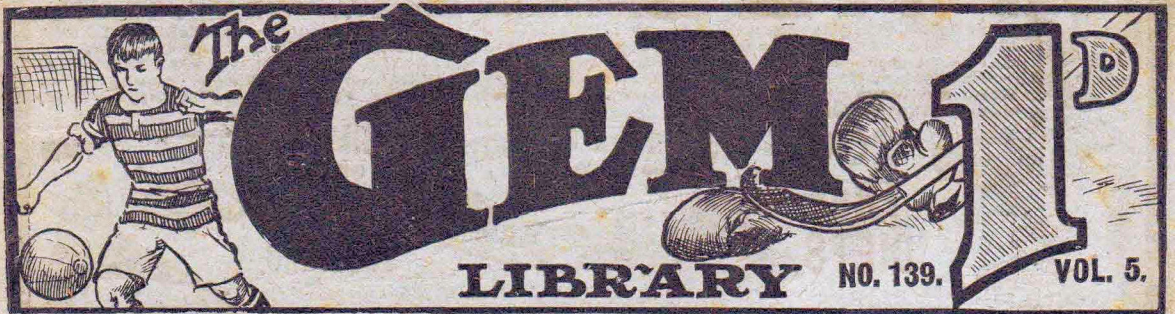


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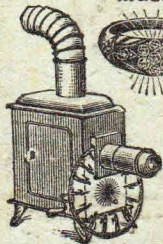




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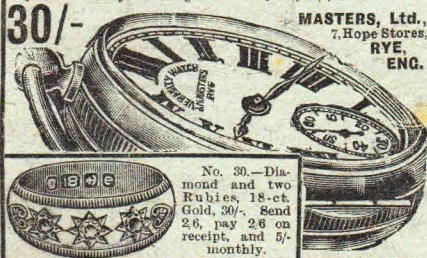


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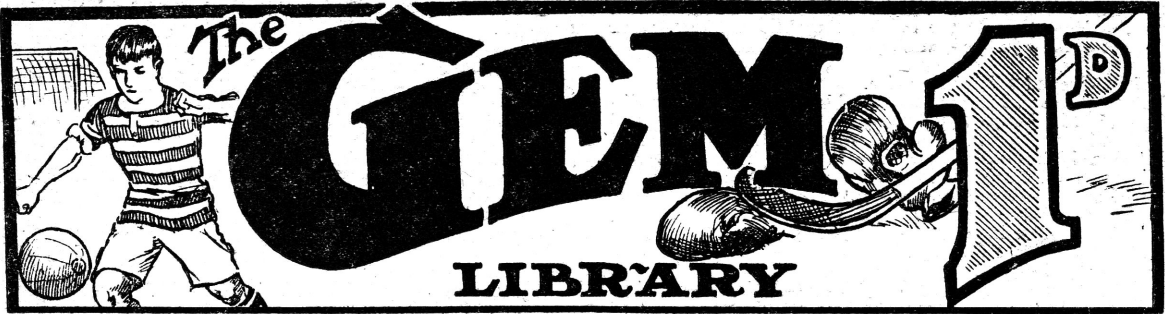
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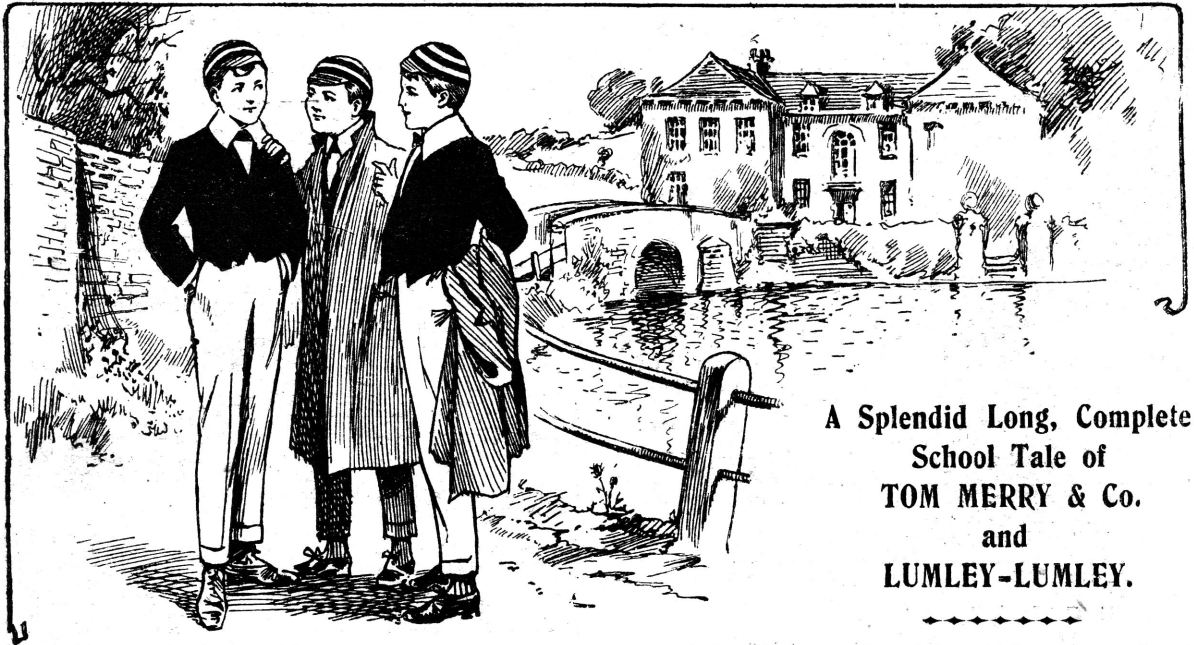
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# THE MYSTERY OF THE MILL

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A Splendid Long, Complete  
School Tale of  
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## CHAPTER 1. Horrid for Gussy!

"HOWWID!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made that remark with a great deal of emphasis.

It was not often that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was annoyed—or, at all events, showed his annoyance—only, indeed, upon exceptional occasions.

This occasion was one of the exceptions.

D'Arcy had been known to bear many things with fortitude. A great authority has told us that there was never yet a philosopher who could endure the toothache patiently. Now, D'Arcy had, in his time, endured the toothache patiently, and so, upon Shakespeare's authority, we may place him above any philosopher in the matter of fortitude. But there were things that wore out even D'Arcy's patience.

This was one of them.

D'Arcy was dressed to kill, as his chums in the Lower School would have said—he was clad in his very best. And if there was anything that exceeded the daintiness of his boots and the elegant crease of his trousers, it was the glossiness of his silk hat, or else the glimmer of his eyeglass.

And Arthur Augustus, thus clad in shining raiment, found himself in the middle of Mill Lane, near Rylcombe village, on his return to St. Jim's from a visit to the vicarage, and yet half a mile from the school, and—

And it began to rain.

The afternoon had been exceptionally fine, and D'Arcy, who never did like carrying an umbrella, had none with him now. There was no shelter at hand, either—only the old, deserted mill looming in the growing dusk of evening over the trees. And the rain began to fall.

Whereupon D'Arcy pronounced that it was horrid—and he was right.

The swell of St. Jim's stopped in the lane and looked about him. Shelter, save for a few, meagre-looking trees near the mill, there was none. Umbrellas he had in plenty at St. Jim's, but with him he had only a light, gold-headed walking cane. That gold-headed cane was supposed, in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, to be worth fabulous sums, but it was rather less useful now than the cheapest and baggiest gamp would have been.

D'Arcy looked up at the lowering heavens, round at the empty fields, and over towards the distant tower of St. Jim's, and said emphatically:

"Howwid! Disgustin'!"

A LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 139 (New Series).

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Ting-ting-ting!

It was the sharp ringing of a bicycle-bell in the lane behind him. The lane was narrow, and the road was not marked off from the footpath. At the sudden ring behind him, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped, and squeezed up close to the towering hedge.

"Hallo!" cried a familiar voice.

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye—it had been displaced by his jump—and looked at the cyclist, who had halted. He was a sunny-faced, curly-haired lad, very little older than himself—no other, in fact, than Tom Merry, of the Shell at St. Jim's, and cock of the School House; or at least, of the junior portion thereof. For to the seniors—the Fifth and the Sixth—even Tom Merry, the hero of the Shell, was of little more importance than a fag.

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Gussy!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here? And it's beginnin' to rain! How did Blake come to let you out?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I always advised him to keep you on a chain," Tom Merry pursued gravely. "Suppose you were to meet some of the naughty village boys—"

"Weally—"

"Or the Grammarians—and I saw Frank Monk and Gordon Gay not an hour ago," said Tom Merry. "Suppose they made a cock-shy of that beautiful topper?"

"My deah fellow—"

"Suppose they laid sacrilegious hands upon that waistcoat—"

"I wegard your wemarks as mere wot, Tom Mewwy. I am in a wathah distwessed state of mind at pwsent. It is beginnin' to wain."

"And it's wot rain, too," said Tom Merry seriously.

"And I have no umbwellah."

"Horrid!"

"That's just what I was wemarkin', deah boy. It's howwid. I have my best toppah on, too—and this is the first time I've worn this waistcoat. Was there evah such an extremely unfortunat state of things?"

"Never," said Tom Merry. "There have been some great misfortunes in history, such as the earthquake at Lisbon and the great Fire of London, but they're not in the same street with this."

"I wish you would be sewious, Tom Mewwy. The question is, what is to be done? How am I to get to St. Jim's without gettin' wet?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I give that one up, Gussy."

"You uttah ass! I am not askin' you conundwums," said D'Arcy peevishly. "I shall get my clothes wuined."

"Jump up behind me," said Tom Merry. "You can put your tootsies on the foot-rests, and hold on to my shoulders, and we'll be at St. Jim's in five minutes."

"Thank you vevy much, Tom Mewwy."

"No need for that. Jump up!"

"Imposs., deah boy. I am not dwessed for cyclin'," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I should look widiculous stickin' on your bike behind you. Besides, it is wainin' now, and in five minutes I shall be quite wet."

"Horrid!" said Tom Merry. "Since the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, there's been nothing quite like it!"

"Pway don't wot. Look here, suppose I wun acwoss to the mill—"

"Good! Cut for it!"

"But it may wain for hours—"

"Looks like setting in for a night of it," agreed Tom Merry, with a glance up at the threatening sky.

"I can't wemain in the mill all night. Pway tell Blake to come for me with a macintosh and an umbwella."

Tom Merry grinned.

"I'll tell him, certainly."

"Pway tell him also to bwing my leathah hat-box and a cap for me to weah goin' home. Then I shall be able to save my toppah."

"Happy thought!"

"Tell him to bwing my goloshes also."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatever to cackle at, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "I think I can see Blake tramping through the rain with an umbrella, a hat-box, and goloshes and a macintosh. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Jump up behind me on the bike, Gussy, and I'll have you at the school in five minutes," urged Tom Merry.

"Imposs."

"But Blake wcn't come."

"Pway tell him that I wely on him as a fwiend."

"But—"

"I cannot stand heah in the wain talkin', Tom Mewwy. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

My toppah is quite wet already. I'm goin' to cut for the mill."

"Hold on, Gussy. You know the mill's haunted, I suppose?"

"Wats!"

"Everybody says so, and that's why it's deserted," said Tom Merry, with a face of great and solemn seriousness.

"Wot! It's deserted because it's in Chancery, and it's fallen out of wepair," said Arthur Augustus.

"But the ghosts—"

"I don't believe in ghosts."

"You will when it's quite dark, though," said Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

"Better jump on my bike."

"I decline to do so."

"Oh, all right! No good my stopping here and getting wet, either. So-long!"

"Pway don't forget my message to Blake."

"Ha, ha! All right."

"Tell him I'm waitin' for him."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry put his leg over his bicycle.

"Tell him not to forget the macintosh—"

"Right you are."

"And the umbwellah—"

"All right," called back Tom Merry, laughing, as he pedalled off.

"And the hat-box!" shouted D'Arcy after him. "Mind you don't forget the hat-box, deah boy!"

But his voice was lost on the wind. Tom Merry was gone.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned from the lane, and began to run across the field towards the deserted mill. The rain was steadily falling now, in a shower, and there was every promise of a good downpour as the darkness thickened.

Tom Merry put his head down over the handle-bars, and scorched on for all he was worth, and dashed up to St. Jim's at top-speed.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Arthur Augustus is Haunted.

"BAI JOVE! Howwid! Weally, vevy howwid!"

It was!

The rain had been falling in light drops, but as D'Arcy crossed the field at a run towards the windmill, it thickened.

Heavy drops came splashing upon the silk hat and elegant jacket of the swell of St. Jim's, and he quickened his pace.

He reached the windmill with the rain lashing round him.

The lower door was open, and D'Arcy ran in, and a damp, cold atmosphere struck him, and he found himself in deep gloom.

The window was encrusted with cobwebs, where it was not broken, and the apartment was very gloomy and shadowy.

The mill was hardly ever used, and there was a story of its being haunted which made people willing to avoid it after dark. D'Arcy was not thinking of that now. He was only thinking of getting shelter from the rain.

That was coming down steadily and heavily now.

It splashed on the stone pavement before the door, and dashed in in little showers at the broken window.

"Bai Jove! I'm well out of that!" murmured D'Arcy. "I have had a feahfully nawwow escape of wuinin' my best toppah, bai Jove! I was wathah weckless to go to the vicah's without an umbwellah, bai Jove! This is a wotten climate—you can nevah go out of doors weally without some wisk to youah toppah!"

Arthur Augustus looked round his new retreat.

How long it would be before Blake arrived with the umbrella, the macintosh, the goloshes and the hat-box he did not know, but it was certain to be some little time.

D'Arcy looked round for a seat.

He found a wooden bench, and sat down. It was cold in the mill, and gloomy.

"Bai Jove, I wish I had a candle and a book!" murmured D'Arcy. "A book would be a gweat comfort. I should have had last week's 'Pluck' in my pocket, only I left it in the studay. Even one of Skimpole's wotten books on Determinism would be bettah than nothin'. Bai Jove! What's that?"

He started and listened.

From the interior of the mill had come a faint sound, exactly what he could not define. He looked into the gloom about him.

Tom Merry's words came back to his mind.

"Bai Jove! They say the place is haunted, you know."

D'Arcy was not superstitious. He was too healthy-minded for that. But a fellow who laughs at ghost stories is liable to feel a little tremulous in a lonely place after dark, on a spot reputed haunted.



"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "I wondah what that was? Ah, there it is again!"

It was a rumbling sound above his head. The swell of St. Jim's shivered a little. He recalled the story of the haunted mill, as he had heard it during his first term at St. Jim's. The miller had been murdered, and his body dragged from the upper chamber, where the fell deed had been done, and buried on the moor. According to the country folk, after dark it was still possible to hear the sound of heavy dragging in the upper chamber of the mill.

"Gweat Scott!" murmured D'Arcy. He listened intently. Dragging, dragging! There was undoubtedly someone in the mill besides himself, and a heavy weight was being dragged over the floor above his head.

D'Arcy stepped towards the wooden stair that led to the upper chamber. The swell of St. Jim's had plenty of pluck.

"Who's there?" he called out. There was no reply. The dragging sound ceased, and all was silent in the mill, save for the lashing of the wind and rain without.

A creepy feeling came over D'Arcy. He stood there in the thickening gloom, looking upwards uneasily. If there was someone in the upper chamber, why did he not reply?

"Look here, I know you're there," called out Arthur Augustus. "You can't frighten me in the least, you wottah. Why don't you show yourself?"

There came a reply to this. It was a deep groan. The sound echoed through the mill, and caused a shudder to run through the veins of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated involuntarily. He stepped back towards the door of the mill. There, at least, it was not quite dark, and there D'Arcy stood, unconscious for the moment of the fact that the rain was beating upon him.

He felt very much shaken. The sound of dragging on the planks above recommenced. D'Arcy recovered his nerve in a very few moments.

His face set grimly. "Bai Jove! It's some wottah playin' a joke," he murmured. "Pewwaps somebody who's come in heah out of the wain, just as I have."

He stepped back towards the narrow wooden stair. The dragging above continued. "You wottah!" called out D'Arcy. "I know you're theah."

Groan! "I wegard you as a beast. I'm jolly well comin' up to give you a feahful thwashin', for playin' this wotten twick on me."

Groan! D'Arcy set his lips, and placed his silk hat on the bench, took a silver match-box from his pocket, and began to ascend the stairs.

The sounds above ceased. D'Arcy went on intepidly to the top step, and then he paused and struck a match.

The light flickered feebly out into the thick gloom. Wavering shadows danced round the juniors.

The place was enough to shake the nerve of anyone, and Arthur Augustus wished for the moment that he had not ascended the ladder. But he would not retreat now. He held the match up to show a light round him.

It suddenly went out. D'Arcy had not seen anyone, but he was sure that the match was blown out by a puff of breath.

"You wottah!" he shouted. "You uttah boundah!" Groan!

Scratch! Another match flared up. It was instantly extinguished.

Breathing wrath, Arthur Augustus stepped into the upper room, and struck a third match. He watched carefully for anyone to attempt to blow it out.

Groan! The sound was close behind him, and he jumped and turned round. As he did so the match was extinguished.

Groan! It was too much for D'Arcy's nerves. The horrid feeling that he was in the dark, with unknown dangers round him, took possession of him. He made a dive for the ladder, and went slithering down a great deal faster than he had come up.

He landed on the ground very much fluttered. "Bai Jove!" he murmured, feeling for his matches. But he had dropped the box in his hurried descent, and it was useless for him to seek them in the darkness.

He made towards the open doorway. Groan!

To D'Arcy's horror, the sound was now on the ground floor, and close to him. There was a sound of heavy dragging, too, and it was approaching him.

D'Arcy whirled round, and faced the unseen in the darkness.

"You—you wottah! I know it's a—a twick!" he stammered.

Groan! D'Arcy rushed in the direction of the sound, hitting out furiously. But his blows encountered only space, and he fell over the form he had been sitting on a few moments before.

The stumble shook up his nerves. It was nothing in itself, but it was the last straw.

D'Arcy scrambled up all in a twitter, and as the deep and resounding groan was repeated, he darted out of the mill.

The rain lashed down upon him. But the swell of St. Jim's did not heed that now. In a couple of minutes he was soaked, and then he paused. But it was no worse to go on than to go back now, and he glanced back at the mill with a shudder, and tramped on through the rain towards St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove," he murmured, "I won't go into that howwid place again! I shall meet Blake on the woad, so that will be all wight. It was—was somebody playin' a twick, of course, but—but upon the whole I won't take the twouble to go in theah again."

And he didn't.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Toast for Three.

"KETTLE'S boiling!" said Jack Blake. Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, in the School House at St. Jim's, was looking very cosy. Outside, the rain was dashing against the window, and it was very gloomy in the quadrangle, and the elm-trees were groaning in the wind. But the blind was drawn, and a cheerful, ruddy fire burned in the grate, and the table was laid for tea with a shining white cloth, and quite a respectable array of crockery. There was an unusual supply of provisions on the table, too, and a pile of buttered toast was rising higher and higher on a dish at the fender. Digby, with a face of crimson, was making the toast, and Herries, with shiny fingers, was buttering it—not with his fingers, of course, but in the process of buttering a considerable amount of butter was transferred to his digits, and glistened there in the gaslight.

The kettle had been singing on the hob for some time. Now Jack Blake announced that it was boiling, and he poured a little water from it into the teapot, to heat that utensil ready for making the tea.

"Toast's ready!" said Herries. "I think I've made enough," said Digby. "I was going to make it till Gussy came, but I think I'd better stop now."

"Gussy doesn't seem to be coming."

"Where the dickens can he have got to?" exclaimed Blake.

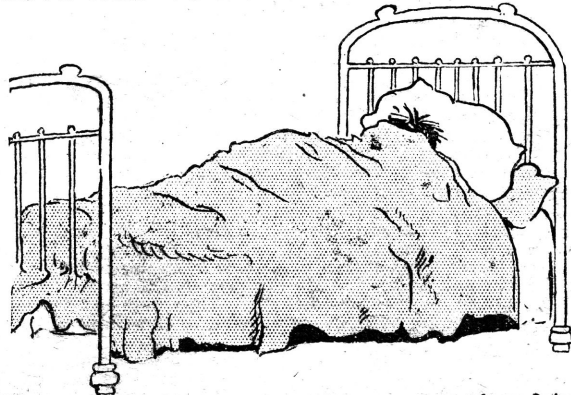
"The young boulder! He was to have been home long ago."

"Oh, it's the vicarage tea-party that's keeping him, of course," said Digby. "I told him not to go, and he said that a decent chap must support the church."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I offered to let him take Towser for a run," said Herries.

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE RUGGER FOURTH." Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



"He refused. There must be some jolly strong attraction at the vicarage."

"Awfully strong, to make a chap miss a chance like that," agreed Blake solemnly. "But it's been raining for some time now, and if Gussy isn't in, he'll come in jolly wet."

