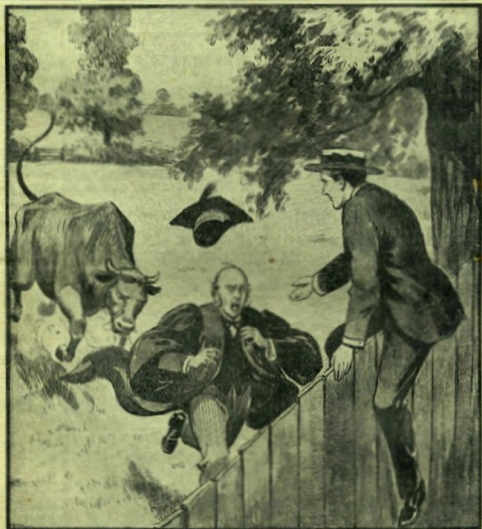
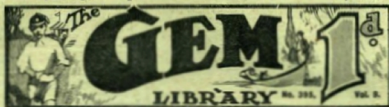


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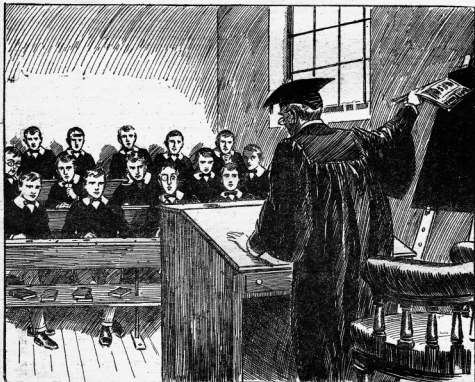


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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"Such rubbish," said Mr. Lathom, "can only have an unsettling and pernicious effect upon the mind. I have heard of a case in which a weak-minded boy actually desired to become a highwayman—or a pirate, I forget which—entirely owing to the influence of such papers as this." "Bow-wow!" murmured Blake. (See Chapter 9.)

CHAPTER I. A Narrow Escape.

"**L**OOK out!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, glanced up as the sudden shout fell upon his ears.

The swell of St. Jim's was sauntering at a leisurely pace from Rylcombe towards the school. And he was not looking where he was going.

Arthur Augustus had purchased his favourite paper in Rylcombe, and he was reading it as he sauntered home to St. Jim's. His paper absorbed all his attention, and he

was grinning as he read, evidently having found something very amusing in the columns of the green journal.

He had not heard, or heeded, the hoot of a motor in the distance round the bend of the road.

"Look out!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

He did not see who had called to him, but it was a lad of about fourteen, who had started up from the grassy bank beside the hedge. All Arthur Augustus saw was a big motor-car sweeping round the bend, and almost upon him.

He had no time to act. The reckless motorist, evidently

Next Wednesday:

"THE ST. JIM'S VOLUNTEERS!" AND "UNDER THE DRAGON!"

of the "road-hog" variety, was sweeping round the bend on the wrong side of the road at a terrific speed. The car was rushing down upon the startled swell of St. Jim's even as he saw it.

Another second and the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's would have been hurled aside by the rushing car.

But in that second the lad who had called to him leaped into the road, grasped him with a pair of strong arms, and swung him out of the way.

"Gwooh! Gweat Scott!" mumbled Arthur Augustus dazedly.

Bump!

Arthur Augustus pitched into the grass, saved from the collision by the skin of his teeth, so to speak; but his rescuer was not so lucky. The car, as it whirled past, struck him and pitched him into the hedge with the impact.

The car did not stop.

It swept on towards Rylcombe in a cloud of dust and a wreck of petrol, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sprawling in the grass, and his rescuer lying under the hedge, still and motionless.

"G-g-gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up.

He groped for his eyeglasses, jammed it into his eye, and blinked along the dusty road. The whirling car was vanishing in the distance, and Arthur Augustus shook a furious fist after it.

"You feahful wottahs!" he shouted.

The car disappeared.

"Bai Jove! I have been thwown into quite a fluttah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, staggering to his feet. "And my papah is lost, bai Jove! And where the dooce is that chap who pulled me out of the way?"

Arthur Augustus blinked round for his rescuer.

"Oh, deah!"

He sprang towards the lad who laid under the hedge. The boy lay upon his back, and his eyes were closed, and there was a smear of red under the dark hair on his forehead.

Arthur Augustus dropped on his knees at his side, a terrible fear gripping his heart for a moment. That shabby lad, a stranger to him, had risked his life for him. Had he lost it?

"Stunned, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The cah must have grazed him, and he knocked his head when he dropped. What a feehfully nawwow escape! I should like to be within hittin' distance of that beastly woad-hog. Now, what am I goin' to do with this chap?"

That was a puzzling question.

The stranger was quite unconscious, and a black bruise was forming under his dark hair. Arthur Augustus regarded him attentively. He was about fourteen years old, and a well-built lad. His clothes were shabby and worn, his boots decidedly "soedy." It was clear that he was in very poor circumstances.

