

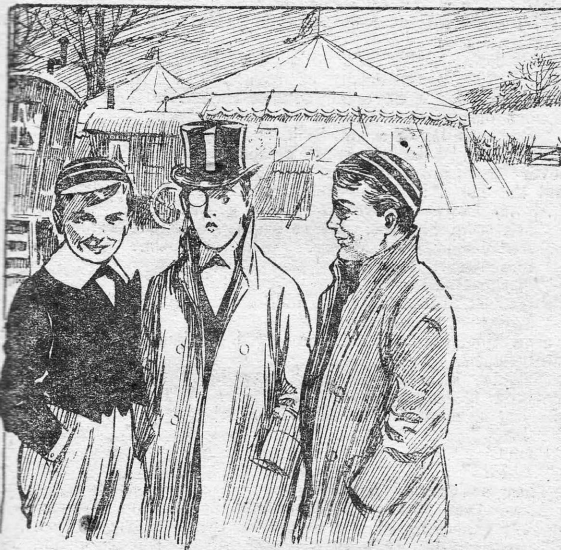
EVERY

THURSDAY

The GEM LIBRARY

COMPLETE
STORIES

FOR ALL AND EVERY STORY A GEM!



THE CIRCUS

AT

ST. JIM'S.

A Grand Long, Complete School

Tale of

TOM MERRY & Co.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

"What's Up?"

"WHAT'S on?"
"Blessed if I know."
"Something the matter, I suppose."

"Looks like it."
"There's going to be a row, I expect," said Jack Blake of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "What have you been up to, Gussy?"

There was considerable surprise, and a great deal of curiosity, among the boys of St. Jim's—especially the boys of the junior Forms.

The school had been summoned to hall for the Head to speak to them after prayers, and even Tom Merry & Co., who were generally up to the times and knew what was going on as a rule, were quite in the dark as to the cause.

Since the time Gore was expelled, there had been no such gathering of the clans, as Jack Blake described it, and, as nobody was to be expelled now, the fellows wondered what it meant.

That it meant a row of some kind, few of them doubted. The question was, what was the matter, and who was the culprit?

There were various conjectures, and when the boys crowded into the big hall, a little group of Shell and Fourth-Form fellows stood discussing it.

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell—confessed that they didn't know what the Head wanted, and the chums of Study No. 6 could offer no solution to the riddle.

Blake suggested that there was to be a row, but that suggestion had already been made a dozen times.

The fact that it was Wednesday caused no little alarm

among the juniors—for Wednesday was a half-holiday, and if there was a row the school might be gated, and that prospect was enough to daunt any of them.

Jack Blake poked his elegant chum Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the ribs with an aggressive forefinger.

"What have you been up to, Gussy?"

D'Arcy started out of a brown study. He had been thinking.

"Ow! Weally, Blake, I wish you would not be such a wuff ass!" he remonstrated. "I uttahly detest bein' poked in the wibs! It throws me into a fluttah!"

"Go hon!"

"As to your question, I wegard it as widiculous. I haven't been up to anythin'. How do you know there is goin' to be a wow?"

"Well, there's going to be something. The Head isn't calling us together for the fun of the thing, I suppose."

"I have been thinkin'—"

D'Arcy broke off as Tom Merry extracted a threepenny-piece from his waistcoat-pocket and extended it towards him. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked at the coin, and then at Tom Merry.

"What is the meanin' of that, Tom Mewwy?"

"Take it."

"Weally—"

"It's yours."

"Mine!"

"Yes. You deserve it. You ought to have a threepenny-bit every time you think, old man," said Tom Merry solemnly. "It will encourage you. And if you save them all up, you will have two or three shillings by the end of the year."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I can see nothing whatevah to

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

cackle at in Tom Mewwy's widdiculous wemarks! As I observed, I was thinkin'! I think that this gathewin' is pwobably due to Goah!"

"Whose gore?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! I mean George Goah of the Shell! You wemembah that he was expelled fwom St. Jim's—"

"That's an old story now," said Tom Merry, who noticed that Gore of the Shell was within hearing, and didn't want to wound him.

Gore had been trying, in some ways, to amend since that time. His "sacking" had been a severe lesson to him, although the Head had allowed him to come back—and Tom Merry wanted bygones to be bygones.

"Yaas, watah! But it has stwuck me—"

"Where?"

"Pway don't intewwupt me, Blake! It has stwuck me that pewwaps Goah is goin' to be expelled again, you know!"

"Rats!"

"If you say 'wats' to me, Mannahs—"

"Well, I do," said Manners. "Gore has turned over a new leaf. The Head allowed him to come back. Why should he expel him again?"

"Well, he has certainly turned ovah a new leaf, but he has had welapses," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "He acted like a wotten cad when the circus was at Wylcombe. You wemembah how caddishly he behaved to that charmin' gal, the young lady widah! Besides—"

"Oh, ring off—Gore can hear you!"

"Bai Jove, if Goah is heah, I may as well ask him his opinion!"

"Don't be an ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy! Pway dwy up, as I should be sowwy to make a vulgah scene in hall by givin' you a feahful thwashin'!"

Tom Merry grinned, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned to the junior who had always been called the cad of the Shell. He gave Gore a scrutinising glance through his eyeglass.

"Goah, deah boy—"

Gore's face was darkly clouded. He glared at the swell of the Fourth Form, and his eyes glinted. D'Arcy's remarks had not pleased him.

"Goah, deah boy, do you wegard it as pwob. that you are to be sacked again?" asked Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Gore.

"Weally, Goah—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Blake caught D'Arcy by the arm and swung him back among the Fourth Form fellows. D'Arcy's glass dropped to the end of its cord.

"Bai Jove, Blake—"

"Don't be an ass, Gussy! It isn't Gore this time! More likely you have been playing the giddy goat!" said Blake.

"I decline to admit anythin' of the sort. I am not in the habit of playin' the giddy goat. Pewwaps, howevah, if it is not Goah it may be Glyn."

"Hallo!" said Bernard Glyn of the Shell, the inventor of St. Jim's. "Who's that bragging that they know me?"

"I wegard it as pwob. that it is Glyn. He may have been fixin' up some more of his wotten inventions, or the Head may have sat down in his electwic chair—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No such luck!" chuckled Bernard Glyn. "The biggest game I ever caught in that is our respected German master, Herr Schneider!"

"Yaas, I wemembah the occasion. Pewwaps it is Kangaroo, then?"

"Why, what the dickens can I have been doing?" said Harry Noble, more familiarly known as "Kangaroo" in the School House at St. Jim's. "I've been as good as any little Georgie in a goody-goody book ever since we came back from Paris!"

"More likely some New House rotter!" said Digby. "Figgins, old man, is it one of your crowd that's going to be expelled?"

Figgins of the New House grinned genially.

"Not half!" he said. "I hear, though, the Head's going to deliver some new instructions, concerning the School House mainly."

"Bai Jove! What are they?" asked D'Arcy unsuspectingly.

"About kids washing their necks every morning," said Figgins, "and changing their collars at least once a week."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Kerr and Wynn, Figgy's chums in the New House, delighted at seeing Arthur Augustus drawn in this way. "Good old Gussy!"

"I wegard Figgins's wemarks as insultin'! Do you think it would attwact much attention, Blake, if I were to give Figgins a thwashin'?"

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Jack Blake grasped his excited chum by the arm.

"I rather think it would, you ass!" he replied. "Shut up! Lathom is blinking this way!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here's the Head!"

The juniors were quiet at once, and they stood in perfect order, in respectful silence, as Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, entered by the door at the upper end of the hall.

CHAPTER 2.

Good News.

DR. HOLMES glanced at the ranks of the gathered Forms—seniors, juniors, and middle school, all in order, with their eyes fastened upon him. Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff, the House-masters, had glanced round severely, but it was not needed—the buzz of talk died away as the Head entered.

Dr. Holmes coughed.

"Boys!"

There was a deep breath.

What was coming? What was the crime, and who was the culprit? Upon whose devoted head were the vials of the doctor's wrath to be poured?

The seniors looked grave; the juniors exchanged glances of alarm.

But Tom Merry felt relieved as he scanned the doctor's face. The usual kindly expression was still there. The Head would not have looked like that if he had been upon a stern errand.

"Boys, to-day is a half-holiday at St. Jim's!"

The school was St. James's Collegiate School, but it was never called anything but St. Jim's, even by the masters and the Head himself, except upon state occasions.

Monty Lowther gave an audible groan.

"It's coming, kids! We're going to be gated!"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "Can't you see?"

"See what?"

"If the Head were waxy he wouldn't say 'St. Jim's.' It's always 'St. James's' when he's got his wool off."

"Jove! I forgot that!"

And the juniors were comforted. Tom Merry was certainly right.

"To-day is a half-holiday," repeated the Head. "I have received a communication from a—an Italian gentleman, offering to come to the school and give an entertainment to the boys."

"Oh!"

"Phew!"

They understood now.

More than once entertainments had been given at the school, especially at the end of a term—magic lanterns, or cinematographs, or lectures—generally to the utter boredom of the boys, who took it all as kindly as they could, as it was intended for their amusement.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" murmured Blake. "It's a giddy lecture—some awful geology or botanical lecture! My only hat! Do you remember the frabjous ass who gave us a lecture on—what was it—the origin of speeches?"

"Ha, ha, you ass! The origin of species!"

"I knew it was some rot. 'I—'"

"Shut up—let's hear the Head!"

"The name of this gentleman is—is—" The Head referred to a card he held in his hand. "The name of this gentleman is Signor Tomsonio."

"Bai Jove!"

"He is the proprietor of a travelling circus and hippodrome."

"Bravo!"

"He offers to bring his circus to St. Jim's for the afternoon and plant it in the field attached to the playing-grounds, so that every boy at St. Jim's may have the opportunity of patronising it."

"Hurrah!"

"Silence, please, till I have finished! I regard a circus entertainment as being both harmless and amusing, and Mr. Railton, who saw the circus when it was in the neighbourhood of Rylcombe a short time ago, gives me a favourable report of it. I think it would be a good plan to allow the Italian gentleman to bring his show to the school for the entertainment of my boys. I have therefore granted him permission to use the field for the erection of his tent, and he will arrive here early this afternoon."

"Hurrah!"

The cheer could no longer be withheld. A visit of a magic-lantern showman, or a lecturer—even a geological lecturer—the boys would have received with resignation.

But the visit of a circus was a matter quite different. No resignation was required in that. They were delighted.

Dr. Holmes smiled as the cheer rang forth.

He was the kindest of head-masters, and left no stone



Mr. Latham waved his arms frantically. "Shoo!" he gasped. "If you do not go away I shall strike you with this umbrella! Shoo! Shoo!"

turned to make his boys more comfortable in every way, in giving them instruction and in providing for their hours of leisure.

But it is safe to say that he had never done a more popular thing than in permitting the "Italian gentleman" to pitch his tent on the ground adjoining St. Jim's.

Most of the fellows had visited the circus when it was at Rylcombe, and they had liked it exceedingly, and they would be very glad of a chance to go again, while those who had not gone were very anxious to go for the first time.

And so the boys cheered.

Dr. Holmes waited for the cheer to die away, and then he spoke again, when something like silence had been restored.

"I hope I need not caution you to be careful in regard to this circus," he said. "I have heard that when this same travelling circus was staying at another school some of the animals were released for a trick by a foolish person—among others, a tiger. I think I can trust you all not to meddle with anything that does not concern you."

"Yes, wathah, sir!" said D'Arcy.

Dr. Holmes looked at him. Arthur Augustus stepped forward from the ranks of the Fourth Form, feeling that he was called upon to say something.

"You can wely upon us, sir," he said. "As a mattah of fact, I shall make it a point to keep an eye on the youngstahs—"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake.

"I decline to shut up, Blake. I wish to assuah Dr. Holmes that he can wely on me—"

"Very good, D'Arcy. That will do."

"I assuah you, sir—"

Blake and Herries dragged the swell of St. Jim's back into his place. There was a ripple of laughter through the great hall.

"You frabjous ass!" muttered Blake.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Ring off!"

"That is all I have to say to you, my boys," said Dr. Holmes. "I am sure I can rely upon you to remember what I have said."

"Certainly, sir," said Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school.

And the Head retired, and the meeting broke up.

There was an excited buzz of talk as the boys poured out of the hall.

"A circus!" said Blake, with deep satisfaction. "And I

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

was afraid it might be another lecture on the origin of speeches—"

"Species!"

"I mean species. One's as good as another, I suppose, though?" said Jack Blake aggressively. "Blessed if there'd be any sense in either. I was afraid it was a lecture, and I hoped it was a magic lantern, and it runs out to be a circus! Hooray!"

"Hip-pip!" said Kangaroo.

"We'll roll up in our thousands, of course," said Tom Merry. "I remember those circus chaps—they were a fine lot of fellows. You remember the chap who did the turn with the tiger? What was his name?"

"Jack Talbot," said Manners.

"Yes, that's it."

"There's something good about a fellow named Jack, I've always noticed that," said Blake.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "But he was decent. And then that clown chap—Joey Pye—the original Joey Pye, he called himself—he was ripping!"

"And the girl rider—"

"Clotilde. Yes."

"The girl Goah was wude to," said Arthur Augustus, a frown coming over his face.

"Let that slide, Gussy—he was licked for it—and Gore seems to be turning over a new leaf lately."

"Yaas, and I do not wish to bwing up his past against him, but if he should twangswess again—"

"You'd give him a fearful thrashing!" grinned Lowther.

"We can guess that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Shell and the Fourth Form fellows separated to go to their different class-rooms. There was a thoughtful look upon the features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He seemed to be turning something over in his mind.

"Do you know, you fellows—" he began suddenly, as they neared the class-room.

"No, I don't!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo, Lathom's not turned up yet!" said Blake, entering the class-room. "It only wants one minute to time. Lathom is late! What does Lathom mean by it? I can't have a Form-master behaving in this way."

"Blake, deah boy—"

"Keeping us waiting!" said Blake indignantly. "He jolly well knows how anxious we are to get on to cube roots and deponent verbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, I was goin' to say—"

"Hallo! Were you speaking, Gussy?"

"You know I was, you ass!"

"Well, I thought I heard a row, but how was I to know that it wasn't somebody filing a saw?" demanded Blake.

"You uttah ass! Howevah, I was goin' to say, apwopos of this circus comin' to St. Jim's, I have always wathah fancied myself as an acwobat."

"Go hon!"

"You must have noticed my twicks on the pawallel bahs in the gym—"

"I've noticed you fall off them."

"I was not alludin' to that. You must have observed that I can turn somersaults in a weally extwordinawy way—"

"Yes, extraordinary somersaults, and no mistake!" agreed Blake, and Herries and Digby giggled.

"Weally, Blake, you persist in misunderstandin' me. I have always fancied that I could be a weally wippin' acwobat if that had happened to be my line of biznay."

"Curious, the fancies people have, isn't it?" said Blake, with a nod.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I wonder where Lathom is?"

"Nevah mind Lathom. I am certain that if I twied I could turn handspwings and double somersaults like that chap Pye in the circus."

"Of course—I don't think!"

"As a mattah of fact, I twied, in the pwivacy of the dorm., aftah that time we went to the circus, and I was quite satisfied with the wesult."

"Some chaps are easily satisfied, aren't they?"

"Weally, Blake, I considah—"

"Give us a show now," suggested Digby. "Lathom isn't nere yet."

"Bai Jove, it's not a bad ideah!"

"Go it, then!" said Jack Blake. "I'll hold your coat!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated, and his chums grinned. That grin decided the swell of St. Jim's.

"Vewy well, deah boys!"

He took off his jacket and handed it to Blake. Then he unhooked his watch and gave it to Digby to hold. Then he placed his eyeglass in the hand of Herries, and his purse was confided to the care of Figgins, and a handful of loose cash—gold and silver—to Kerr.

Then he was ready.

"You see, I'm goin' to turn a somersault," he remarked.

"I take a little wun, and then—"

"Well, take the little run."

"I'm just goin' to begin—"

"Lathom may be here any tick."

"Yaas, I suppose I had bettah huvwuy up."

And Arthur Augustus took a little run towards the door, and—stopped. There was a hoot from the Fourth.

"What's the game now?" demanded Blake.

"I—I—I wasn't weady!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Oh, go it!" said Figgins.

"Vewy well."

Arthur Augustus retreated, and took another little run. Then, as he drew near the door, he slackened, but he sped on again with an effort. It wasn't so easily done, when he came to do it, as he had expected, but he was bound to go through with it now.

Down went his head, and his hands and his feet went over in the air.

"Bravo!" shouted Blake. "Oh—gum—my hat!"

The Fourth made a rush for their forms. In the doorway had suddenly appeared the form of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. The little short-sighted Form-master was coming in to take the class, and he did not see D'Arcy—and D'Arcy, naturally enough, did not see him till too late.

"Look out, Gussy!"

But the warning fell upon deaf ears.

Over went the amateur acrobat, and rolled at the very feet of Mr. Lathom, and his heels came with a far from gentle impact upon the Form-master's waistcoat.

Mr. Lathom gave a gasp, and staggered back, right across the passage to the opposite wall, and Arthur Augustus bumped down in the doorway, and sat there, seemingly turned to stone, staring with horrified eyes at the Form-master.

CHAPTER 3.

Truthful Augustus.

"Bai Jove!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Weally—"

"What!"

"I'm awfully sowwy—"

"D'Arcy!"

"It's a giddy duet!" murmured Jack Blake. "Tenor and baritone. Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth, after the first shock, could not help laughing. Arthur Augustus was still sitting in the doorway, too breathless to move. Mr. Lathom was staring at him as if he were some remarkable specimen of a new kind of animal.

"D'Arcy! How dare you?"

"I'm awfully sowwy, sir—"

"Get up! Get up this instant!"

"Certainly, deah boy—I mean deah sir!"

And Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet, and felt over his bones to make sure that none of them were broken.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "This—this is extraordinary! I—I never saw such a thing before! Are you out of your mind, D'Arcy?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Then you deliberately planned this assault upon your Form-master?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Then what does it mean?"

"It was a twick, sir—I was doin' an acwobatic turn, sir," said D'Arcy sheepishly. "I didn't know you were comin' in, of course, sir."

"I should say not!" said Mr. Lathom sarcastically. "I should certainly say not, D'Arcy! Do you regard the Form-room as being the proper place for acrobatic twicks?"

"Bai Jove, sir, I nevah thought of that!"

"You will think of it another time, perhaps, D'Arcy, as you will have five hundred lines to write out for your thoughtlessness on this occasion," said Mr. Lathom drily.

"Oh, sir—"

"Go to your place at once!"

"With pleasuah, sir!"

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 96.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Arthur Augustus went to his place. Mr. Lathom walked up the Form-room with a great deal of dignity. The juniors indulged in suppressed chuckles.

"You frabjous ass!" whispered Blake, as D'Arcy sat down beside him, and dusted his jacket. "I wonder you weren't sent into the Head to be caned."

"Weally, Blake——"

"You might have winded poor old Lathom with your hoofs."

"I wefuse to have my feet chawactewised as hoofs, Blake. It was an accident, and I wegard it as wathah low down-of Lathom to give me five hundred lines."

"Five thousand would be nearer the mark, you ass!" said Digby.

"I wefuse to be called an ass. Undah the circs.——"

"I am sure there is someone talking," said Mr. Lathom, looking round.

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

And the talk ceased.

Mr. Lathom never had a very easy class to handle in the Fourth, and they were a little less attentive than usual that morning.

All thoughts were fixed upon the coming circus.

The fellows who had been to Signor Tomsonio's show had to tell those who hadn't all about it, and those who hadn't had to ask those who had what it was like; and a dozen conversations were going on most of the time during the morning.

Mr. Lathom, who was a patient little man with a sweet temper, as a rule, was exasperated into using his pointer on youthful knuckles once or twice; but it made little difference, except to the knuckles, of course.

There was a German lesson that morning, however, and when Herr Schneider took over the Fourth, he showed himself less patient than the Form-master had been.

"Tat you are silent!" he exclaimed, as soon as the first buzz rose.

Ahd the buzz ceased for nearly a minute.

The German master, who had had troubles of old with the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, kept one eye slyly open, on the look-out for a delinquent, determined to make an example of the next boy he caught talking in class, instead of following with proper interest the thrilling excursion into the realms of German irregular verbs.

"D'Arcy!"

Herr Schneider rapped out the word suddenly, and the swell of St. Jim's gave a jump.

"Yes, sir?"

"You vas talk to Plake."

"Oh, sir!"

"Vat you say to him—hey?"

Arthur Augustus turned red.

"If you please, sir, I should pwefer not to answah that question," he said. "I am sowwy you found me talking, sir."

"I tink tat is ferry likely, D'Arcy. I insist upon knowing vat it is tat you say to Plake. Anyting tat is said in te Form-room is for te master to hear."

"Yaas, wathah, sir, but——"

"Repeat vat it is tat you have said to Blake."

"Weally, Herr Schneidah——"

The German rapped the desk with his pointer with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Repeat tat, D'Arcy, instantly!"

"Vewy well, sir; but I do not wish to wepeat it."

"At vunce! You hear me?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Den vat vas it tat you said?"

"I said we must be careful, sir, because the—the——"

"Go on!"

"I would wathah not, sir."

"I command you."

"Vewy well, sir—because the old wottah has the cornah of his eye upon us," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

The German stood transfixed.

There was silence in the class for a few seconds, and then a roar burst forth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The German glared furiously at the class. But they still giggled; they could not help it. That D'Arcy should repeat exactly what he had said to Blake, considering what it was, struck them as funny.

"Oh, you ass!" murmured Blake. "This will be a lick-
ing, as sure as a gun."

"I could hardly do othahwise than tell the twuth, Blake."

"D'Arcy! Poy!"

"Yaas, sir."

"You are insolent——"

"I hope not, sir. You asked me, and I have answahed

against my will, as I explained to you, sir," said D'Arcy, with great respect.