There was a bang at the door of Study No. 6, so sudden that it made Blake almost drop the teapot, and he growled.

"There's Gussy!"

The study door opened, and a cheerful face, spotted with rain, with damp, curly hair over it, looked in.

It was not Gussy's.

"Hallo, Tom Merry!" grunted Blake. "I thought it was Gussy. Has that young duffer come in yet, do you know?"

"No, he hasn't."

"The ass! He'll get wet."

"He's rather damp already, I think," grinned Tom Merry. "He's gone into the old mill to take shelter from the rain. I passed him in Mill Lane."

Blake grunted.

"The ass! Why, the rain will last hours, most likely. He won't be able to get through it in time for calling-over."

"You're to go to him—"

"What?"

"And take an umbrella—"

"Eh?"

"And a macintosh—"

"Oh!"

"And goloshes—"

"Ah!"

"And a hat-box."

"A what?"

"A hat-box," said Tom Merry serenely, "and a cap. Gussy is going to wear the cap home, and put his topper in the hat-box."

"Look here, Tom Merry, if you want to be funny, you can spring it on Manners and Lowther," said Blake crossly. "They're bound to stand it. But—"

"I'm not joking," said Tom Merry, laughing. "That's Gussy's message, and I said I would give it to you. I expressed my doubts at the time about it's being any good."

"The ass!"

"That's what I said. Well, I must go and get my things off," said Tom Merry. "I'm pretty wet."

"Hold on a minute!" said Blake anxiously. "Gussy's really in the old mill?"

"Yes. I warned him that it was haunted, and it didn't make a bit of difference. I couldn't do more."

"And he wants me to go—"

"Yes; with a cap, an umbrella, a macintosh, and a hat-box," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Oh, cheese it!"

Blake looked round at the cosy study, and at the singing kettle and the pile of buttered toast, and sighed.

It was a wrench. But Jack Blake was a true chum, and he would have taken any amount of trouble for Gussy, or Herries or Digby, for that matter.

"I suppose I must go," he said.

"Don't forget the hat-box."

"Oh, rats! I shan't take the hat-box, as a lesson to Gussy. If his topper isn't ruined by the rain, I shall make it a point to tread on it!" said Blake crossly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going, you chaps," said Blake. "You'd better wire in—"

"Oh, stuff!" said Digby, not without a longing glance at the toast, too. "I'm coming with you."

Herries looked at the fire, and grunted.

"So am I," he said.

"Oh, rot!" said Blake. "No need for all three to go!"

"We're coming!"

"Better take them, Blake," advised Tom Merry. "You see, Dig can take the umbrella, and Herries can negotiate the macintosh, while you're carrying the hat-box."

"Oh, chuck it! Why didn't you yank Gussy home with you?" demanded Blake. "Put the toast by the fire to keep warm, Dig. Look here, Tom Merry, none of your raiding while we're out, you know!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We won't come into the study—honour bright," he said.

"All right, then."

Tom Merry went on his way, to take off his wet things, and Blake and Digby and Herries prepared to go out to the rescue of the weather-bound Gussy. They were not pleased with their errand, but they set about it as cheerfully as they could.

They wrapped themselves up in macintoshes, and pulled their caps about their ears, turned their trousers up, and, provided with umbrellas, and one extra for Arthur Augustus, they left the School House.

It was raining hard.

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"Ugh!" grunted Blake. "Ugh! Rotten weather!"

"Good for the farmers," said Herries, who generally managed to see good in everything.

Blake grunted.

"Blow the farmers!"

And they tramped through the rain to the gates. Three youths were chatting to Taggles, the porter, in the doorway of his lodge, and they saw the School House fellows go. Blake did not notice Figgins & Co.; he was thinking about the rain, and mentally rehearsing some things he was going to say to D'Arcy when they met.

Figgins grinned at Kerr and Wynn.

"What on earth are those kids going out for in this weather?" he remarked.

"Master D'Arcy hasn't come in yet," remarked Taggles. "They may be going to look for him."

"My word!" said Fatty Wynn. "Why, only twenty minutes ago Blake was in the tuckshop, laying in grub for tea! They can't have had tea yet."

Figgins chuckled softly.

"Let's go and see," he remarked. "Lend us an umbrella, Taggles! We looked in to see if you were quite well."

Taggles grunted sceptically.

"You looked in to borrow an umbrella, Master Figgins!"

"Well, hand it out, then! See how gin-and-water sharpens the perception?" said Figgins, with great admiration.

"Taggles sees through me at a glance."

Taggles grunted, and handed out the umbrella. Figgins & Co. had taken refuge in his lodge when the rain came on, and had been toasting their toes at his fire, and chipping the old porter ever since. Figgins took the big umbrella Taggles handed him, and the three chums of the New House crossed the quad. They did not go to their own House, but to the School House, and, as he expected, Figgins did not find the School House fellows hanging about. On that cold and rainy evening most of them were in the common-room or in their cosy studies.

Figgins led the way quickly upstairs.

He looked into Study No. 6. The gas was extinguished, but the fire gave a ruddy light over the study and the table.

Figgins gave a soft whistle.

"My hat! Toast for three, and no mistake! Come in—quick, before the bouncers see us! This is gorgeous luck!"

Figgins & Co. stepped quickly into the study, and Figgys closed the door. Kerr stirred the fire, and a bright light flared out over the room. They did not trouble to light the gas.

"This is all right," said Figgins. "Blake's gone to look for Gussy. Good! It would be a shame to let the toast get cold or spoil by baking up near the fire. It's a duty we really owe to the chap who made it, to do it full justice."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, eyeing the toast lovingly.

"Then wire in, my sons!"

Figgins made the tea. The teapot was ready, the kettle singing. By the cheery light of the bright fire, Figgins & Co. sat down to tea—Blake's tea—and they enjoyed it exceedingly. Digby had not made that mountain of toast in vain.

#### CHAPTER 4.

#### A Brush with the Enemy.

"GROO!"

"What's the matter?"

"Rain, ass!"

"Oh!"

"I've just got a gust of it in my chivvy, and it's running down my neck," said Blake. "Groo! Hang Gussy!"

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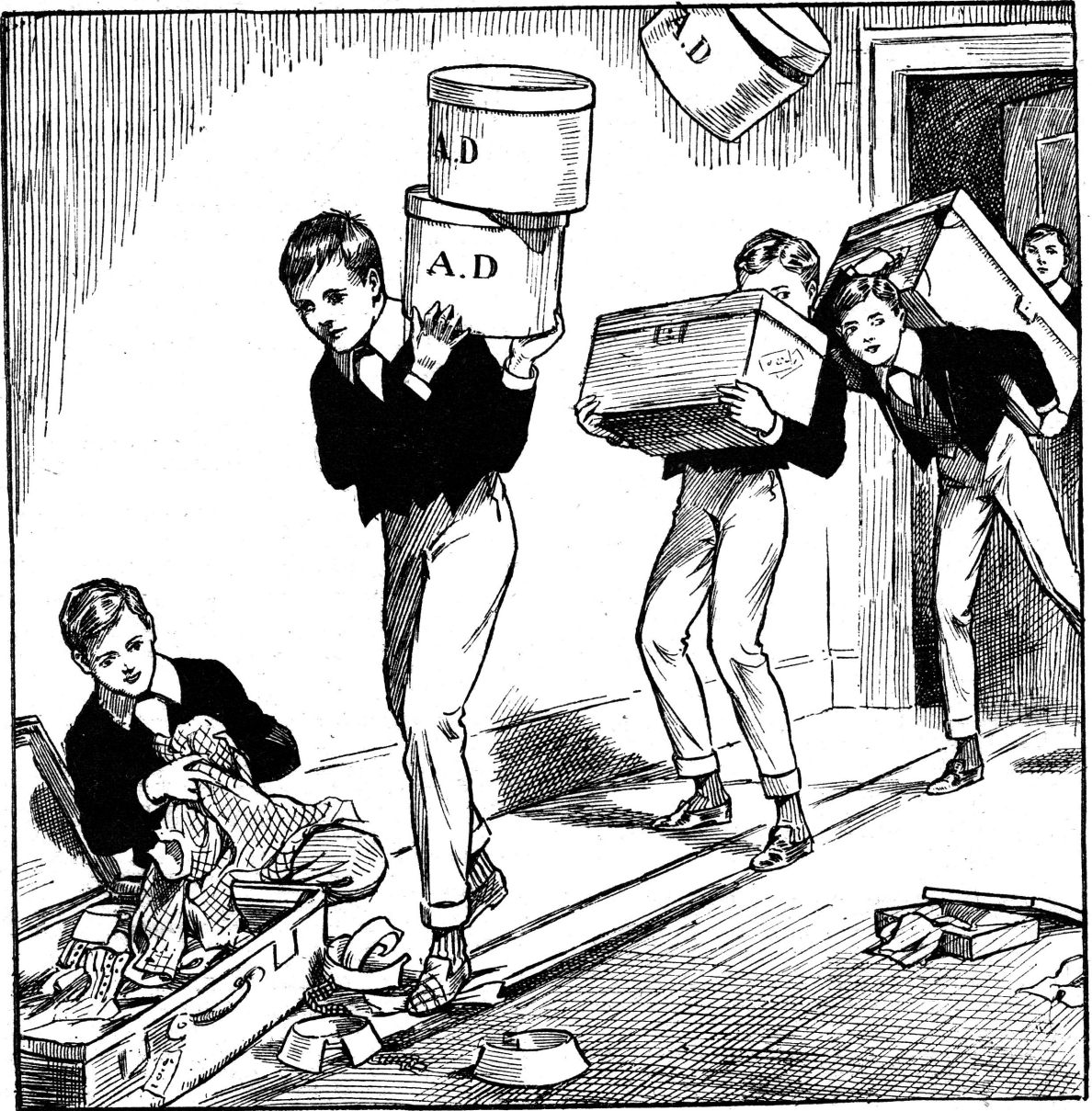
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"Buck up, fathead!" muttered Tom Merry, as Kangaroo picked up the dropped articles of clothing and crammed them into the bag. "Gussy'll be along soon!" (See page 12.)

"He always was a trouble in the family!" grunted Herries. "I hope his silk topper's spoiled!"

"So do I," said Digby.

"If it isn't, I shall jolly well spoil it!" said Blake. "I'm not coming out in this weather for nothing!"

"No fear!"

"Keep your umbrella out of my neck, Dig!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here——"

"Buck up, and don't jaw, old chap!"

"I'll jolly well——"

"Piffle!"

By which it will be seen that the good-humour which had reigned in Study No. 6, in the School House of St. Jim's, had not accompanied the juniors very far on the road.

As a matter of fact, it was a very rainy and uncomfortable evening.

There was a keen wind on the countryside, and it brought gusts of rain, and the umbrellas were not of much use against it. Indeed, when the wind caught them, they threatened to carry the juniors away into the air like youthful Blerriots. The macintoshes were running with water.

The feet of the juniors ploughed through thick mud. The

lane was never in the best of condition, but in rainy weather it was a Slough of Despond which might have excused even the famous Pilgrim for halting in his progress.

No wonder the juniors growled.

Friendship had called them out into the rainy gloom, but it did not prevent them from grumbling heartily.

Blake stopped suddenly.

"Hark!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, come on!" said Digby. "This isn't a place to stand and jaw, old chap!"

"Hark, you ass!"

"What is it?"

"I can hear footsteps."

"Stuff!"

"Listen, fathead!"

The juniors stopped and listened. There was no doubt about the footsteps. They came splashing and ploughing through the mud.

"Look out!" said Blake. "Whoever it is is running."

"Oh, it must be Gussy!"

"I suppose so."

"Sounds like more than one," said Herries.

"Well, we—— Oh!"



"Yah! Oh!"

A bunch of running figures suddenly bolted out of the gloom, and bolted fairly into the three halted juniors.

The School House chums were flying.

There was a howl from Blake as he sat in a deep, deep puddle, sending up a shower of muddy water round him. Digby roared as he squelched in deep mud, and Herries staggered against a tree with a gasp.

The runners who had collided with them did not escape scot-free.

Two of them rolled in the muddy lane, and three more stopped, staggering and gasping. There were five of them in all, in mortar-board caps.

"Oh!" exclaimed a voice. "Yah! Who's that?"

"What ass was blocking up the way?" demanded another voice.

Blake uttered an exclamation.

"Grammar rotters!"

"Blake!"

"Gordon Gay!"

"Yes, rather!" Gordon Gay, the leader of the juniors of the Grammar School, the old rival of St. Jim's, chuckled as he staggered up from the mud. "So it's you St. Jim's bouncers! What do you mean by racing along a dark lane?"

"We weren't, you ass! We were standing still."

"Then what do you mean by standing still?" demanded Gordon Gay.

"Yes; that's it!" said Frank Monk. "What do you mean by it, you duffers?"

Blake grunted.

"Oh, go and eat coke! You frabjous asses, to bolt along like that! Nice state our macs. will be in!"

"And ours," said Carboy, of the Grammar School. "We were trying to get in out of the rain. We've been under shelter for a long time, but the blessed rain doesn't seem to be going to leave off to-night, and we made a bolt for it."

"It was jolly cold in the——"

"Shut up, Monkey!"

"Oh, all right!"

"You'd better get on, you Grammarian asses!" said Blake.

"If I weren't so wet I'd give you a licking for rushing about like that! Seat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"I was thinking that we're not too wet to give you a licking," said Gordon Gay, laughing. "Come on, chaps!"

"Here, hold on!"

"Bump them!"

"Hurray!"

The Grammarians came on at once. Blake, Herries, and Digby hit out manfully, but in a moment or two they were lying in the puddles, and the Grammarians were speeding on their way, laughing.

Blake sat up.

"Ow! Yow! It's c-c-cold!"

"Did you expect to find rain puddles warm?" growled Herries.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I think you're an ass for getting up a row with the Grammar cads when they were five to three!"

"Rats! They'd have bumped us, anyway!"

"I'm jolly wet!"

"Well, I'm not dry!"

"It's all Gussy's fault," said Digby pacifically. "We'll give him a jolly good bumping when we find him!"

"Yes; that's one comfort!"

And the chums of the Fourth, very wet and muddy, started on towards the old mill again. They had been near it when they met the Grammarian juniors, and they had not much further to go.

They turned off across the field, and the dark mass of the mill loomed up before them in the shadowy sky.

"There's the mill!" said Blake.

"Buck up!"

They hurried through the rain.

Glad enough were they to get into the dark, damp-opening of the mill, out of the lashing rain and wind. The mill was not inviting, but it was better than nothing.

Blake gasped, and shook the rain drops from him.

"Groo! This is better! Groo! Yah!"

"Yes; you sound pleased."

"Rats! Now, where's Gussy? Gussy! Gussy!"

The hollow chambers of the old mill echoed back "Gussy!" but there came no other reply to Blake's calling.

"Gussy! Gussy!"

The three juniors shouted together.

But there was no reply.

"My word!" said Digby. "He's not here!"

"He can't be. But Tom Merry said——"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

"I suppose Tom Merry couldn't have been rotting?" said Digby dubiously.

Blake shook his head decidedly.

"He wouldn't tell a lie for a joke," he said. "It's all right as far as Tom Merry is concerned. Gussy's gone without waiting for us."

"The horrid bouncer!"

"I can't understand it. It's not like him. Let's have a good look round," said Blake abruptly. "Something may have happened to him."

"I wish we had a lantern. Got any matches?"

"Yes; a box of vestas."

Blake struck match after match, and they searched the lower part of the building. Digby uttered a sudden exclamation as something glimmering upon the floor caught his eye.

He picked it up. It was D'Arcy's silver match-box, with his monogram on it.

"That's Gussy's," said Blake, looking at it. "It shows he's been here."

"Oh, he's been here, right enough! But where is he now?"

"Let's look upstairs."

They ascended the wooden stair.

With his matches, striking one after another, Blake lighted up every dark, cobwebby corner, but there was no sign of the swell of St. Jim's.

The juniors descended again.

"The young bouncer!" said Blake wrathfully. "He got tired of waiting for us, I suppose, and chanced it."

"It was rotten."

"But he ought to have passed us going to the school," said Herries.

"Perhaps he did. We might have passed a dozen people without seeing them in the dark, or hearing them in that beastly howling wind," said Blake. "We only saw the Grammarians because there were a lot of them, and they ran into us. I shouldn't wonder if Gussy was at the school by the time we got here."

"The—the——"

"Or," said Blake, in a lower voice, "something may have happened to him."

"I hope not, but——"

"Let's get back to the school."

The chums of the Fourth left the mill hurriedly. All three of them had a fear that something might have happened to D'Arcy. On the other hand, if nothing had happened to him, and he had let them in for this through sheer carelessness, they were prepared to be extremely wrathful.

They were, as a matter of fact, in that curious frame of mind we have all experienced, when we do not know whether to turn on wrath or anxiety—a most uneasy and disturbing frame of mind; and Blake and his comrades hurried on to the school to get relieved from it as soon as possible.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Butter for Gussy.

KANGAROO—Harry Noble, of the Shell—was looking out into the rainy quadrangle at St. Jim's when Blake & Co. arrived. The Cornstalk junior gave a whistle at the sight of them—three muddy and forlorn and dragged figures.

"My only hat!" said Noble. "Where have you been—dredging?"

"Oh, don't rot!" grunted Blake. "We've been out!"

"Ha, ha! Out of your minds, I should say!" grinned Kangaroo.

"We've been looking for Gussy. Has he come in?"

"I haven't seen him."

The three juniors dragged themselves into the House, and squelched up the stairs. The Cornstalk grinned after them, and so did a good many other fellows. Skimpole, of the Shell, met them on the stairs, and blinked at them in amazement through his big spectacles. Skimpole was a wise and scientific youth, and took a deep interest in things that would have perplexed and tired out any ordinary brain; but Herbert Skimpole's was not an ordinary brain, as could be told by the enormous bumps, like door-knobs, on his intellectual forehead.

Skimpole knew such subjects as evolution and determinism and the like from beginning to end, and he could discourse upon them for hours, using words of such tremendous length that reply was impossible.

Skimpole took Blake by the button—a most objectionable way he had always taken somebody by the button, when he was not poking him in the ribs with his bony fingers.

"Blake, you look wet!" he exclaimed.

"I am wet!" said Blake.

"Oh, I see!"

"Amazing, isn't it?" said Blake sarcastically.



"Really, Blake! I have been looking for you. I have lately had a new book sent to me—Dr. Spoofer's great volume, 'Determinism and Social Problems.' I am willing to read this out to you, if you would care—"

"You may be willing," said Blake, "but I don't think you'll find anybody else willing! Has Gussy come in?"

"It is a wonderful book—"

"Have you seen Gussy?"

"It deals with the problems of modern life, the miseries of the downtrodden rich and the luxurious millions—I mean, the luxurious rich and the downtrodden millions—"

"Have you seen Gussy?" roared Blake.

"Gussy! Never mind Gussy! As a matter of fact, D'Arcy is a member of a bloated aristocracy, who, by their wrongful possession of all the land and other resources of the country, have reduced the millions to direful want—"

"Where is he?"

"I really do not know. As I was saying—"

Jack Blake gently inserted his fingers into Skimpole's collar, and turned him round, and sat him down upon the linoleum.

Leaving Skimpole sitting there in a state of considerable astonishment, the chums of the Fourth walked on.

They had to go up to the dormitory to change, for, in spite of the macintoshes and the umbrellas, they were pretty well soaked. But they looked into Study No. 6 in passing. The gas was alight, and the light streamed from under the door, so they knew that somebody was there.

Blake opened the door, and looked in.

The study was lighted up, and there was a ruddy fire in the grate. Before the fire, in the armchair, was extended the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He was alone in the study.

The swell of St. Jim's was clad in a dressing-gown of flowery design, the ample folds of which were gathered round him as he lay reclining in the chair. His eyes were closed, and he was asleep.

Blake looked round the table.

The mountain of toast was gone, and the tea had evidently been made and disposed of. The rest of the provisions were conspicuous by their absence.

The three chums looked at one another.

Of Figgins & Co.'s raid upon the study they, of course, knew nothing. The sight of D'Arcy placidly asleep in the armchair, anyway, was enough to raise their ire, after their long tramp through the rain and mud in search of him.

"My only hat!" murmured Blake. "This looks like taking it easy, doesn't it?"

"The bounder!"

"Fast asleep!"

"And he's bolted all the grub!"

"My word!"

"He's had a party in here to tea with him, I should think," said Blake. "He couldn't have bolted all that grub alone—and there are three teacups, too!"

The chums simply glowered at the unconscious swell of St. Jim's.

The thought of D'Arcy having friends in to tea in the study, and then going placidly to sleep, while they were braving wind and rain in search of him, was the last straw.

And their anxiety lest something had happened to him had all been wasted, too—nothing had happened. As is usual in such cases, anxiety turned to wrath on the spot. Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"Nothing's happened to him, after all," he said.

"But something's going to happen," said Herries.