There was no building nearer than the school, and the motorist had not stopped. It was up to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to look after his rescuer, but what he was to do was not clear. Certainly he could not abandon him there.

Arthur Augustus looked up and down the road.

There was no vehicle in sight. His green paper lay in the road, and D'Arcy picked it up and tucked it into his pocket. Then he looked towards the school. The gates of St. Jim's were a couple of hundred yards distant. There was only one thing to be done, and Arthur Augustus made up his mind to it.

"I shall have to cawwy him in, bai Jove!"

He stooped over the insensible lad, and, with a considerable effort, raised him in his arms. The lad was a good weight, but D'Arcy was no weakling, and he raised his burden to his shoulder, and started for St. Jim's.

A pair of dusty boots scraped on D'Arcy's elegant trousers, but he did not heed it. At that moment all his thoughts were for his rescuer, and he had forgotten even his "clobber."

Gasping a little under the burden, Arthur Augustus tramped down the road towards the school.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 395.

"Hallo, Gussy! What the deuce—"

Three juniors were in the old gateway of St. Jim's—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell. They were waiting for the postman. They stared blankly at Arthur Augustus as he came into sight with his burden.

"What on earth have you got there, Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Where did you find it?" asked Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus panted.

"Pway lend me a hand, deah boys! This kid is stunned. He dragged me out of the way of a motab, and was knocked ovah himself."

"My hat!"

The Terrible Three ran to D'Arcy's aid at once.

The insensible lad, held in their sturdy arms, was carried in at the gates, and they stopped at the porter's lodge. Taggles stared at them as they carried their burden in.

"My heye!" said Taggles.

"Knocked down by a motor," explained Tom Merry. "He seems to have had a bad knock. Get on the telephone to the doctor, Taggy, while we give first aid."

"My heye!" repeated Taggles.

The insensible boy was laid upon Taggles's sofa. His eyes were still closed and his face was very white. Tom Merry & Co. had learned "first aid" as Boy Scouts, and they did what they could for the stranger, while Taggles hurried to the telephone. But there was little to be done. The boy was stunned, and they could do little but wait for him to come round.

"He's comin' to!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus suddenly.

The stranger's eyes open wildly. He made an effort to sit up, and sank back again, breathing hard.

"Lie still, kid," said Tom Merry. "You're all right here."

"Yas, wathah, deah boy! We're lookin' aftah you."

"What is it? Oh, I remember—the motor! I—I've been hurt." The lad's hand went to his head. "Ow! Crikey, it hurts!"

"It was vevy wvave of you to wush to the wescue like that, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I might have been wun ovah."

The boy grinned faintly.

"You jolly well would have been run over," he said. "I thought you were a goner when I spotted you, and saw the motor coming."

"It was vevy careless of me; I was vevy interested in my papah. But that wotten woad-hog was on the wong side of the woad," said Arthur Augustus. "I wish I had taken his numbah. How do you feel now, deah boy?"

"Rotten!"

"The doctah is comin'," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway wemain where you are till he comes, kid. We are lookin' aftah you."

The lad sat up.

"The doctor!" he said. "I don't want a doctor. I'm all right. I—I haven't any money for a doctor."

"Wats! We shall see to that."

"But—but—"

"Lie down," said Tom Merry. "You're not to move till the doctor comes."

"But—"

"Cheese it, my son! Do as your uncle tells you," said Monty Lowther.

The boy started.

"My—my uncle!" he exclaimed.

Lowther grinned.

"I mean Tommy—only a way of speaking," he said. "Lie still; you've got a bump there as big as a football, or nearly. You must have damaged the earth where you fell on it. Now, if you had a head like Gussy's, you would have fallen upon a soft spot!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"The doctor's coming," said Taggles, coming into the room. "I don't know what the 'Ead will say about this 'ere, Master D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglasses upon the porter. "Weally, Taggles, I trust you do not suppose that Dr. Holmes would have any objection to my lookin' aftah a vevy cowwageous kid who wescued me from a woad-hog. I pwosome I was bound to look aftah him."

Taggles looked grimly at the figure on the sofa. To Taggles he looked like a young tramp, and Taggles was not fond of tramps. The boy flushed crimson under the old porter's grim look, and he sat up again.

"I'm all right," he said. "I can go—"

"Wats!"

"Stay where you are, fathead!" said Manners.

"Yes, stay where you are till the doctor comes, anyway," granted Taggles. "You young gents needn't stay. I'll keep a hey on him. Wat's your name, young shaver?"

The boy coloured again, and hesitated before he replied.

"Teddy!" he said at last.

"Eh? Teddy wot?"

"Smith."

Taggles gave him a very sharp look. The lad's hesitation in stating his name made a bad impression upon him, added to the shabby and dusty state of his clothes, and the dilapidated condition of his boots.