"Insolent poy! Come out before te class."

"With pleasure, sir."

"Hold out your hand."

The German master took a business-like grip upon the pointer. D'Arcy eyed it doubtfully. A cut from the hard, unyielding pointer was worse than a blow from a cane. Arthur Augustus held out his hand in the most gingerly manner.

Herr Schneider made a swipe at it, and, acting on second thoughts, Arthur Augustus withdrew his hand.

The pointer, meeting with no resistance, swept down, and caught the German master a crack on his knee that rang through the Form-room.

"Ach!" yelled Herr Schneider, dropping the pointer, and clasping his knee in both hands, and dancing on the other leg. "Ach! Himmel! Oh! Yaroooh!"

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, and looked at him.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ach! Donner! Blitzen! Yah!"

"What an extwaordinawy performance!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It may be a welief to the feelin's, but I cannot but wegard it as lackin' in dig."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"It is weally no laughin' mattah, Blake. I am vewy sowwy to see one whom we should wespect sacwificin' his dig. in this way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The German master dropped his damaged leg. His glare was perfectly ferocious as he turned it upon Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy, I—I reports you to te Head! Go to your place."

"Certainly, sir. I am vewwy sowwy for that accident."

"Go to your place!" thundered Herr Schneider.

And Arthur Augustus went to his place, and the German lesson proceeded. But the lesson was punctuated with suppressed chuckles, and Herr Schneider limped all through it, and he was still limping when he dismissed the class.

CHAPTER 4.

The Circus.

GLAD enough were the Fourth to be dismissed that morning. The Shell were already out, and the two

Forms met in the wide flagged passage and fraternised. In the exuberance of getting out of the class-room, it was not unusual for the juniors to begin rows in the passage, Form rows or House rows, or any rows that happened along. But just now there was peace. Figgins & Co., of the New House, met Tom Merry and Blake, of the School House, with grins of cordiality, as if the prophecied time had come when the lion was to lie down with the lamb.

"Jolly fine afternoon, too," said Figgins, as he slapped Tom Merry on the shoulder. "Cold, but fine; ripping day for a walk. I'm going down the road to meet the circus."

"Oh, are you?" said Fatty Wynn, before Tom Merry could reply. "What about dinner?"

"Blow dinner!"

"Now, don't be an ass, Figgy!" said Wynn, in a tone of patient remonstrance. "Don't be a silly ass, you know. You can't go very far down the road and get back in time for dinner."

"Well, we're going to miss dinner, then."

"No fear!"

"It would do you good to miss a meal, Fatty," said Tom Merry. "A change is always good, you know; and that would be a really drastic change."

"Oh, don't be funny! You can go down the road and meet the blessed circus if you like, Figgy, but I'm going to stay in for dinner."

And Fatty Wynn marched off before he could be remonstrated with.

"Well, I'll come," said Kerr. "You, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, rather! Come along, my sons!"

"I've got some photographs to develop, and Monty is going to help me," said Manners. "I'll see you later."

"Right you are."

"Goin' out, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus, as Tom Merry, Figgins, and Kerr came down to the doorway, with their caps on.

"Yes; going to meet the circus."

"Good!" exclaimed Blake. "I was thinking of that myself. We'll come along."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway wait ten minutes while I get my toppah."

"What-ho!" grinned Tom Merry. "I'll wait ten seconds, and give you a thick ear, if you like."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Come on!" said Blake. "We'll go and meet the circus, while Gussy goes and meets his topper. You coming, Dig?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Gussy!"

"Weally, Dig—"

The juniors crossed the quad. Arthur Augustus hesitated a moment, and then dashed upstairs, and dashed down again with a topper. He had done it in ten seconds instead of ten minutes, but he had not had time to change his collar or necktie, and his face was reproachful as he ran after the juniors and joined them half-way to the gates.

"Hallo," exclaimed Blake, in surprise, "here's Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gr-r-r!

Arthur Augustus gave a jump, as a particularly savage-looking bulldog came up, straining at the chain which was held by Herries.

"Bai Jove! Keep that beast away, please, Hewwies."

"He's all right," said Herries; "I'm going to take him for a run. Where are you chaps off to?"

"To meet the circus."

"Good! That road will suit Towser."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Herries with a stare that ought to have disconcerted him, if it did not freeze him; but it had no effect whatever upon Herries.

"Hewwies, deah boy—"

"Come on, Towsy!"

"I object to walkin' out in company with that wotten dog. He has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs."

"Well, you needn't come," said Herries; "Towser won't mind."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Rats!" said the master of Towser cheerfully.

And he led the way, Towser growling joyously at having a run. The festive bulldog soon jerked the chain out of his master's hand, and skipped away on his own. The juniors followed him down the lane, Herries calling after him with a voice of authority which Towser did not pay the slightest heed to.

"Pway let him go, Hewwies," said D'Arcy. "He is evah so much bettah at a distance, you know."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Herries. "Towser! Come back! Towser! Towsy!"

Towser clinked the dragging chain along the road without turning his head. There was a sudden yap-yapping in the lane, however, and Towser looked back with a business-like expression in his eyes.

"Bai Jove! Here's Wally and Pongo! Now there will be a wov."

D'Arcy minor, with Pongo on a chain, came trotting along the road. Although Wally belonged to the Third Form, and was the inkiest and untidiest fag at St. Jim's, he was not at all awed by the Fourth Form and the Shell. He nodded to Tom Merry & Co. with perfect coolness, and yelled to Herries:

"Herries, keep that beastly tripehound of yours away from Pongo!"

"Oh, that's all right," said Herries, with a disdainful sniff; "Towser is very particular what he eats."

Wally glared wrathfully at the owner of Towser.

"If he goes for Pongo, I'll—I'll jump on him!" he exclaimed.

Herries chuckled.

"Sorry for your legs if you do," he remarked. "Towser is a particular dog. He won't take more'n one bite at a mongrel like that, and I don't suppose one bite would kill him. If it did, you could pick up a waster like that anywhere for a bob."

Wally's feelings were too deep for a verbal reply. He tramped on without speaking, keeping a tight grip on Pongo's chain. Though Pongo had no chance whatever in a tussle with Towser, the little shaggy mongrel was always trying to get at the bulldog, and he certainly had heaps of pluck, if little prudence.

"Bai Jove, what a wov those bwutes make, yappin' at one another!" said Arthur Augustus. "The wov is gettin' on my nerves. Are you sure the circus is comin' this way, Figgins?"

"Well, it was at Greyfriars last, and this is the only road from Wayland to St. Jim's, unless they took the footpath through the wood," said Figgins sarcastically.

"I cannot see them yet."

"That's because they're not in sight," explained Figgins. "When they're in sight, you'll see them fast enough."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Here they are! Listen!"

Ta-ta-ra-ra-ra-ta-ta!

It was a blast from a bugle, and it was followed by a blare from a cornet. The sounds floated through the keen, cold air from the bend of the high road ahead.

The juniors hurried on, and, as they rounded the corner, the sight of the circus burst upon them all at once.

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CHAPTER 5.

Towser Causes Trouble.

SIGNOR TOMSONIO'S World-Famous Circus and Hippodrome was an imposing spectacle when it was on the march.

There were at least a dozen caravans, as well as waggons galore; and, mingled with them in the procession, came an array of curious animals, including elephants and camels and giraffes—at least, one giraffe. Upon the innumerable horses rode most of the circus company, and some of the bandmen were playing their instruments.

The rub-a-dub of a drum mingled more or less melodiously with the notes of a bugle and a cornet, and whether there was music or not, there was certainly plenty of noise, and that was really what Signor Tomsonio wanted.

For the procession was a standing advertisement of the circus—or, rather, as the original Joey Pye, the funny merchant of the troupe, put it, it was a walking advertisement.

All who came to their doors and to the hedge gaps to look at the passing circus were possible customers, and they had no lack of coloured handbills, distributed on all sides, to tell them exactly when and how they could see the unequalled performances of Signor Tomsonio's Circus.

Upon a van from which, at intervals, proceeded a deep roar, showing that some powerful animal was confined therein, sat a handsome lad of about Tom Merry's age, whom the hero of the Shell knew at a glance.

It was Jack Talbot, the tiger tamer, known on the circus bills as Jungle Jack.

Beside that van rode a young girl upon a black Arab, which she sat with infinite grace, and her, too, the juniors recognised at a glance. It was Miss Clotilde, the girl rider, and one of the greatest attractions of Tomsonio's Circus.

Joey Pye, the mirth-merchant, was seated on the back of a donkey, with his face to the tail, in full clown's costume, with daubed cheeks and a paper hat. His fat, good-natured face was grinning—its usual expression. He passed remarks with pedestrians on the road, joked with the other members of the company, and even presumed at times to pull the august leg of Signor Tomsonio, the monarch of all the goodly array. Sometimes his remarks fell upon a dark, handsome fellow who was riding a pony in the cavalcade, who was looking sullen and thoughtful. It was Jim Carson, the "Handsome Man," as he was called, between whom and Joey Pye there was no love lost.

An old man with a coppery complexion, and eyes dimmed by the incessant indulgence in strong liquor, was perched upon an elephant just behind Joey, and as Joey had his face to his steed's tail, he was looking towards the elephant rider.

"Mind you don't fall off, Doc!" he called out, a little anxiously; and then he went on to himself: "Blessed if he hasn't been at it again!"

The man he called the Doc was holding on to the elephant's back with both hands, but he slid to and fro as if his seat were unsafe—as, indeed, it was, for it needed only a glance at the man to see that he had been drinking.

"Doc, do you hear?"

"Wharrer marrer?"

"You'd better get off Oliver Cromwell," said Joey Pye. "Take my tip, and get into one of the vans. Oliver can go alone."

"M-m-m-or-r-right!"

"Don't be an ass! You're not all right!"

"M-m-m-or-right!"

And by way of showing he was all right, perhaps, the Doc slid right off the elephant's back, and only saved himself from a nasty fall by catching hold of one of the animal's huge ears, and hanging there.

Joey Pye gave a shout.

"Look out! Catch him!"

A nimble, active figure came speeding from the corner of the road, and as the Doc slid from his precarious hold, he was caught in the grasp of Tom Merry.

The weight of the falling Doc carried Tom Merry right over, and he went sprawling on the ground, the Doc sprawling over him.

But he had broken the man's fall, and in all probability saved him from breaking a limb, which would certainly have had serious consequences to a man of the Doc's time of life, and of his habits. A system soaked through with strong liquor was not calculated to stand a serious accident, and survive.

But now the Doc was not hurt, save for a slight shock.

He rolled off Tom Merry, and sat in the lane, and blinked amazedly at the circus and the grinning schoolboys.

"I'm orright!" he murmured. "I'll have one more, Carson. I'll see you under the table, anyway."

The Handsome Man grinned. It was not a good-natured grin. The Handsome Man was not a good-natured man. It was rather an amusement of his to encourage the Doc in his wretched habits—partly from a feline cruelty of nature,

partly because Jack Talbot was attached to the old man, and disliked seeing him degraded. And the Handsome Man was the enemy of the young tiger tamer.

"You'll put yourself under the ground if you keep on like this!" grunted Joey Pye. "Help him up, somebody."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The man's drunk!"

Joey Pye waved his hand.

"Glad to see you again, young gent! You remember Joey Pye—the only one—the original Joey Pye? You're quite mistaken about my friend the Doc, Master Sarcy—"

"D'Arcy, if you please, deah boy!"

"Ahem! My mistake! The Doc has been out in the sun a little, that is all."

"Orright," mumbled the Doc, "out in the sun, you know. M-m-m-orrigh!"

"Gweat Scott!" said D'Arcy, who did not know the significance of Joey Pye's slangy explanation. "Does gettin' in the sun have that effect on a chap, you know?"

Joey chuckled.

"Ain't it right, Doc?"

"Orrigh!" mumbled the Doc. "Set 'em up again. I'll see you under the table, anyway, Bibby."

"Vewy peculiar!" said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha! Awfully peculiar!" said Blake. "I suppose he was thirsty when he was out in the sun, and this is the result."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't tread on that elephant's toes, Gussy. He mayn't like it," said Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

"Keep back from the elephant, please, young gentlemen!" called out Signor Tomsonio. "He's a little bit excited; it's the Doc's fault."

"Orrigh!" grunted the Doc. "See you under the table, anyway."

"You worm!" said the signor, in disgust. "A nice state to be in at midday!"

"Surely it wasn't his fault, if he's been out in the sun, sir?" suggested Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the circus-master.

"H'm! No, certainly not!" said Signor Tomsonio. "I—Hallo! Keep those dogs away from the elephant! Oliver Cromwell doesn't like dogs!"

The elephant was beginning to trumpet.

Pongo had circled round his master, upsetting D'Arcy minor by getting his legs tangled in the chair, in the excitement of the Doc's fall. To jerk the chain out of Wally's hand was nothing, then, to Pongo. And, careless of the weight against him in the combat, Pongo had gone at once for Towser.

Towser was only too glad to oblige him. They rolled in the road, yapping and snapping, and rolled right under Oliver Cromwell.

The elephant could have crushed both of them with a stamp from one foot, but he seemed to be scared by the dogs. He trumpeted with a deafening sound, and tramped wildly out of the line of march. The juniors promptly scattered out of the way. The elephant was for the moment uncontrolled—the man who should have been looking after him was sitting half insensible on the ground.

"Stop him!" roared the signor.

But there was no time.

Trumpeting madly, the elephant marched down the road, the way the juniors of St. Jim's had come.

The boys stared after him.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "There'll be trouble, now!"

"What a pity he didn't tread on Towser!" remarked Blake.

"Look here, Blake—"

"Aftah him, deah boys! He ought to be captured before he can do any damage!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"How are you going to capture him, ass?"

"Stop, you boundah!" shouted D'Arcy.

He was already sprinting after the elephant, with his silk hat on the back of his head, and his eyeglass streaming at the end of its cord.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

And the St. Jim's juniors dashed after Arthur Augustus. Several of the circus hands, roared at by Signor Tomsonio, dashed after them, joining in the chase of the elephant.

Oliver Cromwell was usually a quiet-tempered animal, but the Doc's clutch on his ear, and the scare of the dogs, had excited him tremendously. The sight and sound of pursuers excited him still more. He broke into a trot, and went lumbering along at a speed which it taxed the runners to keep pace with.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "I nevah thought an elephant could run like that, you know."

"Phew! Look there!"

The butcher's cart from Rylecombe was coming down the

road. The driver saw the elephant bearing down upon him, and, with a yell of terror, he turned his horse into the hedge.

Leaving horse and cart to take care of themselves, he took a flying leap over the hedge, and sprinted for his life.

Oliver Cromwell took one squirt at the cart, and passed on without harming it at all, and went lumbering on towards the gates of St. Jim's.

The school gates were wide open, and the shouts of the boys could be heard from within. Oliver Cromwell's curiosity seemed to be aroused. He stopped at the gates, and looked in, and trumpeted.

"Gweat Scott! He's goin' in!"

Oliver Cromwell took one look back at his pursuers, and then lumbered through the school gates.

CHAPTER 6.

A Visitor in the School House.

TOM MERRY & CO. put on a spurt, and gained the gates. There they halted, panting, and stared after the elephant.

Oliver Cromwell had halted at the fountain in the quad, and was snuffing up water with his trunk, whether for drinking purposes or for offensive purposes if he were attacked the juniors did not know.

"We may get him now."

It was Jack Talbot's voice. The young tiger tamer, though he had started later, had caught up the juniors in the lane.

He ran straight towards the elephant, calling him. There was not an animal in the circus who was not fond of Jungle Jack, but Oliver Cromwell was too excited now to heed his voice.

He withdrew his trunk from the water, and lumbered on towards the New House. A crowd of alarmed juniors swarmed into the house to get out of his way, and the great doors were slammed and bolted.

Oliver Cromwell snorted at the door, as if he wanted to go in, and then, seeing his pursuers on the track, he turned away and trotted over to the School House.

Manners and Lowther were on the School House steps, apparently petrified with astonishment.

The elephant came up, and Manners and Lowther bolted wildly into the house, and Oliver Cromwell, finding the door open, tramped in after them.

Tom Merry gave a gasp as the elephant passed up the broad stone steps and tramped into the School House.

"My only hat! There's the dickens to pay now!" he said. Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, was in his study.

There were fellows in the passages, but they were very quickly in their studies, too, when they caught sight of the elephant.

Behind locked doors they waited palpitating.

Oliver Cromwell wandered up and down the passage, bumping and tramping, and occasionally trumpeting. Mr. Railton, who was trying to write in his study, raised his head with a look of annoyance.

"What a dreadful noise the juniors are making this afternoon!" he murmured. "I really shall have to interfere!"

He rose and opened the door of his study.

"Boys!"

There was no reply, and the tremendous noise still continued.

"Boys! Why—what—"

Oliver Cromwell, attracted by his voice, turned round and looked at him. Mr. Railton made one bound back into his study, and slammed the door.

At the same moment Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, opened his door and looked out. Mr. Lathom was very short-sighted, and the passage was always a little dusky. He did not see the elephant at first.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "You must really make less noise, my boys!"

There was no reply.

"I can excuse a certain amount of exuberance on a half-holiday," said the Fourth-Form master, "but this dreadful hubbub must cease."

Tramp—tramp—tramp!

"Dear me!"

The solid floor creaked and groaned as the elephant tramped towards Mr. Lathom. The master of the Fourth adjusted his glasses and stared at it.

"Great goodness! It is a beast—a large animal—an elephant! Ah, doubtless it has escaped from the circus the Head was speaking of! Shoo!"

Mr. Lathom was certainly very much flurried, or he would certainly never have tried to "shoo" away an elephant as if it had been a chicken.

He waved his hands frantically.

"Shoo—shoo! Go away! Shoo!"

Oliver Cromwell halted, and blinked at him with his little eyes. Evidently he did not know what to make of the little gentleman in glasses.

"Shoo!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "If you do not go away I shall strike you with this umbrella! Shoo—shoo!"

Oliver Cromwell stood still.

"Shoo—shoo!"

Mr. Lathom brandished the umbrella, and smote Oliver Cromwell upon the trunk with it. The blow was like a gnat's touch to the great animal, but it made Oliver angry.

There was a sizzling sound, and a stream of water shot from the elephant's trunk as if from a garden hose.

"Ow—ow—oohoh! Oooh!"

The stream caught Mr. Lathom fairly in the face.

It swept him off his feet, and he went staggering back into his swept, followed by the sizzling stream.

"Oh! Oh, dear! Help—help!"

Splash—sizz—sizz!

Mr. Lathom collapsed on the floor in a pool of water, drenched and dazed, and wondering if it was the end of the world.

"Help!" he moaned feebly. "Help!"

Mr. Railton tore open his door and rushed out. He did not particularly wish to encounter the elephant, but he could not let a cry for help pass unheeded.

He had caught up a poker as the nearest weapon. It would have been about as useful as a straw against Oliver Cromwell, but fortunately no weapon was needed.

Jack Talbot sprang in at the door.

"Don't touch him, sir! He's all right!"

The boy tiger tamer ran up to the elephant and caught him round the trunk, speaking to him all the time with a strange caressing tone in his voice.

Oliver Cromwell calmed down wonderfully. He made no effort to escape, but stood there with the boy caressing him.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, arriving breathless at the door. "Bai Jove, deah boys, he's capchahed!"

"And a jolly good thing, too!" panted Tom Merry.

"Lucky he's done no damage. I suppose you will be willing to have Towser shot now, Herries?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should certainly wecommend that Towsah should be shot in some painless way, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Towsah has caused all the twouble."

"Rats! It was Pongo!"

"Well, will you agree to have Towsah shot if young Wally agrees to have Pongo ddowned?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a generous air, as if he were making a really sporting offer.

Herries only grunted.

"Don't be an ass, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Don't be a howling duffer if you can help it!"

"I wefuse to be called a howlin' duffah! I wegard it as a good suggestion, and I cannot undahstand your objections."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Hewwies, I shall have no wresource but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Rats!"

"Vevy well! Pway hold my coat, Blake—"

"Look!" gasped Blake. "Good heavens! Look!"

It was an exclamation of horror. Every eye turned at once upon the elephant. The strong, muscular trunk had twined round Jack Talbot, and the circus lad was lifted from the floor and whirled into the air.

"Good heavens!"

"Save him!"

But there was a cry from Jack Talbot.

"Stop!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's only a trick! Stand back!"

Tom Merry gave a gasp of relief.

"It's all right!"

The juniors breathed more freely. It was indeed all right. The elephant raised Jack Talbot high in the air, till he hung over the huge head, but the lad never showed the slightest sign of nervousness.

Then slowly the great beast lowered him to the floor again.

Jack Talbot drew himself away from the encircling trunk and smiled at the juniors' startled faces.

"It's all serene!" he said. "It's a common circus trick. Oliver Cromwell wouldn't hurt a baby."

"Bai Jove! I was thwown into quite a fluttah for a moment, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Talbot laughed.

"Indeed, I was very much alarmed, too!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I am sorry the elephant has caused you so much trouble, sir," said Jack Talbot respectfully. "Signor Tomsonio will come and apologise for it, and he will make good any damage Oliver Cromwell has done."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The House-master smiled slightly.

"The damage is rather personal than anything else, and all seems to have fallen upon Mr. Lathom," he remarked.

The Fourth-Form master was looking out of his study now. He was drenched, and evidently still in a state of alarm.

"Mr. Lathom—"

"Ah! I—I—"

Jack Talbot turned towards the Fourth-Form master.

"I am very sorry, sir," he exclaimed. "Oliver Cromwell is quite good-tempered, and he really wouldn't hurt you for worlds."

Mr. Lathom gasped.

"Ah! Ugh! I am very wet!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He does look wet, too!"

