way back, and Torrence told us."

Daubeny's lip curled bitterly.

"They left me," he said. "My own fault, though; I wouldn't go with them, and they didn't want to stay out. Well, now you've found me you can leave me. I'm not askin' you for anything."

"You can't stay here," answered Drake quietly.

"I'm goin' to."

"You can't camp out—"

"It's delightful weather for campin' out,"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

answered Daubeny in the same tone of reckless bitterness. "I'm all right."

"Wait till the dew falls and you'll be drenched," said Drake. "You'd wake up in the morning with an ague."

"I don't care."

"Well, I care," answered Drake shortly. He glanced round. Arthur, from a motive of delicacy, was keeping back at a distance, and Dick Rodney stayed with him. Tuckey Toodles had sat down at once to rest. "Look here, Daub, don't play the goat," went on Drake. "You've got to come back to the Benbow."

Daubeny did not move.

"I can't come back," he said. "I dare say you mean well, Drake, but it can't be done. I owe that sharper Captain St. Leger twenty pounds; he won it from me on the races. Don't tell me I've been a fool; I know that. I can't go back. I can't pay the man before the Benbow sails, and he won't trust me out of his sight. He's coming to the Benbow to show me up if I don't pay him. And I can't! I can't face the disgrace." Daubeny's lips quivered. "Just fancy the scene! All the Benbow crowd and the ship's officers and the masters, and that dashed blackguard comin' on board to claim money! I wouldn't face it for anything!"

"You can't stay here."

"I'm going to."

"Where is that fellow to be found?" asked Drake.

"He's got a billiards saloon in Port of Spain," said Daubeny. "He could be found there to-morrow, most likely. He's given me till the mornin' to go there and pay him, in fact. I can't pay him. I suppose you're not offering to lend me twenty quids?" added Daub with bitter sarcasm.

"I would if I had it," said Drake.

Daubeny looked at him curiously.

"Well, I believe you would," he said, his expression softening a little. "But if you haven't it, what's the odds? You won't get any more remittances while we're at Trinidad—and I shan't, either. You can't help me. Let me alone."

"You awful ass!" exclaimed Drake. "Are you thinking of staying behind when the Benbow sails, then?"

"Nothin' else to be done."

"We'll manage to help you somehow," said Drake. "Most of my tin is gone, but we may manage it somehow."

"That's not good enough."

"Come back to the Benbow with us, Daub, like a sensible chap," urged Drake.

"I can't."

"You must, Daub!"

"I won't, then!" said Daubeny sullenly. And he leaned back in the grass again.

Jack Drake stood looking down at him, his brows knitted. Daub's conduct that day had been reckless and blackguardly, but Drake knew that it was Egan, his evil genius, who was chiefly to blame.

Even had it not been so, Drake would not have abandoned him. He understood Daub's shrinking from the scene on the Benbow if Captain St. Leger should come on board to claim his money. The "show-up" would be serious enough for the dandy of the Shell. But the fact remained that Daub had to go back to the school-ship.

"You must come," said Drake, at last. "You'll be glad later that we made you come, Daub."

"You can't make me come," sneered Daub. "I tell you I won't."

"Rodney! Cazalet!" called out Drake.

His chums came up quickly.

"Daub's got to come back to the ship," said Drake. "He says he won't come. Lend me a hand, will you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Come on, Daub!"

The Shell fellow leaped to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"If you dare— Let go!" he shouted, as the juniors grasped him.

"You're bound to come, old chap," answered Drake. "It's for your own sake, you know."

"Will you let me go?" shouted Daubeny furiously.

"No," said Drake grimly.

"Then take that!"

Daubeny struck out fiercely. Jack Drake knocked up the blow just in time, and the next moment Vernon Daubeny's arms were pinned to his sides.

"Come on!" said Drake quietly.

Daubeny struggled fiercely; but Drake and Rodney, on either side of him, held him with grim determination, and he had to march. Arthur Cazalet led the way, Drake and Rodney following with their prisoner, and Tuckey Toodles brought up the rear, occasionally emitting a fat chuckle.

BROUGHT ON BOARD!

VERNON DAUBENY'S face was white with rage as he walked between the two Fourth Formers. He resisted at first, but he soon found that resistance was useless, and yielded to the inevitable.