"Pway don't wovwy the kid with your questions, Taggy," said Arthur Augustus. "He is not in a fit state to talk. You can take a little wun, Taggles, and we will look aftah Mastah Smith till the doctor awwives."

"I—I really don't want to stay any longer," stammered Teddy Smith. "I'm all right, you know. I can walk."

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus and the Terrible Three stayed with Teddy Smith until Dr. Short arrived from Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 2. Very High-handed.

JUST like Gussy!"

That was the verdict of Jack Blake of the Fourth, when he heard about it. Blake and Herries and Digby all agreed that it was just like Gussy.

"Nobody but Gussy goes to sleep in the road walking," said Herries. "Gussy does these things. Why does he do them?"

"Echo answers why!" said Dig, with a shake of his head.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"You uttah asses! I was not goin' to sleep. I was weadin' my papah, and I happened to be vewy interested. I admit that it was wathah careless, and I hope you fellahs will take warnin' by it. Howevah, if that motawist hadn't been on the wong side of the woad—"

"And what were you reading?" demanded Blake.

"Mugging up your lessons?"

"Wats!"

"Deep in the last number of the 'Weekly'?" asked Monty Lowther. "Was it my comic column that held you in thrall?"

"Wubbish! I was weadin' my favouwrite magazine—'The Boys' Friend,'" said Arthur Augustus. "The 'Green 'Un,' you know."

"Well, you duffer," said Blake severely, "you might have been knocked over, but we could have got over that; but you might have lost the paper, and that would have been serious."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"So you read that green rag?" said Crooke of the Shell, with a sneer. Arthur Augustus was telling his adventure in the common-room, and a crowd of fellows were listening to the thrilling tale.

"Weally, Cwooke—"

"Crooke prefers pink rags," grinned Monty Lowther. "The Boys' Friend" wouldn't be any good to Crooke. It doesn't give the racing news."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weward you as a sillay ass, Cwooke. And if you

chawacterise any papah that I wend as a wag, I shall have no resource but to punch your sillay head. I should wecommand you to twy it instead of wacin' papahs. You are less likely to get sacked from the school some day if you do."

Whereupon Crooke of the Shell scowled, and said no more.

"I have been gbin' to draw you fellahs' attention to somethin' in this papah," resumed Arthur Augustus, producing the celebrated "Green 'Un" from his pocket.

"There is a competish—"

"A what?" asked Tom Merry.

"A competish, deah boy."

"The burbling ass means a competition!" said Blake.

"Is there a prize for the biggest idiot? If there is, go in and win, my son."

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake. I have not wend it all yet, but there is a first prize of a motah-bike. I have been thinkin' that I should like a first prize of a motah-bike. I wathah fancy myself as a motah-bikist. Undah the cires, I shall go in and win. It only requires bwains, you know, to bag the prizes in a competish, so—"

"Then what on earth's the good of your going in?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy declined to answer that question. He retired with his green paper and an emphatic snort.

"Stop!"

Arthur Augustus stopped. Knox of the Sixth, a prefect of the School House, had stepped into the common-room. When a prefect of the Sixth said "stop," there was only one thing for a junior of the Fourth to do, and that was to stop. So Arthur Augustus stopped, and drew himself up to his full height, and adopted his most stately expression.

"Pway what do you want, Knox?"

Knox pointed to the green paper in D'Arcy's hand.

"That!" he said.

"You want to wead my papah? I shall be vewy pleased to lend it to you when I have wend it," said Arthur Augustus.

"You young ass!"

"Weally, Knox—"

"Do you think I read such stuff?" snapped Knox.

"I believe you generally wead the 'Latest Results' column in the evenin' papahs, Knox. A' change to 'The Boys' Friend' would be a

change for the bettah!"

There was a chuckle from the juniors. Knox, the bully of the Sixth, had certain "sporting" proclivities which were supposed to be a dead secret. They were a dead secret from the masters, or Knox would certainly not have remained a prefect, if he had remained at St. Jim's at all. Arthur Augustus's remark showed Knox that his little ways were not such a dead secret as he had supposed.

"You cheeky young rascal!" shouted Knox.

"I wefuse to be called a wascal, Knox!"

"Give me that paper!"

"What for?" demanded D'Arcy, his slim fingers closing more tightly upon his precious paper.

"I am going to confiscate it," said Knox. "As a prefect, I cannot allow you to read such rubbish."

"Have you evah wead the papah, Knox?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then how do you know it is wubbish?"

"I'm not going to argue with you," said Knox. "Give me that paper at once, or I will report you to the House-master!"

"I wefuse to give up my papah, Knox. The papah is my pproperty!"

"Cheese it, you ass!" murmured Jack Blake. "Let him have it, fathead! You don't want a hundred lincs or a licking."

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THE EDITOR.

"Mr. Wailton would not give me lines for weadin' this papah, Blake."

"But he would for defying a prefect, ass!"
"Oh! Upon the whole, Knox, I will give you the papah, but I protest against your extremely high-handed and inconsiderate conduct!"