Blake grinned.

"Yes, rather!"

"Shall I wake him up?"

"Hold on! He's left nothing but a pat of butter on the table, and he may as well have that," said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet! He'll wake!"

"Oh, he's sound asleep!"

That certainly was the case. D'Arcy was tired out with his walking and with the exertion of rubbing himself dry and exchanging his clothes when he came in. His breathing was deep and regular.

Blake took up the butter pat, and approached the sleeping junior.

"Case of a sleeping beauty being awakened—not with a giddy kiss, though!" grinned Blake. "Now, look out for the fireworks!"

"Let's get out of the study as soon as you dab him," grinned Digby. "He won't know where it came from."

"Good egg!"

Digby and Herries retreated into the passage. Blake leaned over D'Arcy, and suddenly dabbed the butter full upon his face.

The swell of St. Jim's awoke.

"Gwoo—o—o—o—oh!"

Blake stepped quickly out of the study, and joined his chums. The three, bursting with suppressed laughter, hurried up the stairs to the Fourth Form dormitory, and there, as they tore off their drenched clothing, they yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In Study No. 6 the sleeping beauty started to his feet, and dabbed at his face with his hands, and gasped with horror again as his fingers were thick with butter.

"Ow!" groaned D'Arcy. "What is this? I am in a howlid state! Bai Jove, it is buttah! I uttably fail to compwehend this!"

He rubbed the masses of butter from his eyes, and blinked round the study. The door was open, and the swell of St. Jim's realised that someone must have slipped in and dabbed the butter upon his face while he was asleep.

D'Arcy crimsoned with indignation—under the butter.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "What howlid wuffian—"

He scraped the butter off. But his face was very shiny, and there were still chunks of Mr. Sands's best fresh about his eyes and ears and hair.

"The uttah wottahs!" he exclaimed. "The howlid boundahs! I wondah who it was? It is vewy singulah that I did not see the pewpetwatah of this feahful outwage! But, of course, it was some of those Shell boundahs!"

And Arthur Augustus, mopping his face with a handkerchief, hurriedly left the study, and dashed off towards Tom Merry's quarters.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Arthur Augustus is a Little Hasty.

"BUTTER!" said Tom Merry.

"We haven't any left."

"Here, this won't do!" said Tom Merry severely.

"You've been wasting the butter, you know."

They were the words that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy heard as he came towards Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

The Terrible Three were discussing the propriety of making toast for supper, and Tom Merry had found half a loaf, and had found also that there was no butter in the study. Hence the above remarks.

But to D'Arcy they had more significance than that.

The swell of St. Jim's knew that he was on the right track now. He burst into the study without the formality of knocking.

The chums of the Shell stared at him in amazement.

D'Arcy was usually very careful in his attire, and it was but seldom that he failed to appear in an extremely neat and spick and span condition. To see him navigating the junior passages in a sweeping dressing-gown, and with his face shining with butter, was a novelty.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

"You uttah wottahs!"

"What!"

"You wascals!"

"Eh?"

"You feahful boundahs!"

"Oh!"

"I wegard you with uttah despision—I mean, contempt! I despise you feahfully!" said D'Arcy, trying to jam his monocle into his eye, but failing, for the rim would persist in slipping out on the butter.

The Terrible Three exchanged glances.

"Poor old chap!" said Monty Lowther, quite sympathetically. "It must be the rain—the wicked, wet rain—that's done it. Softening of the brain, of course—fatty degeneration of the head!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We're short of butter, too, and Gussy has been wāsting it decorating his face," said Manners. "Weren't you ever taught, Gussy, that wilful waste makes woeful wasps—I mean, waspful woe?"

"Mannahs—"

"I don't like the style of decoration," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "What do you call it, Gussy—florid, Byzantine, or what?"

"Tom Mewwy—"

"But the gown is a treat," said Lowther. "I like Gussy in a dressing-gown. The colour scheme is splendid, and—"

"You uttah ass—"

"But wherefore this thusness?" said Lowther. "Why does the great Gussy descend upon his humble admirers thus gorgeously arrayed, with butter pale complexion?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tis butter little faded flower—"

"I wegard you as a set of howlid wuffians, and I have come here to thwash you!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Eh?"

"Pway put up youah hands, Tom Mewwy!"

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"Where?"

"I mean, I'm goin' to begin with you! Put up your hands!"

And D'Arcy rushed at the hero of the Shell. Unfortunately, he had calculated without the dressing-gown. The long folds of it caught in his feet, and he rolled over without a chance of saving himself. He reached Tom Merry in a horizontal attitude, and reclined at his feet.

Tom Merry looked down at him in surprise. "Good!" he exclaimed. "Do that again!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's all right, you fellows; Gussy has learned some new acrobatic tricks, and he has come to show them to us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy sat up, rather dazed and bewildered. One leg stuck out of the gown, with a slipper half off the foot.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Go it, Gussy! Do it again!"

Arthur Augustus caught at the table to help himself up. Unfortunately, his grasp fastened on the table-cover, and instead of dragging himself up, he dragged the cover off, and with a shower of books and papers and an inkstand.

The Terrible Three gave a simultaneous shout.

"You ass! Leggo!"

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

A splash of ink added to the artistic effect of the smeared butter on D'Arcy's aristocratic countenance.

He scrambled to his feet.

"Oh, you chump!" said Manners. "That's the third time that ink's been upset to-day."

"You feahful boundahs—"

"Oh! Go home!"

"I wegard you—"

"Never mind about your kind regards! Go home!"

"Weally—"

"Buzz off!"

Instead of buzzing off, D'Arcy rushed at Manners, and closed with him. The Shell fellow wrestled with him, and they waltzed round the table, Manners getting a great deal of the butter off D'Arcy's face upon his own.

"Here, keep your chivvy away!" he roared. "Keep it off!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Don't butter me, you chump!"

"I wegard you—"

"Help! He's greasing me all over!" howled Manners. Tom Merry and Lowther rushed to the rescue. They grasped Arthur Augustus, and hauled him off by main force, the swell of St. Jim's struggling all the time.

"Welease me!" he roared. "I am goin' to give you all a feahful thwashin'! I insiet upon being weleased at once!"

"No takers," said Lowther blandly, as he pushed D'Arcy upon the floor, and planted a foot on his chest. "Now, keep still!"

"You wuffians—"

"What's the matter with you?" asked Tom Merry, adding a foot to Lowther's, and keeping the swell of St. Jim's pinned to the floor. "What are you on the warpath about?"

"I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect!"

"Go hon!"

"I have been smothahed with buttah while I was takin' a nap in my own studay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Twas butter joke!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah, you wottahs, and I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'! I wegard such a joke as in the worst of taste!"

"Was it cheap butter?" asked Lowther.

"I weally don't know."

"If it was good butter, the taste ought to have been all right," said Monty Lowther, in the solemn tone he usually adopted when perpetrating a bad pun.

"I did not come here to listen to your wotten jokes, Lowthah! I came here to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"But what for?" demanded Tom Merry.

"For playin' that wotten jape on me."

"Ha, ha! But we didn't!"

"Eh?"

"We didn't do it," said Tom Merry. "You ass, you've been a little too previous!"

"Oh! If you give me your word that you didn't do it, of course, I shall take it!" said D'Arcy. "I'm sowwy!"

"I should think you are. You've upset the study, and made Manners's nose nearly twice its usual size."

"I'm sowwy! Why didn't you chaps explain?"

"How were we to explain when we didn't know what you were after?"

"Bai Jove, you know I nevah thought of that! You see—"

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"Never mind, it was worth it to see Gussy's cheerful chivvy in this state," said Monty Lowther. "Will you stay another minute while I take a snapshot of you, Gussy?"

D'Arcy rose to his feet.

"I decline to do anythin' of the sort!" he exclaimed, with dignity. "I will wetire now, and I wepeat that I am sowwy. I will go and look for the weal perpetwatahs of that howwid outwage!"

"Deal gently with them, Gussy," said Monty Lowther imploringly. "You know what a fearful chap you are when you are roused, and—"

But D'Arcy did not wait for any more. He left the study, and closed the door with unnecessary force.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Outsider Overhears:

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY rustled up to the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House, to wash the butter from his face—a step he might as well have taken earlier, instead of paying that hasty visit to Tom Merry's study. But, as D'Arcy would have explained, he never thought of that.

Blake, Herries, and Digby had nearly finished changing. They looked at the swell of St. Jim's as he came in.

"My hat!" said Jack, with an appearance of great surprise. "What have you been doing with your face, Gussy?"

"He's been wasting the butter," said Digby, with a shake of the head. "Is it a new dodge for the complexion, Gussy? If it is, I really think you might use margarine, and not our best fresh!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"It reminds me of Shakespeare," said Blake thoughtfully. "What is it he says about the schoolboy with his shining morning face?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only it's a shining evening face."

"I wefuse to listen to these wotten wemarks!" said D'Arcy, going to his washstand. "I have been tweated with uttah wudeness. Some wotten boundah slammed this buttah on my face while I was asleep."

"Not really!" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have you slain him?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Have you strewn the hungry churchyard with his bones?" asked Digby.

"You ass!"

"Have you left as much as a grease spot to mark the place where he previously existed?" queried Blake.

"Pway be sewious! I want you fellows to help me find the chap, as I am wresolved to give him a feahful thwashin'!" said D'Arcy, scrubbing away at his face, and speaking in jerks. "I did not know you fellows had come back."

"We didn't know you had come back, you chump, when we left to look for you," said Blake. "Tom Merry told us you were in the haunted mill."

"So I was, deah boy."

"And wanted us to come with umbrellas and things."

"So I did."

"Then why didn't you wait for us?" exclaimed Blake. "When we got to the mill there was nobody there."

"You ass, Gussy! You fraud! You—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Why didn't you wait?"

D'Arcy began to towel his face.

"Is all that buttah off?" he asked.

"Blow the butter!"

"Yaas; but is it all off?"

"Look here, Gussy, if you've got an explanation to give, you'd better give it," said Blake, as he fastened his collar.

"You gave us a long tramp through the rain, and coolly left the place we were to meet you at. You bolted all the grub before we came back, and had a blessed tea-party in the study!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"What do you mean by it? I may as well tell you that you're booked for the biggest bumping you ever had in your natural!"

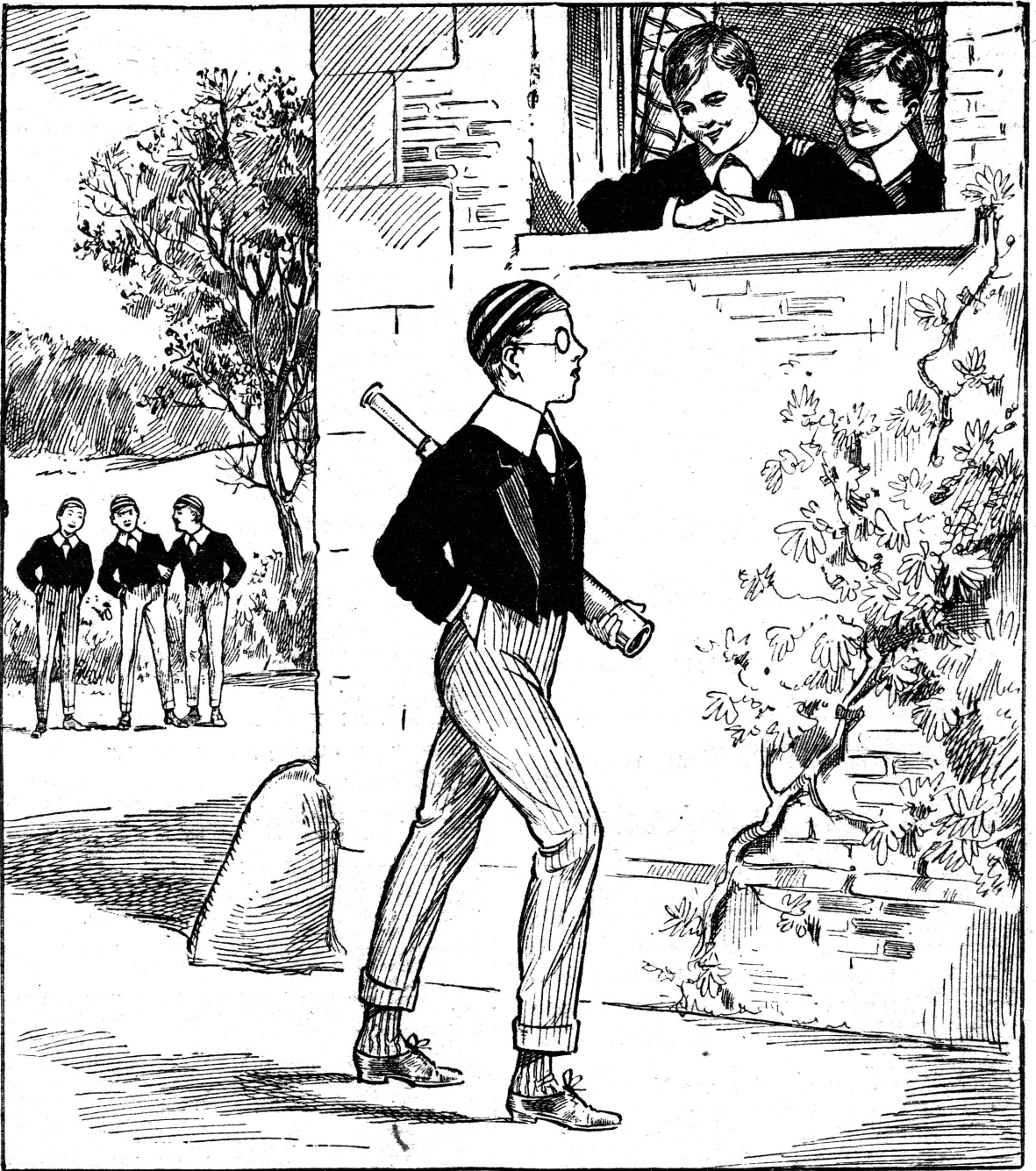
"I should uttably wefuse to be bumped! I have not had tea yet, and have not had a tea-party in the studay!"

"What! There were three teacups, and the grub's all gone!"

"I thought you chaps had had it before you went," said D'Arcy. "I wepeat that I haven't had my tea yet, deah boy."

"My hat!" said Blake. "Somebody must have raided the study while we were out, then. Figgins & Co. most likely, though how could they know? It wasn't Tom Merry; he





"Ha, ha, ha!" The juniors in the window sent a roar of laughter after the unconscious Skimpole as he passed by the window with a huge telescope under his arm. (See Page 19.)

gave us his word. Well, never mind the tea; as you didn't do it, we'll excuse you for that!"

"Freely," said Digby generously.

"But what do you mean by buzzing off and leaving us to go to the haunted mill for nothing?" demanded Blake.

"I am sowwy—"

"You'll be sorrier shortly!"

"It was unavoidable, deah boys, undah the cires. I thought I should pass you comin' to the school, you know—"

"I suppose you did pass us, ass!"

"I mean, I thought I should see you. I suppose I must have passed you—I mean, that you must have passed me in the dark!" said D'Arcy. "It was wathah careless of you! Howevah, I am ppeared to ovahlook it!"

"You—you are prepared to overlook it, are you?" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, undah the cires, as there's no harm done," said D'Arcy. "As for why I left the mill, that is vewy cuwious. You have heard the fellows say that the mill is haunted, I suppose?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, while I was there I heard the most mysteriuous noises—"

"That's nothing new," said Blake. "I've often heard the most mysteriuous noises while you've been present. Tenor solos, I think they call 'em!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You don't mean to say that you were scared out of the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE RUGGER FOURTH." Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



mill by the noise of the wind in the loft?" demanded Digby.

D'Arcy turned pink.

"Weally, Digby—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, in chorus.

"It was not the noise of the wind!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "There was a feahful noise of dwaggin' bodies about, and howwid gwoens!"

"Rats!"

"I ascended the stairs, you know, to see if there was anythin' there, but my matches went out. I think some wottah was there blowin' them out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at! Eithah there was a wottah there playin' twicks, or—"

"Or a ghost!"

"Well, of course, there wasn't a ghost," said D'Arcy uneasily. "But—but it was vevy howwid, all alone in the dark, and—and—"

"And you bolted!" said Blake, laughing. "Well, I suppose we'd have done the same. So would anybody. I—"

"Bolted from a ghost! Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a disagreeable laugh. The chums of the Fourth swung round. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the fellow who was always called the Outsider at St. Jim's, had come into the dormitory.

D'Arcy became crimson.

"Did you address me, Lumlay?" he exclaimed.

The Outsider laughed again.

"So you bolted!" he exclaimed.

"That is no biznay of yours!"

"Not at all! But I guess it's funny!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Bolted from a ghost! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wottah—"

"I guess I'll tell the fellows!"

"Oh, hold your tongue!" said Blake crossly. "Gussy only did what any chap would have done in his place. It was a case of nerves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lumlay—"

"So you believe in ghosts, D'Arcy?" grinned Jerrold Lumley.

"Certainly not!"

"Then you're afraid of what you don't believe in? Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy stepped towards the Outsider.

"Did you remark that I was afwaid?" he said, with ominous calmness.

"I guess so."

"I will show you, at all events, that I am not afwaid of an ill-mannered boundah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Kindly put up your fists, you cad!"

Lumley retreated to the door.

"I guess I'll let the fellows know!" he said.

D'Arcy ran towards him. The Outsider of St. Jim's dodged out of the dormitory, and his footsteps could be heard scuttling away down the passage.

Arthur Augustus turned back to his chums with a dismayed look.

"Bai Jove! It will be all ovah the School House now!" he exclaimed.

"Rotten!" said Blake. "It was beastly luck for Lumley to come in just then; but he's always turning up at awkward moments. There never was such an intolerable beast as that fellow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, you'll have to grin and bear it, Gussy," said Digby. "Any chap would have bolted in your place."

"I did not exactly bolt, deah boy; I—I left the mill."

Blake chuckled.

"There's not much difference," he remarked. "But whether you bolted or not, or only left the mill, the fellows will make a song out of it, and you'll have to grin and bear it. Better punch Lumley's head, too!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake wagged a finger at him reprovingly.

"You see now what comes of staying out late for tea, and visiting vicarage garden-parties to show off a new waistcoat."

"You uttah ass! I—"

"Never mind, don't do it any more!" said Blake magisterially, as he turned towards the door.

"I wefuse—"

"We'd better go and scout for some tea," said Herries.

"Yes, rather!"

"I have not yet discovered the wottah who shoved that beastly buttah on my face," said D'Arcy. "I want you fellows to help me find him."

"Oh, rats!"

"I am wesolved—"

"Let it drop."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

THE NEXT STORY-PAPER TO BUY THIS WEEK IS THE "MARVEL."

"I wefuse to let it dwop! I—"

"Come and have tea!"

"I cannot, consistently with my personal dig., have tea till that mattah is settled," said D'Arcy firmly. "Are you aware who it was, Blake?"

"Yes," faltered Blake.

"Then pway give me his name."

"I—I—I—"

"Pway go on, deah boy."

"I—I—I'm afraid to!"

"Weally, Blake, I will pwotect you. I will see that you are not hurt in the least," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously. "You can rely on me."

"Noble youth!" exclaimed Blake, throwing his arms round D'Arcy's neck, and hugging him. "Noble Gussy! Come to my arms!"

"Ow!"

"Let me press thee—"

"You ass!"

"Let the outpourings of my gratitude flood thy necktie, and—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And then let's go and have tea!" said Blake, calming down suddenly after his transports. "I'm jolly hungry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby and Herries.

"You have not told me the name of the culpwtit yet, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, his name!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"John Blake!"

"Eh?"

"John Blake, familiarly known as Jack!"

"Weally—"

"And now let's go and have tea."

"Blake!"

"Exactly! Come on!"

"Do I understand that it was you, Blake, who played that wotten twick on me?" demanded D'Arcy majestically.

Blake looked puzzled.

"I don't know," he said. "How should I know what you understand, Gussy? It depends on the state of your understander, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass! You swamped that wotten buttah on my face!"

"It wasn't rotten butter; it was best fresh."

"You did it?"

"Alone I did it!" assented Blake, striking the attitude of Coriolanus on the stage. "Like an eagle, I fluttered your dovescotes in Corioli— Alone I did it! Boy!"

"Then I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"After your promise, Gussy! You shock me!"

"My—my pwomise?"

"Yes. You're going to protect me, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Herries and Digby roared again.

D'Arcy's face was a study.

"I weward you as a wottah, Blake!" he remarked at last.

"I was twicked into makin' that pwomise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weward you as a boundah and a wotten, pwactical jokin' beast!" said Arthur Augustus, with some heat.

"Undah the circs., I will let you off!"

"I thank your gracious mercy!" sang Blake, to the melody to which Theodora sings those words in the oratorio.

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! Undah the circs., I let you off; but I weward you as a beast! I am westwained by my pwomise fwom givin' you a feahful thwashin', but you will kindly take the will for the deed. Pway considah yourself as soundly thwashed!"