The party tramped over the Savannah, skirting the groups of dancing negroes, towards the roadside where the buggy had been left.

In the darkness the juniors could scarcely have found their way, but Arthur Cazalet knew every foot of the Savannah, on the border of which he had lived most of his life.

They arrived at last under the wide-spreading branches of the roadside trees, where, in the deep shadow, the horse was tethered. Tuckey Toodles bundled into the buggy at once, and Cazalet loosened the horse from the tether.

"Jump in, Daub!" said Drake amicably.

Daubeny drew a deep breath of rage.

"Will you let me go?" he exclaimed, between his teeth.

"Can't be done."

"You meddlin' rotter—"

"Get in!"

"I won't!"

"Lift him, Rodney!"

"You bet!" said Dick Rodney briefly.

Daubeny gritted his teeth.

"I'll get in," he said savagely. "Hang you, you needn't drag me. Let me alone, will you?"

He stepped into the buggy, the two Fourth Formers following quickly to give him no chance to dodge. They sat down with their arms linked in Daubeny's. Arthur Cazalet dropped into the driver's seat and gathered up the reins.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Quite, thanks!"

"Off we go, then!"

The buggy was set in motion, the horse trotting swiftly away towards Port of Spain and the sea. Daubeny sat squeezed between Drake and Rodney in grim silence.

Once or twice he cast a quick glance round, as if the idea had come to him of leaping from the

vehicle. But if he thought of that desperate expedient it was futile, for the Fourth Formers did not let go of his arms. Tuckey Toodles sat in the bottom of the buggy and nodded off to sleep as the vehicle rattled along the smooth road into the town.

As they drew near the Cazalets' villa, Drake tapped the West Indian on the arm. Arthur glanced round.

"That's your show," said Drake. "It's not fair to keep you out any later, old fellow. We can walk the rest; we know the way."

If Rupert de Vere Toodles had not been asleep there would have been an instantaneous and emphatic protest from the bottom of the buggy. But only a snore was heard from Tuckey Toodles.

Arthur shook his head.

"I'll drive you on to the quay," he said. "I can explain to father why I'm late—I mean, that I drove down some Benbow fellows who were left behind. Pater won't mind."

"It's awfully good of you," said Drake gratefully. "I can't say I fancy tramping miles just now."

"Right-ho! It's all right."

And the buggy rattled on through Port of Spain. In taking a short cut to the quay the buggy passed through a rather dingy street near the docks. On the steps of a brightly lighted building a man with a moustache was lighting a cigar, and he glanced at the buggy as it passed. Daubeny clenched his hands, and Drake frowned as he recognised "Captain" St. Leger, the race-course sharper.

The captain recognised the party in the buggy.

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and waved his hand with the cigar in it, with a mocking grin.

"Is that his place, Daub?" asked Drake.

"Yes; he runs a billiards saloon there," grunted Daubeny. "I—I dropped in once with Egan. You can tell them on the Benbow, if you like."

"Don't be an ass!"

"Here's the quay," said Rodney. "Wake up, 'oodles!" He stirred the fat junior with the toe of his shoe.

"Groooogh-booh!" came drowsily from the sleeper.

"Wake up, fathead!"

"Ow! Lemme alone! 'Tain't rising-bell!" mumbled Toodles. "Don't you shove my hammock, you beast! Ow! Ow! Ah!" Toodles woke up. "I say, I'm jolly hungry! I wonder whether Packer will let us have any supper?"

Arthur drew in the horse, and his passengers jumped out of the buggy, Daubeny still under guard. The juniors bade a cordial good-night to their West Indian chum and shook hands heartily with him, and Arthur drove away for home.

A black boatman was roused out of slumber in the lee of a warehouse, and he drowsily demanded double fare for a row to the Benbow, on which lights could be seen twinkling across the starlit water. A coloured doek policeman strolled up to inquire who and what the party were, and saluted politely when Drake explained. Daubeny was very silent till the policeman was gone, but as Drake led him into the boat down the steps he made a last angry appeal.

"You're forcing me to go on board, Drake."

"You know you ought to go, old scout!"

"I don't want to, I tell you!" muttered Daubeny savagely. "Think of the scene to-morrow. I tell you I can't stand it!"