"For goodness' sake, shut up, and give me the paper," said Knox. "Are you wound up, you young ass?"

"Pway allow me to make a remark, Knox. I should like to point out to you the good points of this papah."

"You young idiot!"

"And pewpaws then you would become a new weadah. Knox, and would sign the list as one to help me in the competish—"

"What?"

"You see, it is a wippin' papah—quite decent and healthy, you know, with wippin' cricket stowies, and so on. Then there is a weally toppin' page by the editah—"

"Are you going to give me that paper?" roared Knox.
"Certainly, Knox. But pway allow me to finish. If you look at this page you will observe that the editah's chat is a vewy useful institution."

"D'Arcy!"

"He gives advice to fellahs who are in difficulties, you know. I wote to him once myself about a spwung cricket-but—"

"Give me that paper!"

"And he woplied vewy courteously. Then, there are sometimes notices on this page about missin' people—fellahs who have left home, you know, and are known to be weadahs of 'The Boys' Friend. Their people ask the editah to put in a notice callin' their attention to the fact that all is forgiven, and so forth—"

"You young villain—"

"And fellah's have been found, and wostored to their sorrowin' pawents through the medium of 'The Boys' Friend.' I have heard of several cases. In this numbah, too, there is a wippin' school stowy—"

"If you don't give me that paper—"

"A stowy it would do you good to wead, Knox. It is about a beastly bully, and how the fellahs got fed up with him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox made a furious stride towards the swell of the Fourth, who backed away round the table.

"That stowy would improve your mind, Knox. It would show you the wottenness of bein' a bully, and enlighten you as to how a bully is wearded by decent chaps. It would do you lots of good. I considah— Yow—yow—yawoooo!"

Knox's grasp was upon Arthur Augustus. With one hand Knox snatched away the green paper, and with the other he boxed Arthur Augustus's noble ears, then he strode out of the common-room, with the "Green 'Un" in his hand.

Arthur Augustus rubbed his ears, and gasped.

"Bai Jove! The bad-tempahed beast! If he were not a prefect, I would get aftah him and give him a feahful thwashin'! Gwooh!"

Knox strode away with the paper. After the way he had dropped upon Arthur Augustus, it might have been expected that the bully of the Sixth would immediately consign that paper to the flames. But he didn't. He went to his study. There he struck a match—but it was not to burn the "Green 'Un," it was to light a cigarette. With the cigarette between his teeth, Knox sat in his arm-chair and opened the offending paper, and began to read.

Fellahs who passed Knox's study a little later were surprised to hear the sound of chuckling proceeding from that apartment. Knox was more given to scowling than to laughing, and those who heard him were surprised.

They would have been still more surprised if they had seen Knox's actions. He had half-smoked his cigarette by the time he became deeply interested in the paper. Then a thoughtful expression came over his face, he coloured, and in a hesitating, shamefaced manner, he took the half-smoked cigarette from his lips, and threw it into the grate.

Arthur Augustus, wrathful as he was, would not have regretted the loss of his "Green 'Un," if he had known of its unexpected effect upon the black sheep of the Sixth.

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CHAPTER 3.

Looking after Teddy.

"**A**OW are you feelin' now, deah boy?"

Teddy Smith smiled cheerfully.

"I'm all right now, sir—only a bump on my head. I'm going now."

"Hold on," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Are you in a feahful hurwy?"

"No sir."

"Have you had your tea?"

"Tea?" said Teddy Smith.

"Yaas."

The lad coloured painfully.

"N-n-no, I—I haven't had tea," he replied hesitatingly.

"Vewy good! Then pewpaws you would care to have tea in the studay with us befoah you go?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

Teddy Smith looked down at his shabby clothes and dusty boots, and glanced at the spotless attire of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. His face crimsoned.

"Thank you vewy much, sir," he replied. "But—but I think I'd better get going, if you don't mind."

"Are you hungwy?"

"A—a—a little."

"Then you are comin' in to tea," said Arthur Augustus. "You have remarked that you are not in a hurwy. Come on!"

"But—but—" stammered Teddy.

"Pway don't but me any buts, deah boy. It will be wathah a nice spwead—we are in funds in our studay. There will be some wathah decent chaps there—those chaps you've seen, and Blake and Herries and Dig, my studaymates, and Talbot. They will be glad to see you. This way!"

Teddy Smith did not move. He was standing outside the porter's lodge, and had been about to leave, when Arthur Augustus bore down on him. Arthur Augustus had been watching for him, in fact. He did not mean his rescuer to leave without being made to understand that the fellow he rescued was grateful. As for Teddy Smith's shabby clothes, D'Arcy did not even notice them.

"Come on, deah boy!"

"I think I'd better go, sir," said Teddy. "I'm not the sort of chap your friends will want to see, and—and look at my clothes—you understand—"

"Oh, that is all wight, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus placidly. "I am askin' you to tea, not your clothes."