"I—I was very much startled!" said Mr. Lathom. "I am very wet. Really—"

"It weally wasn't the circus people's fault, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "The elephant was fwightened by a dog belongin' to St. Jim's, sir, and wan away."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"In that case the apology is due from us," said the House-master smiling. "I suppose the animal will go quietly with you, my young friend?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Jack Talbot.

And he led Oliver Cromwell from the School House. The juniors crowded back to give the great animal room to pass. Oliver Cromwell lumbered down the steps, and lumbered off across the quadrangle, Talbot walking by his side.

Mr. Lathom retired to dry himself—he needed it. Tom Merry & Co. followed the elephant and the circus lad as far as the gates.

"We'll see you again this afternoon," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Jack Talbot smiled and nodded, and led the elephant back to the circus. Herries came in with Towser—on a chain again now.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon his chum with a severe expression.

"I twust, Hewwies, that you will see the advisability now of havin' that howwid beast shot," he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

But Towser's master only grunted and led the bulldog away. Wally followed him in with Pongo, also on a chain.

"I twust, Wally—" began D'Arcy.

Wally sniffed.

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally, I must insist upon beginnin'! I wegard it as a dutay. I twust, deah boy, that you will see the advisability of havin' that howwid mongwel shot."

"Oh, rats!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—I mean, I decline to allow you to say wats to your majah, Wally. As for Pongo—"

Wally snorted, and passed on.

"Weally, Wally, I insist upon your stayin' and hearin' my wemarks."

But Wally was gone.

Arthur Augustus looked after him, and then looked seriously at Blake.

"Do you think I ought to give him a feahful thwashin', Blake, and teach him pwopah wespsect for his eldahs?" he said.

Jack Blake grinned.

"No—come and feed instead."

And they went.

CHAPTER 7.

D'Arcy Wants to Ride.

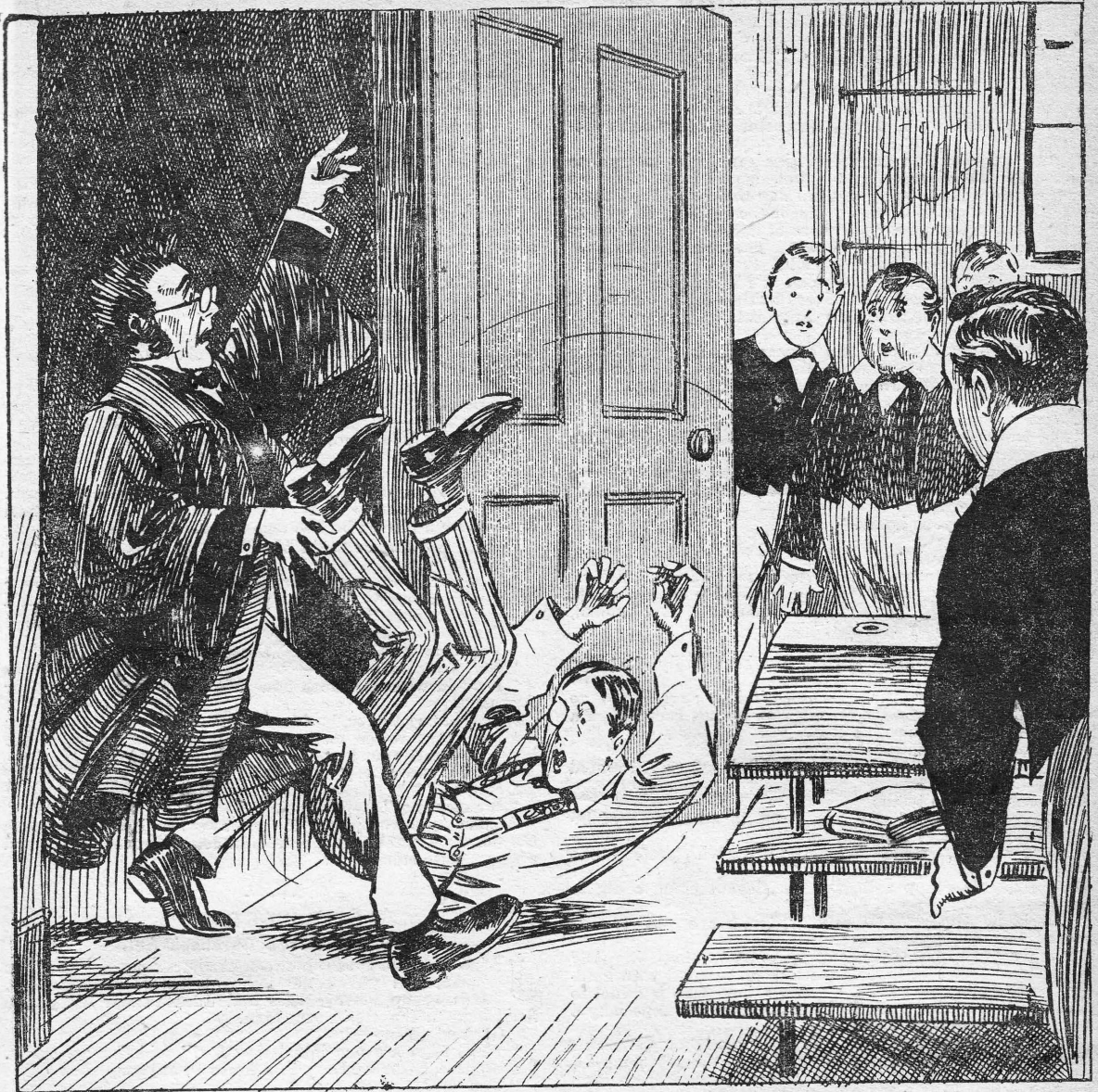
WHEN the circus arrived upon the spot selected for its pitch, there was a goodly crowd of St. Jim's boys gathered there, ready to assist with either help or advice—especially advice. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would willingly have taken over the whole management of the affair, and turned Signor Tomsonio's job into a sinecure—only the signor did not quite see it. Arthur Augustus, with his monocle jammed into his eye, watched the proceedings not wholly with approval.

"I am afraid that tent won't be really quite safe, you know, Tom Mewwy," he remarked. "I weally wish the signor had allowed me to give some diwections. You wemembah how we put up the tent when we were campin' out as Wed Indians."

"I remember how it came down," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, but—"

"It's barely possible that the signor knows his business, almost as well as you could show it to him," suggested Monty Lowther.



"Bai Jove!" The amateur acrobat rolled at the very feet of Mr. Lathom, and his heels came with a far from gentle impact upon the form-master's waistcoat.

"Wats! I suppose a little intelligence on these occasions is always useful. Howevah, I shall give no more advice on the subject."

"Well, that's a mercy, at any rate."

"I regard you as an ass, Lowthah. I have been thinkin'—"

"What with?" asked Lowther, with an air of great interest.

"I twust, Lowthah, that you will not dwive me to givin' you a thick ear, to put an end to these unseemly intewwup-tions," said D'Arcy. "I have been thinkin', Tom Mewwy, that when I gwow up, I shall pwobably become a circus widah, if the House of Lords is weally abolished."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, it would be a more active life," he remarked.

"Better stick to the House of Lords, Gussy," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "It's a quiet, restful place, and would suit your intellect admirably—almost as well as a padded cell."

"You know that I wide wathah well," went on D'Arcy, un-heeding. "As a mattah of fact, I have always wathah fancied myself as a circus widah. I should like awfully to give a turn in the wing."

"A what?" demanded Tom Merry and Lowther together.

"A turn in the wing."

"On an aeroplane, do you mean?"

"Certainly not. On a horse."

"But horsas don't have wings, unless you're referring to Pegasus."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "He means in the ring."

"Oh, I see! Jolly good! I should like to see you in the ring," grinned Tom Merry. "I can just imagine you jumpin' through hoops—but what price your silk topper?"

"Three-and-nine," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, I know you can ride, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "But I don't know how you'd manage in the ring, and per-hap you wouldn't be quite up to form."

"Wats! I could wide any horse they've got here, Tom Mewwy. I've looked at most of them. That is a wippin' horse Miss Clotilde has—a black Arab. Do you know that it is worth two hundred guineas, at least?"

"By Jove!"

"It's about the best horse in the show," said D'Arcy, who had a keen eye for horseflesh. "I wondah what Signor Tom-sonio would say if I offahed to do a turn this attahnoon in the wing?"

"Ha, ha! I know what the Head would say if you did it."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Look at that beautiful creature!"

The chums of the Shell looked round, expecting to see some member of the gentle sex, from D'Arcy's exclamation; but it was a horse which Arthur Augustus had turned his eye-glass upon.

It was indeed a fine animal—with clean limbs, every line in its body full of grace, and a well-shaped head. But the gleam of white in the eyes, and the way the ears turned back, showed that it was a vicious brute in the temper; as well as the fact that two grooms had charge of it, and were extremely careful not to get too near its hoofs. They were taking it to the canvas stables of the circus, and Arthur Augustus walked over towards it to get a better look at the animal.

The horse snuffed and put its ears further back, and one of the grooms called out to Arthur Augustus.

"Don't come close, sir."

The swell of St. Jim's did not appear to hear. The beauty and grace of that horse seemed to enwrap him. Jim Carson, the acrobat—the "Handsome Man," came striding up.

"Stand back," he said, roughly.

D'Arcy turned his eye-glass upon Carson.

"Did you address me?" he asked, in tones that might have sent an extra chill through an iceberg.

"Yes, I did! Keep further back! I don't want my horse to hurt you. Not that it would matter, except for the fuss," said Carson, angrily.

"Oh! Is that your horse?"

"Yes."

"It is a fine animal."

"What do you know about horses?" said Carson, gruffly.

"I wathah fancy myself for my knowledge of horseflesh, deah boy. I can see that that is a wemarkably fine animal, and he has been badly tweeked?"

Carson flushed red.

"And how do you know that he has been badly treated?" he sneered.

"Because of his temper. He doesn't like anybody to go neah him, and I am pwetty certain that he has been licked a gweat deal to make him like that."

"He is a vicious brute."

"Any animal would be vicious if it wasn't tweeked decently."

Carson gritted his teeth.

"You young puppy! Do you mean to accuse me of ill-treating my horse?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, with perfect coolness.

Jack Blake came up and gave his elegant chum a dig in the ribs.

"Chuck it, Gussy!" he said. "What are you rowing about?"

"I am not wovin', Blake, and I wefuse to chuck it. Any ass could see that that horse has not been tweeked with kindness," said Arthur Augustus. "And a man who is cwuel to animals is a cad who ought to be suffocated, and especially a man who is cwuel to a horse."

Carson's face went crimson. A good many of the circus hands, and of the boys of St. Jim's, heard D'Arcy's remarks, and there was a general chuckle. Carson would have been glad to lay his riding-whip round the junior's shoulders, but that was a step he could not venture upon.

"Have you anything more to say on the subject, you young puppy?" he said, with a sneer.

"I wefuse to be called a young puppy!"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wing off, Blake! I depwecate vevy much interfewin' betwene a man and his horse—I wegard it as bein' in vevy bad taste as a wule. But when I find that an animal has not been tweeked with kindness, I wegard it as a duty to express an opinion on the subject."

The Handsome Man laughed.

"It is not a laughin' mattah," said Arthur Augustus. "As you are, in a mannah of speakin', a guest here, I will not tell you pwecisely what I think of you."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Carson. "When you've finished I'll tell you what I think of you."

He made a movement towards the horse. The animal shied back, and its look and movement very plainly showed the way it regarded its master.

D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind the monocle.

"You see that, deah boys?" he remarked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "It's rotten!"

"It's a handsome animal, too," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Bai Jove, I should like to wide him round the field."

Carson turned towards him again quickly.

"Would you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, wathah!"

"Can you ride?"

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can take him round the field, if you like!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

Carson grinned. The two grooms with the horse looked startled and scared, but there was a gleam of savage mischief in the Handsome Man's eyes.

"I warn you that he's vicious," he said.

"Oh, that's nothin'!"

"You might get hurt."

Arthur Augustus smiled serenely.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that!"

"Well, if you like to take him round, there he is."

Tom Merry and Blake caught hold of the swell of St. Jim's at the same moment. Their faces were very anxious.

"Gussy! Chuck it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Stop it, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"The horse is a savage brute, whatever's the cause of it," said Tom Merry. "You will be hurt, old son. Let it alone."

"Wats!"

"You may get your neck broken."

"Wubbish!"

"Look here—"

"My deah fellow, you know I can wide."

"Yes, I know, but—"

"I shall be all wight!"

"You can't and you sha'n't," said Blake, gripping his arm. "We're not going to have you limping about the School House with a blessed broken leg, or a damaged fin."

"Pway welease me, deah boys."

"Bosh!"

"Well, are you going to ride him?" asked the Handsome Man, with a sneer. "Or has your courage petered out, as I expected it would?"

D'Arcy's eyes flashed.

"You hear that, Blake? Welease me at once!"

"But, I say, old chap—"

"I would wide the horse now if it killed me," said Arthur Augustus.

"You young duffer," whispered Tom Merry. "Can't you see that that rotter made the offer because he hopes the horse will hurt you, because you've got his rag out."

"I don't care a wap, deah boy."

"But—"

"Welease me!"

Arthur Augustus jerked himself away, and strode towards the horse. But at that moment an active figure ran up, and a sharp voice called out:

"Stop!"

CHAPTER 8.

An Unrehearsed Bareback Act.

JACK TALBOT ran between Arthur Augustus and the horse, and waved the junior back. D'Arcy stopped, putting up his eyeglass, and Jack turned his glance fiercely upon the Handsome Man.

"Carson! You—"

"Well, what are you interfering for?" said Carson, coolly.

"I suppose I can lend my own horse to anybody I like!"

"You—"

"Our young friend wants to ride Demon, and I'm willing to lend him," said Carson. "What on earth business is it of yours, Talbot?"

Jack Talbot's eyes blazed.

"You know that Demon isn't safe to ride!"

The Handsome Man shrugged his shoulders.

"I've told the boy that he's vicious."

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"You haven't told him that he's vicious, and has been badly treated till he's a perfect demon, and has already half-killed a groom!" exclaimed Talbot.

"Yaas, I could see that he had been badly tweeked," said Arthur Augustus. "But I can manage him, deah boy."

"He's a dangerous brute!"

"It's all wight."

"I tell you there's not a man in the circus can ride him!" exclaimed Talbot. "Carson is trying to sell him for half his value because he's no good for riding!"

"Bai Jove! I wish my pocket-money would wun to buyin' him," said Arthur Augustus. "I will write to my governah about it. He's been awfully close since the Budget, but if this is a bargain, it ought to be picked up."

"You'll want picking up after you've ridden him," said Lowther. "Better leave the brute alone, Gussy."

"Wats, deah boy."

"You will be mad to touch him!" exclaimed Jack Talbot. "I tell you he is dangerous, and no one here can ride him!"

"All the more fun for me to twy, then."

Talbot made a gesture of impatience. The slim, elegant swell of St. Jim's did not impress a casual observer as being a great horseman. He had sometimes surprised his own chums by his powers in this line, but when they looked at the vicious horse they had strong doubts as to his powers of tackling Demon with success.

But it was evident that Arthur Augustus had made up his mind—and when he had made up his mind, it was useless to argue with him.

"Well, if you're determined, I cannot stop you," said Jack Talbot. "But I warn you you will be in great danger, and that Carson has only made the offer because it will amuse him to see you get hurt."

"Vewy pwob., but I shall not get hurt."

Jack Talbot stepped aside.

"Have your own way, then."

"Yaas, watah!"

There was a thronging of the crowd round as D'Arcy walked towards the horse. Blake and Tom Merry looked round in the hope of seeing a prefect who would stop the swell of St. Jim's. But the crowd on the circus-field were nearly all juniors. Arthur Augustus was fated to have his own way.

"Pway give me the bwidle, deah boys."

One of the grooms handed it to him, and slipped back quickly. The Handsome Man looked surprised at the ease with which D'Arcy bridled the horse. Demon did not object—that was a strange circumstance, too. Arthur Augustus stood at the horse's head, and signed to the grooms to fall back.

"Aren't you going to saddle him, sir?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"No, that's all wight."

The Handsome Man laughed.

The crowd thronged back to give Demon plenty of room as D'Arcy, with a light leap, vaulted upon his back.

Demon had seemed too taken by surprise to raise any objections to D'Arcy's proceedings so far. But as soon as the junior was on his back, everyone knew that the fun would begin.

And it did!

Demon stood stockstill for an instant, while D'Arcy's knees gripped his sides, and then he gave a spring forward like a stone from a catapult.

Nine riders out of ten would have rolled off Demon then, like hailstone from glass, but D'Arcy was the tenth!

He sat to the horse as if, like the fabled Centaur of old, he were a part of the beast. Demon came down with a crash of hoofs upon the grass, and D'Arcy was still sitting his back with perfect coolness.

He had an iron grip on the reins with his hands, a grip on the horse with his knees; and his silk hat was on the back of his head, his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord.

"Bravo!" yelled Blake; and the crowd gave a cheer.

"It's fool's luck!" said the Handsome Man, with a muttered oath. "He'll be down in a minute!"

And really it looked like it.

Demon had had no one on his back for some time, and he did not like the change, and he was trying by every means in his power to get rid of the incubus.

He leaped into the air, coming down on all four feet together with a jar that would have unseated many riders. Then he came down on his forefeet, pretending that he was going to turn a somersault—and then he rose on his hind legs, as if about to fall over backwards.

And all the time D'Arcy clung to his back like a limpet to a rock.

The crowd of circus folk and schoolboys watched the scene breathlessly. It was thrilling and almost terrifying.

D'Arcy did not see the crowd—he saw nothing, thought of nothing but the horse and the work in hand.

He was thoroughly enjoying the contest, and he knew that

the horse would give in when he had found his master—and D'Arcy meant that Demon should acknowledge him, master before the contest ended.

The thud, thud, thud, clatter, clatter, clatter of the hoofs, and the exclamations of the onlookers, brought fresh accessions of numbers to the crowd, till it seemed as if two-thirds of St. Jim's was gathered in the circus-field.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school, came up, and stared at the youthful horse-tamer blankly.

"Is—is that D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Blake. "Isn't he a corker?"

"The young ass! He will be killed!"

Blake shook his head. He was full of confidence now.

"No, he won't, Kildare. If he was going to be killed, he'd have been killed before this. Good old Gussy!"

"Go it, Gussy!" was the shout.

But D'Arcy did not reply. All his attention was wrapped up in the horse. Kildare held back from interference. It was impossible to interfere now. If D'Arcy had tried to dismount with Demon still untamed, it would have meant disaster. The advantage then would have been on the side of the savage horse.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Jack Talbot, with hearty admiration. "Splendid!"

Jungle Jack was a good rider himself, and he would willingly have undertaken to ride Demon, and take his chance, but he had never cared to ask it of the Handsome Man. But there was no trace of jealousy in the circus lad's nature. He frankly admired the splendid horsemanship of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And it certainly was splendid. The swell of St. Jim's was not even in riding-clothes, and he had no saddle. Yet he stuck to the horse's back like a limpet. Nothing that Demon could do came anywhere near unseating the swell of the School House.

"By George," exclaimed Tom Merry, with wide-open eyes, "it's ripping! Gussy takes the bun, and no mistake! Hallo!"

"He's off!"

It was Demon that was off—not D'Arcy. The horse, finding that he could not unseat his rider, had suddenly bolted. With a thud of hoofs he dashed away, and Arthur Augustus gave him his head, and he went like lightning.

There was a shout of alarm.

Demon was bolting directly towards the wall which bounded the field on the side of the school—a high brick wall, which no horse could ever leap. The animal seemed to be mad, and in a few seconds he must dash himself and his rider to death against the bricks.

Blake turned white.

"Good heavens! Old Gus—"

He closed his eyes for a second.

CHAPTER 9

Demon's Master.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was the only one whose face did not grow pale at that terrible moment. But the swell of St. Jim's did not turn a hair, so to speak.

Straight on the maddened horse dashed, and it seemed certain that he must dash upon the high, solid wall, hurling the junior to a fearful death.

But within six paces of the wall an iron grip on his rein dragged him round.

Round went Demon with a whirl, and on again, almost brushing upon the bricks, so close was he—and D'Arcy, for a second, had to lift one leg over his back.

Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"Thank Heaven!"

Blake had closed his eyes in horror for a second—when he opened them, the horse was dashing away along the field, D'Arcy sitting tight.

"Oh, thank goodness! He's safe!"

"Safe as houses!"

"My hat—how he flies!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form. "My only sainted Aunt Janette! I thought Gussy was a goner that time!"

"It looked like it!"

"How he goes!" exclaimed Wally. "What a ripping gee-gee for a steeplechase! Gussy could win hundreds on him!"

"There he goes!"

On the other side of the field was a high hawthorn hedge, and beyond that a lane, of which glimpses could be had through the green. Inside the hedge was a wide, deep ditch, flowing full with water. It was an obstacle that many a steeplechaser would have balked at, but Demon and his rider took it lightly enough.

The horse rose to the rider's hand, and cleared the high hedge with a good foot to spare, and crashed down in the

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road. Then along the lane he went like an arrow, and D'Arcy disappeared from sight.

"Phew!" ejaculated Jack Blake, picking up D'Arcy's silk topper, which had fallen off in the tussle with the horse.

"Phew! I wonder if we shall ever see Gussy again?"

"What a giddy Mazeppa!" said Manners. "I never thought Gussy had it in him—though he rode that beast Badger in Rylcombe!"

"Your friend is a splendid rider!" exclaimed Jack Talbot. "I am sure he will bring the horse back safe!"

"He had better," said Jim Carson. "It will cost somebody fifty guineas else!"

Tom Merry turned on him.

"It will cost nobody a penny, excepting yourself!" he exclaimed hotly. "You knew the risk when you let him mount the horse, though you expected only my chum to be hurt!"

The Handsome Man scowled.