"Good!" said Blake, with a nod. "And if you began, I should take you by the neck and wipe up the dormitory with you, so pray consider yourself used as a floor-wiper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to considah anythin' of the sort! I—"

"My dear chap, one good turn deserves another," urged Blake. "If I consider—"

"You ass!"

"Then you ought to consider—"

"You fwabjous fathead—"

"Taking one consideration with another, as the poet remarks—"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake!" said D'Arcy. "Let's go and have tea. I wefuse to talk wot any more."

# ANSWERS



"Going to start in life as a dumb man?" asked Blake pleasantly.

To which polite query D'Arcy vouchsafed no response.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Tom Merry's Idea.

"THE ass!"

"The fathead!"

"He ought to be kept on a chain!"

Such were the remarks the Terrible Three made, after D'Arcy had quitted the study, and they set about picking up the things he had scattered in dragging off the table-cover.

But all the things that had been scattered were not easily collected.

The ink, for example, was irrecoverable, and as most of it had been spilt over the papers, the loss was not in the ink alone. A nice imposition of fifty lines which Manners had written out for the German-master was smothered with ink, and would have to be done over again. Tom Merry's new Latin Grammar—a present from his kind old guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett—was swimming in ink. It was surprising that so much ink could have come out of one inkpot.

"The cheerful chump!" said Tom Merry emphatically.

"Look at my blessed grammar!"

"Look at my impot!"

"Rotten!" said Lowther. "The Grammar doesn't matter so much—but the impot. will have to be done over again. It's rotten!"

"I rather think it's time Gussy was put through it," said Manners. "He's too fresh!"

"Yes, rather!"

"What is he going about for in a blessed dressing-gown?" demanded Lowther. "What's the whoeze, anyway?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"He's been out in the rain."

"Well, I don't see why he can't change his clothes, like anybody else, and not swank about in a dressing-gown," said Lowther. "Hang it all—dressing-gowns in the Fourth Form. We shall have marble baths next!"

"Yes, it is a bit thick," agreed Tom Merry.

"Why, there are very few of the Sixth who sport dressing-gowns!" exclaimed Lowther. "It's too thick altogether!"

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled.

"I've got an idea," he remarked.

"For getting at the giddy gown?"

"No. Gussy's so fond of the gown that I think he ought to be made to live in it for a time," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"How do you mean?"

"What price removing his duds?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on, though," said Manners. "That's not a light job. Gussy has trunks and trunks of 'em!"

"I know he has—and it would be ripping fun to cart 'em all away," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "I know where his props are. He keeps a trunk in the box-room, and hand-boxes galore in the Fourth Form dormitory, in the wardrobe there, as well as a couple of smaller trunks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we quietly lifted them—"

"Good egg!"

"It would be a joke to see Gussy hunting for his togs—and if the other chaps wouldn't lend him any, he'd have to turn up to calling-over in his gown."

The Terrible Three yelled at the idea.

"Let's get 'em, then," said Lowther.

They left the study. Kangaroo was coming along the passage towards the end study, which he shared with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn. He stopped as he caught sight of the grinning faces of the Terrible Three.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Any joke on?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's up against Gussy, and you can lend a hand if you like."

"I'm on," said the Cornstalk at once. And Tom Merry explained, to an accompaniment of cachinnations from Lowther and Manners.

"Good!" grinned Harry Noble. "Blake and the rest are having tea now. I just saw Dig take the kettle in. Somebody wolfed their grub while they were out, and they've been borrowing from half the studies in the passage. The coast is clear for the dorm."

"Come on, then!"

The four Shell fellows hurried up to the Fourth-Form dormitory.

There was a faint sound in the gloom on the upper staircase, and a scuttling of retreating feet. Tom Merry paused.

"My hat! Those Fourth Form bounders are there!" he exclaimed.

"Not Blake," said Kangaroo.

"Who was it, then?"

"Whoever it is can help us, and keep his mouth shut," said the Cornstalk. "Hallo, who are you there?"

There was no reply.

The Shell fellows hurried up the stairs, and looked along the dormitory passage. The passage was in complete darkness; the gas-jet usually burning there had been extinguished.

"Hallo!" said Kangaroo. "That means some jape, I suppose. Look out!"

"Light the gas!"

"Right-ho!"

A match flared out. Kangaroo lighted the gas, turning it up to its full extent. The passage was deserted save for themselves.

Tom Merry looked perplexed.

"I know jolly well there was somebody here," he exclaimed.

"I can't see 'em!"

"They've gone," said Lowther. "Never mind, let's get to bizney."

The chums of the Shell entered the Fourth Form dormitory, and lighted the gas there.

There was a sound of a suppressed gasp in the gloom, ere the light flared up.

Tom Merry looked round quickly.

"Who was that?" he exclaimed.

"Who was what?"

"I heard somebody."

"I can't see anybody here except ourselves," said Kangaroo.

"There is somebody, though. Look under the beds!"

"Oh, all right!"

"You needn't trouble," said a voice, rather breathlessly.

"We'll come out. It was all through your blessed grunting, Fatty!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Oh, get out!"

Three figures crawled from under the beds.

They were Figgins & Co., of the New House. They looked dusty and fluffy, and somewhat red and breathless, and they stared sheepishly at the Shell fellows.

Tom Merry eyed them grimly.

"Oh, it's you," he remarked.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Figgins genially.

"What the dickens are you doing here?"

"We nipped into this room when we heard your voices—we felt certain you were going to your own dorm."

Tom Merry laughed.

"As it happened, we weren't. How did you chaps get here, and what did you come for? A House jape, I suppose?"

Figgins grinned ruefully.

"The jape's over," he said. "We've been here a long time looking for a chance to get away. We had tea in Blake's study—"

Kangaroo uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, it was you!"

"Ha, ha! Yes; we were going afterwards, but the coast wasn't clear. Then Gussy came in, and we saw him coming up to the study, and we nipped in here. We've been looking for a chance ever since."

"No rest for the wicked!" commented Monty Lowther.

"The feed wasn't worth it," said Fatty Wynn, pathetically. "It was pretty good, I admit. But it wasn't worth this, you know, and I'm hungry again already."

"Is it pax?" asked Figgins. "Otherwise, we're going to rush you, and get out. Ready, my sons!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr.

"Oh, I'm ready," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll rush anybody, if there's a chance of getting in to supper!"

The School House chums laughed.

"I think we'd better bump them, for their blessed cheek in coming into a respectable House," said Monty Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it!"

"Buck up, New House!" sang out Figgins.

In a moment more the parties were closing in conflict. Figgins had Monty Lowther's head in chancery at the very first onset, and then suddenly an idea flashed into Monty Lowther's mind. Whether his head being in chancery had anything to do with it, we cannot say.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Pax!"

"That's all very well—"

"Pax, you ass! I've got an idea!"

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins. "Pax, you fellows!"

"Oh, rats!" said Kangaroo. "I say—"

"Pax!" said Tom Merry. "But what's the row, Lowther?"

"I've got an idea," said Lowther, rubbing his nose.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE RUGGER FOURTH." Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



"Figgins can help us in that little wheeze we came up for—we shall have enough to do to get Gussy's things out."

"Good egg!"

"What's that?" asked Figgins.

Tom Merry explained, and the New House juniors chuckled.

"Good!" said Figgins. "Ripping!"

And Kerr and Wynn gave a willing assent, it being understood that as soon as the jape was over, the New House chums were to quit the School House in peace.

Then Tom Merry & Co. set to work.

## CHAPTER 9.

### An Amateur Removal.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was the most elegant junior at St. Jim's. There were dandies in the Fifth and the Sixth, but even seniors could not vie with Arthur Augustus. It was admitted by all—excepting, of course, the dandies aforesaid—that D'Arcy was the best-dressed fellow in the school. It was a great distinction for a Fourth-Former, and D'Arcy felt it as such; but he did not allow it to get into his head. There was no swank about him. He bore his blushing honours thick upon him with great modesty. But this reputation was not to be kept up without trouble and expense. D'Arcy had a big allowance from home, and he spent it royally. He had a number of boxes at St. Jim's which were a standing joke with the other fellows. He could not be the best-dressed chap in the college without having plenty of changes of attire. And he had plenty—more than plenty. The number of D'Arcy's waistcoats was supposed to be unlimited, and his neckties were as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa. He was never the possessor of fewer than three silk hats at a time, and, indeed, in time of changing fashion in brims the number had been known to rise to six or seven. Monty Lowther had remarked, that if D'Arcy ever wanted to start in the second-hand garment line of business, he would have a stock all ready, and the necessary number of hats to wear at one time in symbol of his calling.

This luxurious supply of apparel was kept wherever room could be found for it. D'Arcy had an enormous trunk in the box-room, and he kept dressing-cases and necktie-boxes and collar-boxes and so forth in the study. But it was in the roomy old wardrobe at the end of the Fourth Form dormitory that the major part was stowed. There were D'Arcy's band-boxes and hat-boxes, and trunks and shirt-boxes, in an imposing array.

It was really no light task to think of moving them all.

The seven juniors gazed at the pile—the venerable pile, Monty Lowther called it—and grinned.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry. "It's about time Gussy had a lesson on this subject."

"What-ho!"

"Blake and the others are always jawing him about it."

"So they are."

"I hear that Mr. Lathom told him something would have to be done."

"Very likely," said Figgins. "My word! If we had a chap in the New House with a supply of clothes like this, we'd—we'd scrag him!"

"I'll take the band-boxes," said Tom Merry. "You fellows pile into the others. Better get it all done in one journey, in case any of those Fourth-Form bounders come upstairs; Gussy mustn't get a hint of what's become of his wardrobe."

"Not a whisper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors started operations. In turn they loaded themselves up with the possessions of the unconscious Gussy.

Tom Merry negotiated a pile of band-boxes. Kangaroo, who was strong and sturdy, and the biggest of the party, shouldered the largest box. Lowther and Manners took a large trunk between them on their backs. Figgins & Co. shouldered hat-boxes, and band-boxes, and shirt-cases galore.

"That's the lot!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Right-ho!" grinned Tom Merry. "March!"

Kangaroo led the way. Tom Merry was second, with the pile of band-boxes in his arms, rocking a little dangerously as he moved.

"Take care of the doorway," said Figgins. "You'll catch it with the top box if you're not careful."

"All right. I'm on that."

Tom Merry stooped low as he passed the doorway, and the topmost box of the pile narrowly escaped collision. He followed Kangaroo up the passage, and the others followed him, grunting under their burdens.

Kangaroo was grunting the most forcibly. Strong and sturdy as he was, he had taken on a burden a little too heavy for him, and he was staggering under it now.

"Careful there," said Tom Merry, as Kangaroo gave a

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

lurch against the wall. "You'll have the blessed box down in a minute."

"I jolly well thought it was down then!" grunted Kangaroo.

"Careful!"

"Oh, it's all right now!"

Bump!

The heavy box lurch against the wall again.

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther. "Somebody will hear the row if Kangy goes on doing the war-dance with that box."

"Ass!"

"Well, I was only suggesting—"

"Fathead!"

"Suppose we lend you a hand, Kangy?"

"Bosh!"

And Kangaroo, having rested the box against the wall for a space, shouldered it again manfully, and staggered on.

The chums followed him with doubtful looks.

Kangaroo had no doubts about his ability to negotiate that heavy box alone, but the extreme uncertainty of his stride gave Tom Merry & Co. very big doubts.

However, it was clearly useless to say anything, and they tramped on, and hoped for the best.

Another lurch, and another bump on the wall.

"Look out!" called out Lowther.

Crash!

The box was on the floor, and the lid burst open, and the contents pouring out over the linoleum.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Kangaroo, sprawling over the fallen box. "Who'd have thought it?"

"You ass!"

"It was Lowther's fault."

"What?"

"If he hadn't called out to me—"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Lowther indignantly.

"I—"

"I was getting on all right—"

"Rats!"

"Oh, pick the things up!" said Manners. "I suppose you're not going to spend the rest of the evening sprawling on that box, are you, Kangy?"

"Look here—"

"Buck up, fathead!" muttered Tom Merry. "Gussy'll come along."

Kangaroo grunted, but he bucked up. The contents of the box were crammed back into it, we are afraid with less order than before. D'Arcy was very neat in his many boxes and trunks, and everything in them was always in apple-pie order; but Kangaroo had a heavy hand in packing.

He crammed the things into the box, while the procession of juniors passed him, on their way to the upper stairs and the box-room.

The Cornstalk did buck up. By the time the other fellows had passed him, he had the box packed again, and was throwing his weight on the lid to keep it shut.

Figgins, having got rid of his burden, came back to help him, and between them they dragged the heavy box to the upper staircase.

Tom Merry had led the way up with his pile of band-boxes, performing a really wonderful balancing trick in getting them up the stairs without a tumble.

They passed the box-room that was usually used by the juniors, and went on up a narrow creaking stair, to a disused room under the roof, where old boxes and broken chairs and other lumber reposed undisturbed term after term.

There the cargo was planked down.

The juniors returned to help Kangaroo up the stairs with the large box. This was no easy task, as on the narrow stairs it jammed in the banisters, and for a long time it would not move.

By twisting out several of the banisters, however, room was made for it to pass, and the box was carried into its hiding-place at last.

Then the juniors, dusty and tired, descended the stairs.

"Better have a pick-me-up in our study," said Tom Merry hospitably. "We're entitled to a drink after a removal job, I suppose, and Manners can make good coffee."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn. "Did I see you in the tuckshop this evening, getting some pork-pies, Manners?"

"No, you didn't," said Manners.

"Then it was you, Lowther."

"No, it wasn't."

"You, then, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, you didn't see me, Fatty, and there aren't any pork-pies in the study; but we've got a big cake, and you're welcome."

Fatty Wynn grinned serenely.

"Nothing I like so much as cake and coffee," he said,

THE NEXT STORY-PAPER TO BUY THIS WEEK IS THE "MARVEL."



Skimpole had thrown aside the signalling flags and was sitting down with his book open, deeply engrossed in social problems. When Skimpole was on his favourite subject he was deaf and dumb to everything else. (See page 22.)

"unless perhaps it's saveloys, or ham and beef, or poached eggs on toast, or gammon rashers, or—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins. "Cut the catalogue."

"I was only saying—"

"Here's the cake," said Lowther.

And Fatty Wynn said no more. He was too busy with the cake.

When the cake and the coffee were finished, the New House fellows and the School House chums parted on the best of terms, and Figgins & Co. returned in peace to their own House, chuckling as they discussed how Gussy would look when he found out that his extensive wardrobe had made a sudden and startling disappearance.

### CHAPTER 10. D'Arcy Won't Stand It.

"I WEFUSE to stand it."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that observation in Study No. 6. The swell of St. Jim's was growing exasperated.

It was all through those unlucky words Lumley-Lumley had overheard in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

The Outsider of St. Jim's had, of course, retailed them in the common-room, and the whole of the Lower School—or the School House portion of it—made merry over D'Arcy's bolting from the ghost of the mill. There was no doubt, too, that the New House would be chucking over it on the morrow.

During the belated tea in Study No. 6, several fellows had looked in to inquire the exact facts.

D'Arcy had not been gracious to them.

True, some of them explained that they couldn't take Lumley-Lumley's word, and wanted to know the truth from D'Arcy's own lips.

D'Arcy only told them to go and eat coke.

Which was as good as saying that Lumley's story was true, and the inquirers departed chuckling.

Then came continual callers, not so much to inquire into the facts, but to chip D'Arcy on the subject, to ask him whether he believed in ghosts, and whether the ghost of the old mill had flaming eyes and so on, and the swell of St. Jim's was growing more and more exasperated, and his exasperation was not soothed by the fact that his chums took the matter as a joke, too.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

NEXT  
THURSDAY:

"THE RUGGER FOURTH." Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



Hence D'Arcy's announcement, at last, that he refused to stand it.

Blake had been beginning his prep., the tea-things having been swept away upon the coal-locker for the nonce.

"You hear me?" said Arthur Augustus.  
"I think so," said Blake. "You could be heard at the end of the passage, for that matter. Moderate your transports, old son."

"Weally, Blake——"  
"Time for prep."  
"I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect——"  
"Nearly time for the evening call-over, too."  
"And my own fwriends cackle like silly asses, instead of bakin' a chap up. I wefuse to stand——"

"There's your chair."  
"Eh?"  
"Sit down, old son."  
"I wefuse to sit down."

"Blessed if there's any pleasing you," said Blake, in a tone of resignation. "You refuse to stand, and you won't sit down. I suppose you don't want to rest in mid-air like Mahomet's coffin?"

"You uttah ass——"  
"You'd better get that thing off, and dress for calling-over," said Digby, looking at the gorgeous dressing-gown with a sniff.

"I wefuse to stand it!"  
"Well, we've had to stand it," said Digby.  
"You have not been subjected to this wotten chippin'——"  
"Oh, I thought you meant the dressing-gown," said Digby innocently.

"You ass!"  
"What I like about Gussy," said Blake, looking round, "is his politeness, and his choice of epithets in friendly conversation."

D'Arcy blushed.  
"I—I withdraw that expression," he said. "I am sowwy, Dig. Howevah, I wefuse to stand this wotten persecution. I shall thwash the next chap who comes to the study with a silly remark about ghosts."

"Go it, old son," said Blake heartily. "We'll look on and cheer."

"Weally, Blake——"  
The door opened, and Reilly, of the Fourth, looked in. He grinned cheerily at the chums of Study No. 6.

"Faith, and I was lookin' for ye, Gussy," he remarked.  
"Is it thrue what Lumley has been telling us?"  
D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs.

"Faith, and he says ye cut and run from a ghost in the haunted mill," said Reilly. "Sure, and I—— Howly Moses and murder!"

Reilly uttered those exclamations as the swell of the Fourth rushed at him, hitting out.

He staggered back against the door, with D'Arcy's knuckles beating a tattoo upon his nose and chin.

"Ow!" he gasped. "'Are an' 'ounds! Murther entirely!"

"There, you wottah——"  
The astounded Reilly feebly defended himself.  
Rap, rap, rap! came D'Arcy's knuckles.

"You uttah ass, I told you what I would do——"  
"Eh?"  
"I gave you fair warmin'——"  
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "You didn't tell Reilly—you told me."

"It is all one. I am goin' to—— Yow!"  
Reilly, recovering a little from his astonishment, began to hit out in return. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caught his fist upon his aristocratic nose, and staggered back.

Reilly followed up this advantage by a tap upon the upper portion of D'Arcy's dressing-gown, which made him stagger still more, and his feet became entangled in his gown, and he sat down violently.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.  
The Irish junior danced round him, brandishing his fists.

"Faith, and come on!" he roared. "I'll give you some more! Jump up, you spalpeen! Come on! Howly mother n'er Moses, I——"  
"I'll—I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!" gasped D'Arcy.

"I——"  
"Yah! Come on!"  
"Bai Jove! I——"

Arthur Augustus scrambled up and rushed at Reilly. Digby caught the trailing cord of his dressing-gown and pulled him back, and at the same moment Blake and Herries laid violent hands upon Reilly.

"Let me get at him, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus.  
"Rats!"

"Faith, and leggo!"  
"Outside!" said Blake severely. "You can't come rowing in this study, young Irish. I'm-ashamed of you!"

"Faith, and he dotted me on the boko!" roared Reilly.

"Well, it's an honour to be dotted on the boko by the one and only Arthur Adolphus Aubrey of that ilk."

"Sure, I——"  
"Weally, Blake——"  
"Knock Gussy down and sit on him, Dig——"

"I wefuse to be sat on! I——"  
"And we'll cluck this fire-eater out."

"Faith, and I——"  
"Out you go!"  
"Sure, ye——"

"We want peace in this study," said Blake. "We'll have peace if we have to fight the whole House for it. Out you go!"

"Faith——"  
"Chuck him out!"

Reilly struggled, but Blake and Herries hurled him forth. He crashed down in the passage, but he was up again in a moment, as if he was made of indiarubber, and coming on like a bull.

Once again he was seized and hurled forth. Blake waved a warning hand to him from the doorway of the study.

"Now run away and play," he said affably. "Tell them in the common-room that the joke has had a good run, and it's time they buried it."

"Bai Jove! Let me get at him!"

"Rats!"  
"I insist——"

"Shut up!"  
"I wefuse to shut up——"

"Sit on his head!"  
"I uttably wefuse to have my head sat on! I—— Gwoo! Hoo! Gwoo!"

Reilly scrambled up, and burst into a laugh. Herries and Digby were sitting on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Blake guarded the door.

"Cut off!" he said.  
"Faith, and I——"

Blake slammed the door. Reilly hesitated a moment, but he could hear the sounds of strife and an indignant voice within, and perhaps he thought D'Arcy had enough trouble on his hands. He went down the passage, and met Skimpole at the corner. Skimpole took hold of one of his waistcoat buttons.