"Your master will not like it—"

"Wabbish!"

"I'd better tell you, sir: I'm on tramp, looking for a job," said Teddy Smith desperately. "Now you understand."

"Yaas, I undahstand perfectly. Come on!"

"But, don't you see, I—I—"

"Yaas, I see. This way, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus linked his arm in Teddy Smith's, and marched him away across the quadrangle.

Teddy Smith went with him, resigning himself to his fate. Glances were cast at them from all sides as they crossed the quad. The contrast between the elegant swell of St. Jim's and his shabby companion was striking.

Kildare of the Sixth encountered them in the doorway of the School House. Kildare gave D'Arcy's companion a puzzled glance.

"Whom have you got there, D'Arcy?" he inquired.

"My friend Smith."

"What?"

"This is the kid who wescued me from the motah, Kildare. I am takin' him in to tea in the studay."

"Oh!" said Kildare.

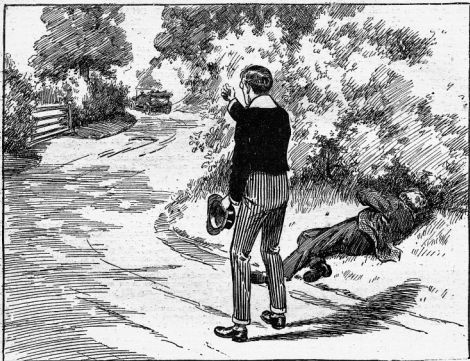
He said no more, and the two boys passed on, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy led the way up the stairs. Crooke met them on the landing, and stared, and burst into a cackle.

"Ha, ha, ha! Where did you pick up that ragged robin, D'Arcy?"

"Biff!"

"Yow!" roared Crooke, as D'Arcy's hand smote him, and he staggered against the wall.

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs, his eyes glittering.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy got up, and groped for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and blinked along the dusty road. The whirling car was vanishing in the distance, and Arthur Augustus shook a furious fist after it. "You feah'ni wottahs!" he shouted. (See Chapter I.)

"Do you want any more, you cad?" he demanded. "How dare you address my friend Smith in that mannah?"

"My hat! I'll smash you! I'll——"

"Come on, you wottah!"

The big Shell fellow hurled himself at Arthur Augustus. He was met by a straight drive on the chin, and he curled up on the landing.

"Ow, ow, ow!" mumbled Crooke.

"Are you goin' to remain there, Cwooke, or will you get up and have some more?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yow-wow-wow!"

"Pway excuse the wudeness of that disgustin' boundah, Smith. His mannahs are shockin'. He is wathah a low beast, you know."

"Yow-wow-wow!"

"I think I'd better go, sir," muttered Teddy.

"Wats?"

As Crooke showed no disposition to rise, Arthur Augustus left him sitting on the landing, and walked on with his new friend. There was a clinking of crockery, and a sound of cheery voices from Study No. 6.

The study was full of juniors, the Terrible Three and Talbot of the Shell having come in to tea.

They all looked at Arthur Augustus as he came in, almost dragging the reluctant Teddy Smith.

"Hallo!" said Blake.

"Is that the chap?" asked Dig.

"Yaas, Gentlemen, this is Teddy Smith, who rescued me from the wood-hog, and was wathah knocked oval himself. Smith, deah boy, this is my studay, and these boundahs are my friends. Is tea weady? Smith has come to tea."

"Welcome as the flowers in May, Smith," said Blake, shaking hands with the shy Teddy. "Much obliged to

you for pulling Gussy out of the way of the car. Of course, it wouldn't have been much loss——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"But we should have missed him," said Monty Lowther seriously. "He is our one and only Gussy. As the poet remarks—— a poor thing, but our own."

"You uttah ass——"

"Sit down, kid. Here's a chair; mind how you tackle it—— one leg is gammy," said Blake.

Teddy Smith sat down.

The utter indifference of all the juniors to the fact that his clothes were shabby and his boots dilapidated put him more at his ease. His face, which was good-looking, though somewhat thin, brightened up.

Study No. 6 gave him a hearty welcome. In a few minutes Teddy Smith was feeling quite at home.

Tom Merry & Co. were feeling a little curious about him. That he was poor was only too plain, and his looks seemed to show that he had been through recent privations. That a boy of his age should be "on the tramp" struck them as curious, and they were interested in him.

The fare was plentiful in Study No. 6, and Teddy Smith made a very good tea. He looked all the better for it. It was probably some time since he had had a decent meal. The juniors chatted cheerily through tea, taking care to make Teddy Smith talk. But he had little to say.

When tea was over, he rose to his feet, colouring.

"Not goin' yet, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, sir; it will be getting dark soon, and——"

"But I'm goin' to have a little talk to you first," said D'Arcy calmly. "Pway sit down and twy the toffee. Will you excuse me if I remark that I am wathah intewested in you, Smith?"