"We must try to help you out somehow," said Drake quietly. "You've got to go on board, Daub. You'll be glad of it later."

"Confound you for your meddlin'!"

Jack Drake made no reply to that. He sat in the stern, with his arm still in Daubeny's, and the boat pushed off from the stone steps. In silence they pulled out to the Benbow.

The voice of Mr. Pigtop, the chief mate, hailed them as they came under the ship's counter.

"Boat ahoy! Keep clear!"

"It's us, Mr. Pigtop!" called back Drake. "Throw us a line!"

"Oh, you young scallawags, is it?" grunted the chief mate. "Mr. Packer, your boys have come back."

The Fourth Form master was on deck, doubtless in a state of anxiety about the absentees.

The juniors came mockingly on board, Drake paying the boatman and dismissing him.

Mr. Packer eyed them grimly.

"So you have returned?" he said.

"Yes, sir. We—"

"You need make no excuses now. Go to bed at once. I will hear what you have to say in the morning," snapped Mr. Packer.

"Yes, sir."

There was nothing more to be done that night; it was already past bed-time for the Benbow fellows. Daubeny walked away without a word to his cabin, and Drake & Co. went to Cabin No. 8.

Five minutes later they were fast asleep in their hammocks.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,641.

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES!

JACK DRAKE was up before rising-bell the following morning. It was Sunday, and that morning the Benbow crowd were to attend service at Trinity Church ashore. But before that, Drake had plenty to do. He had slept soundly, but on waking his first thoughts were for Vernon Daubeny.

Captain St. Leger had given his dupe until eight o'clock in the morning to pay his debt, but Daubeny had not the remotest prospect of paying it.

Drake sought him out in the Shell quarters before breakfast. Egan and Torrence were still in their hammocks, but Daub was coming out of the cabin as Jack Drake came along. He gave the Fourth Former a bitter look.

"I came to see you, Daub," said Drake.

"Well, you've landed me in trouble," said Daubeny, with a sneer. "I can't get ashore until the fellows start for church. I've got to wait till St. Leger comes on board and disgraces me before the whole school. You've let me in for that, hang you!"

"Even that's better than catching a fever sleeping out on the Savannah."

"I suppose I know my own business best."

"It appears you don't!" retorted Drake. "Don't let us rag, Daub. I want to help you out."

"You can't!"

"A messenger could get ashore, if we can't," said Drake. "I could send Tin Tacks. It's about the money—"

Daubeny thawed a little.

"I know you mean to be friendly," he said. "But it can't be done. Where the thump are we to raise twenty quids? Most of the fellows have run through their money ashore—most of them have got their pockets empty. You can't get an advance from Mr. Packer without saying what it's for." He grinned in a rather grim way. "You couldn't tell him, I suppose?"

"Try what you can do in the Shell, and I'll beat up the Fourth," said Drake. "If we can raise enough tin to see you through, the darkey will go ashore and see the blackguard."

"I'll try, if you like," muttered Daub. "I—I was thinking of it—but—well, I'll try!"

"Don't lose a minute, then!"

The juniors separated, to proceed with their rather curious tasks. As the rising-bell sounded, and the Benbow fellows turned out, Jack Drake made a round of the Fourth—borrowing. Most of the available cash had been lately expended in the excursion to the Pitch Lake, and Drake had only a couple of pounds left. Rodney had less, but he lent what he had.

In the Fourth Form there was a general shortness of cash. As the Benbow was due to sail in a few days, and there was no spending money at sea, the juniors mostly "blued" their cash ashore in Port of Spain—making hay while the sun shone, as it were. Most of the fellows were willing to lend to Drake, but they had little to lend.

When the captain of the Fourth rejoined Daubeny on deck, just before breakfast, he had a total of seven pounds.

"What luck, Daub?" he asked.

"Four pounds ten," said the Shell fellow, with a grimace.

(Continued at foot of next page.)



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"Then that makes eleven pounds ten between us!"

Daubeny's face fell. "It's no good," he said. "I knew it couldn't be done, Drake. It's good of you, but you ought to have left me on the Savannah."

"Roh! I say, you don't feel inclined to make a clean breast of it to Mr. Vavasour?" asked Drake, hesitating.

"I'd rather jump into the sea!"