"You've got a long tongue for a kid!" he said. "Perhaps a cuff on the head will help you to keep it between your teeth!"

Tom Merry's eyes glinted.

"Go ahead with the cuffing, then," he said.

"None of that, Handsome!" said stout Signor Tomsonio, coming up, in silk hat and gorgeous waistcoat and riding-whip, as usual. "None of your games here! The young gent is quite right—you're responsible for the horse!"

The Handsome Man gritted his teeth.

"The young gentleman rides like—like an angel," said Signor Tomsonio, at a loss for a simile. "I wish I had him in my circus. He would make a lovely pair with Clotilde—eh, Jackie?"

Jack Talbot laughed and nodded.

"Quite right, signor."

"He'll bring the-hoss back all right," said the signor.

"I've been watchin' him all the time, and I can tell you my heart was in my mouth at first. You may not know me, young gents—I am Signor Tomsonio."

"The Italian gentleman!" grinned Blake.

"Jolly glad to meet you, sir," said Tom Merry.

The signor raised his topper.

"The pleasure is on my side, gentlemen," he said gracefully. "As for the Italian part of the business, there's nothing Dago about Dick Thompson but the name. But Signor Ricardo Tomsonio sounds better on a circus poster than plain Dick Thompson. Cause why—the public will run arter foreign names. There's nothin' a foreigner can do that an Englishman can't do better; but the B. P.—the British public—is an ass, gents. The B. P. treats me very well, but I maintain that the B. P. is an ass. Look at the singers, for instance. Who crowds round a gallery door for twelve hours to hear an English tenor? No; they don't do that till plain Bill Smith becomes Guillaume Smizzio. Then the blessed public would walk on all fours for a dozen miles to hear him, whether he can sing in tune or not. The public is an ass!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Very likely, sir."

"They have their redeeming points, though," said the signor magnanimously. "They support circuses well. They say the Roman populace in olden times used to demand bread and circuses. Well, that showed their sense. I should have liked some cheese with the bread myself; but they were all right to ask for the circus. Things has improved since those days, though. A bareback riding act, or the acrobatic turn of Handsome, here, is better than gladiators sticking one another in the ribs with swords and daggers."

"Much better, and much more pleasant for the performers," said Blake.

Thud, thud, thud!

All looked round as Demon's hoofbeats came to their ears again.

Arthur Augustus, riding easily, with Demon now under perfect control, leaped the gate at the end of the field, and cantered up to the circus pitch.

He drew Demon to a quiet halt without an effort.

"Bravo!" shouted the signor.

D'Arcy slid to the ground, and patted Demon's head.

"You'll find the cwittah all wight now," he remarked.

"I should like to keep him. How much do you want for him, sir?"

"Fifty guineas," said the Handsome Man, with a sneer. "Bai Jove! I shall w'ite to my govannah about it."

Demon, very quiet now, was led away, and D'Arcy rejoined his friends. Blake held his hand behind him with the topper in it.

There was an anxious expression upon D'Arcy's face, and Blake knew what was the cause of it.

"Has anybody seen my topper?" he asked.

"Topper!" said Blake thoughtfully.

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"Yaas, wathah!"

"You must have dropped it."

"Weally, Blake, a chap needn't be as cute as Sherlock Holmes to guess that," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course I dropped it. I twust nothin' has happened to it My twousahs are bad enough."

"What's the matter with the bags?"

"They are feahfully wumped. Howevah, it was a wippin' wide, and I don't mind. But I should be sowwy to lose my toppah. It was one of those I purchased in Pawis, you know."

"Better look round for it."

D'Arcy looked round, and up and down. Blake kept the hat behind him, and his face towards D'Arcy all the time. The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass in every direction in vain.

"Bai Jove! It's gone."

"Too bad!"

"Nevah mind; it was pwobably damaged by fallin'," said D'Arcy, in a thoughtful way. "It's all wight."

"Aren't you going to look for it any more?"

"No. I weally do not see what you chaps are gwinnin' at."

"Given it up as a bad job?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Can I have it if I find it?"

"Oh, certainly, deah boy!"

"Good!" said Blake again, bringing the hat out to view.

"I wanted a new topper, and I can make this fit me by shoving some blotting-paper under the band inside. Thank you very much!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle first upon Blake, and then upon the hat.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you had it in your hand all the time, you wottah!"

"Well, I suppose a chap can hold his own hat in his hand if he wants to," said Blake.

"His—his own hat!"

"Certainly. This is my hat now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"It's rather a nice one, too," said Blake, turning the hat over in his hands. "How much did you give for it, Gussy?"

"Forty fwancs in the Wue de la Paix."

"Good! I shall keep it for best."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned away, while the juniors yelled with laughter. Blake jammed the hat on his head from behind, and D'Arcy uttered an exclamation.

"Weally, deah boy——"

"You ass!" roared Blake. "There's your blessed topper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus beamed again.

"Well, I weally thought you were only wottin'," he said.

"I wegard you as an ass, but you can have the hat if you like."

"My dear chap, I wouldn't be found dead in it."

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Gentlemen, excuse me!"

It was Joey Pye, the mirth merchant. He bowed gracefully as he came forward. He was in his professional attire now, baggy trousers and paper hat complete, with his face adorned with chalk and red.

"Hallo, deah boy!"

"Will you allow me to look into the hat, sir?" said Joey.

"I think there is some of my property in it, sir, if you don't mind."

And the original Mr. Pye took the hat from the hand of the amazed swell of St. Jim's.

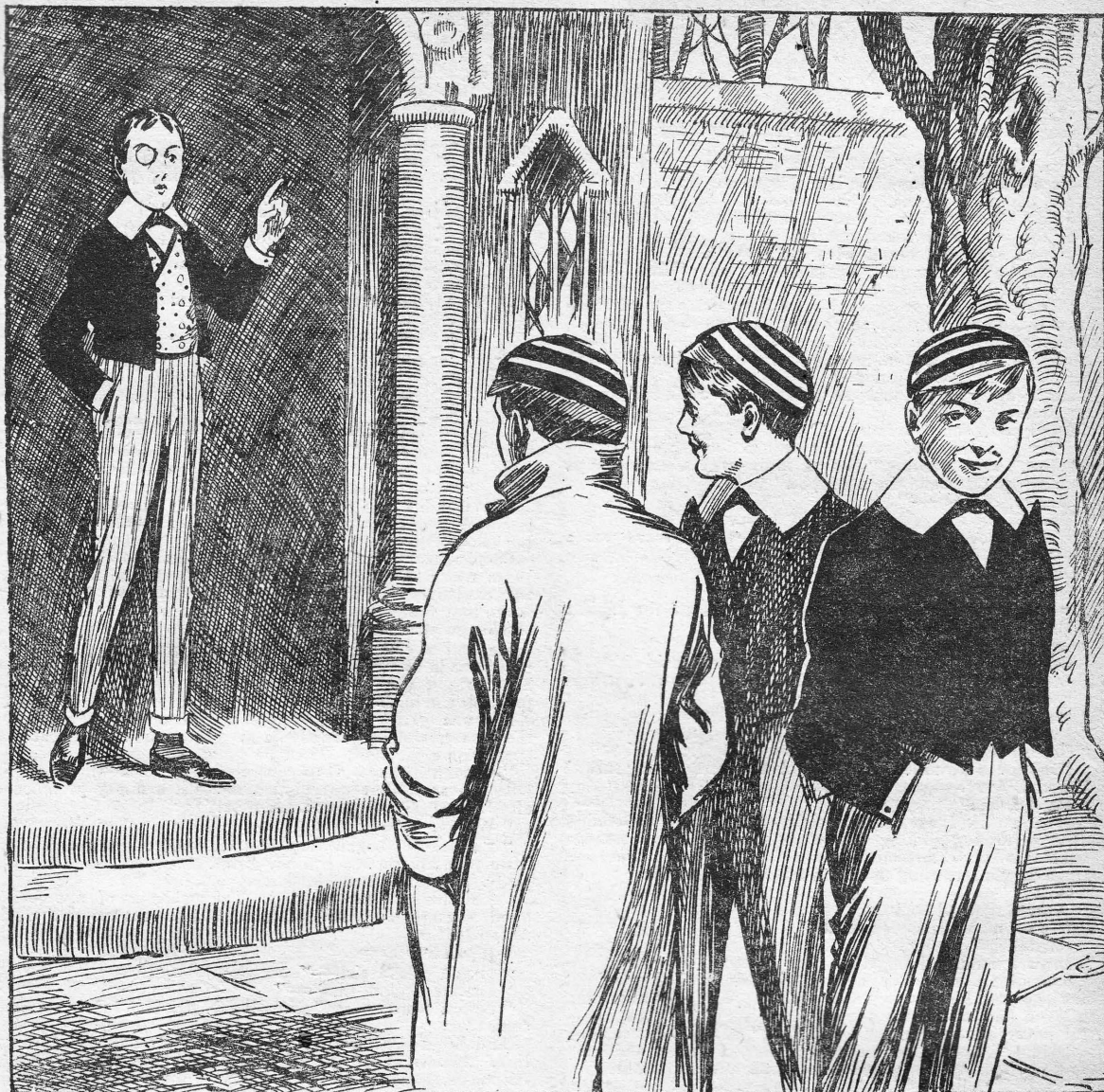
CHAPTER 10. Strange Discoveries.

JOEY PYE turned the hat over in his hands, while Arthur Augustus looked at him in great surprise, which was shared by the other fellows. There was a peculiar twinkle in the eyes of Mr. Pye, however, which warned the keener observer that the clown of Tomsonio's World-Famous Circus was in a humorous mood.

Joey Pye looked into the hat, and then glanced at D'Arcy.

"You have no objection, sir?" he asked, with great deference.

"Weally——"



"Pway wait ten minutes while I get my toppah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Just a few articles——"

"But how——"

"Ah! You would ask how they could have got into your hat?" said Mr. Pye, with a shake of the head. "Perhaps this young gentleman put them in?"

"Not a bit of it," grinned Blake.

"Then how——"

"Perhaps they have been in all the time, and you never noticed it, Master D'Arcy," suggested Mr. Pye. "Do you think you would notice it, if you had a few things like forks and spoons and white rabbits in your hat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Do you think you would, Gussy?"

"Imposs.!"

"They seem to be there."

"Imposs., deah boy!"

"Well, I'll take them out."

Mr. Pye plunged his hand into the hat, and drew forth a white rabbit. The rabbit blinked at the juniors, and the juniors stared at the rabbit. Arthur Augustus was overcome with amazement.

"Gweat Scott!" he ejaculated.

"Anything else?" asked Lowther.

"Yes; hold the rabbit, please. Here's a few things. Perhaps Master D'Arcy carries them in his hat to have a change when he needs them."

D'Arcy coloured a little.

"As a mattah of fact," he said, "I do sometimes cawwy an extwa pair of gloves in my topper, in case of accidents."

"Good! And a change of linen, too, I suppose?" grinned Figgins.

"Certainly not," said D'Arcy indignantly.

"What's there, Mr. Pye?" asked Blake. "Shove 'em out!"

"With pleasure, sir."

Mr. Pye plunged his hand into the hat again. He dragged out a set of silken pyjamas, and the gay colours gleamed in the sun.

"There was a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Gussy!"

"They nevah were in my hat!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Blake must have put them in for a joke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I didn't honour bright!" gasped Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Gussy!"

"I tell you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I insist——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tom Merry. "Anything else, Mr. Pye?"

"Yes. What's this?"

Half a dozen silk handkerchiefs came out next, and then a pair of gaudy socks. Then some soft slippers, and a toothpick. Then a shaving-brush and a stick of soap, at which the juniors shrieked again.

D'Arcy's face was blank with amazement.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, again and again. "Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard this as remarkable. Of course, none of those things belong to me. Is there anythin' more in the hat, dear boy?"

Mr. Pye turned out a toasting-fork and a box of tooth powder.

"Gussy must have been preparing for a week-end," said Tom Merry.

"I tell you, Tom Mewwy——"

"Jolly good idea to carry the things for a week-end in one's hat," said Blake. "Now I know why Gussy always insists on going about in a topper."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Pye brought out a couple of cigars, and there was a shriek.

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

A photograph of a famous actress followed, and the juniors yelled.

"Oh, oh, oh, Gussy! Oh, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, I have nevah seen it before!" said D'Arcy, with a gasp. "I wefuse to allow this howwid wibald laughah; it offends my good taste."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of asses!"

"Oh, my hat! Pictures of actresses, too! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've nevah cawwied anythin' of the sort in my life!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's this, I wonder?" exclaimed Mr. Pye, pretending to see something poking out of D'Arcy's pocket, and he jerked into view a picture-postcard, which represented a famous dancer, crawling upon the floor like a tortoise.

"Gussy!"

D'Arcy staggered back.

"I—I've nevah seen it before!"

"Oh, tell us another!"

"Draw it mild, old chap!"

"I shouldn't wonder if he's got hundreds of them about him!" gasped Figgins. "Oh, Gussy! Wally—Wally, why don't you look after your major?"

"I never knew anything about this," said Wally, shaking his head. "Gussy is a bit of a duffer, I know, and very trying at times, but I always believed he was respectable."

"Weally, Wally——"

"It's a sad disappointment to me," said Wally solemnly. "I can see that I shall have to be more strict with him."

"You young wascal!"

"Better go through his pockets, and turn out the rest," said Tom Merry severely. "This is simply shocking!"

"I don't know whether I ought to remain on the spot, being so young and innocent," remarked Harry Noble. "Will you hold my hand, Glyn, and we will support each other in this trying position?"

"Certainly! I was about to suggest it," said Bernard Glyn.

And they held hands firmly. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them with a withering look.

"You uttah wottahs——"

"Don't descend to abuse, now that your true character is being revealed," said Clifton Dane loftily.

"Weally, Dane——"

"I wonder what horrors a further search would bring to light," said Blake. "I am very much ashamed of you, Gussy; but I think we had better hash up the rest."

"I wefuse to have it hushed up! It is a twick! Somebody has put those wotten things in my beasty pockets for a wotten joke!" cried D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a set of gwinnin' asses! Anybody is welcome to search my pockets!"

"Go it, Mr. Pye. As a disinterested stranger, Mr. Pye is the man," said Lowther, who had, of course, guessed before this that the clown was also a conjurer.

"I am quite weady——"

"Very well, to oblige you, gentlemen," said Mr. Pye

blandly; and he proceeded to search D'Arcy's pockets, and his discoveries were truly amazing.

He turned out a cigar-case full of cigars, a cigarette-holder and a packet of cigarettes, a matchbox with a music-hall star's face upon it, and a packet of letters tied up with a pink ribbon.

Arthur Augustus nearly fell down when he saw them.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated faintly.

Mr. Pye went on, the fellows watching him eagerly. The next discovery was a copy of a sporting paper of a pink colour, and there was a yell.

"Oh, Gussy! What price the winner?"

"Weally, you know——"

Next a black pipe, half full of tobacco, and still warm; then a pocket-flask, with a smell of brandy to it.

D'Arcy gazed at it in horror.

There was a sudden sharp exclamation:

"What—what do I see? What? Good heavens! What base depravity in one so young! D'Arcy, follow me instantly!"

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Ratcliff is Simply Horrified.

THE juniors whirled round towards the speaker.

It was Mr. Ratcliff, the Form-master of the Fifth, and house-master of the New House at St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff was a gentleman of very uncertain temper—generally bad. He did not like boys, as a rule; neither was he beloved by them.

Suspicious and distrustful, he generally succeeded in seeing harm where no one else could see any, and he never waited for explanations. The slightest evidence was sufficient to make him jump to a conclusion, and he was far too obstinate to change an opinion once formed.

He had a certain narrow and hard sense of duty, which really made him more unpleasant than if he had been remiss. Mr. Ratcliff was one of those persons who always carefully perform the duties which make other people uncomfortable.

He was gazing now in undisguised horror at the pipe, the cigars, and the brandy-flask. He seemed hardly able to speak for a moment. Then he burst out:

"Wretched boy! Guilty wretch! So this—this was the true character that was hidden beneath a flimsy pretence of affectation! This! Good heavens!"

"Weally, sir——"

"Please——" began Joey Pye, alarmed at the result of his little joke on the swell of St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff waved him back.

"I desire to hear nothing. The evidence of my eyes is good enough for me. D'Arcy, follow me to the Head instantly."

"But——"

"If you please, sir——"

"Let me explain that——"

"Not a word more!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "D'Arcy, come!"

And he stalked away, deaf to remonstrance and explanation. Arthur Augustus had no choice but to follow him. Although, strictly speaking, he was only amenable to the authority of his own house-master, it was impossible to disobey the order of a man in Mr. Ratcliff's position.

The juniors stared after him blankly, and Mr. Pye gave a gasp.

"My only pyjama hat!" he ejaculated.

"It's all right!" gasped Tom Merry. "Of course, we could all see it was conjuring tricks—all except Gussy, and he would have seen it soon. Any master but Ratty would have seen it; but he was only too glad to catch one of us."

"Yes, rather!"

"But—but will he get into a row?" said Joey Pye.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"You'll have to explain to the Head."

Mr. Pye looked rather uneasy. Although the clown of Tomsonio's Circus had nerve enough for anything, as a rule, he felt some awe of the grave and reverend Head of St. Jim's, whom he had seen from a distance.

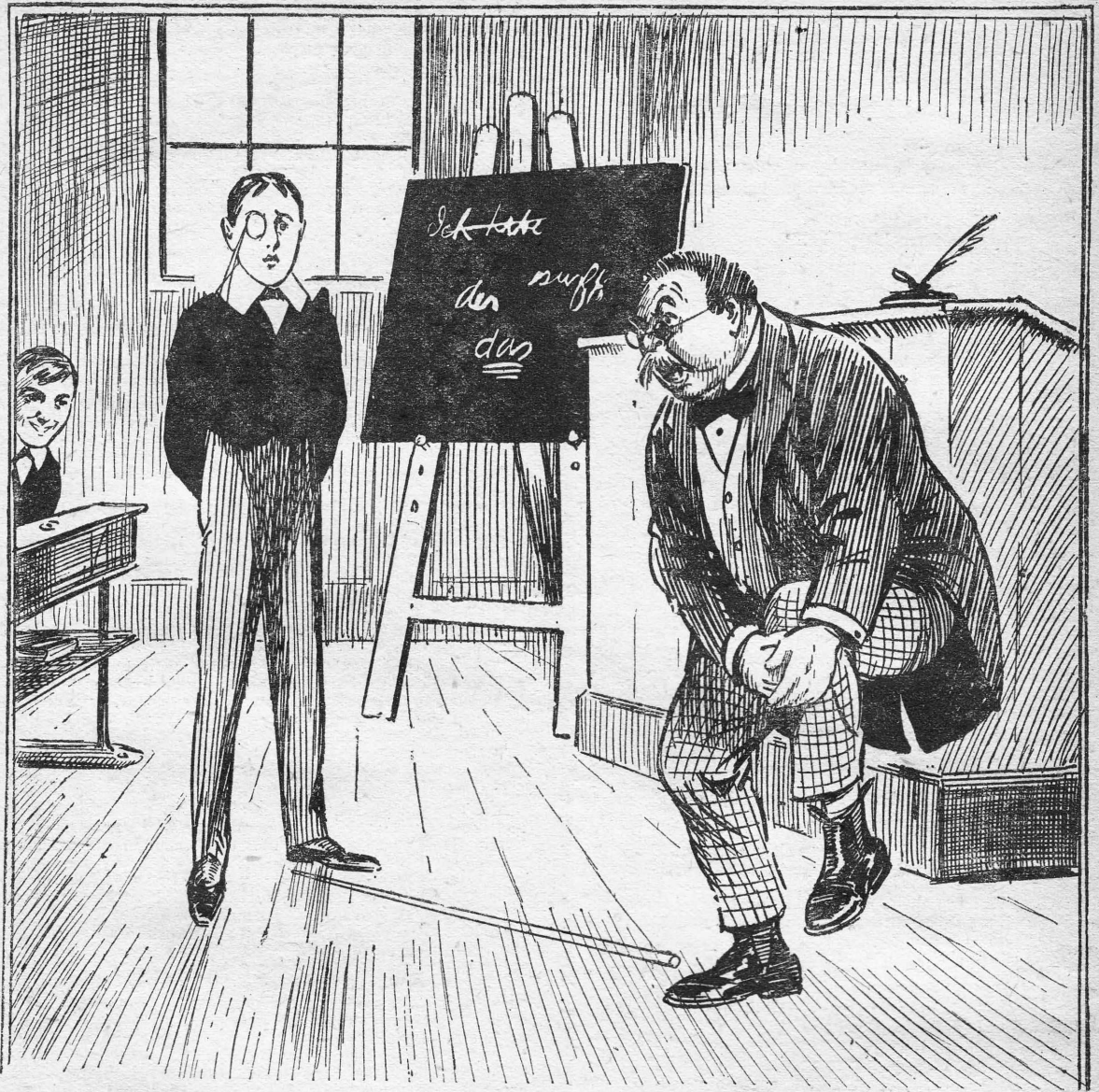
"Must go!" grinned Blake. "Come on, we'll show you the way!"

"Oh, all—all right," said Mr. Pye.

"The Head's a brick," said Tom Merry, reassuringly. "It will be an awful bloomer for Ratty, too. You'll owe us a debt of gratitude, Figgy."

"What-ho!" said Figgins, who was not proud of his house-master.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ratcliff, a wrathful figure in rustling gown, was stalking into the quad, followed by D'Arcy, who was still in a state of amazement. Mr. Ratcliff had snatched the flask and the pipe from Mr. Pye's hands, and he was carrying them before them as he stalked. He marched



Arthur Augustus withdrew his hand, and the pointer, meeting with no resistance, caught the German master a terrific crack on the knee. "Ach!" yelled Herr Schneider, "Himmel! Yaroo!"

straight on to the School House, and entered it, with Arthur Augustus at his heels. He turned round at the doorway.