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Teddy grinned, and tried the toffee.

"Certainly, sir!"

"You have told me, deah boy, that you are on twamp, lookin' for a job. As you have, pewwaps, saved my life, and certainly saved me from severe injuw, I wegard it as up to me to look after you a bit."

"Thank you, sir; but—"

"Pwaw speak to me as a friend; we are all friends here," said D'Arcy. "You needn't mind being fwank, you know."

"You're very kind," faltered Teddy.

"Now, you are lookin' for a job?"

"Yes."

"That means that you are out of work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Gussy works these things out in his brain," interjected Monty Lowther.

"Pwaw don't intewwupt, Lowthah. I have an ideah that it is up to us to help our young friend."

Teddy crimsoned.

"I—I don't want help, sir; I—I—"

"I am not thinkin' of offahin' you money, deah boy. I want to know the circe, and pewwaps I can help you get a job."

Teddy brightened up.

"Oh, sir, if you could—"

"Are you not wathah young to be at work?" asked Arthur Augustus. "You are youngah than I am."

Teddy laughed.

"But you are rich, sir, and I am poor!"

"Yaas, I suppose that makes a difference," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Yaas, that must make a good deal of difference. Of course, I could work, you know—in fact, I tried it once. I have not the slightest doubt that I could get a job and earn my livin', if I tried. Any fellah who can't do that must be wathah an ass. What sort of work do you do?"

"Anything I can get."

"Why did you leave your last job, deah boy?"

Teddy flushed again.

"I—I worked with my uncle, and disagreed with him, so I left."

"And your parents?"

"My father is in the Army in France, and my mother has only the allowance from the War Office," said Teddy. "There are three younger than I am, and I couldn't be a burden on her."

"Bai Jove! So you have started out on your own to look for a job?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what luck have you had?"

"None at all, so far, sir."

"Wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Has my learned friend opposite finished his cross-examination of the witness?" asked Monty Lowther in a judicial manner. And there was a chuckle. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the humorist of the Shell.

"Weally, Lowthah, I trust you do not suppose that I am questionin' Smith out of idle curiosity! It is necessary for me to know the circe if I am to find him a job. I wegard that as bein' up to me."

"Oh," said the juniors.

Teddy Smith looked hopeful, but the rest of the teaparty grinned. How Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth was to find a job for Teddy Smith was a mystery. Teddy seemed to have learned already to place great faith in the elegant junior of St. Jim's. His eyes were fixed hopefully on the Honourable Arthur Augustus's aristocratic face.

Arthur Augustus looked very thoughtful. There was a deep wrinkle on his noble brow.

He was thinking out the problem. Tom Merry & Co. waited with great interest for the result of his deep cogitations.

CHAPTER 4.

Teddy's Job.

"TOM MEWWY!"

"Hallo!"

"What are you gwinnin' at?"

"Was I grinnin'?"

"Yaas, you were gwinnin'."

"Sorry!" murmured Tom Merry. "I—I was only wondering what kind of a job you were going to provide. Get it out, Gussy; we're on tenterhooks!"

"I am thinkin' it orah, Tom Mewwy, and there is nothin' whatever to gwain at. Blake!"

"Well?" said Blake.

"What are you sniggewin' about?"

"Only watchin' your chivvy!" said Blake cheerfully. "It's as good as the front page in 'Chuckles,' you know!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake. Pwaw do not make frivolous weemarks at a sciwious moment. Smith, deah boy!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I am goin' to find you a job, somehow. Anyway, you're not in a hurwy, as I shall not let you go on twamp this evening, under any circe."

"But—but I—"

"There is such a thing as hospitality—especially at St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose you have not already booked your wooms in any hotel?"

"Eh? Oh, no—no, sir," gasped Teddy.

The juniors had another attack of grinning and sniggering. Arthur Augustus's innocent question struck them as funny. Teddy Smith did not look as if he could afford to book rooms in an hotel.

"Vewy good. Where did you intend to pass the night, if I may ask?"

"Under a haystack, sir."

"And suppose it wained?"

"Well, that couldn't be helped, sir. I should have to chance that."

"I wufuse to allow you to chance it. I will speak to the Housemaster—that is all wight! Now, about your job. What can you do?"

"I used to help my uncle."

"And what did he do?"

"He is a carpenter, sir."

"Carpentah?" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I am wathah fond of carpentwy myself. I made a chair once!"

"Yes, and I sat in it, and nearly broke my neck!" growled Herries.

"That was your fault, Hewwies; the chair was all wight if you had sat in it carefully. Do any of you fellahs know of a carpentah in the distict who wequires a young assistant?"

There was a smiling and shaking of heads. Tom Merry & Co. were not acquainted with any carpenters in need of assistance.

"Pewwaps you can do somethin' else?" suggested Arthur Augustus. "Can you dwive a cah?"

"A—a—a car?" stammered Teddy.