"But—"

"It's no use," muttered Daubeny. "I know—"

"Breakfast!" called out Sawyer major. "What are you fellows confabbing over? Here comes Vavasour."

Mr. Vavasour came along the deck, and the juniors went to breakfast. It was now eight

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o'clock, the time when, according to Captain St. Leger's stipulation, the debt should be paid at his billiards saloon, lest worse should befall the debtor. The debt could not be paid, and the sharper had to be left to do his worst.

Drake's heart ached for the wretched fellow, whose white face he glanced at several times during breakfast. He noted, too, that Mr. Vavasour glanced at Daubeny rather sharply.

The two juniors were listening for a sound of St. Leger's arrival on the ship. But when they came out from breakfast the sharper had not put in an appearance. There was a hugging hope in Daubeny's breast that the rascal would not dare to come.

"It's possible that it was only a threat, Daub."

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Drake said, in a low voice, as they leaned on the rail and watched the shore. "After all, your Form-master wouldn't allow you to pay him, if he came, and most likely he knows that."

"It's possible," muttered Daub. "But—but this suspense—" He broke off with a shiver. If ever a reckless punter was punished for his folly Vernon Daubeny was being punished then.

"Time to put your clean collars on, you fellows," said Tuckey Toodles, joining the two juniors at the rail. "The fellows are getting ready for church. I suppose you can lend me a collar, Drake? I've borrowed a tie from Rodney—you needn't mention it to him—he doesn't know yet!"

A cheery crowd boarded the long-boat to go ashore for church, but there were at least three serious faces among them.

As they stepped on the quay, Daubeny's eyes roved round him, in fear of seeing the swarthy face of the sharper. But Captain St. Leger was not there.

The Benbow crowd walked in orderly array towards Trinity Church—attracting a good many glances from the varied crowds in the streets of

THE MAN FROM BRAZIL!

(Continued from page 25.)

"Oh ewikey!"

The juniors looked at one another with tense faces. It seemed too terrible for them to believe, but Monty Lowther, at least, had no doubt.

"But—but—" stammered Tom. "what can it possibly mean? Why should he be afraid of Gussy getting to Rio—for that's what it amounts to!"

"I don't know. But Gussy won't get to Rio if that villain can stop him!" said Monty Lowther. "I know that! It's no use asking me what it means; I can't make it out any more than you can. It's something to do with that letter from Lord Conway, but how and why, goodness knows! But I can tell you this, Gussy won't live long enough to see the Blue Star steam into the bay at Rio de Janeiro if that villain can prevent it. He warned Gussy what to expect, and he was going to keep his word!"

Arthur Augustus polished his eyeglass thoughtfully.

Port of Spain—Jagueros, coolies, Indians, Chinamen, Spanish, Venezuelan, and mulattoes and Creoles.

Daubeny's eyes were about him all the time—though not on the Sunday crowd of promouers. It was near the church that a flashily-dressed man stepped towards the schoolboy procession, a grin widening his gash of a mouth. It was "Captain" St. Leger. He saluted Daubeny. "I've been expecting you," he said.

"I—I—" "Make it to-morrow morning at eight," said the captain. "I'll let you off for Sunday. But if you don't show up to-morrow morning with the money—" His eyes glittered.

"Daubeny!" Mr. Vavasseur's voice rang out sharply. "Walk on at once! How dare you, sir!"

Daubeny cringed and walked on hurriedly. Captain St. Leger waved his cigar to him mockingly, and sauntered away. Daubeny walked on—the sword of Damocles still suspended over his head!

Next Week: "THE LOSER PAYS!"

"I wathah think that Lowthah is wight," he remarked calmly. "Probably I have had a vewy narrow escape!"

"Feel like getting a steamer for home at Madeira?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye and turned it on Blake in mild surprise.

"Are you jokin'?" he inquired.

"Fathend!" answered Blake.

"Wealdy, Blak—"

"We're on our guard now, at any rate!" said Tom Merry. "We'll jolly well see that the brain doesn't get another chance, if that is los game! Keep that cabin door locked to-night, you fellows."

"You bet!" said Blake.

The St. Jim's juniors returned to their bunks, but it was long before they slept again. Mysterious as it was—a mystery they could not begin to fathom—they knew now that the shadow of deadly peril hung over the party bound for Brazil.

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