"Keep with me, D'Arcy."

"I am keepin' with you, sir."

"You need not attempt to run away, to avoid the punishment of your enormous conduct," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Yes, sir, enormous is the word. What you have been guilty of is an enormity, sir, and nothing less."

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff—"

"Follow me!"

"Ygas, but—"

"Not a word, sir!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "Follow me!" And he strode away to the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes was in his study when the house-master entered, with the swell of St. Jim's at his heels. The Head looked up, and did not look too pleased at being interrupted.

"Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Yes, sir."

"And D'Arcy! Dear me! Is anything wrong?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, that there is something very much wrong," said Mr. Ratcliff. "The true character of this boy has been revealed to me by accident."

"Dear me!"

"I find, sir, that far from being the careless, somewhat foolish youth I have always supposed—"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff—"

"Don't interrupt me, D'Arcy!"

"I am bound to intewrupt you, sir, with all wespect, when you apply oppwobious epithets to me," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I siwongly object to bein' chawactewised as a foolish youth!"

"You must not interrupt Mr. Ratcliff, D'Arcy. Go on, sir!"

"Far from being what has been generally supposed, sir, he uses this outward pretence as a cloak for the vilest debauchery."

"Weally, sir—"

"Mr. Ratcliff, you must be mistaken!" exclaimed the Head sharply. "Please weigh your words. What you suggest is absolutely impossible!"

"Then what do you think of that, sir?"

And the New House-master crashed the flask down upon the desk before the doctor, and crashed the pipe down beside it, with such force that it broke in two.

The Head gave a jump.

"Wh-what is this?"

"That, sir, is a flask. The odour, sir, attached to it, will inform you that it has been used, and is still used, to contain brandy."

"I can see that, Mr. Ratcliff. I was not asking you to explain the nature and use of this object, which I can see perfectly well for myself," said Dr. Holmes, somewhat acidly. "But what has this to do with D'Arcy, or with me?"

"It is his, sir!"

"What?"

"Weally, sir——"

"Silence, D'Arcy, until Mr. Ratcliff has finished. Now, Mr. Ratcliff, you aver that this flask belongs to D'Arcy."

"I assert it, sir."

"Your reasons?"

"It was taken from his pocket."

"Surely not!"

"I saw it so taken, sir, along with the pipe, and other disgraceful articles, such as cigars and cigarettes. It was done in the presence of a crowd of boys, who can testify to the facts, if necessary. I am sorry to say that they greeted the discovery with laughter, apparently regarding it as a joke. I am far from regarding such a discovery as a joke, and I think you will take my view, sir."

"Most decidedly, Mr. Ratcliff! but——"

"It points to secret habits of drinking and smoking—vile enough in anyone, but in a boy of D'Arcy's age——"

"I cannot help thinking that there must be some mistake. Dear me, there is someone at the door! Come in!"

The door opened, and Joey Pye was pushed in by Blake and Tom Merry, who shut the door after him, so that he could not escape.

Dr. Holmes started to his feet in blank astonishment.

He had received all sorts and conditions of visitors in his time, but it is safe to say that a circus clown in full professional garb had never entered the sacred precincts of his study before.

"Good—goodness!" he ejaculated. "Wh—what is this?"

Joey Pye doffed his paper hat.

"If you please, sir——" he began meekly.

"Who—what are you?"

"The original Joey Pye, sir," said the mirth merchant, recovering himself a little. "The mirth-provoker, wheeze merchant, and chestnut wangler of Tomsonio's World-Famous, sir!"

"Oh, oh! You belong to the circus?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I—I understand! But—but you should not come here—especially in that—that attire. You should really—er—not——"

"Beg pardon, sir! I've come to clear up this little matter." And Mr. Pye pointed to the incriminating articles on the desk.

"Ah! You can throw light on the matter—the possession of these—these dreadful implements by this junior?"

"What—ho—I mean, yes, sir!"

"This is a trick," said Mr. Ratcliff, frowning.

"Exactly, sir!" said Joey Pye, smiling broadly. "It was a conjuring trick, sir."

Arthur Augustus gave a gasp of relief.

"Bai Jove! Now I undahstand!"

CHAPTER 12.

Joey Pye Explains.

DR. HOLMES looked at Joey Pye, and then he adjusted his glasses and looked again. Mr. Ratcliff was silent, in sheer surprise.

"I—I do not quite understand you," said Dr. Holmes at last. "You say it was a conjuring trick. What was a conjuring trick, my good man?"

"Finding them articles on Master D'Arcy, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

"It was a little joke, sir," exclaimed Mr. Pye, with a grin.

"It was a joke, and also done as an advert., sir."

"An advert.?"

"Advertisement, sir—advert. for short. If you can make people laugh they will always come and see your show, you're always safe in betting on that," explained Mr. Pye; "and the young gents was laughing—this gentleman will testify to that."

He looked at Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master did not speak. His complexion seemed to be changing to a yellow hue.

"Bless you, sir," went on Mr. Pye, encouraged by the relieved expression upon the good old doctor's face, "I'd taken a white rabbit out of the lad's hat, sir! I took them things out of his pockets."

"Impossible!" said Mr. Ratcliff sourly. "This is an—invention, sir, got up to screen D'Arcy from the penalty of his misdeeds."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff——"

"I do not think so," said the Head, rather coldly. "I certainly hope that the statement is true, at all events. I suppose you will give me some—er—well, some proof, Mr.—er——"

"Pye, sir—Joey Pye—the original Joey Pye. Yes, sir, there's heaps of proof—gobs of it," said Mr. Pye cheerily. "In the first place, there's Herr Biberach's name on that flask; it belong to him—Bibby, o' the circus, sir."

Dr. Holmes glanced at the metal rim of the flask.

"It is true."

"Then that pipe belongs to me, and anybody in the circus would reckonise it. I want to know who's going to pay for it."

The Head smiled slightly.

"I have no doubt that Mr. Ratcliff will recompense you for the pipe, as he has inadvertently damaged it," he said.

"Very good, sir."

"I think we may take the matter as settled," said Dr. Holmes. "D'Arcy has been the victim of an absurd conjuring trick, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hardly believe it, sir," said the New House master. "This friend was brought here by Blake and Merry, two close friends of D'Arcy's. I cannot suspect otherwise than that it is a plot to clear him."

"Ahem! I——"

"We have no proof, in fact, that this man is a conjuror at all."

"Ahem! Well——"

Joey Pye chuckled

"I'll jolly soon prove that, sir!" he exclaimed, coming nearer to the Head. "Would you like me to produce yards of ribbon from your ears, sir?"

The Head started back.

"N-n-no, thank you!" he exclaimed hastily.

"Shall I pull threepenny bits out of your eyelashes, then?"

"Oh, no—no!"

"Perhaps this gent. would rather put it to the test himself, as he seems a rather suspicious sort of gent.," said Mr. Pye, turning towards the New House master. "You don't believe I'm a conjuror, sir?"

"I do not!" said Mr. Ratcliff sternly.

"Good!"

"Pray keep your distance——"

"Allow me, sir!"

Mr. Pye put his hand into the breast of Mr. Ratcliff's coat and drew out a cigar, and then another, and another.

The Head gazed at them in astonishment, for the moment not realising the trick, so cleverly it was done by Joey Pye.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Why, I always thought you were a non-smoker, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"So I am, sir—so I am!" exclaimed the New House master furiously. "This is a trick. Keep your hands off me, fellow!"

"But I wanted to prove——"

"Hands off, I say!"

"Dear me!" said the Head. "Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff. It is only fair that the man should prove that he is a conjuror, as you doubted his statement."

"You're a gentleman, sir," said Joey Pye; "but I needn't touch our touchy friend, sir. Look here!"

And the mirth merchant of Tomsonio's World-Famous Circus proceeded to draw yards and yards of coloured ribbon from the ink-well in the Head's desk.

"Bless my soul!"

Joey Pye went on to swallow the ribbon, which he apparently did by the yard—at all events it disappeared, and it certainly seemed as if it went by way of Mr. Pye's capacious gullet.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in great admiration. "I wergad that as weally vewy clevah, you know! I couldn't do that!"

Mr. Pye grinned at the Head.

"Satisfied, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, yes! Quite satisfied!"

"This young gent. is as innocent as you are yourself, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I am quite convinced of that now," he said; "and I am greatly obliged to you for coming here and explaining. Otherwise, D'Arcy might have been the victim of a great injustice."

"Quite welcome, sir! I hope we shall see you at the show this afternoon, sir?"

"Ahem!"

"The signor would be glad to sell you a box, sir, if you would care to bring the missis and the little chicks!" said Joey Pye cheerfully.

The Head gasped.

"Er—thank you—but——"

"Not at all, sir! We shall be proud to have you! Very thrilling and improving entertainment, sir. There's the sword—swallowing of old Puggies——"

"Yes, yes——"

"And Jungle Jack, the Boy Tiger-Tamer——"

"Bless my soul!"

"And Miss Clotilde's bareback act——?"

"But—but surely——"

"And the Handsome Man——"

"But, surely, sir, at this season of the year especially, the performances are not given in evening-dress?" exclaimed the Head.

Mr. Pye burst into a chuckle.

"Oh, my! My only maiden Aunt Gloxiana! Excuse me, sir, I couldn't help smiling! It means that the horse has a bare back, sir."

"Oh—oh! I see!"

"Then there's the signor himself, sir, whose waistcoat alone is worth the money, to say nothing of the top-hat."

"Yes, indeed, but——"

"And the monkeys——"

"I am sorry. I shall be too busy this afternoon to visit your doubtless very agreeable and improving entertainment, sir."

"It's the chance of a lifetime, sir," said Mr. Pye; "but have your own way. Modesty has prevented me from mentioning the greatest attraction. However, I hope you will change your mind and come, sir."

And Joey Pye bowed himself out, taking the flask with him, and leaving the broken pipe on the Head's desk.

"D'Arcy, you may go," said Dr. Holmes. "There is no stain on your reputation. I am sorry you were ever placed in such a painful position for a moment."

"Vewy good, sir, thank you!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowywy you should have been twoubled ovah such a widiculous mattah, sir."

"Yes, yes," said the Head hurriedly, as Mr. Ratcliff's complexion began to turn from yellow to green. "As I said, you may go."

"I should like, sir, to speak a word to Mr. Watcliff before I go, with your kind permish," said the junior.

"Really, D'Arcy——"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the master of the New House.

"This is not the first time, sir, that Mr. Watcliff has been impertinent——"

Mr. Ratcliff jumped, and the Head gasped.

"D'Arcy!"

"What!"

D'Arcy did not budge.

"I weapat, sir, that this is not the first time Mr. Watcliff has been impertinent, but I twust it will be the last."

"Boy!"

"To accuse a decent chap of having habits of sewet dwinkin' is the wankest impertinence, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "I wepudiate the accusation, and I cannot help wegardin' Mr. Watcliff's conduct as impertinent in the extweme. I twust there will be no more of it."

And before either of the amazed masters could speak Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the study. There was silence in the room for a full minute. The Head rubbed his nose thoughtfully. Mr. Ratcliff burst out at last.

"Dr. Holmes, I presume that this—this unheard-of insolence on the part of a Fourth Form junior will be punished?" The Head shifted uneasily.

"If it is allowed to pass, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff excitedly, "I think there is an end to all respect and discipline in the school."

"I cannot agree with you," said the Head, somewhat tartly. "You have placed both yourself and me in a very awkward position. I grant that you could not very well guess that the—the clown person was playing conjuring tricks, yet you should have been very slow to believe that a junior who had hitherto borne a good character was addicted to the vile habit of drinking spirits in secret. Scarcely any evidence would have made me believe D'Arcy guilty of anything of the sort, yet you appear to have jumped to the conclusion without examining the evidence at all. Naturally D'Arcy thinks you were actuated by some personal dislike of himself as much as by your sense of duty as a master. He had a right to be heard in his defence, and you should really have investigated the matter a little before bringing it to my notice."

"I concluded——"

"You concluded too quickly, I am afraid, and very injudiciously," said the Head drily. "The best thing that can be done now is to let the matter rest absolutely, and take no further notice of it whatever."

And the Head turned to his desk again, as a hint that the matter was settled, and the interview at an end. And Mr. Ratcliff bowed himself out—not in a good temper.

CHAPTER 13.

Arthur Augustus to the Rescue.

"M sorry, sir," said the original Mr. Pye, with a grin, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out of the School House. "I hope it's turned out all right?"

"Wight as wain, deah boy. I wegard you as a wathah cheekay boundah, but it's all wight."

"Jolly good!" said Blake, in great relief. "Some head-masters would have licked you without waiting for evidence. The Head's a brick!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard him as being an old sport."

"Shall I look for any more of my property?" asked Joey Pye, with a grin.

D'Arcy hastily backed away.

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy. You can play your beastly conjuwin' twicks on Blake or Tom Mewwy."

Mr. Pye thoughtfully drew a yard of pink ribbon from Monty Lowther's ear

"Werry good," he remarked. "I was really givin' you a sample of the wonderful entertainment provided by Signor Tomsonio's World-Famous Circus. For details see small bills. Of course, you young gents are going to roll up in your thousands?"

"Hundreds, at all events," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I don't suppose there are many fellows at St. Jim's who will miss the show."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I will take my leave, gentlemen," said Mr. Pye, taking off his paper hat, and bowing gracefully over it.

"It is time for me to take my stand at the entrance of this Palace of all the Delights, and add my persuasive tones to the roll of the drum and the squeak of the fiddle, for the purpose of attracting the British public to the finest show on earth."

And Mr. Pye walked away towards the circus tent.

The drum was already beginning its roll, and the fiddles and the cornet added their sweet strains, and the music—music more or less—floated all over St. Jim's. The Head shut his windows a little tighter, but the rest of St. Jim's flocked in the direction of the music.

Tom Merry felt a tap on the arm as he was strolling down towards the circus-field. He turned his head, and saw Gore of the Shell.

He looked pleasantly enough. Tom Merry was not the fellow to remember too keenly the fact that not so long ago he had been on the worst possible terms with Gore, of the Shell. Ever since Tom's return from Paris Gore had been doing his best to bridge over the gulf, so to speak, and Tom liked being on good terms better than bad.

"Hallo, Gore!" he said, cheerily enough. "Coming to the circus?"

"I was thinking of coming," said Gore hesitatingly.

"Well, come on, then!"

"Wait a minute. I—I——"

"Go ahead! Is it the tin?" asked Tom, feeling in his pockets. "Of course, I will lend you a bob, if that's it."

Gore laughed uneasily.

"No; it isn't the tin," he said. "It's something else. The fact is—well, when the circus was staying near St. Jim's some time ago, I went."

Tom Merry's brow darkened a shade. He remembered very well the cad of the Shell at the circus, and his impertinence to Clotilde, the girl rider.

"I remember!" he said shortly.

Gore's face was crimson.

"I'm sorry for what happened that night," he said, looking away from Tom Merry. "I—I don't know whether I ought to show up, that's all."

"Oh, that's all right! I dare say Miss Clotilde has forgotten by this time; and, anyway, you won't be noticed in the crowd," said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I know what you wanted to be such a worm for!"

Gore did not reply to that.

"But if you feel bad about it, why not go and apologise to the young lady?" said Tom, kindly enough. "That would make it all right."

"Hallo, deah boys, what's that?"

"Nothing, Gussy—only something."

"Pway don't be an ass, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass from Gore to the hero of the Shell, and back again. "I accidentally caught the word apologise. If there is any amende honorable to be made, you cannot do bettah than ask my advice about it."

"Go hon!"

"I am fah, I hope, fwom wantin' to intafeah in an impertinent way," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "But in a case of doubt, I can always tell you the fwopah thing to do, you know. What we wequiah in an emerg. is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Oh, it's all right!" said Gore, in a low voice. "I'd like to apologise to Miss Clotilde for—for what happened the

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

time the circus was at Rylcombe, and—and I haven't the cheek to go and speak to her."

"Oh, I see!" said Arthur Augustus. "That's all wight, I'll come with you."

Gore looked at him doubtfully. He was really sorry for what he had done, and he wanted to make it good, but an apology came awkwardly from his lips, while Arthur Augustus was the most fluent and graceful of apologisers. Indeed, his friends had hinted that D'Arcy sometimes purposely gave little causes for offence, for the purpose of working off a graceful apology afterwards. But that was libel.

"Pway come with me, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, slipping his arm through Gore's in the most friendly manner. "I have always regarded you as an absolute beast, you know, and I am vewy pleased to see these signs of weform in you. Come on, and I'll help you through."

"But—"

"Not a word, deah boy. Come on!"

It was not like Gore to tamely yield to the lead of another, as a rule; but just now he was in a dubious and hesitating frame of mind, and he followed D'Arcy's lead, for the sake of deciding something to do. Tom Merry rejoined Manners and Lowther, while D'Arcy and Gore went in search of Miss Clotilde.

There was already a big crowd at the public entrance of the circus-tent, where the music was sweetly discoursing, and **Joey Pye was haranguing.**

But at the back there were only the folk connected with the circus, most of them very busy, as the performance was about to commence.

Arthur Augustus, with the coolness that belonged to his character, led his companion into the ground within the camped vans, and turned his eyeglass to and fro in search of Miss Clotilde.

As it happened, the girl was standing beside her black horse, waiting for her cue, and chatting to Jack Talbot, near the staff entrance.

"Bai Jove, there she is, deah boy!"

Gore coloured, and started, too, at the sight of Talbot. He did not wish to meet him. He pulled on D'Arcy's arm.

"Let's get back!" he muttered.

"What for, deah boy?"

"I—I—I—"

"Wats! Keep your cowage up, you know."

"Yes; but—"

"Come on!" said Arthur Augustus, keeping tight hold of Gore's arm, so that he could not escape without a struggle.

"This way, deah boy."

"I—I'd rather—"

"It is not a question of what you would wathah, Goah. It's a question of what is due to a lady, and what is due to yourself," said D'Arcy severely. "You owe Miss Clotilde an apology."

"Yes, yes; but—"

"Then—"

"You don't understand. I—I'd rather leave it. You see, I—I feel such an ass, and I sha'n't know what to say."

"Oh, that's all wight!" said D'Arcy. "I'll help you through, deah boy."

"Yes—ye-e-es; but—"

"You see, if you feel wathah nervous, I'll make the apology for you, and you can say 'Yes,' or 'Just so,' or merely nod your head," said Arthur Augustus. "I admit that I can put these things in a more gweaceful form than most fellows."

"Yes; but—"

"Here we are! Take off your cap!"

Talbot and Clotilde had caught sight of them, and were looking towards them in some surprise. Gore and D'Arcy came up, and D'Arcy raised his silk topper in his well-known manner, while Gore awkwardly dragged off his cap, and stood looking red and sheepish, and wishing that the earth would open and swallow him up.

CHAPTER 14.

An Apology by Proxy.

CLOTILDE bowed to D'Arcy in return for his graceful salute, but she did not appear to see Gore. She could not fail to remember his rudeness to her on a previous occasion, when the cad of the Shell had imagined that he could say anything he liked to a "circus girl," and had had a severe lesson on the subject.

Jack Talbot looked puzzled, wondering what the two juniors were there for. He also ignored Gore's presence.

"This isn't the entrance," he said. "You must go round to the other side of the tent, please. Only the staff enter here."

"I am quite aware of that, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I haven't come heah to go in. I'm bwingin' a friend."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Oh!"

"On a pwevious occasion," said Arthur Augustus, "this person—pewwaps, undah the circs., I may now venture to call him a gentleman, howevah—this gentleman was guilty of the amazin' bad taste of bein' wude to this charmin' young lady."

Clotilde smiled slightly.

"Well, never mind that now," said Talbot.

"But I must mind it, deah boy. Goah has thought ovah the mattah, and he is sowwy at havin' been such an unspeakable cad."

"Oh!"

"I twust I put it cowweetly, Goah," said D'Arcy, turning to his dumb companion. "You are sowwy for havin' been such an unspeakable cad?"

"Yes!" muttered Gore.

"You now see your conduct in its twue light, and wealise what an absolutely wank outsiders you were?"

"Yes."

"You wealise, top, that the lickin' you got on that occasion was fully deserved, and you are glad now that you had it?"

"Ye-e-es."

"You would be willin' to have another feahful thwashin' now if the young lady thought fit for you to have it?"

"Ye-e-e-es."

"You see," said D'Arcy, turning to Talbot again, "the person—or, wathah, undah these circs., the gentleman—is vewy sowwy, and he begs to ofah his most sincere apology for havin' been an unspeakable cad."

"Really—"

"Bein' a wathah fatheaded and mumchance sort of ass himself, he wants me to express it for him in a gweaceful way," explained D'Arcy. "In a case of difficulty, and when-evah a chap is in a doocid awkward posish, I can always tell him the pwopah thing to do, you know, and am willin' to help him through."

"That'll do!" muttered Gore, who was crimson.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Not at all, deah boy. It won't do. The apology hasn't been made yet. Miss Clotilde, Goah wishes to express his most humble and sinceah wegwet for havin' been a wotten cad, a howwid worm, and an unspeakable beast!"

Clotilde could not help smiling.

"Is that wight, Goah?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"He twusts that you will forgive him, and not despise him more than you can help," said D'Arcy. "He fully wealises what a howwid worm he is."

"Oh, chuck it!"

"Wats! I twust you do not wish to withdwaw now, Goah, aftah you have once decided to do the decent thing."

"You ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. Weally—"

"Shut up a minute—"

"Weally, Goah—"

"I want to speak, you ass—"

"I wefuse—"

"The fact is," said Gore, speaking hurriedly. "I'm sorry, miss—very sorry I—I acted like—a beast, and—and I hope you'll believe me, and look it over. That's all, miss."

And Gore, with a face like fire, and without waiting for a reply, turned away, and almost ran.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared after him, and then looked at Clotilde, who was looking surprised and a little amused.