"My dear Reilly, you look excited. I heard a noise in the passage. I trust you have not been fighting?"

"Rats!" growled Reilly.  
"Really, Reilly, I think——"

"Leggo!"  
"Pray step into my study," said Skimpole. "I have a new volume by Dr. Spoofer, called 'Determinism and Social Problems,' and one chapter deals with the unhappy spirit of militarism which is rife, not to say rampant, in these times. I will read you the whole chapter, and——"

"Chuck it!"

"It will do you a great deal of good. You see, I know that you are of an insufficiently developed intelligence, and will probably not understand half of it, but that is no reason why I should not do my best. As a Determinist——"

Skimpole got no further.

Reilly grasped him, and shoved him against the wall, and solemnly knocked his head upon it—once, twice, thrice. Then he departed without a word, leaving Skimpole rubbing his head, and gazing after him with a bewildered expression.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Adsum!

JACK BLAKE looked severely at the swell of the Fourth as he staggered to his feet. D'Arcy gazed back at him in speechless wrath.

"You duffer!" said Blake. "Blessed if I know what we take so much trouble about you for! Do you know, Dig?"

Digby shook his head solemnly.  
"I don't!" he replied.

"Do you, Herries?"  
"Haven't the least idea!" said Herries. "Towser would be less trouble in the study. I'm sure of that, but you fellows object to Towser."

"You uttah asses——"

"There he goes again, abusing his best friends, who'd stand by him at any time," said Blake. "After what we've just done he's the same as ever. I suppose it's no good expecting gratitude."

"No good at all," said Digby. "It's a hard world, but I must say I shouldn't have expected Gussy to be so hardened at his tender years."

"There must be something in what Skimpole says about the stony-heartedness of the aristocracy," said Blake gravely.

"You're right."

"You feahful boundahs——"

"Oh, Gussy!"



"I twust I did not hurt you vevy much last night, Weilly," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy graciously. "I should be vevy sowwy to weally hurt you, though you pvovoked me vevy much at the time. You know I am wathah tewwible in my tempah when I am woused." Reilly chuckled as he saw Blake tighten the string. (See page 17.)

"You have thwown me into quite a fluttah——"  
 "Look here, it's time to get down to last call-over," said Blake briskly. "If you're going to thank us, get it over, and let's go."

"Thank you!" yelled D'Arcy.  
 "Don't mention it!" said Blake.  
 "Thank you!"  
 "There, you have thanked us twice—that will do. Don't mention it. Come on."

"I haven't thanked you——"  
 "Yes, you have, twice. Come on."  
 "You ass——"

"This is the way, Gussy. You've got to change your clothes, you know."  
 "You uttah wottahs——"

"Oh, Gussy!"  
 "You have tweated me with gwoss diswespect——"  
 "Gussy!"

"You have tweated me——"  
 "After all the trouble we've taken!" sighed Blake. "Oh, dear!"

Digby gave a sob.  
 "You feahful boundahs!" said D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye, and surveying them. "I wegard you with contempt. You have interfeahed with me when I was chastisin' Weilly——"

"I thought you were getting the chastising," murmured Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Oh, that's all right! Gussy would have made mincemeat of Reilly, and there would only have been a few patches of clothing and a bone or two left to go home to Belfast at the end of the term," said Blake solemnly. "But we were thinking of the dressing-gown——"

"The what?" said D'Arcy.  
 "The dressing-gown."  
 "My dwessing-gown?"

"Exactly. Suppose you had thwashed Reilly—I mean thrashed him—suppose you had strewed the hungry churchyard with his bones, as Shakespeare so feelingly expresses it—what would have been the use if you had rumped that beautiful gown, and perhaps torn some of the braid?" said Blake, with great solemnity.

D'Arcy looked down at the dressing-gown, which, indeed, was considerably rumped already, and then looked at Blake. If Blake had been a judge on the Bench, asking a prisoner that playful little question as to whether he had anything to say before sentence was passed on him, he could not have looked more serious.

"Weally, Blake, I feah I have misjudged you," said D'Arcy, after a pause. "You are not usually so careful in important mattahs, you know, and I did not know that you were wowwyin' about my dwessin'-gown."

"He did not know it!" said Blake reproachfully. "Do you think I should have slept to-night if anything had happened to that gown, Gussy?"



"I—I weally, Blake——"  
The door opened, and Kangaroo looked in.  
"You fellows——"  
"You uttah ass!"  
"What?"  
"You feahful idiot!"  
Kangaroo stared at the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment.  
"Is Gussy often taken like that?" he asked.  
"You fwabjous ass!"  
"Eh?"  
"I will not stwike you, as I do not want to get into a wov while I am wearin' this gown, but othahwise——"  
"What?"  
"Othahwise I would give you a feahful thwashin'. I wegard your comin' to this studay as a piece of wank impertinence."  
Kangaroo looked astounded.  
"My only hat!" he ejaculated.  
"I wegard you as a wank wottah!"  
"I suppose the ginger-beer has got into his head," said Kangaroo, looking at Blake.  
"Weally, you wottah——"  
"Anywaw, this isn't what I call a polite way of greeting a fellow who's come to tell you it's calling-over," said Kangaroo.  
D'Arcy jumped.  
"What did you say, deah boy?"  
"The bell's gone for calling-over, and you'd better buck up, or Railton'll have you down as absent."  
"You came to tell us?" gasped D'Arcy.  
"Yes."

"I—I apologise most sincerely. You see, I thought you were one more of those wotten jokahs——"  
"Buck up!"  
"Pway allow me to apologise. You see——"  
"You can apologise to-morrow. And I'll get off now," grinned Kangaroo. "The Shell are called over before the Fourth. Better buck up!"  
And the Cornstalk junior darted off.  
"Bai Jove! I——"  
"Always putting your foot into it!" grinned Blake.  
"Weally, Blake——"  
"Never mind—let's get down."  
"I must go and change this dwessin'-gown first. I could not vewy well turn up at callin'-ovah in a dwessin'-gown."  
"Ha, ha! I should say not."  
"I will be with you in a minute, deah boys."

And D'Arcy ran upstairs, while his chums strolled in a more leisurely way down to the Hall for the calling-over. D'Arcy reached the Fourth-Form dormitory by the time his friends were in the Hall below. Tom Merry & Co. were there, and they looked at Blake as he came in.

"Hallo! Where's Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.  
"Gone to change his things."  
"Ha, ha! He'll miss call-over!"  
"Oh, they haven't started yet, and they begin with the Sixth!"

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, was calling the names. The fellows answered one after another. The chums of the Fourth looked a little anxious. It was a serious matter to miss call-over, and D'Arcy had not re-appeared yet. What was delaying him?

True, the swell of St. Jim's was accustomed to taking plenty of time to dress, but on an occasion like this even he might be expected to buck up. Besides, he had had plenty of time to change.

Mr. Railton had come to the Fourth Form now, and was beginning. Blake slipped out of the Hall quietly—he was very near the door—and gave a piercing whistle—a signal among the chums of Study No. 6.

He stepped back into his place, to find Mr. Railton's grim eye on him.

"Blake!"  
"Ye-es, sir?" said Blake.  
"Take twenty lines for leaving your place."  
"Ye-es, sir."

There was a rustle at the door. D'Arcy came in, looking very flurried. But he had not changed his clothes. He was still clad in the sweeping folds of that gorgeous dressing-gown.

"My hat!" murmured Blake.  
Mr. Railton stared, as well he might. A gust of laughter swept through the Hall.

"D'Arcy!" rapped out Mr. Railton.  
"Yaas, wathah—I—I mean, Adsum, sir."  
"D'Arcy, how dare you come here in this ridiculous attire?"  
"Excuse me, sir. My——"  
"I cannot excuse such a nonsensical action! Take——"  
"My clothes——"  
"Take fifty lines!"  
"My clothes have been——"  
"Silence!"  
"Yaas, sir. But——"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

"A word more, and you will be caned!"  
"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. He did not speak again.  
Mr. Railton went on calling the names. He came to D'Arcy's name, but the swell of St. Jim's did not reply.  
"D'Arcy!"  
No answer.  
"D'Arcy!"  
Silence.  
"Answer, you ass!" whispered Blake, nudging his chum.  
D'Arcy shook his head.  
"D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Railton.  
He could not very well mark down D'Arcy as absent when there was the boy standing under his gaze.  
Still the swell of St. Jim's did not speak.  
"D'Arcy, why do you not answer?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.  
"Have you taken leave of your senses, boy? Answer to your name!"  
"Certainly, sir. But you told me not to speak."  
"What?"  
"You said I should be caned if I spoke another word, sir," said D'Arcy innocently.  
Mr. Railton seemed about to choke.  
"Answer to your name, D'Arcy!" he said at last, as a chuckle swept through the Hall. "D'Arcy!"  
And the swell of St. Jim's cheerfully replied.  
"Adsum!"

## CHAPTER 12. Sunday Clothes.

THE boys crowded out after call-over, and in the passageway Jack Blake took a firm grip on the back of his elegant chum's neck, and shook him.

Arthur Augustus struggled in the iron grasp of his friend.  
"Weally, Blake, you ass——"  
"Chump!"  
"Leggo!"  
"Fathead!"  
"I insist——"

Blake shook the swell of St. Jim's.  
"What do you mean by coming down in that rig?" he roared. "What do you want to set the whole House cackling at us for, you dummy?"  
"Weally, Blake——"

"Let's bump the duffer!" said Herries.  
"Hear, hear!" from Digby.  
"I uttally wefuse to be bumped!" said D'Arcy, wriggling.  
"And if you do not immediately welaase me, Blake, I shall stwike you! I have been tweated wottenly! Some ass has taken all my clothes away!"

"What!"  
"All my boxes are gone——"  
"Impossible! Why it would take Carter Paterson weeks to clear out all your boxes!"

"Weally, Blake——"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"You've been dreaming," said Blake. "It's the bloater-paste you had for tea. You've been seeing things."

"I tell you——"  
"Rats! You've been dreaming! Wake up!"  
And Blake gave the swell of St. Jim's another hearty shake, as if for the purpose of awakening him.

D'Arcy jerked himself away.  
"Look here, you ass——"  
"Bosh! You've been drinking ginger-beer, and it's got into your head! I tell you that Hercules would have funk'd moving all your blessed boxes, if they had given it to him for a thirteenth job."

"They are gone."  
"Where?"

"I don't know. I suppose they have been moved for a wotten twick," said D'Arcy, his eye gleaming wrath through his monocle. "Somebody knew I was in this dwessin'-gown, and wanted to make me come down in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at. I——"  
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.  
"Weally, deah boys——"

"Well, let's go and see if the boxes are really gone," said Blake.

The chums of the Fourth ascended to the dormitory. There they had proof that Arthur Augustus had not been mistaken. The boxes certainly were gone—trunks, and hat-boxes, and band-boxes, and every kind of box. All had disappeared.

"This is a practical joke, I suppose," said Blake.  
"Yaas, wathah!"  
"Same chaps who wolfed our tea, I dare say," Digby remarked. "My word!"

"Bai Jove! I'll give him a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose it was some of the New House wottahs all the time! Bai Jove!"

"Well, it's too late to call on Figgins & Co. to-night," said Blake. "The House is closed after calling-over. To-morrow—"

"But I haven't any clothes to wear."

"Horrid!"

"What am I to do, deah boys?"

"Well, that gown's becoming," said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Yes, it's becoming a worry," said Herries, venturing upon a pun.

Blake shook his head, and tapped Herries on the shoulder.

"Don't do it, old chap," he said.

"Eh?"

"Don't do it."

"Don't do what?"

"That! Leave it to Lowther. We're used to it from him. Don't you start as a funny man, you know. We'd—we'd rather have Towser in the study."

"Look here, Blake—"

"About Gussy—I suppose he'll have to stick to the dressing-gown," said Blake. "Luckily, we saved him from rumpling and damaging it when he was obstreperous this evening."

"Weally, Blake—"

"After all, it will make a bit of a sensation in the Form-room—"

"You uttah ass—"

"Well, I'm only trying to make useful suggestions—"

"You know perfectly well that it will be imposs. for me to appear in the Form-woom in this thing!" said D'Arcy warmly.

"But you can't do without it, dear boy, if you haven't any clothes," remonstrated Blake. "I'm not a particular chap as a rule, but I think the line ought to be drawn somewhere—I do, really."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass! I shall have to bowwow some clothes."

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be," said Blake. "We have that on Shakespeare's authority, and I uphold Shakespeare. Now—"

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah in this fivivolous spiwit."

And D'Arcy walked away with his nose high in the air, and his dressing-gown trailing and rustling. The chums of the Fourth chuckled. That night D'Arcy came up to bed in his dressing-gown, and all the Fourth Form chuckled too. D'Arcy went to bed under a fire of remarks impartially distributed upon the subjects of ghosts and dressing-gowns.

He soothed his wrath in balmy slumber.

In the morning he rose before anybody else in the dormitory, and made a selection of clothes from the boxes of Digby, Herries, and Blake. He chose Sunday clothes, and took the articles that fitted him best.

"My hat!" said Blake, sitting up in bed as the rising-bell clang-ed out. "Dressed already, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You've found your clothes?"

"No; I've found yours."

"Mine!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all right!" said Blake generously. "You can have my second-best bags till your things turn up, and—"

"I've bowwowed the Sunday bags, deah boy."

Blake jumped.

"My Sunday bags!"

"Yaas, wathah! I must say they are not a vevy good fit, and not a vevy good fit for you, eithah, I think. You should weally change your tailah, Blake."

"You—you cheeky ass—"

"Ha, ha!" roared Digby. "Good old Gussy! Is that Blake's waistcoat, too?"

"No, it's your waistcoat, Dig, deah boy. The best one."

"You—you boulder—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, in his turn.

"Oh shut up!" said Digby. "That waistcoat—"

"It's wathah out of date in cut," said D'Arcy, "and this Eton jacket of Hewwies is not as clean as I should like it; but as it's his best one, I suppose I must be satisfied with it."

"My best jacket!" roared Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Three juniors leaped out of bed—three forms in pyjamas rushed towards D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's stepped quickly outside the dormitory, and walked down the passage. Three wrathful faces glared after him.

Arthur Augustus smiled softly and strolled downstairs.

## CHAPTER 13.

### D'Arcy Sits Down.

**B**LAKE & CO. had calmed down a little by the time they descended from the dormitory, and went out into the quadrangle. Arthur Augustus was there, sunning himself in the early beams. Figgins & Co. were out in the quad, too, and they grinned at the sight

of Arthur Augustus. They could see that he was not in his own clothes, so it was clear that the boxes hidden away in the disused room had not been discovered. Reilly, of the Fourth, gave D'Arcy a cheerful grin as he came out. There was a slight swelling on D'Arcy's nose, which was a souvenir of the encounter in Study No. 6 the previous evening.

"Faith, and the top of the morning to ye," said the Irish junior.

D'Arcy lifted his silk hat in a stately way. It was the only silk hat he had left, having fortunately been in the study with him at the time of the raid on his property in the dormitory.

"Good mornin'!" he replied.

Blake, Herries, and Digby came along. Blake had a thin cord in his hands, which he was carelessly tailing on the ground.

D'Arcy looked at him, ready for war, but Blake was quite affable.

"Glad the trousers suit you, Gussy," he remarked.

"As a mattah of fact, Blake, they are not a vevy good fit."

"Well, take care of them, and mind you don't go sitting on the ground, or anything of that sort," said Blake.

"I am not likely to do anythin' of the sort."

"If you do, I shall change them for a pair of your trucks, mind, when the things turn up," said Jack warningly.

"You would be quite welcome to do so, deah boy. I have a most stwong habit of takin' the gweatest care of anybody's property entwusted to me."

"Good! Don't forget it."

Blake strolled away, round D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's resumed speaking to Reilly, unconscious of the fact that Blake had trailed the cord in a wide circle round his feet, and now, behind him, was engaged in making a slip-knot upon it.

"I twust I did not hurt you vevy much last night, Weilly," said D'Arcy graciously.

Reilly grinned.

"Not much," he said.

"I should be sowwy to weally hurt you, though you pwovoked me vevy much at the time. If Blake had not wstwained me, I am afraid I should have done you some injuwy. I am wathah tewwible in my tempah when I am woused."

Reilly chuckled. He saw Blake tightening the string, and knew it would be only a few seconds before the loop was round D'Arcy's ankles and over his boots. And then when D'Arcy tried to walk away—

The swell of St. Jim's did not quite understand Reilly's chuckle.

"If you are laughing at me, Weilly—" he began with great dignity.

"Ha, ha! Not at all."

"Weally, Weilly—"

"You see, I—I hope you weren't hurt, either," said Reilly. "By the way, how are your ghosts getting on?"

"What?"

"Have you seen any more spooks?"

D'Arcy coloured.

"Aftah thwashin' you last evenin', I should be sowwy to thwash you again this mornin'," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity; "but if you are impertinent, Weilly, you will leave me no othah wewsource."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You diswewspectful ass—"

"Ha, ha! I can stand a lot more thrashings like that," grinned Reilly, "heaps of 'em! Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of the Fourth pushed back his cuffs.

"You wottah, come on, then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reilly laughed and backed away. The swell of St. Jim's strode towards him. The loop of the cord was over his boots by this time, and as he started forward it tightened about his ankles.

D'Arcy gave a lurch forward.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "What is that—what is—Ow!"

He rolled over and sat down with a bump.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Reilly.

D'Arcy gasped.

The ground was damp and muddy from last night's rain, and the trousers had suffered. D'Arcy looked dazed.

"Bai Jove! I caught my foot in somethin'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Hallo, what about my bags?" shouted Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I told you not to sit on the ground in them."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE RUGGER FOURTH."

Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



"I—I'm weally vewy sowwy," gasped D'Arcy, "but—but—but somethin' became entangled in my feet, I think."

"Rats!"

"I stumbled over somethin'."

"Always clumsy!" said Digby, with a shake of the head.

"Weally, Dig—"

"You've ruined my bags," said Blake indignantly. "Of course, I shall take your best Sunday ones in exchange."

"Weally, Blake—"

"A bargain's a bargain, you know."

D'Arcy stared about him helplessly. He saw the string round his ankles, and jerked it away in wonderment.

"Bai Jove! Look there."

"What's that?" asked Blake gravely.

"Bai Jove! It's a stwing!"

"Now I look at it I can see it's a string," concluded Blake. "What wonderful powers of observation Gussy has! He knew it was a string at first glance. Talk about Sherlock Holmes."

"You ass—"

"Oh, Gussy ought to be a detective!" said Digby.

"I stumbled ovah that stwing," exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly. "Some feahful wottah must have laid it wound my feet on purpose."

"Impossible."

"Sae for yourself. That is what I stumbled ovah."

D'Arcy scrambled up, red and wrathful. There was a big patch of mud on the trousers.

"Impossible!" repeated Blake. "Who could have dared to play a jape like that upon the only Adolphus? It's past belief! Bring forth the culprit, and the boiling oil, and molten lead, and—"

"You feahful ass! You must have seen who it was—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Fourth could restrain themselves no longer, and they burst into a roar of laughter.

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and glared at them.

"So it was you—you feahful boundahs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was uttably wotten—feahfully bad form—"

"Almost as bad as collarin' a chap's best clothes while he's asleep in bed of a morning," roared Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, undah the cires—"

Blake, and Herries, and Digby walked away laughing. D'Arcy turned to Reilly, who was almost in convulsions.

"Weilly, deah boy, will you oblige me by dustin' me down?" he said.

"Sure, and I will," said Reilly.

He took off his cap to use for the purpose, and twisting it in his hand, began to beat D'Arcy's trousers with it. The swell of St. Jim's gave a gasp.

"Pway not so hard, deah boy—ow—"

Bang! Bang!

"Weally, you know—"

"It's coming off," said Reilly.

Bang! Bang!

"Stop!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Chuck it! Ow! Stop, you feahful ass!"

Bang! Bang!

Arthur Augustus fairly ran.

"It's all right!" called out Reilly. "Stand still, you know, and I'll soon have all that mud off, darling."

But D'Arcy declined.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Skimpole Thinks It Probable.

"SEEN any more ghosts?" Several voices asked that question when Arthur Augustus came in to breakfast. The swell of St. Jim's turned very pink, and sat down at the breakfast-table without a word.

There was a chuckle among the Fourth-Formers, which was echoed from the Shell table. D'Arcy's adventures at the mill were not likely to be exhausted of interest for some time to come.

"Look here," said D'Arcy, as he left the dining-room with his chums after "brekker." "I wufuse to stand this."

"Yes, it's getting on one's nerves," agreed Blake. "What on earth did you go and play the giddy ox like that for, Gussy?"

"I decline to admit that I played the giddy ox. On reflection, I feel that there is somethin' goin' on at the mill that ought to be investigated."

"Ghostly hisney; of course?"

"No, ass. I don't believe in ghosts."

"In the daylight, you mean," grinned Digby.