"Yaas. My patah's chauffeur has gone to the war, you know, and he is in want of a new one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for widiculous laughtah, you fellahs—"

"You ass!" roared Blake. "Do you think Lord Eastwood wants a chauffeur fourteen years old?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that. Pewwaps Smith is wathah too young," said Arthur Augustus. "Let me see! There's Sands, the gwocah, has lost his book-keepah—he's gone into the Army. Smith, deah boy, can you do book-keepin', shorthand, typewitin', Fwench and German?"

"Oh, my eye!" ejaculated Teddy. "No, sir."

"Pewwaps you can do harvestin'?" suggested Arthur Augustus. "I have heard that farmahs are in need of labah. Can you cut corn and things? I think you use a sickle or somethin'—or a scythe or somethin'—or a pitchfork or somethin'—or pewwaps it's a wake. There is nothin' to gwain at, you duffahs!"

"I've never worked on a farm, sir," said Teddy, grinnin' himself.

ANSWERS

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"Bai Jove! I've got an ideal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I wondah I nevah thought of it befoah. It's all wight!"

"Well?" said all the juniors together.
"I will wite to the editah of 'The Boys' Friend,' and ask his advice in the Chat page, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What are you cacklin' at now?"
"How long will it be before you get the answer in the Chat page?" shrieked Blake. "And what are you going to do with Smith all the time?"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that! It weally seems to be wathah a difficult matter. Hallo! Come in!"

There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, entered. The juniors rose respectfully. Mr. Railton had his left arm in a sling; it was still crippled by the wound he had received in Flanders, when a sergeant in Kitchener's Army.

"D'Arcy, I hear that you have someone here," said Mr. Railton sternly. "I have been informed that you have some disreputable person——"

"Bai Jove! That wasel Cwooke——"
"Crooke considered it his duty to inform me," said Mr. Railton. "Is this the person?"

His eyes rested upon Teddy Smith, who was scarlet.
"This is my friend Smith, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "He risked his life to wescue me froom a motah-cah, sir."

"Ah, I have heard of that incident!" said Mr. Railton, and his glance became kindly at once. "Crooke appears to have made a mistake. It was a very brave action of this lad's. There is no objection whatever to your asking him into your study, D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir. Bai Jove!" A sudden thought occurred to Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps, sir, you would be willin' to give us some advice."

"I am always prepared to advise the boys of my House, D'Arcy."

"Yas, sir. Smith is lookin' for a job, sir."
"Indeed!"

"His pater is in the Army, and his people are not wick. Aftah the wippin' way he has acted, sir, I feel that it is up to us to look aftah him a bit. He can't go on twamp again, especially with that feahful bump on his head."
"Ahem!"

"Pewwaps, sir, you know somebody who wants a weally decent chap——"

Mr. Railton smiled.
"Come with me, Smith. We will talk this matter over," he said.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Teddy.
He followed Mr. Railton from the study.
Arthur Augustus smiled with great satisfaction.

"I wathah think it will be all wight," he remarked.
"Waiton is a good sort, you know. And anybody could see that Smith is a vewy decent chap."

The juniors were curious to know the result of Teddy Smith's interview with the Housemaster. They waited for him in the hall; but when he came out of Mr. Railton's study, the Housemaster came with him.

Mr. Railton quitted the house with Teddy, who gave Arthur Augustus a grateful glance in passing.

The Housemaster came back alone.
Arthur Augustus marched up to him. He wanted to know what had become of his young friend Smith:

"If you please, sir——" began D'Arcy.
"I have found employment for Smith, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton. "As you may be aware, the under-coachman has onlisted, and has not yet been replaced. William will be glad of a useful boy to help him for a time. Smith will remain here, and he will have a room in the coachman's house. This is only temporary, of course; but it will help the boy for the present."

"Thank you vewy much, sir."
Mr. Railton passed on to his study; and Arthur Augustus grinned triumphantly at his chums.

"Didn't I tell you I would find Smith a job?" he demanded.

"But you haven't; Railton's found it," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, if you are goin' to argue——"

"Let's go and see Smith, and see how he's fixed," suggested Talbot.

"Good egg!"
Tom Merry & Co. made their way to the stables. They found Teddy Smith receiving instructions from William the coachman. He looked very bright and cheerful.

"All wight heah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, sir, and very thankful," said Teddy.

"Bwavo! Have you a stamp, Tom Mewwy?"
"Certainly!" said Tom.

"Give it to me, then. Smith will want to wite home to his people and tell them he has found a job."

"It's on a letter," explained Tom Merry; "and the letter's been through the post once."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you are an ass. Can you give me a stamp, Lowthah?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Pwavy give me one, then—— Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as Monty Lowther brought his foot down upon an elegant boot. "You uttah chump, what are you stampin' on my foot for? Yow-ow!"

"Didn't you want me to?" demanded Lowther.