"Bai Jove! Goah is wathah a clumsy ass, you know," said D'Arcy. "I was helpin' him through a tweek, you know. But you fully undahstand, Miss Clotilde, that the wottah is sowwy for havin' been such a wottah."

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said Clotilde.

"He can't put it in a gweaceful way, you see," said Arthur Augustus. "But he weally means well, you know."

"Oh, I am sure of it!"

"I should be vewy happy," went on the swell of St. Jim's, in his most stately way, "to be able to assuah Goah that you ovahlook his twangswession against good mannahs on that unfortunate occasion."

Clotilde nodded.

"Please assure Gore that I quite forgive him, and had really almost forgotten the whole circumstance," she said.

"Vewy good. That will weelieve Goah's mind vewy much. And while I am here and talkin' to you, deah boy—I mean deah gal—I will take the opportunity of extendin' an invitation which we have been discussin'. My friends and I would take it as a great favah if, aftah the performance, you would do us the kindness to have tea with us in our study."

Clotilde glanced at Talbot.

The circus lad smiled, but hesitated.

"Of course, it won't be a pwincely entertainment in our study by any means," said D'Arcy, in rather a stately way. "We are only in the Fourth Form, you know, and it won't

be like havin' a feed with Kildare or Dawwel of the Sixth. But we should do our best to give you a decent spweed."

"We should like to come very much," said Clotilde.

"But—"

"Then weally—"

"But, as a matter of fact," said Talbot, bluntly, "what will your masters think of your inviting people from the circus into the school? Have you permission to do so?"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"My deah chap, we invite anybody we like, and so that's all wight. Of course, if we started askin' any boundahs, people who dwink and all that sort of thing, we should heah somethin' f'rom the House-mastah. But when it is a charm-in' young lady and a weally decent chap like yourself, then it's all sewene."

"That is a very nice way to put it," said Clotilde, laughing. "But you must really ask your Head-master's permission first."

"Just so," assented Talbot.

"Well, I will ask Mr. Waitton, to make all wight," said D'Arcy.

"Is he your Head-master?"

D'Arcy smiled.

"Oh, no! Doctah Holmes is the Head—Mr. Waitton is the House-master, you know—head cook and bottlewash in the School House. It is he who would give permish, you see. I assuah you that Mr. Waitton would be as honahed as we should be."

"You are very good."

"Then you will come, aftah that pweliminary has been awwanged?"

"With pleasure," said both together.

"Vewy good. It will be simply wippin' for us."

"Hallo, it's time to get on!" said Talbot. "Thank you vewy much."

"Au revoir," said D'Arcy, raising his silk hat, and walking away.

"Come in, Clotilde."

Clotilde mounted the black Arab, and Talbot led the horse in. The girl was smiling softly.

"D'Arcy is a very nice lad," she said.

Jack Talbot nodded.

"One of the very best, I believe," he said.

And they passed into the ring. Arthur Augustus, ignorant of the good opinion he had established for himself with the circus chuns, returned to look for Gore, and found him hanging about outside the tent. He tapped the one-time cad of the Shell upon the shoulder in a kind and reassuring way.

"It's all wight, Goah."

"Good!"

"Miss Clotilde quite ovahlooks the mattah, and you are forgiven, you know. She is weally a wippin' gal."

"She is," said Gore.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Are you coming in?" asked Gore, going towards the tent entrance.

"Yaas—in a few minutes— Have you seen Wynn, of the New House?"

"Fatty Wynn! No, Figgins and Kerr have gone in, but Wynn is not with them. I expect he's in the school shop."

"Yaas, vewy likely."

And Arthur Augustus strolled away towards the school shop, while Gore went into the circus tent.

CHAPTER 15

The Self-Denial of Fatty Wynn.

"HOW many did you say for sixpence, Mrs. Taggles?"

"Six, Master Wynn."

"What price seven?"

"Sevenpence."

"Mrs. Murphy, in the village, would let me have seven for sixpence, I think."

"Then I really wonder you don't take a walk to the village, on such a nice, fine afternoon, Master Wynn."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy overheard that dialogue as he entered the school shop. Fatty Wynn and Dame Taggles faced each other over the pile of tarts on the counter. To Fatty Wynn, of the New House, six tarts did not make much difference. The extra one would help to fill up the aching void. But Dame Taggles wasn't making any reduction for quantities. Probably she

knew very well that the sixpence would burn in Fatty Wynn's pocket until he had expended it in some form of eatables.

"Hullo, Wynn, deah boy!"

"Hullo!" said Fatty Wynn, without turning his head. "I say, Mrs. Taggles, what price the little cream puffs."

"One penny each, Master Wynn."

"How many for sixpence?"

"Six."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"How many penny buns for sixpence?" asked Wynn, thoughtfully.

"Six, Master Wynn."

"I can't help thinking that you're a very obstinate woman. Mrs. Taggles. Why, Mrs. Murphy, in the village, would let me have eight."

"I don't see how Mrs. Murphy can make that pay," said Mrs. Taggles. "I know I could not."

"Now, really, Mrs. Taggles—"

"Wynn, old man, I want to speak to you. The circus is beginnin'—"

"Yes, I know," said Wynn. "Figgys told me that. But I can't go to a place of amusement on an empty tummy. It spoils the enjoyment. When you're going anywhere like a circus or a theatre, you should always lay a solid foundation."

"Yaas, but—"

"I have had a very light dinner—only two helpings of beef, and potatoes, and Yorkshire pudding, and three of pie, and some bananas and a cake I had in the study, as well as th' mincepies my mater sent me, and the apples," said Fatty Wynn. "I feel as if I shall have a rotten time at the circus if I go hungry."

"Yaas, you must be nearly famishin'," said D'Arcy, with sarcasm, which was quite lost on Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, that's just how I feel, D'Arcy. You can understand a fellow. Are you standing a feed just now?"

"As a mattah of fact, Wynn, that's just what I'm going to do."

Fatty Wynn's plump face beamed.

"Jolly good! I'll have—"

"Look here—"

"These tarts are ripping, and—"

"You see—"

"And the cream puffs—"

"Yaas, but—"

"And then the pork pies—"

"I haven't come here to win ovah a list of pwovisions, Fatty Wynn. I'm thinkin' of standin' a study feed."

"Jolly good! I'll come."

"I'm invitin' some fwienids f'rom the circus."

"Good, again! I'll help you get up a really ripping feed for them."

"I'm goin' to the circus, and haven't got time to do the shoppin'—"

"Leave it to me."

"But you'll miss the circus—"

"That's all right—I'd do more than that for a fellow I like," said Fatty Wynn, beaming. "I don't care so vewy much for circuses, and I can buy something towards the feed with the boblet, too."

"If you weally don't mind—"

"Not a bit!"

"Then I'll hand you the two pounds—"

"Two pounds! Why, my dear fellow, you could feed Lucullus or a Roman emperor on that," exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'll get up a feast that's never been seen before outside the Guildhall in London."

"Vewy well—and you'll have it weady in the studay—Studay No. 6 in the School House—when the performance is ovah at the circus."

"Ready to the tick!"

"I know I can wely upon you to spend the cash to the best advantage, deah boy. This is vewy geneuous of you."

"Oh, I like to help a chap!"

"You can bwing Figgins and Kerr with you to feed, if you like."

"Good again!"

"Then I can twust it in your hands—you weally don't mind givin' up the circus?"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

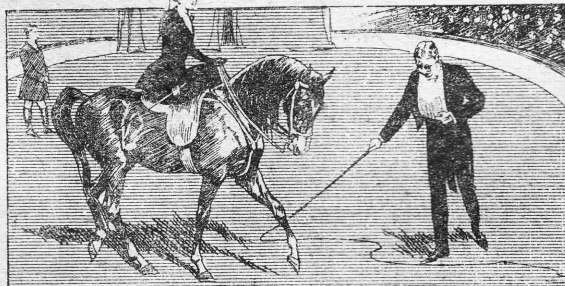
"My dear chap, I'd give up fifty circuses."

"Good! Here's the tin."

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 96.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.



A splendid long, complete tale of Signor Tomsonio's circus, appears in the number of PLUCK, now on sale. In this same issue the Editor is giving away a Motor Cycle.

And Arthur Augustus laid two sovereigns on the counter. Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened.

"Blessed if I know why my father wasn't a lord?" he exclaimed. "I'm descended from a Prince of Wales, you know. My family—"

"Good; but the circus has begun. Good-bye."

And Arthur Augustus departed. Fatty Wynn picked up the two sovereigns, and looked out of the corner of his eye at Mrs. Taggles. The good dame had her eye on the sovereigns also, and she was all smiles. Politeness, such as Fatty Wynn's solitary sixpence had not called forth, was forthcoming in a moment at the glistening of gold.

"What are you going to have, Master Wynn?"

"Eh?" said Fatty absently.

"Pork-pies, of course."

"I was just thinking—"

"You were thinking if you would have cold chicken—"

"Oh, no! I was thinking whether there would be time to go down to the village before the circus was over," said the New House junior thoughtfully.

"Oh, Master Wynn!"

"Mrs. Murphy would let me have seven tarts for sixpence, I am sure."

Dame Taggles forced a smile.

"Yes, Master Wynn, but—"

"Besides, a walk on this fine afternoon would be all right, and I really wonder I don't take it," murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, Master Wynn, you wouldn't spend your money out of doors, and not—not support home industries!" said Mrs. Taggles. "I thought you were a Tariff Reformer, too."

"Well, you see, Tariff Reform is one thing, but sixpence for six tarts is another," said Wynn, shaking his head. "It's a jolly good thing for us we have Free Trade between St. Jim's and the village anyway, or your prices would go up like a balloon."

"Did I say six?" said Dame Taggles. "Of course, taking large quantities makes a great difference. We might say seven for sixpence."

"Oh, in that case, of course, as a patriotic Saint, I must support home industries!" grinned Fatty Wynn. "Here goes."

And he began to give his orders.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went into the School House to speak to Mr. Railton.

The School House master was not in his study, but D'Arcy ran him to earth in the St. Jim's library, a fine old apartment, with well-filled bookcase, and cabinets full of rare old manuscripts, where some of the masters and the more studious boys spent a great deal of time.

Mr. Railton, who was reading off blackletter as easily as if it were a page of the "Daily Mail," paused and looked up as D'Arcy came in.

"D'Arcy! Not at the circus?"

"Well, no, sir—"

"Bless my soul," said the House-master, "I am quite surprised, D'Arcy, to see you in on a half-holiday when you have an opportunity of going to the circus. It is a very laudable taste, certainly, but—"

"If you please, sir—"

"Of course, any studiousness like this is a thing I am willing to encourage," said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir; but—but I haven't come to be studious, please, sir. I—I came to speak to you, sir, with your permish," said D'Arcy.

The House-master laughed.

"Ah! I misjudged you, then. What is it?"

"I want to invite two or three friends to tea in my study, sir," said D'Arcy. "They won't come unless I have your special permish."

Mr. Railton looked puzzled.

"I don't quite understand you, D'Arcy. You are free to invite anybody you please to your study, of course—anybody at the school."

"But these friends do not belong to the school, sir."

"Oh! Who are they?"

"A young lady and a young gentleman attached to the circus, sir."

Mr. Railton's face became a little grave.

"Their names, please?"

"Miss Clotilde and Jack Talbot, sir," said D'Arcy firmly.

"You have met them both, sir, and I am sure you must regard them as being the real thing, sir."

"Yes, certainly, I have no objection to make," said Mr. Railton.

"Vewy good, sir. I was sure I could rely upon your takin' a pwopah view of the mattah, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Thank you, D'Arcy. I am very glad to see, by your request to me, that you are not at all tinctured by any kind THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 96.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

of snobbish feeling owing to your being better placed in the world than the people you speak of."

D'Arcy turned pink.

"I trust, sir, that nobody would evah suspect me of bein' snobbish," he said.

"Certainly not, D'Arcy, certainly not," said the House-master kindly. "You have my full permission to entertain your friends in your study."

And Mr. Railton turned to his blackletter again.

"Thank you very much, sir."

Arthur Augustus quitted the library and the School House, and made his way towards the circus tent, from which the merry strains of music and the sound of loud cheering proceeded.

CHAPTER 16.

The Circus.

TOM MERRY and Co. had good seats in the circus tent, and they were enjoying the performance keenly. The tent was crowded to the last seat almost.

Nearly all St. Jim's was there, including several of the masters, and there were hosts of country people and lads from the village of Rylcombe.

Although it was an afternoon performance, generally less well attended than the evening show, the tent was almost as full as it would hold, and the fat face of Signor Tomsonio was beaming in consequence.

The bareback act, in which Clotilde was assisted by Jack Talbot, who had added to his business of tiger-taming that of equestrianism, elicited loud applause, as much due to the sweet beauty and grace of Clotilde as to the act itself.

Clotilde's act was drawing to a close when Arthur Augustus entered the tent. The swell of St. Jim's put up his eyeglass and looked round for a place.

Jack Blake waved frantically to him over the heads of a dozen rows of people.

"This way, Gussy!"

"It's all wight, Blake. As I am late I shall have to take a back seat, you know. It's wathah wotten, but it's only fair."

"Rats! I've kept a place for you."

"Bai Jove! that was welly thoughtful of you, deah boy."

"Come on, duffer!"

Arthur Augustus made his way down to the front row, where he sank into a seat between Blake and Tom Merry. The rest of the company were in the same row. They had steeple-chased over the seats for the front row immediately the tent was open to the public, and they had bagged the seats in fine style. Arthur Augustus sat down in great content, and a voice behind him—very discontented—proceeded to make remarks.

"Can't you take your 'at off?"

Arthur Augustus turned his head

"Weally, my deah sir—"

A red-faced man glared at him.

"Do you expect me to see through your 'at?" he demanded.

"There is no harm in askin' a chap politely to wemove his toppah," said D'Arcy, with stately dignity, "but a wewest pweferrerd in a wude and wotten mannah is bound to be wefused. A chap owes that to his personal dig."

"Are you goin' to take your 'at off?"

"Certainly not, undah the circs."

"Then I'll knock it off."

"I should pwobably lose my tempah if you did, and stwike you severely."

"My heye!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the ring again. The next moment his silk-hat was jerked off; but as a matter of fact it was Digby who jerked it off, reaching round behind Tom Merry to do it. Dig wanted to avoid a row in the circus-tent; but the result of his effort was most unfortunate. For D'Arcy turned flaming upon the red-faced man.

"You uttah wastah—"

"What!"

"Take that!"

Biff!

The red-faced man roared as D'Arcy's fist clumped upon his fat, red nose. That nose had already been swollen to more than natural proportions by the excessive use of strong liquor. Arthur Augustus's blow made it a little fatter and a little redder.

"Ow! oh! oh!"

"I pwesume—"

"I'll squash him!" said the red-faced man, getting up, "I'll—"

"Hold on!"

"Sit down!" yelled a dozen voices behind. "Down there!"

"I'll squash 'im!"

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"I have pwopahly punished you for touchin' my toppah," said D'Arcy, with dignity, as the red-faced man was forced into his seat by indignant hands behind. "I wegard you as a beast. Now pway westore me my toppah, or I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"You—you—you—"

"My toppah—"

"Oh, you ass!" gurgled Dig. "I took your silly topper. Here it is."

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's face was a study. He mechanically took the silk hat, while the juniors roared.

The red-faced man was on the point of explosion, apparently.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, "I weally beg your pardon. I am awfully sowwy. I wegarded you as bein' the ass who wemoved my hat."

"You—you—"

"I have apologised, and a fellah cannot do more," said D'Arcy.

"Sit down!" yelled a dozeri voices.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the protesters.

"I am apologisin' to this gentleman—"

"Sit down!"

"I twust, sir, that you accept my sincere wegwets. I will certainly keep the hat off now, although pweviously I should have wefused to do so."

"Oh, sit down!" grunted the red-faced man.

"Certainly, my deah sir."

And Arthur Augustus sat down.

"I weally fail to perceive what all you chaps are gwinnin' at," he remarked. "I suppose the gentleman was entitled to an apology."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally; deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurray!" shouted Blake, clapping his hands as Miss Clotilde cantered out of the ring at last. "Bravo!"

"Bravo!" yelled the audience.

The next turn was that of the Handsome Man.

The juniors, and all the audience in fact, watched with keen interest as the lithe, active acrobat swung himself up to the trapeze, and then went through his performance there.

It was certainly a clever and a daring performance, and was well cheered, but the St. Jim's chums did not cheer as loudly as for Clotilde.

They did not like the Handsome Man.

"The chap doesn't tweat his horse decently," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "And a chap who can't be kind to animals is a beast, and I'm not goin' to cheer him, whatevah he does."

And he did not.

On the other hand he had loud hurrahs for the original Joey Pye, and gave a full meed of praise to every item in the programme except the Handsome Man's trapeze turn.

It was really an excellent entertainment from beginning to end, and it fully deserved the applause it received.

But an unrehearsed effect caused more excitement probably than any of the turns specified in the programme.

Oliver Cromwell, the elephant, came in, and Joey Pye climbed up his trunk and sat on his neck, and piloted him round the ring.

He stopped opposite the juniors of St. Jim's, and grinned at them. The juniors gave Oliver Cromwell a cheer, remembering his exploits in the School House.

"Any young gentleman like to feed the buliphant with a bun?" asked Joey Pye cheerfully.

"Bai Jove, I should awfully like to feed the elephant," said Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah fond of elephants. But I haven't a bun."

"Here's one."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. Joey Pye extracted a bun from some recess of his flowing garments.

"Step down into the tan," he said.

"Certainly, deah boy."

D'Arcy jumped the low barrier of the ring.

Joey Pye tossed the bun to him, and Arthur Augustus caught it as if it had been a cricket-ball. There was a lurking twinkle in the eyes of the original Mr. Pye.

"Pat him on the trunk before you feed him," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus gave Oliver Cromwell a pat upon the trunk.

In a second the elephant's trunk curled round the swell of St. Jim's, and he was whirled off his feet into the air.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

Joey Pye, grinning, gave the elephant a touch on the neck, and Oliver Cromwell proceeded to march gravely round the circus, carrying the elegant junior in his trunk.

CHAPTER 17.

D'Arcy's Unrehearsed Act.

"B AI Jove! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

And the audience fairly yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy was startled and amazed, but he was not being hurt. Oliver Cromwell was as gentle as a kitten. But the aspect of the swell of St. Jim's was decidedly the reverse of stately or dignified.

His silk hat had fallen off, and he had grasped it in one hand. His eyeglass was flying on its cord, and his jacket was rumpled up round his shoulders. The elephant's trunk was curled round his chest, under the armpits, and his slim legs thrashed wildly about as he was borne along.

The audience shrieked.

"Oh, my hat!" roared Blake. "This is too good! That rascal Pye made the beast do it on purpose! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The tears were running down Tom Merry's cheeks. The juniors were almost in hysterics. The unrehearsed turn was sending the audience almost into convulsions.

But Arthur Augustus wasn't enjoying it.

He struggled in the trunk of the elephant, but he might as well have struggled in the grip of a steel vice. His resistance made no difference whatever to Oliver Cromwell.

Slowly and steadily the elephant paced on, with the wriggling swell of St. Jim's in his trunk, slowly and steadily round the ring.

"Help! Yow! Wow! My clothes will be wuined! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Signor Tomsonio. "Oh, dear, this is too funny! What? Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my ribs! What?"

Right round the ring, till the elephant and his rider were opposite the juniors again. Then Oliver Cromwell raised his trunk, and lifted D'Arcy over the barrier, and set him down in his seat—breathless and gasping, but unhurt.

"B-b-b-bai Jove!" panted D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oliver Cromwell remained still, his trunk extended over the barrier towards the swell of St. Jim's, as if expectant of something.

"Get away, you bwute! Shush!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take the howwid bwute away!"

"He wants his biscuit!" gurgled Blake. "Oh, my hat! He's waiting for the bun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't you going to feed the elephant, sir?" asked Joey Pye, with perfect gravity.

The bun was still unconsciously gripped in D'Arcy's hand. He felt for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and looked very curiously at the original Mr. Pye.

"Not going to feed the elephant, sir?" asked Joey Pye, in dulcet tones.

Arthur Augustus swallowed his wrath.

"Yaas, wathah!" he said.

And he handed the bun to Oliver Cromwell, who took it in his trunk and transferred it to his mouth. Then he extended his trunk again, and waited for more.

"Shoo!" said D'Arcy, waving his hand. "That's all, you howwid beast! Pway go away!"

"Won't you give him another bun, sir?"

"I haven't anothah bun."

Joey Pye shook his finger at Arthur Augustus.

"I'm sure you'd find another bun, sir, if you looked for it."

"I wegard you as an uttah ass! Do you think I am in the habit of cawwyin' buns about with me?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly.

"Well," chuckled Blake, "considering the things that are found upon you sometimes, I don't see why there shouldn't be some buns among them!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Just one more, sir," said Mr. Pye.

"I wegard you as an ass, sir!"

"Well, that little currant cake, then."

"I wepeat that I have neithah buns nor cake with me, and I wefuse to continue this widiculous discuss," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"But that one under your arm," said Mr. Pye; and, reaching forward from the elephant's neck, he took—or seemed to take—a currant cake from under D'Arcy's arm, and held it up, and then gave it to Oliver Cromwell, who promptly disposed of it.

D'Arcy gave a gasp.

"Bai Jove! How—"

He stood quite helpless while Mr. Pye deftly extracted a

bun from the back of his neck, and a roll from his watch-pocket, and gave them to the elephant.

The audience were craning their necks to see, and they were simply shrieking with laughter.

D'Arcy's face was a study.

But when Mr. Pye proceeded to turn out biscuits from his pockets, one after another, it dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's that the mirth-merchant was at his conjuring again. He backed away from Mr. Pye as far as the seat would allow him.