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"Weally, Dig—"

"I wanted to speak to you chaps," exclaimed Skimpole, coming up with a big book under his arm. "This is Dr. Spoofem's great volume—"

"Pway buzz off, Skimmay."

"It deals with determinism and the social problem. It completely disposes of the current idea that determinism is mere ancient nonsense raked up and given a new name by foolish scribblers of modern times. It—"

"Buzz away."

"It deals with—"

"Pway shut up, Skimmay. We are talkin' bizney," said Arthur Augustus. "As I was sayin', you fellows, there is somethin' goin' on at the haunted mill that needs investigation. You see, why were they twyin' to fwighten me away?"

"I don't know," grinned Blake. "I only know they jolly well succeeded, whoever 'they' were."

"I wufuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I was not fwightened away. I wifired fwom the mill—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I see no cause whatevah for wibald laughtah in that circumstance. I am convinced that somethin' undahhand is goin' on. You know that I twained myself as a pwivate detective once—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I succeeded in twainin' myself and my powahs of observation vewy much. I also studied a gweat deal of detective litewature at the time. I know that it is not at all an uncommon thing for a gang of coinahs—"

"A what of which?"

"A gang of coinahs," repeated D'Arcy firmly. "I know it's not an uncommon thing for a gang of coinahs to dig in some old buildin' that's supposed to be haunted, and make mystewious noises to fwighten away people who might find them out."

"Not uncommon in detective stories," Blake assented, with a nod.

"Well, even things in novels sometimes happen in weal life, and I have heard that special weports to the newspaperahs are sometimes twue," said D'Arcy. "You nevah know. I think it is extremewy pwob. that there is a nest of coinahs at the old mill."

"You said a gang just now," said Blake, with a grave shake of the head.

"It's the same thing, deah boy."

"My dear chap, how can a nest and a gang be the same thing? A gang is a number of persons, a nest is the place where birds live. I can show you it in the dictionary, if you like."

"I mean, a nest of coinahs may be livin' there."

"You don't mean to say that coiners live in a nest like birds?" asked Blake, in astonishment.

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would be sewious. There is cithah a nest of coinahs, or a gang of footpads—"

"Or a nest of footpads, or a gang of coiners," suggested Blake.

"I wufuse to take any notice of fwivolous wemarks. I think it is our duty to wout them out."

"Good," said Blake, with a yawn. "We'll go and rout them out this afternoon. It's a half-holiday, and looks like being fine for once."

"Good," said Herries. "We'll take Towser, if you like, and if there's anything there, he'll rout it out fast enough."

"He would give the alarm."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Herries warmly. "You know jolly well what sort of a dog Towser is, D'Arcy."

"I know he is a howwid beast, and has no wespsect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Look here—"

"Oh, blow Towser!" said Blake. "We'll go and dig up the coiners. It will be a nice walk, anyway."

"I will come with you," said Skimpole.

"Oh, will you?"

"Certainly, I shall be very pleased to do so. I will bring Dr. Spoofem's new book, and read some chapters of it on the way. I also have trained my intellect as an amateur detective, and I think D'Arcy is probably right. There is a gweat deal of reason in his view of the matter."

"Yaas, wathah! Skimmay isn't such a silly ass, aftah all, you know."

"You see," pursued Skimpole, "taking the old mill on the one hand—"

"You couldn't do it," said Blake. "Why, even the Strong Man at Tomsonio's Cires couldn't do a thing like that."

"I was not speaking literally, Blake," said Skimpole, who never saw a joke under any circumstances whatever. "What I mean is, take the old mill, on the one hand, and the fact, on the other hand, that— Pray do not walk away while I am speaking, Blake. What I mean to point out is, that the probable is scarcely ever true, and that it is the

unexpected that always happens. The chances are immensely against the old mill being the haunt of coiners, and, therefore, I should say that the old mill is extremely likely to be the haunt of coiners. This is reasoning on the true Sherlock Holmes's system."

"Bai Jove!"

"It is a fact, too, that the old mill can be seen from the school tower with a telescope," said Skimpole. "I think it would be an excellent idea to take a survey from the tower by means of a telescope. I will borrow Herr Schneider's telescope, which is the largest one at St. Jim's. Fortunately, it is quite easy to get it in his room."

"It won't be fortunate for you if Herr Schneider finds you borrowing it," grinned Digby.

"I shall not mention the matter to him. Herr Schneider has old-fashioned ideas about property," said Skimpole. "Of course, under Socialism, all telescopes will be nationalised. I consider—"

The bell ringing for classes cut short Skimpole's considerations. The juniors went into their various class-rooms. During the morning lessons, an idea occurred to Blake, which made him break out into a quiet chuckle, and caused Mr. Latham to glance towards him.

Blake coloured, and dropped his eyes upon his book.

When the Fourth Form turned out after lessons, Herries and Digby grasped their chum by the arms.

"What's the joke?" they demanded together.

Blake chuckled, freely this time.

"A wheeze, my sons, a wheeze," he said. "Look for Skimmy when he gets out, and don't let him come to Schneider's study for a few minutes. I'm going to see the telescope before he borrows it."

"What on earth for?"

"To rub some black over the lens."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake dashed off. Skimpole came out of the Shell Form-room with the Terrible Three. He was talking earnestly to them.

"You can help me in the matter, if you like," he remarked.

"I should like someone to carry the telescope up to the tower for me, and, besides, if I discover a gang of coiners, I shall need aid to lay them by the heels. I am convinced that there is something of the sort going on at the old mill. I have not studied Sherlock Holmes's methods for nothing. It must be so."

"Why?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Because it is so improbable."

"Eh?"

Skimpole smiled serenely.

"Naturally, your undeveloped brain and defective intellect cannot grasp that," he said pleasantly. "It is an argument to appeal only to a master mind, such as my own. The thing is true because it is improbable."

"Then if it were impossible it would be a dead cert?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I have not thought that out, Lowther, but perhaps—ahem—never mind that point now. It has nothing to do with the matter. If you will go and get the telescope for me—"

"No fear."

"You can go if you like, Manners."

"I don't like," said Manners.

"Oh, very well, only if Herr Schneider finds me in his study, he may get angry, and that would interfere with me materially. Of course, a philosophic mind enables one to bear any amount of pain, but it is disturbing to the calmness necessary for reflection. And Herr Schneider is so hasty. However, I will go."

Skimpole went. He found Digby and Herries in the path.

"Hold on a minute, Skimmy," said Digby affably.

"I'm rather pressed for time, Digby."

"Will you explain to us about Determinism?"

That was a bait Skimpole could not possibly resist. He paused at once. Digby glanced down the passage. He meant to endure Determinism manfully until Blake reappeared after his visit to the German master's study. The Terrible Three, somewhat puzzled—for they could not imagine anybody willingly listening to Determinism—stopped and looked on. Skimpole blinked at the juniors very benevolently through his spectacles.

"Upon which point do you specially desire to be enlightened?" he asked.

"Well," said Digby, rather hazily, "suppose you—suppose you explain the—difference between—between Determinism and mathematics."

Skimpole looked perplexed, as well he might.

"The two subjects bear no relation to one another, Digby," he explained. "You see—"

"Well, then, the difference between Socialism and conchology?" said Herries.

"Really, Herries—"

"Yes, I think I should like that," assented Digby.

"But the subjects bear no relation."

"Hang it all," exclaimed Monty Lowther, joining in, "you don't mean to say that Socialism and conchology are alike?"

"Of course not, Lowther. I—"

"Then why can't you explain the difference?"

"You see—"

Blake came along the passage, and bestowed a wink upon his chums. Digby's interest in Determinism ceased as suddenly as it had arisen.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed. "You've made it quite clear, Skimmy. You can buzz."

"But I haven't said a word."

"Better go and get the telescope while you've got a chance," said Blake. "I saw old Schneider in the upper passage."

"Dear me! Perhaps I had better."

And Skimpole hurried off. The chums of the Fourth burst into a roar.

"What's the joke?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Oh, it's too good!" grinned Blake. "Come into the study and watch for Skimmy. He's going to the old tower with Schneider's telescope to survey the haunted mill."

"Yes, he told us so," said Tom Merry, as he went upstairs with Blake; "but what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know it's funny—Skimpole's always funny—but why—"

"Why this thussness?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Only I've blacked the lens at the end, and Skimpole won't be able to see anything but darkness!" grinned Blake.

The Terrible Three went off into a roar.

"He won't know what's the matter," Blake chuckled. "He's so scientific that he never thinks of looking at anything directly under his nose. Nothing short of a tremendous theory will satisfy him. I want to hear him explain why he can't see the mill through the telescope."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope Schneider won't catch him," said Blake feelingly.

"It would spoil one of the best jokes of the term."

The juniors crammed the study window to watch for the scientific youth to pass. As Blake said, Skimpole had an airy contempt for any detail under his nose, and was never satisfied with anything less than a soaring scientific theory to account for the simplest happening. That, Skimpole thought, proved that he was going to be a very famous and prominent scientific man when he grew up. Perhaps he was right.

The juniors watched eagerly.

They were not disappointed. Herr Schneider had not caught the borrower in his study. A few minutes later, Skimpole passed the window with a huge telescope under his arm.

## CHAPTER 15.

### A Great Scientific Discovery.

"HA, ha, ha!"

The juniors sent a roar of laughter after the unconscious Skimpole.

That scientific youth did not hear it—or if he heard it, like the famous gladiator, he heeded not.

He marched on his way with the big telescope.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove," Arthur Augustus remarked, "I shall be weally intewested to heah what feahful discovewies Skimpole makes."

The juniors strolled down into the quadrangle to look for Skimpole. But he did not appear, and, getting impatient, they entered the old tower, and ascended to the top of the spiral stair to look for him.

They found him with the telescope lodged upon a broken casement, and his eye to the end of it, and a decidedly puzzled expression upon his face.

He did not look round as they came up.

Tom Merry gave him a tap on the shoulder. Skimpole started, and his nose knocked against the rim of the telescope, and he uttered an exclamation.

"Ow!"

"Sorry!" grinned Tom Merry. "We were getting anxious. Have you made any discoveries yet?"

"Dear me!"

"Have you seen the coiners at work?"

"Or the giddy burglars burgling?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have made a most astounding discovery," said Skimpole, blinking at them through his spectacles—"a discovery which will, I think, cause some sensation in the scientific world."



"Eh?"  
 "An amazing discovery."  
 "My hat!"  
 "Bai Jove!"  
 Skimpole waved his hand towards the sky.  
 "Look!" he exclaimed.  
 The juniors looked. The sky was very clear and bright and sunny, and it had all the promise of being a very pleasant afternoon.  
 "Well?" said Blake. "We've looked."  
 "What do you see?"  
 "See! The sky," said Blake, in astonishment. "Some clouds, some fellows, and a silly ass."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Really, Blake, that is not what I meant. I mean, you observe that the sky is bright, and the sun is shining, do you not?"  
 "Yes," said Blake sarcastically. "And all was calm and bright."  
 "Well," said Skimpole, "as soon as you look through this telescope all that vanishes."  
 "What?"  
 "It is a fact. In the distance there is no daylight and no sunshine. It is amazing. Such a phenomenon has never, I believe, been known to occur before. In the distance, over the wood, it is impossible to make out a single object."  
 "Amazin'!"  
 "It is truly amazing. I have turned the telescope in various directions, but the result is the same. It is amazing—astounding. This occurrence will take its place in the list of the most astounding of natural phenomena. I have been trying to think out the cause."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "It is not a laughing matter, my dear schoolfellows. I assure you that this discovery will make the name of Herbert Skimpole ring through the land. My idea is that certain exhalations from the wood have had this amazing result of blotting out the landscape, and shutting it off from telescopic observation."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "I cannot see any reason for laughter. I shall write a long account of this amazing occurrence, and send it to the editor of 'Simple Science.' I shall also send an account to Professor Mustycrust, the famous meteorologist. I—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Really, you know—"  
 "Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry, almost exploding.  
 "Get on with the letters, Skimmy. We shall like to see them in print."  
 "If you like, Merry, I will write a long account also for the 'Weekly,' and you can leave out your usual editorial articles to make room for it."  
 "Thanks, awfully!"  
 "Not at all. I should be very pleased."  
 "But I shouldn't," grinned Tom Merry. "Keep it all for Professor Mustycrust."  
 And the juniors departed, laughing. Skimpole could not understand their merriment. He resumed his scientific observations.  
 It was half an hour later that Skimpole, filled with suppressed excitement, and without a doubt of the reality of his wonderful discovery, descended from the tower with the telescope under his arm. In the interest of the amazing discovery, he had forgotten all about the haunted mill, and his original object in ascending the tower with the German master's telescope.  
 He made his way to the German master's study to return the instrument to its place.  
 The door was half open, and the scientific genius of the Shell blinked in without seeing that Herr Schneider was there.  
 He entered, and laid the telescope on the table.  
 "Mein Gott!"  
 Skimpole started. There was Herr Schneider standing on the hearthrug and regarding him.  
 The genius of the Shell blinked at him.  
 "H'm! Excuse me, sir."  
 "It is tat you haf taken mein telescope, after!" exclaimed Herr Schneider.  
 "I borrowed it, sir."  
 "Mitout asking for te permission, ain't it?"  
 "You see, sir—"  
 "You vas a young rascal, Skimpole."  
 "Under Socialism, sir, all telescopes will be nationalised, and—"  
 "Hold your foolish tongue, mit you, Skimpole? I tink tat perhaps you have damaged tat telescope, ain't it?"  
 The Herr picked up the telescope, drew it out, and tested it at the window. He looked very puzzled.  
 "Mein Gott! I can see nottings."  
 "I've made a most interesting discovery, sir," said Skimpole. "Owing, I believe, to exhalations from the woods—"  
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"You have damaged tat telescope."  
 "Not at all, sir. I—"  
 "Mein Gott! It is inked ofer te glass!"  
 Skimpole jumped.  
 "What, sir!"  
 "Te glass is blacked ofer," said Herr Schneider, examining the telescope, which the truly scientific Skimpole had never thought of doing. "Mein Gott!"  
 "Oh!"  
 "No vunder tat I see nottings. Skimpole, you will take fifty lines in German, and if you borrows tat telescope again I canes you."  
 "But, sir—"  
 "You may go."  
 And Skimpole went.  
 He met Tom Merry in the quad., with his friends, just going over to the New House to call for Figgins & Co. Ho gave them a reproachful look.  
 "Made any more amazing discoveries?" asked Blake.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Really, you fellows—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.  
 "It was a trick," said Skimpole. "Herr Schneider discovered it."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Are you going to write to Professor Mustycrust about it?" asked Monty Lowther; and the juniors gave a fresh yell.  
 Skimpole blinked at them.  
 "Certainly not! I shall take my volume of Dr. Spooferm's wonderful work, and spend the afternoon in the study of social problems," he said.  
 "Hope you'll enjoy it," said Blake, with a shudder.  
 "Good-bye!"  
 And the laughing juniors went on to the New House.

CHAPTER 16.

An Unexpected Capture.

F IGGINS & CO. were perfectly willing to join in the expedition to the old mill. There was no possibility of footer that afternoon, the ground being in too bad a state, and the expedition would nicely fill up the time, Figgins said.  
 Figgins inquired with apparent solicitude whether Gussy had seen any more ghosts—a question that very nearly led to war.  
 D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the New House leader disdainfully.  
 "I wegard that remark as wotten," he said. "Pway let the subject dwop, deah boy. I should be sowwy te intewwupt the harmony of the aftahnoon by administahin' a feahful thwashin' to any gentleman pwesent, but—"  
 "This way!" said Blake.  
 "You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."  
 "I know that, Gussy. Come on!"  
 "I decline to be intewwupted. I was pointin' out to Figgins—"  
 "Rats!"  
 "If you say wats to me, Blake—"  
 "Well, I do, and many of 'em."  
 "Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry. "Don't you Fourth Form kids begin to quarrel, you know."  
 "Fourth Form what?"  
 "Kids. Ahem, I mean cads," said Tom Merry gracefully.  
 "Come on!"  
 And they came on.  
 "Upon the whole," Arthur Augustus remarked, in a thoughtful way, as they went out of the gates—"upon the whole, I will not thwash Figgins this aftahnoon."  
 "Thanks!" said Figgins.  
 "It bein' undahstood, howevah, that he is only let off for the sake of the general harmony," said D'Arcy.  
 "I am sure Figgins feels very much relieved," said Tom Merry. "There is no time for him to go down on his knees now, but—"  
 "Pway don't wot, deah boy. I am in a vevy wuffed state of tempah. These twousahs do not fit me."  
 "Go hon!"  
 "And the waistcoat is wathah tight."  
 "Horrid!"  
 "I believe you are wottin', you wottah, but as a mattah of fact it is vevy howwid. It is uncomfy. My clothes have not turned up yet."  
 "Clothes!" said Kerr.  
 "Yaas, wathah! My clothes were abstwacted last night by some feahful wottah, and I have not found them. I am weavin' bowwowed clothes."  
 "Beastly!" said Figgins. "Have you any idea who collared the duds?"  
 D'Arcy looked at him through his eyeglass.  
 "Yaas, wathah!"

"Blake, I suppose?" said Figgins innocently.  
 "Certainly not."  
 "Dear me! Whom could it have been?"  
 "I wathah think you know, Figgay."  
 "H'm! Perhaps you walked in your sleep and did it yourself. You did walk in your sleep once, you know."  
 "Pway don't be an ass. All the boxes and things were taken away, and it happened befoah I went to bed."  
 Figgins shook his head.  
 "Then it's a giddy mystery."  
 "Weally, Figgins—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Grammar cads!"  
 The subject of the missing clothes was dropped at once. Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy had just appeared from an adjoining lane. They halted at the sight of the St. Jim's juniors.  
 Blake's eye glimmered.  
 "Come on," he said. "They bumped us last night, and one good turn deserves another."  
 "Yaas, wathah!"  
 The St. Jim's juniors advanced.  
 The Grammarians promptly retreated. There were ten of the Saints, and Gordon Gay & Co. had no wish to tackle such odds.

"Stop!" shouted Blake.  
 Gay laughed.  
 "Some other afternoon," he called back.  
 "Buck up, deah boys!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Wun like anythin'!"  
 "Hold on!"  
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"  
 "Hold on, I say!" repeated Tom Merry. "We came out here to explore the old mill, not for a row with the Grammarians. Let 'em go."  
 "But weally—"

Gordon Gay & Co. were already going at a good speed. But they did not go far. They stopped in a clump of trees to watch. Gordon Gay winked knowingly at his comrades.

"Why don't they follow us?" he said.  
 Frank Monk shook his head.  
 "Blessed if I know," he said.  
 "Well, I know," said Gay impressively.  
 "What is it?"  
 "There's something on—and we're jolly well on, too!" said Gordon Gay. "There's no footer this afternoon, and we may be able to jape them as we did Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Grammar youths echoed:  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Tom Merry & Co., having lost sight of the Grammarians, moved on towards the mill. Tom Merry's brow was very thoughtful.

He glanced round and up and down many times, and at last Arthur Augustus took him to task.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you seem to be in quite a fluttah," he remarked. "What is the mattah with you?"  
 "I'm thinking of the Grammar cads."  
 "But they're gone."  
 "I'm not so sure about that."

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass a little more tightly into his eye and surveyed the landscape through it. Then he shook his head, and the monocle dropped out.

"I cannot see them, Tom Mewwy."  
 "Did you expect them to be as conspicuous as the wind-mill?" said Tom Merry sarcastically. "They've trained as Boy Scouts as well as ourselves, and they're quite up to the game. I think very likely they're trailing us to see what we're up to."

"Weally—"  
 "Listen!"  
 There was a rustle in the thickets beside the path the juniors were following. They stopped abruptly, exchanging glances.  
 "Grammar cads!" whispered Figgins.

Tom Merry nodded.  
 "What-ho! Collar them! We'll give them a jolly good bumping, and they won't do any more tracking this afternoon."

"Good egg!"  
 And the juniors rushed into the thickets, and laid violent hands upon a fellow who was walking there, reading a large book as he walked, and dragged him out. Then there was a yell of astonishment:  
 "Skimpole!"

## CHAPTER 17.

### Skimpole Keeps Watch.

It was Herbert Skimpole. The juniors had collared him too quickly to see who it was before they dragged him out.

Skimpole sat up in the grass, his spectacles sliding down his nose and his book beside him, in great amazement.

"Dear me!" he spluttered.

"Skimpole!"  
 "The ass!"  
 "Really, you have startled me!" exclaimed Skimpole, rubbing his bumpy forehead. "You have interrupted me, too, in the midst of a very interesting chapter on the number of infant deaths in London owing to want of proper food supplies for poor school children. I will read it out to you, if you like."

"That you jolly well won't!"  
 Skimpole adjusted his spectacles.  
 "Yes, I will, with pleasure. I think it will do you good, while you are rolling on the lap of luxury, to know that there are schoolboys who go to school without breakfast, and that there are actually people who object to providing meals for them out of the rates. Ah, here is the place! The number of children who are not fed before going to school is approximately—'Yow!'"

Blake kicked the book out of Skimpole's hands.  
 The amateur social reformer blinked at him.  
 "Really, Blake, I cannot help regarding that action as almost rude. The question of the starving school children of London—"

"Drop it!" roared Tom Merry. "Do you think we want things of that sort on a half-holiday?"

"But it is a very serious matter, and—"  
 "Chuck it!"  
 "If you reflect upon it now, you will not grow up into the kind of men who would refuse meals to poor children," explained Skimpole.

"Well, we sha'n't grow up into that kind of men, anyway, I hope," said Figgins. "But we don't want cheerful subjects like that on a holiday. Shut that book."

"Oh, very well, but—"  
 "What do you mean by tramping about and pretending to be a Grammarian?" demanded Blake indignantly.

"Yaas, wathah! What do you mean by it, Skimmay?"  
 Skimpole looked bewildered.

"But I did not—"  
 "We took you for one, you ass!"  
 "Oh, I see! But that was not my fault. I was not—"  
 "Do you mean to say it was our fault?" demanded Kangaroo.

"Er—no. But really—"  
 "Well, bury that rotten book," said Tom Merry. "Come on, you chaps, and let's get to the mill. We're wasting time."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 Skimpole put the book under his arm.

"You are going to the old mill now?" he asked. "I will come with you. I have a great desire to elucidate the mystery of the mill, you know. I am convinced that it is the den of a gang of coiners."

"More likely a nest of coiners," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"Really, Blake, it is quite the same thing. I will explain to you—"

"No, you won't! Shut up!"  
 And Skimpole blinked and shook his head, and joined the party. Tom Merry kept a keen eye open as he came out of the wood into the field towards the mill. For a moment he thought he caught a glimpse of a Grammarian mortar-board in the distance, but he was not sure.

"I rather think those bounders are watching us," he said. "It would be no joke to get into the mill, and have a horde of Grammarians follow us there and corner us. That would be just one of Gordon Gay's little jokes."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 "We'll keep watch for 'em, and flag-wag if they show up," said Figgins, who was one of the keenest of the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's. "Let's make the flags up now, and we can signal from a distance."

"Good egg!"  
 "You know how to signal, Skimmy, of course?"  
 Skimpole nodded.

"Certainly, Blake. I have practised—and, indeed, I consider myself that I ought to be scout-master. However—"

"However, cheese it!"  
 "Really, Blake—"

"There are some straight sticks here that will do for the flags," said Tom Merry. "Now, then, we'll go yonder on the hill, and Skimpole can stay here and watch for the bounders. If they show up, he can signal to us on the hill, and we can pass it on to you chaps at the mill."

"Good enough."  
 "You understand, Skimmy?"  
 "Perfectly."

"Don't go to sleep, you know."  
 "Really, Merry—"

"We'll light a camp-fire on the hill. That will draw the Grammar cads off the scent, and keep them away from the mill," Tom Merry remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 The Terrible Three took up their post on the high ascent.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUGGER FOURTH." Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



Blake and the rest went on to the mill, leaving Skimpole to keep watch on the grassy bank by the wood.

Tom Merry swept the countryside with his eye from the top of the acclivity.

He could see nothing of the Grammarians.

But it would be quite possible for them to creep out of the wood, and keep under cover on the track of Blake & Co., if they succeeded in passing Skimpole.

Lowther built a camp-fire and lighted it, and the smoke rose in a thick cloud—a sufficient signal to the Grammarians if they were near.

Tom Merry stood with the flags in his hand, ready to signal to the mill if the enemy appeared.

Blake & Co. were at the mill now.

Tom Merry waited.

He began to think that his suspicions had been ill-founded, and that Frank Monk and his comrades were really gone.

"They've given it up!" yawned Manners, who was reclining by the fire, for the wind was very sharp on the hill. "Better give it up too."

"Wait a bit."

"They'll be exploring the mill and unearthing all the giddy ghosts without us."

"They won't find anything," said Monty Lowther. "It was somebody playing a trick on Gussy last night, of course, but he's not there now."

"Quite so."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows.

"I told Skimpole to signal in ten minutes, any way, whether they showed up or not," he exclaimed.

"And he hasn't?"

"No."

"Then they haven't passed, and—"

"And Skimmy's forgotten all about it," grinned Lowther.

Tom Merry frowned.

"The ass! I wonder what he's doing?"

Tom Merry would have frowned still more if he could have seen Herbert Skimpole at that moment.

The genius of the Shell had, as Lowther suggested, forgotten the rather important fact that he was on the watch, or supposed to be on the watch. He had laid down the flags, and was sitting with his book open, deeply engrossed in social problems.

When Skimpole was on his favourite subject he was blind and deaf to everything else.

Four figures came stealing out of the wood, and Skimpole never observed them. They grinned at one another, and stole quietly past, and disappeared into the belt of thickets winding round the base of the hill towards the haunted mill.

If Skimpole had looked up from his book he would not have seen them now.

But he did not look up.

He did not take his eyes from the page till about ten minutes later, when a hand grasped him by the shoulder and shook him, and an excited voice bawled in his ear.

"You frabjous ass!"

Skimpole jumped, and his spectacles slid down his nose.

"Oh! Dear me! Y-y-you startled me, Merry!"

Tom Merry glared at him wrathfully.

"You fearful ass!"

"Really, Merry—"

"Is this how you keep watch?"

"Ke-e-keep watch?" stammered Skimpole.

"Yes, ass!"

"I—I—I think I must have forgotten," said Skimpole. "I'm sorry! But I was deeply interested in a very important question whether the human race originated in a speck of seaweed floating in a primeval sea—"

"You chump!"

"Or in a fragment of rotten fruit in the sun, on the banks of some river, probably the Nile or Euphrates—"

"Have you seen the Grammarians?" roared Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"The Grammar cads! Have they been this way?"

"I think not. I have not seen them. But never mind these trivial matters, Merry. Have you ever reflected upon that most important question whether the human race originated in a speck—"

Skimpole got no further.

Tom Merry seized his huge volume and smote him with it—smote him forcibly.

"Ow!" roared Skimpole. "Yah! Ow! Oh! Really, Merry—" And he ran for his life.

Tom Merry hurled the valuable volume of Dr. Spoofer after him, and then returned to his comrades, somewhat relieved in his feelings.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

## CHAPTER 18.

### No Coiners.

TOM MERRY and his chums reached the mill. Skimpole had taken a hurried departure, deciding, upon the whole, that he would not remain. Skimpole had not found his book upon Determinism heavy before, but it had felt decidedly heavy when laid energetically across his shoulders. Skimpole carried his book off, determined to leave the gang—or nest—of coiners to themselves, and devote himself to the study of social problems.

Meanwhile, the Terrible Three reached the mill, and found Blake & Co. waiting for them.

"Well?" said Blake.

"Well?" said Tom Merry.

"Seen the Grammarians?"

"No."

"Why didn't you signal?"

"Because Skimmy didn't."

"And why didn't Skimmy?" demanded Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I found him reading his rotten book. He had forgotten all about the flag-wagging. But it's all right—I haven't seen hide or hair of the Grammar cads."

"They may be hanging about all the same."

"Well, we'll keep our eyes open," said Figgins. "We don't want to spend the whole day watching for them. We haven't been into the mill yet—waiting here for blessed signals that didn't come."

"Well, it was Skimmy's fault. Let's get in," said Tom Merry.

"Pway hold on a moment, deah boys."

"Rats! Come on!"

"It may be dangewous," said D'Arcy. "The coinahs may have wevovahs, you know, and I believe coinahs, as a wule, are vewy despewate chawactahs. You had bettah let me go in first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Gussy's right," said Monty Lowther. "Let him go in first, and his face will paralyse them, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

The juniors crowded into the deserted mill.

In the daytime shafts of sunlight fell into the old, musty place, and lighted up the dust and dirt and cobwebs.

There was certainly no trace—in the lower apartments, at least—of a den of coiners. No one but Gussy, as a matter of fact, expected to find anything of the sort. The general theory was that someone had played ghost the previous evening to scare the swell of St. Jim's—in which he had certainly succeeded.

"It's all serene," said Figgins. "No coiners here."

"No escaped convicts or fugitives from justice," said Blake, in a disappointed tone. "It's really too bad of Gussy to feed us up with false hopes like this."

"Weally, Blake—"

"There may be a murderer or two in the top room," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let's go and see."

The juniors ascended the wooden stair.

But the room above, though dustier and cobwebbier, so to speak, was just as innocent of lurking malefactors of any kind.

D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and looked about him, eager for clues. But the keenest amateur detective could not have discovered any clues there. There were footprints in the dust, certainly, but that did not prove anything. Although the mill was deserted, it was sometimes visited, and there was a good deal of lumber there—old boxes and sacks and ropes, and so on. Even D'Arcy had to admit that, if the mill was the den of a gang of coiners, those gentlemen must have gone out to pay an afternoon call elsewhere.

"Of course, they may be out," he remarked diffidently.

"Gone out cycling," suggested Kangaroo, "or playing a footer match, perhaps—Coiners v. Burglars, or something of that sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

"We shall have to give up the coiners," said Kerr. "I knew all along, of course, that it was only a joke on Gussy, and I suppose you did. But—"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"What's Fatty thinking of?" demanded Blake, noticing a deep and thoughtful wrinkle upon the brow of the Falstaff of the New House. "Have you got a theory, Fatty?"

Fatty started out of a reverie.

"Eh?" he murmured. "What?"

"Have you thought it out?"

"Yes," said Fatty Wynn.

"And you've come to a clear idea on the subject, eh?"

THE NEXT STORY-PAPER TO BUY THIS WEEK IS THE "MARVEL."

## CHAPTER 19.

## The Mystery is Cleared Up.

"Yes."  
 "Then I'd like to hear it," exclaimed Tom Merry. "What do you think, Fatty?"

"I think it would be better to have it in the study."

"What?"

"In the study."

"Eh?"

"What on earth are you babbling about, Fatty?" asked Figgins, giving his plump chum a slap on the shoulder.

"Wake up!"  
 "I was talking about tea," said Fatty Wynn, looking surprised. "Blake asked me if I had thought the matter out, didn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"I don't see the joke. I was thinking the matter out, and I think, upon the whole, it would be better to have tea in the study. I know we're short of funds, but we can borrow some butter of Pratt and some cake of French, and upon the whole we'll have it in the study. But I'll tell you what, Figgys—we'll have tea in Hall first, to lay a solid foundation, as grub is short. Nothing like laying a solid foundation, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see where the laugh comes in. By the way, I'm getting hungry now. I do get hungry this time of the year, somehow. I suppose you haven't any milk chocolate about you, Figgys?"

Figgins grinned, and passed his chum a bar of milk chocolate. He often carried little supplies like that for Fatty.

"About the coiners, burglars, convicts, and murderers—I suppose we shall have to give them up," said Tom Merry. "And as for the practical joker who played ghost last evening, I don't see how we're to spot him. I——"

"Hallo!"

"What is it?"

"Look here!" said Kangaroo.

The Cornstalk was looking out of the window. The juniors crowded there with him, but only a few of them could find room to look out. But they saw the four figures that had come into view.

"Grammar cads!"

"Phew!"

"They're here, then!"

"Gay, Monk, Lane and Carboy," said Tom Merry. "Some of you cut down and guard the door. If they get in and pulled the ladder away——"

"My hat!"

"Don't give the alarm, though," said Tom Merry. "Collar them if they come in, that's all. I've got a wheeze."

"Good!"

Three or four of the juniors rushed down the wooden stair, and Tom Merry turned to the little window again, with a glimmer of fun in his eyes.

Gordon Gay and Frank Monk had gone slowly round the mill. They could see nothing of the St. Jim's juniors, but they believed they were there. They meant to scout very carefully before they ventured into the building. Carboy and Lane stood where Kangaroo had first sighted them, looking towards the mill, and gradually approaching it. They were now almost directly under the window.

Tom Merry drew back quickly to escape observation.

"The sacks!" he said.

"Sacks?"

"Give me the sack, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Buck up, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy. As for givin' you the sack, I will do that willingly, and if the chaps care to elect me as leadah in your place I will do my vevy best to——"

"You utter ass——"

"Weally, you know——"

"The sacks—four sacks, you chump!"

"Oh, I see!"

"Time you did! Buck up!"

The sacks were handed to Tom Merry at the window.

He opened one of them out, and leaned from the window with it in his hand. Figgins grinned, and taking a sheet of paper scrawled on it in big letters, and attached it to a string. The two Grammarians below did not look up. They were waiting for their leader to return, and watching the door of the mill.

"Go it!" murmured Blake.

"Quiet!"

"Go it, before they look up."

And Tom Merry grinned, and "went it."

THE Grammarians were standing close together, chatting, while they waited for Gordon Gay to reappear. They had not the slightest uneasiness as to danger from above, and did not look up.

Suddenly there was a whiz in the air.

"Hallo!"

"What's that?"

"Ow!"

Lane staggered back. The sack had fallen fairly upon his head, and it enveloped him down to the knees.

The daylight was suddenly shut out, and for the moment Lane did not realise what had happened as he struggled and spluttered in the sack.

"My hat!" gasped Carboy.

He made a backward movement, but a second sack was swooping down, and it caught him fairly over the head.

The next moment he was rolling on the ground, entangled in the sack.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Groo!"

"Yaroo!"

Such were the mysterious noises proceeding from the interiors of the dusty and floury sacks, that greeted the ears of Monk and Gay, as they came running round the mill. From the window swung the string, with Figgins's message floating on it:

"Sold again!"

Tom Merry gave a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Sold again, my sons! Ha, ha, ha!"

And from the door of the mill, where Manners and Lowther were looking out, came another burst of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Frank Monk. "What the—how the—— Ha, ha, ha!"

He laughed, too—he couldn't help it. Carboy extracted a red and angry face, and a very dusty and floury head from his sack, and glared at Monk and Gordon Gay.

"Groo-hoo! You chumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm nearly suffocated! Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Carboy dragged the sack off. Lane was still struggling with his, and Gordon Gay went to his assistance, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks.

There was a sudden rush of juniors from the doorway of the mill. Tom Merry & Co. surrounded the Grammarians just as Lane succeeded in extracting himself from the dusty sack.

The juniors yelled with laughter.

"Pax!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "You've done us this time, and 'uff's as good as a feast. What the dickens are you doing here? Is it a feed?"

"A feed! No!"

"Then what's the little game?" asked Gordon Gay.

"We've been tracking you down because we thought there was something on. I thought you had come to the mill, but I couldn't see you. What——"

"We've been looking for coiners," explained Tom Merry.

"For what?"

"Coiners."

"You see, Gussy had a fancy that there was a nest of coiners in the mill," explained Blake. "So we came to rout them out. Somebody played ghost when he was here yesterday, and—and—and—— My only hat! I jolly well know who it was."

The Grammarians fairly shrieked.

"Coiners!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Gay——"

"I know who it was, by Jove!"

"Weally, Blake, if you know who it was, I twust you will acquaint me, so that I can give him a feahful thwashin," said D'Arcy in his most stately way.

"We met these bounders as we came to the mill in the rain," said Blake. "Of course, they had been taking shelter there."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians.

"And then, when Gussy came in, they japed him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's face was a study.

Gordon Gay leaned against the mill and laughed till the tears streamed down his face.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "And he thought it was coiners! Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, and surveyed Gordon Gay through it.

"Gay, I wegard you as a woffen wottah! Of course, it did not occur to me that there might be Gwammah cads in the mill. I nevah thought of that."

(Continued on page 25.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 139.

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE RUGGER FOURTH." Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



Splendid New Nature-Story Feature.

**THE GUNNING ONE.**

By F. ST. MARS.

**D**OWN the hill through the white moonlight, treading softly over the snow, came the old dog fox. He was a red rascal, cunning as a cartload of monkeys, lean, keen, alert, sharp-snouted, clean-limbed, big-brushed, prick-eared.

He was hungry. All the wild folk were hungry. Snow had covered the land for days. There appeared to be more to come, and at such times all the wild folk are hungry. Many were starving. Each one knew that he carried his life in his paws. Everything was either a foe to eat or prey to be eaten.

The fox moved even more warily than usual, but he moved straight. He moved as one who knows exactly where he is going, and is in a hurry to get there.

Very like a dog he was as he trotted along, his tongue lolling out, his sharp teeth gleaming, his eyes twinkling and sharp.

It was as silent as it only can be in the country in snow time. Not a branch stirred. Even on the top of the down, as he breasted it, there was no wind.

Presently he came to a hollow, a basin-like hollow, at the bottom of which several fowlhouses were dotted about in a rough circle, and there was a cart-shed, and there were cornstacks. There was, however, no human habitation nearer than a quarter of a mile.

The fox went down and investigated the fowlhouses. He had come for that purpose. He was very hungry, you remember. They were all of the same pattern—all with a small entrance for the fowls about four feet from the ground, and the entrance was open. From this a plank jutted straight out, so that the fowls could fly up on to it and walk in. Half the plank was outside the entrance, the other half inside. The fowls could not, of course, have flown up and in at the small entrance without the aid of the plank to alight on.

The fox carefully measured his distance, and sprang up on to the plank of one house. If he thought it was unlike the farmers to so accommodatingly leave fowlhouses open in this fashion he did not think so long. He landed on the plank all right, and it promptly tipped up and deposited him sprawling on the ground. This was a decided jar. It appeared that the plank was so exactly balanced that, although it would take the weight of a fowl on the end of it, it would not carry a fox.

Then the fox sat down and considered, with his head on one side. He was ravenous. He must have a meal before morning. On principle, he disliked meddling with men's domestic beasts, knowing the risk, but he guessed it would have to be fowl or nothing. However, he would try the downs first, anyway.

As he trotted off over the bleak hill an owl came and sat on one of the cornstacks and screeched at him, and a stoat passed in its hunt for rats, which couldn't be found, to swear at him in a nasty, chattering gibber. He took no notice, however, knowing he could catch neither.

Presently he started a hare. The little breeze there may have been must have been blowing from him to the quarry and given it warning, and he cursed himself for being such a fool as to hunt down-wind.

Like a grey shadow the hare flickered away over the rolling whiteness, and like a long, red shadow the fox leapt into his stride and followed.

The hare tucked up her long hindlegs and vanished over the hill like a streak, and the fox settled down, his nose on her trail, at his long, easy lope, which was something like the never-tiring lope of a wolf.

Half a mile he followed. Up and down, down and up, over the white hills he tracked that hare. For four hours he tracked her—tracked her round almost to the place from where she had started. Suddenly he stopped and looked upwards. On the crest of the hill in front of him, clear cut against the moon, a man and a big, raking greyhound were walking, and the man was carrying a hare.

Then the fox turned round and went away. He did not need to be told that it was his hare. The greyhound was enough guarantee for that.

Just before dawn the fox stole down into the depression among the downs where stood the fowlhouses, the cart-shed, the three cornstacks, and a dew-pond. All was as still as death. The owl had gone. The stoat, also, had departed, and the only living thing to be seen was a rat feeding at a fowl-trough, who ran away.

In a clump of dead grass leaning against the lee side of a cornstack the fox ensconced himself, and became promptly a

pair of visible ears, and nothing else. He had hunted all the night and caught nothing. He was hungry when he started. Now he was famishing. The cunning light in his eyes had vanished, and there was in place of it a hard glitter.

For an hour he waited, till a faint, grey light began to creep across the hills, and cocks started crowing inside the fowlhouses. He never moved so much as a paw all that time, as he lay completely hidden.

Once he saw another fox come down, smell round the fowlhouses, and go away again. Once, too, a lean, half-starved poaching cat—which must have run wild on its own account—drifted by. It, also, tried to enter one of the fowlhouses, as our fox had done, but went away again in a hurry when the attempt failed.

Then the sun came—welcome, indeed!—and with the sun the fowls.

The fox lay close pressed to the ground till about thirty fowls had left their houses and were gathering round the cornstacks to find their breakfast. Then, like a red streak, he darted upon them.

There was no time to get back to safety, even if the fowls had had the sense to. They scattered all over the place, flapping, running, and cackling, and in thirty seconds the fox had captured and killed three of them.

The first one he ate there and then. The second he started upon, but suddenly realised that it was getting on in the morning, and it would never do for a night-hunter like himself, and vermin into the bargain, to be caught at this game, or even seen at all. He therefore picked up the third fowl and trotted off to his den in a dense wood a mile away.

The next night was one of storm and wind. A blizzard swept the land. Our fox remained warmly ensconced in his den, and thanked his whiskers he had a plump, fresh fowl to dine upon.

The night after that was also one of wind, with snow flurries between. The fox did not turn out till late, and when he did it was with a keen desire to feed quick and find shelter.