"Pway cease this silly wot!" he exclaimed. "I wegard you as an ass! You can play your wotten conjurin' twicks on somebody else!"

Mr. Pye thoughtfully drew a cake from Tom Merry's collar, and nodded.

"Very well, sir, Oliver's had his feed."

And the elephant lumbered away.

The audience cheered Mr. Pye loudly. His conjuring was really very good, and its unexpectedness just then made it a greater success. The only person who was not pleased was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He did not seem amused at all, though it was certainly very funny.

But D'Arcy was never cross for long. Before the performance was over, the good-humoured expression habitual to it had returned to his face.

When the last turn was over, and the band started playing the audience out, the St. Jim's chums rose, greatly pleased with the entertainment.

"Jolly good show!" said Blake. "I'm jolly well going to see this again! That's the best of a circus—you can keep on seeing it without getting tired, as you do of plays and things. I hear they are making their next stop for a week somewhere near here—over at Wayland, I think—and I'm going if they're there next half-holiday."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good wheeze," said Tom Merry. "We'll make up a party to go. Nothing like sticking to old friends. It's a ripping show!"

"I say, deah boys—"

"We'll take Gussy, if he'll promise to be a nice boy, and leave his brandy-flask at home. We can't have any beastly intoxication."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And he will have to confine himself to cigarettes, and chuck pipes, while he's with me," said Digby.

"I wefuse to discuss that widiculous mattah, Dig! I am vevy glad that my Cousin Ethel didn't come, aftah all, and see me in that absurd posish!" said Arthur Augustus. "But to come to biznay, I have invited some fwients to tea after the perfoahmance."

"Like your check!" said Blake cheerfully. "You knew jolly well I am going to do some carpentry in the study! I suppose your friends can have tea while I'm hammering, though, can't they?"

"Certainly not! I twust you will not be so wude as to hammah while a lady is havin' her tea!"

"Eh?"

"I twust you will not be so wude as to hammah while a lady is havin' her tea," said Arthur Augustus, with great distinctness.

The chums stopped outside the tent and surrounded D'Arcy, and stared at him.

"Now, then," said Blake, "what does this piffle mean? Cousin Ethel hasn't come."

"No, deah boy."

"I suppose any of the Cliff House girls haven't come this way by any chance?"

"No."

"Or anybody from Cousin Ethel's school?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Is it Miss Fawcett—Tom Merry's governess?"

"Certainly not."

"Or the draper's young lady from Rylcombe?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or Lily the housemaid?"

"Blake—"

"Or the char-lady?"

"I wefuse to continue a widiculous discuss, Blake. The young lady who is comin' to tea is Miss Clotilde of the circus."

"Phew!"

"Mr. Talbot is bwingin' her."

Blake gave his elegant chum a clap on the shoulder.

"Ripping! Gussy, you're a genius! I thought of it, too; but then the circus drove it out of my head. Have they agreed to come?"

"Yaas, wathah—with Mr. Waiton's permish! I am goin' to call for them."

"But the feed—that will want seeing to."

"Fatty Wynn has awwanged ev'rythin' while we've been to the show."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Oh, that's why he didn't come in!" said Figgins. "I thought he was getting a feed somewhere on the Q.T."

"Yaas, wathah! I am goin' to call for my fwients."

"Good—and we'll get the study ready!"

"Tom Mewwy and Lowthah and Mannahs will come, of course—and Figgins and Kerr. I think we might have young Wally too."

"What-ho!" said young Wally, with emphasis.

"I wathah considah that it will considervably impwove the wuffness of Wally's mannahs, associatin' as much as poss. with a charmin' young lady."

"Oh, come off, Gus!"

"Weally Wally—"

"Buzz off and fetch your friends, my son, while I go and change my collar," said Wally. "Young Gibson squirted some ink over this one, and I think it is soiled."

"I am vevy glad to see you showin' some slight wegard at last for your personal appeance, deah boy."

"More rats!" said Wally cheerfully; and he hurried off to change his collar, while Arthur Augustus went to call for Miss Clotilde, and the rest of the juniors went into the School House, to do their best to make Study No. 6 presentable for the visitors.

CHAPTER 18.

Mellish's Jape.

GORE, of the Shell, was standing on the School House steps, with his hands deep in his pockets, and a gloomy expression upon his face. He was looking out into the quadrangle, already growing dusky. Tom Merry & Co. had just passed him, going in, and Tom had given him a cheery nod. Gore glanced after the chums, and then stared out into the growing dusk, with a shade on his face. He was deep in gloomy thought, and he started suddenly as Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, tapped him on the shoulder.

Mellish was grinning gleefully.

"I say, Gore, did you know—"

"Know what?" said Gore abruptly. His manner was not encouraging; Gore was different in these days from the Gore who had always been Mellish's chum, and had entered with relish into every caddish scheme that the keener but less spirited cad of the Fourth had devised.

"About D'Arcy's visitors?"

"Is he having visitors?"

"Yes, rather! There's a regular beanfeast in Study No. 6. Of course, they haven't asked you."

Gore scowled.

"Why should they ask me?" he growled. "I don't chum with them. What are you getting at?"

"Oh, I thought they might, as you've been sucking up to them lately," said Mellish. "I suppose they'll take all the sucking up, but when it comes to chumming with you, they draw the line."

Gore winced.

"But I was going to tell you something," said Mellish. "Fatty Wynn has been getting the feed ready, and D'Arcy has gone to fetch the visitors. There's going to be a high old time in No. 6, I assure you. Guess who the visitors are?"

"I don't know, and I don't care."

"It's the people from the circus!"

"Oh!"

"Jack Talbot, and Miss Clotilde."

Gore's brow darkened. He was sincerely sorry for his caddish conduct towards Clotilde, but he could not remember with pleasure the licking he had had at that time. His face was not pleasant when he thought of Talbot.

"Well, what about it?" he said abruptly.

"Hallo! Here they are."

Arthur Augustus was coming in, with Talbot and Clotilde. They passed into the School House, and up the stairs to the Fourth Form passage. Gore and Mellish looked after them till the bend of the great staircase hid them from sight.

"Stunning girl, isn't she?" said Mellish.

"Yes."

"You'd like to join the party—eh?"

"Mind your own business."

"Oh, it's all right! I'd like to be there myself. No chance for either of us, though. The next best thing to going is to make them sorry they didn't ask us."

"How?"

"By mucking up the party."

Gore started.

"How can you muck it up? What do you mean? You'll get a jolly good licking if you go and make a row at No. 6."

Mellish chuckled.

"I jolly well sha'n't make a row," he said. "I know what I know."

"And what do you know?"

"You'll keep it dark?" said Mellish eagerly.

Gore looked at him. The cad of the Fourth had evidently been playing some trick, and was simply bursting to confide his cleverness to somebody. And Mellish never could understand that Gore was really trying to turn over a new leaf. In spite of continual rebuffs, he still believed that Gore was only playing a game to deceive the chums of the School House, with the intention of somehow injuring them later on.

"Oh, go ahead!" said Gore.

"Mind, you'll keep it dark?"

As a rule, a promise cost Gore little. He would keep it or not, as suited him best. But now he felt some repugnance making a promise he would not keep. It was the working of the better spirit in his breast.

"No," he said, after a pause. "If you're playing any cowardly trick on Study No. 6 while they've got a lady visitor, I won't keep it dark."

Mellish gritted his teeth.

"Still keeping up the humbug?" he sneered. "I don't see why you want to try to spoof me, as well as Tom Merry. You can't expect me to take it in."

"You worm!"

"Well, if you can't keep a secret, you jolly well won't know it!" said Mellish. And he was turning away, when Gore's grasp fell heavily upon his shoulder, and he was swung back.

"Stop a minute!"

Mellish wriggled.

"I'm going—I—"

"You're not going just yet. You're playing some trick on Study No. 6."

"Well, suppose I am?" said Mellish sullenly.

"If it's only a jape—"

"That's all it is—just a jape!"

"I don't know," said Gore dubiously. "You're such a worm. You can tell me what it is, and I'll see."

"I jolly well won't, unless you promise to keep it dark."

"Tell me!"

"Sha'n't!"

Gore's grasp tightened.

"Come along, then!"

"Eh? What do you mean? Come along where?"

"To Study No. 6," said Gore grimly. "You can explain to Blake if you won't explain to me."

The cad of the Fourth changed colour.

"I—I— Hold on, you fool! I'll tell you!"

"Quick, then!"

"It's—it's only a jape. If you spoil it, I'll be even with you some day!" said Mellish, between his teeth.

Gore shook him fiercely.

"What is it, you worm? Tell me!"

"Well, it's some of the fireworks I had left over from the Fifth," said Mellish sullenly. "I've shoved 'em into a bundle, and lowered them down the chimney on a string." He chuckled. "You see the dodge? As soon as the string gets charred by the heat, it will break, and the bundle of fireworks will drop into the fire. Then—"

"You young fool!"

"It's a jolly good wheeze, I think. They'll explode all at once, and frighten them out of their wits, and there won't be a clue left," grinned Mellish. "I shall be somewhere with the other chaps, to have an alibi ready proved in case they suspected me."

"You mad young idiot! You might blow the fire all over the room, and set it alight."

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"They'll put it out, I suppose."

"The lumps of coal, you fool—you idiot!" gasped Gore, who realised the seriousness of the matter more than Mellish did. "You might injure them—blind somebody for life, perhaps, if the explosion is powerful enough."

"Oh, that's all rot."

Gore gripped him till he cried out with pain.

"Listen! Go and pull that string up, do you hear? Get the fireworks away, or I'll tell Mr. Railton the whole matter. You know what that would mean?"

"Sneak!"

"Go and do it—at once! You mad young idiot, the girl might be injured! You don't know what might happen! Go!"

Mellish, a little frightened by Gore's earnestness, ran. Gore himself hurried away towards Study No. 6. There was a sound of merry voices proceeding from it as Gore neared the door. He tapped at the door, and without waiting for an answer, entered hastily.

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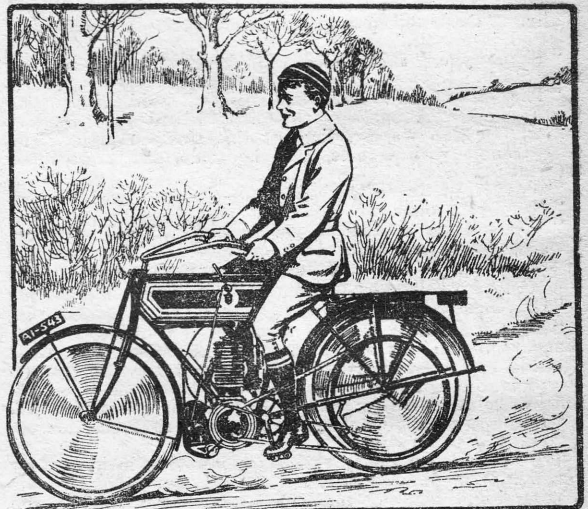
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CHAPTER 19.

Bravo, Gore!

TOM MERRY & Co. were all there. Fatty Wynn was beaming like a full moon with complete satisfaction. He had expended the two pounds to the last penny, and he had certainly made a splendid show for the sum. The table—increased in length by a box stood on end and covered with a borrowed cloth—looked decidedly inviting. It simply groaned under the weight of good things. Fatty Wynn had arranged everything with a master hand. Fatty had had a great deal of experience in that line.

Chairs and forms were ranged round the table, and the guests had taken their places on either side of Arthur Augustus, who had naturally placed himself at the head of affairs. Such of the juniors as could not find room at the table disposed of themselves elsewhere. They sat on boxes, on the window-sill, on the coal locker. But Miss Clotilde and Jack Talbot were quite comfortably disposed, and this, their first experience of a study feed, was a pleasant one.

If they had eaten a twentieth part of what the juniors would have liked to see them eat, they would easily have beaten Falstaff at his best. It was a very merry party, and Clotilde's face was very bright.

"Bai Jove, I wish my Cousin Ethel were here to meet you, you know," Arthur Augustus said, more than once. "You would like her immensely."

"What ho!" said Blake.

"Anothah cup of tea, Miss Clotilde?"

"Thank you!"

"Pway fill Miss Clotilde's cup, Tom Mewwy."

"Certainly."

"A little cake——"

"Oh, no, thank you; no more cake."

"Then a biscuit?"

"Yes, just one, thank you."

"I say, Talbot, let me help you to the seedy cake," said Wally. "I can recommend this seedy cake. I might have selected it myself."

"Thank you," said Talbot, laughing. "I like it very much."

"The sultana cake isn't bad, either," said Wally confidentially. "Altogether, this isn't a bad feed for my major. He can stand things of this sort all right. The only trouble with Gus is, that he sometimes sings tenor solos afterwards."

"Weally, Wally——"

"Now, you know you do, Gus."

"You are an unmusical young wottah," said D'Arcy.

"Pway excuse my usin' that expression, Miss Clotilde. I am sowwy to say that my minah nevah undahstands the respect weally due to an eldah bwotah."

"Oh, come off!" said Wally.

"Do you feel the fire too much, Miss Clotilde?" asked Kangaroo, who was seated next to the circus girl. Miss Clotilde had been given the seat nearest the fire, as the day was bitterly cold now; but the study was too well filled to be at all chilly; and, in fact, it was growing warm.

"I am very comfortable, thank you," said Clotilde.

"Hallo! What's that?"

The door burst open, and Gore ran in, looking very excited. He glanced at the fire, and saw that it was blazing high. At any moment the fireworks might drop into the blaze, and then would come the explosion.

The juniors stared at the Shell fellow.

"Gore, what the——"

"Weally, Goah——"

"What the dickens——"

"I—I'm sorry!" exclaimed Gore, striding towards the fireplace, and placing himself between Clotilde and the glowing grate. "You see——"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet.

"I see it is a feahful cheek for you to come in like this," he exclaimed. "You boundah——"

"I—I——"

"I wegard you as an intwudin' wascal."

"You see——"

D'Arcy waved his hand.

"Pway wetire, deah boy."

"Let me explain——"

"Wats! No explanation can excuse an intwusion. Get out!"

"Hold on, Gussy; let a chap speak before you scalp him," exclaimed Tom Merry, who saw by Gore's expression that something was amiss. "Anything the matter, Gore?"

"Yes," said Gore hurriedly. "A chap—I won't tell you his name—has shoved some fireworks in your chimney, and they may explode any minute."

"Bai Jove!"

"I came in to warn you, and——"

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"Gweat Scott! I am sowwy! I withdwaw the expwes-sions I used!"

"The fireworks may drop into the flame any moment, and——"

Crash!

"There they are!"

Something had fallen heavily into the fire from above. A myriad of sparks shot up, and there was a fizz, a buzz, then——

Crack, crack, crack! Bang, bang, bang!

Bang, bang!

There was a hubbub of exclamations at once.

The juniors were on their feet in a flash. The room was filled with smoke, fragments of exploding fireworks and burning coal were hurled in every direction, and there was a sharp cry from someone in pain.

Talbot sprang towards Clotilde; his first thought was for her. But he collided with D'Arcy, and both fell over an overturned chair, and staggered away. The girl stood bewildered, close to the explosions, which were incessant, and the raining fragments of wood and coal and crackers.

But there was one to help her. It was Gore!

Even as the crash in the fire came, he had torn off his jacket, and he had it wrapped round Clotilde's face in a twinkling, and held it there.

The girl made no movement, too dazed and bewildered to know what was happening.

The scene lasted only a minute.

The last detonation rang out, and it ceased, and Blake dragged the window open for the smoke to clear, and the juniors gathered up the fragments to fling them back into the grate, for the carpet was catching alight in several places.

Tom Merry sprang towards Gore.

Gore's shirt-sleeves were alight in two places, and Tom Merry clapped his hands upon them, careless of the pain, and squeezed them out.

The Shell fellow's face, too, was blackened and bruised, for he had stood in the full force of the explosions, and his skin was scorched, his eyebrows and hair singed.

"By George," exclaimed Talbot, grasping Gore's hand, "you're a plucky fellow, anyway. Clotilde, you're not hurt?"

"N-no," stammered the girl, "I am not hurt; but I should have been but for——"

"But for Goah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Amazin'!"

"It's all right," said Gore awkwardly. "You see, I——"

"Your face wants looking after," said Tom Merry anxiously. "You're scorched. I say, you are a plucky chap, Gore; and you were quick, too. I'm so glad you weren't hurt, Miss Clotilde. This is a silly trick played by some kid who didn't know how dangerous it was. It's too smoky to stay here, Blake; let's get into my study."

"Good!"

"We'll bring the food," said Fatty Wynn.

No one had been hurt except Gore. Blake led him away to have his face seen to, and the party adjourned to Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

Ten minutes later Blake returned, with Gore. Gore's face was almost hidden under bandages, placed there by the skilful hands of the House-dame, and only one of his eyes was visible. He was grinning painfully through the bandages, and seemed very nervous about joining the party.

"I made him come," said Blake. "Modest hero! Wants to light his hide under a bushel—I mean, he wants to hide his light under a bushel. But here he is."

And Gore was made much of during that feed in Tom Merry's study. And in spite of the painful twinges from his burns, it is probable that the next hour was one of the happiest in Gore's life.

And when the feast was over, and the circus chums took their leave, Clotilde gave the one-time cad of the Shell her hand, with a sweet smile.

"Thank you so much!" she said. "It was very brave and very kind of you."

Gore turned crimson through the bandages.

"You're very good to say so," he stammered. "If you can forgive me for having acted like a beast on one occasion, I'm satisfied."

"I have already forgotten that," said Clotilde softly.

The juniors escorted the circus chums back to Signor Tomsonio's camp in great state, and took leave of them there; and ere the chums of St. Jim's were in bed that night, the circus was packed up, and wending its way through dark lanes and over strange paths, seeking fresh fields and pastures new.

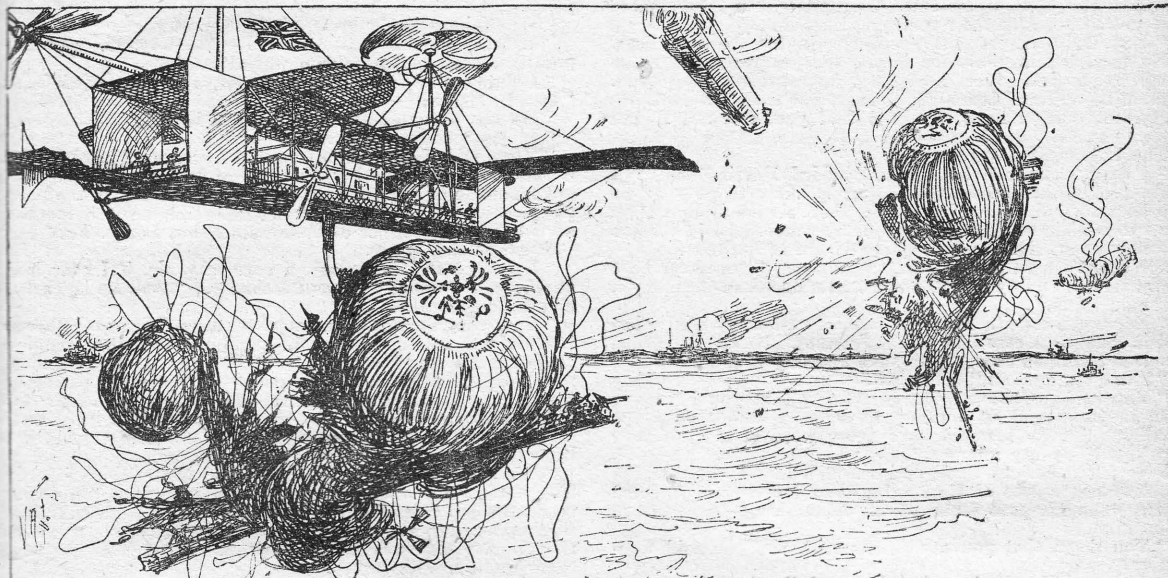
But it was not the last time that Tom Merry & Co. met the chums of the circus.

THE END.

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BRITAIN'S REVENGE

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

AUBREY VILLIERS nicknamed Sam Slick. A lad who has performed wondrous service for his country in her time of need, during the terrible invasion by the Germans.

STEPHEN VILLIERS, his brother. He is Sam's companion in all his exploits.

After the sweeping defeat of the Germans in London, as related in "Britain at Bay," the country is astounded by two brothers—men named Carfax.

Harrington Carfax, a scientist-inventor, discovers the way to make gold, and presents to the Chancellor of the Exchequer £100,000,000.

John Carfax has invented an absolutely perfect aeroplane, and he takes Sam and Steve to Germany.

There the two young scouts accidentally discover that a plot is afoot to murder Harrington Carfax, and they persuade his brother to make all speed to warn him. This John Carfax laughingly consents to do, and the three return to England in the airship, only to find that Harrington is already, to the boy's astonishment, in possession of the details of the plot against him. However, the attempt to kill him is made, but fails, and the assassin meets an untimely end.

"Let us get to bed," said Harrington. "My nerves are not upset."

(Now go on with the story.)

THE HYPNOTIST.

"By Jove, no, I shouldn't think anything would do that!" murmured Stephen, and Harrington escorted them to the other side of the house, where he put the boys in possession of a large room with a couple of beds in it, and John in another next door.

"Sleep long, and get all the rest you need," said Harrington, "for there's no need for haste now. I have got something far more important than to-night's little affair to communicate to you. But that can quite well wait till to-morrow."

He disappeared in the direction of his own room. The boys found their apartment most sumptuously furnished, quite different to the bare, Spartan style of the great scientist's room. Despite the excitement of the night, the boys were so sleepy that they could hardly undress. The

luxury of a real bed and a full spell of rest was a prospect they had not known for a fortnight, and they made the most of it.

"Well," said John Carfax, with a quiet smile, as he bade them good-night, "am I right? Which is the man of iron, my brother or I?"