When dawn came, lowering and grey, he repeated his tactics of the previous hunt. He killed two fowls, ate one, and decamped with the other. But he forgot one thing—the snow had ceased at dawn. He could be tracked. What was more, he was tracked.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when the fox, in his den in the dense briar-patch under the trees, awakened to a bright, sparkling, cold morning.

Something had woken him, something was crackling through the wood, something was whimpering here and there, something was padding to and fro through the bushes. He could, in the stillness, catch the faint jingle of bits outside the wood, and once he heard the thudding of horses' hoofs.

In one bound our fox was on his feet, shook himself, and faded out among the bushes like a shadow. He knew what was coming.

The next we see of him was a red streak, which shot from the edge of the wood, and drummed away over the hills at the speed of a motor-car—a fast one. He caught one glimpse of men in red coats curbing impatient horses; saw just for a second a big, white and tan dog or two, and heard the quick, rasping notes of a horn. Then there broke upon him the rollicking, roistering, tearing, rending, baying of hounds, and he knew he was being hunted. Then he was gone.

They hunted him hard and they hunted him long, but of all the foxes they had ever hunted this one took the cake. All the tricks known to foxes he played them. He mixed his trail with the trail of other foxes; he swam up streams; he twisted his trail about in a gravel-pit; he crossed and recrossed a river three times; he ran to and fro over a railway line, and along it, nearly succeeding in getting half the hounds run over by a train; and he ran twice through a flock of sheep.

At last, right away towards evening, he harked back for his den. There were only three hounds left on his trail and two huntsmen. If he could reach the wood he knew he would be safe, for it was getting dark, and three hounds alone could never turn him out of the wood.

At last he did reach it—or, at least, he reached the ditch at the bottom of the edge that flanked it, and the nearest hounds were a hundred yards away.

"He's done us!" said one of the hunters.

"Yes, fair! Hullo! By Jove! What's up?" answered the second.

There had come a sudden burst of baying from the three hounds and then silence, and those two wearied men, as they rode up, came upon a curious scene.

The fox was lying within a foot of the edge of the wood. The three hounds were lying about five yards from him, too done-up even to reach him. And the fox was dead. His heart had burst.

THE END.

(Another of these wonderful little stories next Thursday.)

THE NEXT STORY-PAPER TO BUY THIS WEEK IS THE "MARVEL."

"We got into the mill out of the rain," said Gordon Gay, in a weak and gasping voice. "We saw Gussy coming, and we got upstairs to jape him. He's such a splendid subject for japing. We dragged a bench about, and groaned on our topnotes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And scared him out of the mill."

"I was not scared out of the mill. I wetired twom the place."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We thought he would guess afterwards that it wasn't a real ghost," gasped Gordon Gay. "But coiners— Ha, ha, ha! Coiners! My hat! Ha, ha!"

And the Grammarians went off into a fresh paroxysm. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed them with chilling dignity, while his comrades roared.

"Weally, you Gwammah wottahs, I wegard you as wotten beasts, you know. Will you have the kindness to hold my jacket, Blake, while I give Gay a feahful thwashin'?"

"Not much."

"Will you hold my jacket, Tom Mewwy?"

"I'll hold your hands," smiled Tom Merry. "We've made it pax, my son."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that. I will thwash you upon some othah occasion, Gordon Gay."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The four Grammarians walked away—slowly, and stopping every minute or two to give vent to a fresh yell of laughter.

Arthur Augustus turned with an air of great dignity to his grinning companions. If their lives had depended upon it, they could not have helped laughing at this ridiculous explanation of the mystery of the mill.

"I think we may as well get back to St. Jim's, deah boys. It is gettin' neah tea-time," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, with great cordiality.

And the juniors walked back to the school. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held his nose very high in the air. The mystery of the mill had been cleared up, but not in a way quite to his satisfaction.

Fatty Wynn was very silent, too. He was thinking something out. As they entered the gates of the school, the fat

Fourth-Former tapped Arthur Augustus upon the arm, with a most agreeable smile upon his fat face.

"I've got a good idea, D'Arcy," he remarked.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"You haven't found your boxes yet?"

"No."

"And you're short of clothes?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's rotten, isn't it?"

"Feahfully wotten, deah boy."

"Well, do you know," said Fatty Wynn, with a mysterious look, "I really think I could help you find those boxes."

D'Arcy looked at him.

"My belief is that somebody has hidden them for a joke," went on Fatty Wynn, with an air of the most engaging frankness.

"Yaas, wathah! I think so myself," said D'Arcy meaningly.

"Pwobably some New House wottah!"

Fatty Wynn did not appear to hear that remark.

"Suppose I help you find them?" he said. "It's awful to think of you going about without any clothes—I mean, in somebody else's clothes, of course."

"I should be vewy glad of your assistance, Wynn."

"Then I'll help you after tea."

"Thank you vewy much."

"I don't know when we shall get tea, though," Fatty remarked thoughtfully. "You see, we're down on the rocks, and—"

D'Arcy grinned. He discerned Fatty Wynn's drift at last.

He paused. They were passing the school tuckshop.

"Come in, dear boy," he said.

Never had Fatty Wynn accepted an invitation with such alacrity as he showed in accepting that one. An hour later Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in possession of his missing wardrobe once more, and was easy upon that score. But it was some time before he was allowed to forget the nest of coiners and the mystery of the mill.

THE END.

(Another long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled "The Rugger Fourth," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy in advance. Price one penny.)

**You can Start Reading this Story now.**



**Read this First.**

Oswald Yorke, one-time knight of the road, joins the Navy as a midshipman under the name of John Smith. His first ship, the frigate Catapult, is wrecked under peculiar circumstances, and Oswald is one of the few survivors. His next ship, the Fireball, is despatched to the Isle of San Andrade to investigate the conduct of a certain family of planters named Wilson, who are suspected of complicity with the notorious pirate Keſter. Scouting round the house in the dark, Oswald gathers clear evidence of the planters' guilt, but is captured and hastily thrust into a dark cupboard. His men enter later, but their suspicions are disarmed by the Wilsons, and they leave again. Norah Wilson eventually saves Oswald from being killed by the Wilsons, and later on is the means of getting Oswald away from the island in a canoe. The young middy finds that his ship has sailed, and he paddles frantically in chase of it. However, he is obliged to give up, and when he looks around he finds he is alone.

(Now go on with the story.)

**Rescued!**

Oswald lay down in the bottom of the canoe, and, sheltering his head with his coat, fell asleep; and for hour after hour he lay there, turning now again from side to side, but never awakening until the sun was sinking in a red glow in the west and the cool breeze of the coming night came stealing over the sea.

All through the long night he sat in the little canoe, watching the bright points of the light made by the stars in the clear heavens.

Dawn broke at last—primrose yellow in the east—and daylight revealed to him a sight that set his heart bounding within him with delight and gratitude.

A full-rigged ship, with every inch of canvas set, was bowling along over the dancing sea like some huge seabird, dipping and bobbing to the waves, and sending the spray in glistening showers from her clean-cut bows.

For some moments he was lost in admiration of the beautiful sight, forgetting almost the joy of deliverance in

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**NEXT THURSDAY:**

**"THE RUGGER FOURTH."**

Another Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



the spectacle. Then, remembering, he sprang up in the canoe and waved his arms frantically.

But he was already seen from the deck of the ship. The vessel's onward career was stopped, she wore, and a few minutes later a boat descended rapidly from her deck, and, manned by half a dozen sailors, was pulled in the direction of the canoe and its lone occupant.

They were merchantmen and Englishmen. Oswald recognised the two facts even before the boat was within hailing distance. He could tell that by the manner of their rowing.

In about five minutes from leaving the ship the boat ran alongside the canoe, and the young officer in charge hailed Oswald.

"Hallo! What are you doing here?" he cried, with surprise at the sight of Oswald's uniform.

"Take me on board and I'll tell you," said Oswald.

In a few minutes he had scrambled into the boat.

"You are alone? No one else in the canoe with you?" asked the second mate of the merchantman.

"Quit alone, and very glad to see you, I can tell you," said Oswald heartily.

"I should rather think you were. We shall have a sharp breeze down on us in an hour or two, and then it would have been all up with that cockleshell of yours. What ship do you belong to?"

"His Majesty's frigate Fireball," said Oswald, with a touch of pride in his voice and manner.

"H'm!" muttered the second mate drily. "I hope his Majesty's frigate Fireball will get along all right without you."

Oswald laughed.

"And what vessel is that?" he asked.

"The Peter and Mary Harris, out from Bristol to Kingston."

The skipper of the Peter and Mary Harris met Oswald on deck.

"Hallo!" said he. "A midshipman! How does it come, young sir, that you are cruising around by yourself in a canoe?" he asked.

"It is a long story, sir, and—well, sir, I didn't ship any provisions when I went to sea."

"I see—I see! Come down below!" cried the old man heartily.

Oswald did ample justice to the liberal breakfast that was laid before him. It was not until he had quite finished that Captain Harris, who was also the owner of the vessel that bore his and his wife's names, allowed him to explain.

And then, while Oswald told him of his adventures briefly, the old man listened with keen interest.

"Then there's no doubt about it that the precious planter and his son are in league with the pirates?" he asked.

"There is not the slightest doubt about it. They were all together when one of my boat's crew gave the alarm. I can't think how it was the Fireball left the island and left them there; but I suppose there will be some explanation of the mystery."

**Two Sail on the Lee Bow—Pirates.**

Oswald's face grew grave while he told the kindly old captain about his escape from the island.

"I felt a coward to go and leave her behind me," he said.

"You would have done no good by staying. You would have lost your own life, and could not have protected her. She is of their own blood, and a woman. Surely they cannot be so utterly heartless as to harm her? No, no! Rest assured that she is safe."

"Heaven grant that she is! If harm has come to her, I shall never forgive myself for going and leaving her to her fate!" said Oswald earnestly.

"To-morrow, with good fortune and fair winds, we shall be at Kingston. Then you can make your report to the admiral, and he will surely send off a vessel to the island and arrest these men. They will expect this, and surely they will not run any further risks by harming this girl. If I dared, I would make for this island, and myself take her off, only my own wife and daughter are on board; and it is for that very reason that I dare not alter my course, especially as you tell me that there are piratical vessels in these waters."

"I hope that by this time they have fallen into the hands of the Fireball," said Oswald. "She left the island in pursuit of them."

"I hope so. And now, young sir, maybe you'd like to go and wash yourself, for I can tell you that you really need it."

It was quite true what Captain Harris had said. Oswald stood sadly in need of a wash. His face was grimed with dirt, and laced with blood, which had flowed from the wound in his head.

He had a bath; and while he was thus engaged, the steward overhauled his wearing apparel, so that when he made his

appearance on deck an hour later, he was looking a good deal more presentable than when he had first set foot on the ship.

Captain Harris was on deck, with a stout, elderly, motherly-looking woman, whom he introduced to Oswald as his wife.

"Harris has been telling me all about your adventures, and about that poor dear young thing who behaved so nobly to you. I do hope that she hasn't suffered for helping you, sir," said Mrs. Harris.

"I hope so from the bottom of my heart," said Oswald. "I shall never know a moment's peace until I hear that she is safe."

"I should think not, indeed, and very right and proper, too!" said the old lady. "Poor young thing! And her all alone with those wicked wretches!"

"My dear, they are her relations—her blood relations!" said Captain Harris.

Just then the captain's daughter came on deck. She was a tall, well-made young woman, with a head of jet-black hair and a pair of bright black eyes, and cheeks like a ripe apple.

A very handsome girl in her way, and the eyes of the crew followed her admiringly; but Oswald, remembering Norah, was proof against Miss Harris's fascinations, though she favoured him with her brightest glances.

"Quite romantic, I do declare!" she said, when she had heard Oswald's story. "Fancy being rescued by a young girl, and nearly being murdered by pirates! It's just like things you read about in books, Mr. Smith!"

Oswald had given his assumed name to Captain Harris when he came on board.

"It is!" he said. "I would sooner read about it in books than go through it myself."

"But it is so romantic!" said the young lady. "I dare say; but it is not very comfortable being shut up all night in a dark cupboard, and knowing that you are going to be murdered in the morning!"

Miss Harris shuddered; and at that moment the man at the look-out hailed the deck.

"Sail on the lee bow!"

A moment later he hailed the deck again, this time with: "Two sail on the lee bow!"

"Two sail!" muttered Oswald, and glanced quickly at the captain.

"What do you make of them, Gibson?" asked the skipper. "Can't say for certain just yet, sir!" the man shouted back.

"Keep a bright look-out, then, and let me know! Do you want to speak to me, Mr. Smith?" the skipper added, turning to Oswald, who had touched him on the arm.

"Yes, if you please, for a moment, privately," Oswald said, in a low voice.

"What is it? You don't think—think—" muttered the skipper, with an anxious look on his face.

"It struck me as suspicious there being two sail," replied Oswald, in a low voice. "We must not alarm the ladies, for I may be wrong, after all; but if it should turn out to be as I fear—those two pirate schooners—"

"For Heaven's sake don't say that!" said the captain in an agitated voice. "Don't think I am a coward, Mr. Smith, but remember I have others on board to think of beside myself."

"I understand!" said Oswald. "I will go aloft and take a look at the strangers; and, if they should prove to be the Rattler and the Albatross, we must run for it."

"Ay, ay! Go aloft and see what you can make of them," said the captain, in an agitated voice.

A few minutes later Oswald joined the look-out man on the cross-trees.

"Where away?" he asked eagerly.

"There, sir, over the lee bow—a pair of 'em; and, if I don't make no mistake, they be schooners!"

Oswald groaned inwardly as he raised the glass to his eye. "You are right!" he said briefly, as he handed the glass back. "They are schooners."

He descended hurriedly to the deck; and, as he did so, the skipper came to meet him, with a look of keen anxiety on his face.

"As I feared!" Oswald said briefly. Captain Harris went white under the tan on his face.

"My heavens! Pirates!" "Yes. Somehow they have escaped the Fireball. Perhaps even they are being pursued now, and will not offer to attack us. Let us hope so!" "I pray so. We can offer little resistance to these wretches. How do they sail?" "Like the wind. The Rattler was one of the fleetest vessels in the service. We could never show her a clean pair of heels."

"Then, if they decide to attack us, we are lost!" said the captain. Then he clenched his teeth. "We are only peaceful (Continued on page 28.)"



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traders, young sir, but we are Englishmen; and, if those rascals attack us, we will prove it. They will find that we will fight like men—ay, and die like men, too!" He paused, and his lips trembled. "Don't notice my weakness, young sir. It isn't of myself I'm thinking—it is of them—of—"

He nodded towards the two women, who, dreaming of no danger, were talking gaily together and laughing aloud.

### In Range—At the Eleventh Hour.

The two ladies were as yet quite unconscious of approaching danger. The older was even admiring the appearance of the two schooners, whose sails glinted whitely like stars on the sea.

"They are coming towards us, I am sure. See, they seem to grow bigger and bigger every moment," said the captain's daughter.

The captain turned away with a groan, and went towards Oswald, who was standing by the mizzen-mast.

"Well," he asked, with a drawn, haggard look on his face, "what is it to be?"

"Fight or flight," replied Oswald shortly. "And the latter is hopeless. You could never outsail the pirates."

"Then it must be fight," replied the old man stoutly.

If flight was hopeless, how much more so was fight. The Peter and Mary Harris had but one small gun mounted on the maindeck, and her crew was but a handful. How could these few men with pistol and cutlass hold their own against the two well-armed vessels, whose decks were crowded with armed and bloodthirsty demons, black, yellow, and white?

"Where can the Fireball be?" muttered Oswald, with his eyes fixed hopelessly on the schooners. Never before in his life had he longed for anything as he now longed for a sight of the frigate. But the endless line of horizon stretched away to east and west, and no sign of a sail but the two schooners.

With every inch of canvas set, the Peter and Mary Harris was making good headway. But she was a slow-sailing craft at the best—never a match for the swift-sailing schooners.

The skipper had called his crew up, and in a few words had pointed the danger out to them. They took the news silently, without a shadow of fear on their honest, bronzed faces.

"We will keep out of the reach of these cursed buccaneers as long as we can, in the hope that some friendly sail may come in sight. Then—" The skipper paused. "You know what then, my ladies."

His glance wandered to the two women on the quarter-deck, and then back to his men again; and they understood.

"They will take none of us alive, sir," said the second-mate quietly—"not one of us," he added.

"Not one," replied the skipper.

He turned away, leaning heavily on Oswald's arm; and Oswald, glancing into his face, saw tears running slowly down his cheeks.

"Heaven forgive me! I am a coward to-day," the old man muttered. "Go," he added—"go to them and tell them. They must know sooner or later. Break it to them as gently as you can."

He wrung Oswald's hand, and turned and went forward.

The wind had risen slightly, and the Peter and Mary Harris, under a cloud of canvas, was making fine headway. The foam flashed from her bows, and now and again, as struck by some more furious blast, she careened over on her side, the water broke over her bulwarks and raced, a silver sheet, across her lower deck.

By this time the two ladies had become vaguely alarmed, though they scarcely knew why.

"Is it a storm?" the younger asked Oswald, as he joined them on the quarter-deck.

He smiled, and shook his head.

"No; the wind is a little fresh, that is all," he said quietly. "We have nothing to fear from the weather."

"You speak as if we had

something to fear from something else," the girl said, with a laugh.

"I—I am rather afraid that we have," Oswald stammered. He raised his arm and pointed to the two schooners.

"Not those little boats?" the girl said, smiling.

"They are not so little as they look. They—they are both armed vessels, each carrying a strong crew. They—they are—"

Something in his manner sent the colour flying from the girl's cheek.

"What?" she whispered. "They are what?"

"Pirates," said Oswald, in a low voice.

For a moment the two women looked at him in speechless astonishment.

"Pirates? And they are going to attack us. They are chasing us now, and that is why we have all sail set?" cried the captain's daughter.

Oswald nodded.

"We must hope for the best. They are yet some distance away. Perhaps we may sight some friendly vessel who will come to our aid. It is our only chance," he added, in a low voice.

The elder lady was shaking and shivering with terror. Her eyes, wide open and glassy, were fixed now in a horrified stare on the distant vessels which a little while ago she had admired.

But there was no trace of fear in the younger one's face.

"They are sailing faster than we are," she said quietly.

"In spite of the speed we are sailing at, I have noticed that they have been gaining on us little by little. See how much nearer they seem to be. They look larger—more clear and distinct."

"I am afraid so," said Oswald sadly.

"And when they come up with us?"

"We shall have to fight—fight to the end. They are stronger, better armed. They are four to our one, as regards numbers."

The girl's eyes kindled.

"That does not matter," she said quietly. "Our men will not be afraid. I am only a girl, but I can help, too. I can fire a gun."

In spite of the peril of their position and the dark outlook, Oswald laughed.

"You will be safer below deck, Miss Harris," he said.

"But I don't want to be safe. I want to share the danger with you and the others. I am not useless; and you will see that I am not afraid."

Oswald looked at her in admiration of her quiet courage.

"But there is your mother," he said.

"She can go below with old June. They will both be frightened together, and will be more of companions to each other than I could be."

"You are, indeed, a very plucky girl," said Oswald, looking at her with an expression of admiration.

"No, I am not—not really," she said. "If I saw a mouse I would scream just like any other woman."

"You are frightened of mice, but not of pirates," said Oswald, smiling.

Talking to her, he had for the moment almost forgotten the danger that was assailing them.

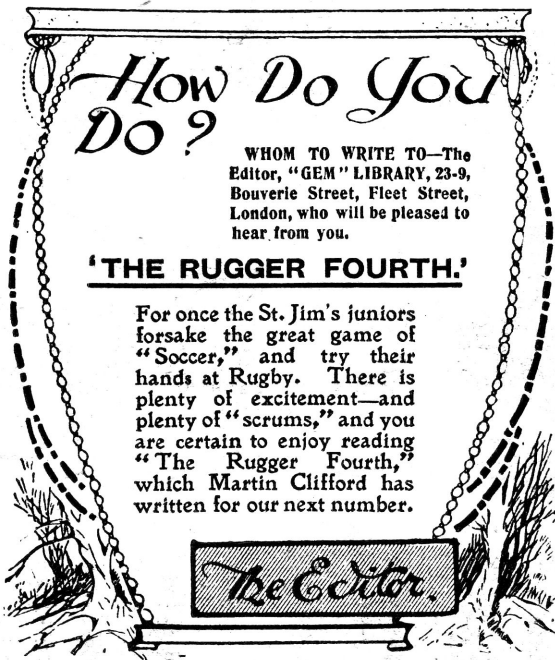
"Will you help me to get your mother below?" he asked.

The captain's wife was in the last stage of helpless terror and collapse. Her limbs refused to bear the weight of her body, which was considerable; so Oswald and her daughter had practically to carry her below—no easy task.

They took her to her cabin, where Mrs. Harris's black maid—a stout, elderly negro woman—was sitting.

"Lor, what do de mattah be?" cried the negress, at the sight of her mistress's collapsed condition.

(Another splendid instalment of this thrilling serial in our next issue.)



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