"Both of you, sir," said Sam, "but I agree he's the harder of the two, and I'd be more sorry to have him for an enemy, even than you. He isn't iron, he's wrought steel!"

And, tumbling into bed, the two young scouts were fast asleep before their heads touched the pillows.

"Nearly twelve o'clock!" exclaimed Sam, looking at the watch he had placed beside the bed, "here, tumble out, Steve. It's the middle of the day!"

He hauled his brother out of the other bed, and both of them were amazed to find how long they had slept. It was little wonder, considering how short of rest they had gone lately, and after a refreshing cold tub apiece they dressed and went downstairs. Harrington came in from the laboratories.

"I didn't have you called," he said; "good long sleep was what you wanted. Do you the world of good, and now you'll be fit for anything. Yes, John's been up some time. Hungry?"

"Rather!" said the brothers.

"It's a trifle late for breakfast, but we'll have an early lunch at half-past twelve—that's in ten minutes' time."

"I suppose you'll be busy getting a lot of that gold sent off to London," said Sam. "Didn't you say it was going to-day, sir?"

"My dear boy, the last of it went six hours ago," said Harrington, laughing. "Saw it off myself. No, I don't go in for much sleep, I can do without it."

"This house is as big a wonder as the Condor, all things considered," remarked Stephen. "I suppose we shall clear off back to Germany now, and get to our duty there again. We sha'n't leave it to warn you of your enemies any more, sir," he added, with a laugh.

"I've got something to say to you first. Ah, here comes John," said Harrington. "I believe you will all be pretty busy before long, but you're used to that. Wait till you hear my news."

The aeronaut joined them with a significant glance at the

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"JACK BLAKE'S LITTLE DODGE."

brother, and they all went in to lunch. An excellent lunch it was, as was usual at Harrington's table, and nothing was said about past or future events while it was in progress. The talk centred on other matters, for two footmen were in attendance, and the boys kept them busy handing dishes.

When the meal was over, Harrington led his guests to the comfortable smoking-room on the first-floor, where, after shutting the door, John and Harrington lit a cigar apiece and settled down in their armchairs.

"You don't smoke, eh?" said Harrington to the boys. "No need to ask that, for if you did you wouldn't be so tough as you are. Well, I've just a few words to say to you. That little affair of last night is over, but there's a far more important one on hand, and one that you, and not I, will have to tackle."

The boys waited expectantly. "I have mentioned it to John," added Harrington, "but neither of us know how the matter is likely to go yet; we are here to find out. First of all, there's something I shall have to explain to you. You probably wondered how I came to know about the late Tarlenheim's plan to murder me."

"Wonder isn't the word, sir," said Sam; "you must be a secret service all in yourself, and a better one than Germany's, I should think."

"No, that's not it. I got some information, certainly, but not in detail. A case like this is different. Now," he turned his gaze full upon Sam, "you have a strong will, I think?"

"I don't know, sir," said Sam. "You certainly have. Yet, supposing that you have any plan in your head at present, of which I know only the smallest inkling. I would have every word of it from your own lips in twenty minutes."

Sam felt a curious thrill pass through him as he met the strange, steely eyes of Harrington, and found that he could hardly take his gaze from them. A sudden light broke in upon him.

"You mean that you are a hypnotist, sir," he said wonderingly.

"There are few such as Harrington is," said John Carfax quietly.

"You are not far wrong, Villiers," said the famous scientist. "However, don't be alarmed, I am not going to practise on you. But it is necessary, considering what we have to do, that I should tell you. As an instance, this unfortunate Tarlenheim told me, out of his own mouth, how he intended to murder me; why, where, and the very hour when he expected to commit the deed."

"Good heavens!" said Sam. "And after that he still tried to do it?"

"He was quite unconscious that he had told me," said Harrington, with a dry smile, "and you will presently understand, I think. He knew no more of what he had said than you would if you had happened to talk in your sleep last night."

Sam stared at him in astonishment, and Stephen looked puzzled.

"I suspected the man when first he applied to me for a situation," said Harrington; "for though Tarlenheim is thought clever at his work, I am not easy to deceive. The rest I soon found out from his own lips, as I say. However, let him rest—he concerns us no more. Now for the news I have to give you. You know, of course, that the Kaiser is a prisoner in London?"

"Yes, certainly," said Sam. "It would be strange if you didn't, considering that his capture—after the final defeat of the German invaders of Britain—was due to your smartness and resource. Well, there is a German plot, now ripening, to effect the Kaiser's escape and get him back to Germany."

"What?" cried Sam, sitting bolt upright in his chair. "Are you sure, sir?"

"I have a warning of it, which I believe has reached no one else—certainly not the Government. Now, you know, naturally, what an immensely important thing it would be to Germany if she could get the Kaiser back."

The boys nodded keenly. "Not that his leadership would make such a great difference, perhaps," added Harrington, "but because it would be a great omen for the German people. They would consider the tide was turning against us once more. While we hold their Emperor a captive of war, it has a big moral effect on their huge army; and these things count, you know."

"Rather!" said Sam. "They do indeed."

"It would be a bad thing for Britain to lose the Kaiser—to let him escape from our very midst, and from London itself, where he is most closely guarded."

"It's impossible, surely!" exclaimed Stephen.

"I don't agree with you, my lad. Never say anything is impossible. The plot is sure to be a good one, and cleverly planned. It might succeed."

"Do you know what the plan is, sir?" said Sam eagerly.

"I do not. I only know that such a plan exists, and I've an inkling of it, that's all. That is guess-work. What we have to do is to discover the whole truth. It will not take us long, and I propose to lay it before you all, as you will have to do the work," said Harrington, knocking the ash from his cigar and rising from his chair. "We will now lay bare this German scheme, and learn the actual facts of the plot."

"What, here in Andover, sir?" said Stephen. "Without leaving this room. By the way, did you suppose that the spy Tarlenheim was alone?"

"I didn't think anything about it, sir," confessed Sam; "but I suppose—"

"He has a confederate, who is still here."

"In your house, sir?" asked Stephen.

"Yes. Did you notice my second footman at lunch? That is the man. He goes by the name of Parkyns, by the way, but his name at home is Heinrich Edelmann, and in the peculiar branch of that secret service of which he is a member he is known by neither of these names, but as No. X5."

Sam whistled softly. "I think I shall keep out of your way, sir, if I ever have anything to conceal," he said feelingly. "And he is Tarlenheim's confederate?"

"Yes; they always work in pairs, these fellows. Although holding a humbler position in the household, Edelmann is Tarlenheim's superior officer, so to speak. It was his business to spy out the land, and decide on the exact place and time for the business to be done, and to give Tarlenheim the order to carry it out."

"I should have thought the indoor servant would have been the one to do the deed," said Stephen.

"No, it isn't so, as you'll understand if you think it over. But never mind that. Heinrich Edelmann is not the man to do the job himself if he could help it. I think he rather dislikes murder, though no doubt he would tackle me if he thought the plan was falling through. These creatures have their credit to keep up, you see."

"Did you learn all this from himself, sir?" said Sam, in amazement.

"No, from Tarlenheim, in the manner I described to you just now. I extracted all the information I could from him about X5, but I have left the latter alone so far. We will now have him in," concluded Harrington, walking towards the bell.

"He knows nothing about what happened last night, then, sir?" exclaimed Stephen.

"Of Tarlenheim's fate? Not a word, as yet, be sure of that," replied Harrington; "but, of course, he can see for himself that, for some reason, his confederate has failed to do the deed. I think our worthy X5 is rather troubled in his mind. However, we shall see."

Harrington pressed the bell-push and returned to his chair. The butler appeared.

"Will you see about the stacking of those wines in the cellar, Watford?" said Harrington, "and send Parkyns up with some black coffee and liqueurs."

The butler retired on his errand, and was heard going downstairs.

"But how will this help us as regards the plot for the Kaiser's escape?" said Sam, in a low voice.

"My information is that Edelmann knows what the scheme is," said Harrington coolly; "and that he may possibly be called on to assist it when he has done with me."

Silence fell on the room for some moments. The expectation of the boys was roused to its highest pitch. A soft step was heard outside, and the footman entered quietly, without knocking, as a well-trained footman should do.

All eyes were turned on him as he entered. He was a tall, square, flat-faced man, rather old to be a second footman, but evidently up to his work. No man ever looked less like a dangerous conspirator. He bore a tray of coffee and liqueurs, with which he advanced noiselessly.

"Thank you, Parkyns," said Harrington. "Leave it on the side table."

The footman did so, and as he turned to go, Harrington stopped him.

"By the way, X5," said the Gold-master, in his suavest tones, "Tarlenheim was not successful in that little job last night. He has paid the penalty."

The footman, before Harrington had even finished speaking, stopped in his tracks, and turned pale as death. Sam and Stephen watched with intense interest. The man turned again to face his master, and a cold sweat had broken out on his face. He made an effort to control his voice.

"I beg your pardon, sir?" he said respectfully, though it could be seen that he was trembling slightly.

"I was about to say," replied Harrington, in the same easy voice, "that Tarlenheim failed, and is therefore dead. If you draw that revolver which is in the pocket of your coat, I cannot answer for your own fate."

The man gave a gasp, and, uttering a sharp, despairing cry, he did the very thing which Harrington had indicated. He whipped out a small six-shooter, and pointed it at the Gold-master's head.

Sam leaped up to rush at the spy, but Harrington threw out an arm and motioned to him to keep his seat, at the same time fixing his own eyes on the face of the German.

"Put that down!" he said, in a low, even voice. "Put down your pistol!"

Sam's heart was in his mouth. The spy's intention was not to threaten, but to kill, as could be seen the moment he drew the weapon, for he was discovered, and there was no hope for him, unless he could silence his discoverers and take to flight.

As his arm shot out straight, holding the revolver, his eyes met the steely, pale-blue orbs of Harrington. They were extraordinary eyes, and the man gave a shiver, as if he had been struck.

The slow, even voice reached him at the same instant, and his finger actually stayed as it was pressing upon the trigger.

"Put it down!" said the Gold-master's level tones again, spoken in a way that seemed to bite right into the hearer. The others watched breathlessly, not daring to move for fear of what might happen. One pressure of that finger-joint, and Harrington, they knew, was a dead man. But the German's face, tense and rigid, began to glisten with perspiration. His eyes were fixed stupidly on Harrington's, the pistol wavered, and began to lower. It seemed about to drop from the spy's grasp.

"On the table, please," said Harrington, who was lying back easily in his chair, and had not moved an inch.

Slowly and stiffly the German, rocking slightly where he stood, laid the revolver upon the table beside him, without taking his eyes from Harrington's, his broad face looking pulpy and unwholesome. He dropped his arm to his side as he let go of the weapon, and the boys gave an audible sigh of deep relief.

"My word," breathed Stephen, "that's hypnotism with a vengeance!"

"Well, Edelmänn," said Harrington quietly, "you have not made quite a success of this business. I have a use for you, however, and I will now proceed to ask you a few questions."

Then the Gold-master, leaning forward in his chair, fixed his gaze with redoubled intensity upon the spy's face. Harrington's pupils looked like two white-hot needle-points, that seemed to burn into the man's brain.

The German stopped swaying to and fro, and became rigid as a statue. The muscles of his face were tense, and a still more vacant, stupid look came into his eyes, like that of a man in a trance.

Not a movement did the Gold-master make, not a single pass with his hands, such as the boys had heard of in such cases. The spy stiffened into a living puppet, under the gaze of those steely eyes, and remained so.

Then Harrington lay back again in his chair, with the look of a man satisfied with his work.

The Flight to London.

"Very good!" said Harrington, laying down his cigar, but not taking his eyes from the German's face. "He has more will-power than I thought. It was touch and go for a moment with that pistol."

Sam rose swiftly, took up the revolver and pocketed it, and returned to his seat. Silence fell upon the room, and the hypnotised spy stared before him with glassy eyes. It was an uncanny sight, and all were glad when Harrington broke the silence with his first question.

"What is the name of the man who is to lead the rescue of the Kaiser?" he said, in a steady, low-toned voice, speaking very distinctly.

There was a slight pause, and then Edelmänn's lips moved, though the rest of him remained perfectly rigid. His voice came, thick and drowsy in tone, but quite audible. "Hauptman von Mansfeldt," he said, without as much as a blink of his eyelids.

"And who sends him upon this undertaking?" said Harrington, amid dead silence.

"Prince Henry of Prussia," was the reply.

"How is it to be done?" asked the Gold-master.

"By airship," was the reply.

"How will the airship rescue the Kaiser?"

There was no reply. Harrington leaned forward again, and repeated the question very slowly. The answer came, after a short pause.

"The airship will take his Majesty by night, from the place where he is imprisoned," said Edelmänn; and, after a pause, he added: "It is considered to be the only possible way."

The interest of the listeners increased tenfold, and they bent forward, so as not to miss a word.

"When will the attempt be made?" continued Harrington.

"On or after the 27th, upon the first suitable night. As soon as there is a night without moon or stars. Very dark," was the answer.

"Which is the vessel chosen?"

"The navigable armed gas airship, Kronenfels."

"Where is she now?"

"Probably over the North Sea or the Straits of Dover, not far from the English coast. At a great height. She waits for the opportunity."

John Carfax and Sam glanced at each other.

"How will she manage to remain so long away from all land and from her headquarters?" said Harrington keenly.

"These gas balloons cannot stay out long for lack of benzine for their engines, and gas for their containers."

"She takes fresh supplies of benzine from German steamers early every night, and again before morning. Gas is supplied her in the same way. She carries enough to take her to London, and thence back across the sea to South Holland with ease."

"Can she wait for a week if necessary?"

"Yes," replied the spy, "unless very strong winds spring up."

"What if she meets the Condor?" asked Harrington drily.

"The Condor is in Germany."

"That is rather fortunate, is it not?"

"Perhaps."

"Does the Kaiser know of this attempt, and when to expect the airship?"

"Yes. The communication has reached him by now."

"In spite of his warders?"

"Yes."

"What is the exact manner in which the Kaiser will be rescued by the airship? What means will she employ when his place of imprisonment is reached?"

"I do not know. It has not been told me."

"Does Von Mansfeldt know?"

"Yes, he knows. It is his plan."

"Did he suggest it to Prince Henry of Prussia, then, himself?"

"So I believe."

"Is it expected to succeed?"

"They are confident they will set the Kaiser free to lead his country against Britain again, and crush her."

"You are to give some help in this matter, I believe, if you have done with Harrington Carfax in time; is not that so? What part are you to play in it?"

"I am to take up my quarters in a house south of the Thames, facing the river, and receive from our spies in London news which the airship will need to know for the purpose of the rescue. I am to communicate it to the Kronenfels by signalling with lights at a certain window of the house, which signals she will be able to read by means of her glasses when approaching the city from above."

Harrington nodded meaningly to his brother and the boys. The spy, still under the influence of the weird hypnotic power, seemed to be growing exhausted.

"If you are not there," pursued Harrington, "will it make any difference to the plan?"

"No. My place will have to be taken by another, that is all. It will be inconvenient, but they will not stop for it."

Harrington rose from his chair.

"I think," he said, "that we now know all he is able to tell us. The rest is easy to fit in."

Edelmänn Forgets.

John Carfax nodded. Harrington's intent, burning gaze no longer sought Edelmänn's face. The Gold-master, standing opposite him, waved his open palm five or six times before the German's eyes.

Slowly the man's countenance relaxed, and the muscles of his face became less rigid. The glassy look faded gradually from his eyes, which began to look intelligent again. Then Edelmänn seemed suddenly about to collapse altogether as his senses came back to him. Harrington caught him by the arm and allowed him to sink into a chair. The man stared round him wildly.

"Where am I?" he said in German, and then, with a start, lapsing into English, "Ah, I remember!"

He gulped, and looked at the table where the pistol had lain.

"I have been to sleep, haven't I?" he muttered. "Or what was it?" He looked at Harrington, and muttered again under his breath. "Well," he said at last, in a sullen voice, "what are you going to do with me?"

"What you deserve," said Harrington. "You merit very little at my hands, Edelmänn—or should I still call you Parkyns? You are a murderer in will, if not in deed, and

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of the two I think I prefer Tarlenheim. Have you anything to say?"

The German kept silence, moodily. "It is an ugly piece of work you have been engaged in," said the Gold-master; "but I suppose it is to your taste, or else the pay is, or you would not have accepted it. Are you engaged in any other spying business over here?"

"No," said Edelmann. Harrington rang a bell twice, and his two stalwart assistants appeared. Motioning to them to wait for a moment, the Gold-master turned to the spy again.

"There is no other scheme you are mixed up in, then? You were over here to help in putting me out of the way, and nothing else? Is that so?"

"I was spying in your house, it is true," said Edelmann sullenly; "there is nothing else. I should have gone back to Germany to-day."

Harrington signed to his assistants. "Keep this man a close prisoner. You know where to take him. See he has all he needs, but ensure that he is well guarded. I will deal with him later, when I have time. You understand?"

"Perfectly," said the bigger of the two young men, and they led the spy away. The door closed upon them.

"You see?" said Harrington, turning to his companions. "He knows nothing of what he has said or done. It is all a blank to him. He does not even know he has been through a hypnotic trance. He lied to me quite openly about his intentions, not in the least knowing he had only just told us a very different story. Tarlenheim was the same."

"It was wonderful, sir," said Stephen. "I never saw anything like it. It gave me creeps all down the back. And you've been as good as your word, and got us the very news we were after."

"And what news!" cried Sam enthusiastically. "By Jove, sir, isn't it immense! The Kaiser to be rescued by airship, so that he can lead his country against us once more! It could be done, too, with a little luck."

"They aren't so far out," said Stephen. "It seems to me, sir, you've dropped into this game only just in time. That must have been the airship we saw hanging over Dover Straits last evening."

"Not a doubt of it," said John Carfax grimly. "I wish I'd stopped and sent her down to the fishes. It will be a harder job finding her now. Yes, it's not a bad scheme for a gasbag. They might do it if they've a smart crew aboard her. She's well armed, too, if there's trouble."

"Where is the Kaiser kept prisoner now?" exclaimed Sam.

"In the Tower," said Harrington.

"What! The Tower of London, d'you mean?"

"Yes. It's been decided on as the safest and handiest place. Rather out of date, you might think, but it's a wise choice. He has the Royal prisoners' apartments there, and he's quite comfortable, I'm told," said Harrington. "Being in the heart of London, and thoroughly well guarded, I don't see how they could do better."

"It sounds like Queen Elizabeth's times come back," said Stephen — "a Royal prisoner of war in the Tower!"

"Well, there's plenty of precedent for it. All Royal prisoners have always been kept there."

"And he's to be rescued out of it by airship!" exclaimed Sam. "This beats all. It's the only way an escape could be made from the Tower, that's sure. They didn't have them in King Charles' day! Well, if it can be done, we've got to stop it!"

"We have so," replied John Carfax, with a nod; "and with no delay."

"What a pity it is we don't know just what this Kronenfels' airship is going to do to bring the rescue off," said Sam, striding up and down the room. "Are you going to hunt her down and destroy her, sir, while she's waiting her chance?"

"No; there are reasons against that," said Carfax grimly. "To take her in the act, then?" cried Stephen.

"That is what I mean to do. And we must take care we do not fail. I will catch her at the very Tower itself, if I take her at all."

"On the 27th, or after," put in Harrington quietly. "That is what Edelmann said."

Sam gave an exclamation of dismay. He had forgotten the date, and what it portended, until then.

"The 27th! That was yesterday!" he cried. "This is the 23th, isn't it? What if she did it last night, after we left her!"

Carfax and the boys were in consternation for the moment, realising what the catastrophe would mean.

"You need have little fear of that," said Harrington. "I should have heard of it myself before now, if it had happened — by private telegraph from London."

"It would scarcely have been dark enough last night, either," said John Carfax. "There was some starlight at times. But to-night it will be black enough for Old Harry himself," he added, striding to the window. "There is little wind, and the sky is heavily overcast. It should be just the Kronenfels' night."

"And the twilight is falling already," said Harrington. "It is time you were gone, for you're far enough from the Condor, and all things hang upon your success, remember that."

"By Jove, you're right!" exclaimed John Carfax, throwing open the door. "Come, lads, we must tackle this matter in earnest, or the Tower will be robbed of the greatest prisoner it ever held, and Germany will be the gainer a thousandfold! We'll nip that in the bud, or never hold up our heads again!"

Half an hour later Harrington's fastest motor-car, with John Carfax and the two young scouts, was racing across Salisbury Plain to the enclosure where the Condor awaited them, while the shadows of night fell fast.

The Condor Lies in Wait.

The wind roared in the ears of the travellers as the motor-car laid the miles behind it. Speed limits were not even thought of, and the pace was well over fifty miles an hour once the big Mercedes was on the long, white road leading over the plain.

"We're losing no time, by George!" said Stephen; but the words were torn from his lips by the rushing wind, and neither of the others answered him. John Carfax was acting as chauffeur, and the boys were on the keen edge of expectancy, looking forward to the work in front of them.

It seemed to them that the start had been made very late, considering the distance before them and the immense importance of the task they had in hand. Sam, in particular, felt uneasy, and it was a relief when the car, after turning down a side road, and perforce going at a slower pace, came in sight of the dark grove of trees that sheltered the aeronaut's headquarters and guarded them from the public eye.

Well did the boys remember that stormy night when, in their balloon from Witham, just before the final defeat of the invaders, they drifted right into the enclosure, and made their first acquaintance with Carfax. The tall palings were reached, and, jumping out of the car, which he left at the lodge, the aeronaut hurried through the outer buildings, and was admitted by his trusty caretaker to the inner clearing within the grove, where the great iron sheds were.

The Condor was resting in the open space in front of the sheds, and Kenneth and Hugh, hastening out of the main building — the former with a spanner and oil-can in his hand — came to greet their chief. They looked well rested and refreshed after their late journey.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial next Thursday.)

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