"You uttah cwass ass——"
"Didn't he ask me to give him a stamp?" demanded Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You fwabjous ass! I—I'll—— Gwooh! I did not mean that kind of a stamp, as you know vewy well, unless you are an uttah idiot! I——"

"If you please, sir, I don't want to wite home," said Teddy, colouring.

"Oh, vewy well! Lowthah, I believe you stamped on my foot for an idiotic joke, and I wefuse to allow you to perpetrate your idiotic jokes on me. I am goin' to thwash you——"

"Help!" gasped Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Monty Lowther fled for his life, and the juniors fled with him, laughing.

"Come back, you wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Come back, and let me thwash you."

But Monty Lowther did not accept that kind invitation, and Arthur Augustus hisped wrathfully after the juniors, leaving Teddy Smith and the coachman grinning.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus's New Wheeze.

"WHAT the merry deuce——"
Tom Merry looked into Study No. 6, after lessons on the following day.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there, and he was busy.

His business was peculiar. The captain of the Shell stared at his mysterious occupation. D'Arcy was standing at the study table, with a heap of impot paper, a ruler, a pen, and an inkpot. He seemed to be trying his utmost to transfer the ink from the pot to his fingers by way of the pen and the ruler.

"Is that a new game?" Tom Merry inquired innocently.

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"It is not a new game, Tom Mewwy."
"Coming down to the cricket?"

"I feah I have no time for cwicket now. I have got to get all these sheets of papah wuled."

"Oh, you're ruling the paper?" asked Tom, in surprise.

"Not manufacturing the greatest possible number of snears in the shortest possible time?"

"Weally, you ass——"

"And when you've ruled all the impot paper in the School House, what are you going to do with it?" asked Tom.

"I am not wulin' all the papah in the House, deah boy. But I shall wequiah wathah a lot for my lists. You see, impot papah is wuled only one way, and I wequiah it wuled downwards as well. Ewery sheet wequiah a line wuled down the centah."

"What on earth for?"

"To sepatate the names of the weadahs froom the name of the papah."

"Eh? To sepatate the sheep from the goats?" asked Tom.

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"You put the name of the weadah on the left, and the name of the papah on the wight," explained Arthur Augustus. "When I have got all this impot papah filled up, I am goin' to get a motah-bike."

"Great Scott!"

"It is a feashful twouble, of course, and it is makin' my fingahs watah inky. It is a vevy curious thing that ink will run on the wulah instead of on the papah."

"Perhaps if you used the bevelled edge instead of the flat edge, it might run on the paper," suggested Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Yaas! I shouldn't wondah."

"And at a time like this, Gussy, you ought not to waste ink smearing your nose," said Tom Merry severely. "You know that even Cabinet Ministers are preaching national economy. Now, waste of ink—"

"Bai Jove! Is my nose smeared?"

Arthur Augustus rubbed his noble nose. As his fingers were wet with ink, the rub did not improve matters. It changed his whole nose into a lump of inky black.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, Tom Mewwy. I am gettin' feahfully inky!"

"I'm surprised at you, Gussy—wasting at a time like this," said Tom, with a shake of the head. "Haven't you heard of national economy? Haven't you heard of the new system of beating the Germans by saving the potato-peelings? All the members of the Government are at it; they are going to cut down everything but their own salaries. And here I find you wasting ink—good ink! How do you know that, if the war lasts another fifteen years, the result may not depend on the last drop of ink?"

"Pway, don't be an ass, Tom Mewwy! I have smeared all this ink frow sheeah accident. Do you think the editah of 'The Boys' Friend' will mind if the lists are watah inky?"

"Blessed if I know," said Tom, puzzled. "Are you sending him a cargo of inky impot-paper?"

"Yaas, watah."

"What for?"

"For a motor-bike."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Hallo, when are you coming?" asked Blake, looking in. "Great Scott! Where did all that ink come from?"

"It's a giddy mystery," said Tom Merry. "Gussy's doing this for the editor of 'The Boys' Friend.' If he inks his fingers, and his nose, and all the impot-paper he can lay hands on, the editor of 'The Boys' Friend' is going to give him a motor-bike. It's extraordinary!"

"It's a competish, you ase!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Aftah wulin' plantay of papah, I am goin' to get fellahs to put their names down as new weadahs. The chap who sends in the biggest list of new weadahs gets a motah-bike. Now, in a school like this, with hundweds of fellahs, there's a wippin' chance of sendin' in the wizin' list. I am goin' to get plenty of papah wuled weadah, and then go wound gettin' new weadahs. I am goin' to ask everybody in the school. I shall need lots and lots of papah, and I believe in gettin' it weady in advance. That's efficiency!" added Arthur Augustus, in quite a crushing manner.

"Oh, that's efficiency, is it?" said Blake. "It's efficiency to ink your nose and your fingers—"

"You uttah ase!"

"To say nothing of the table and the study carpet," grinned Tom Merry.

"While you are heah, deah boys, you may as well sign your names," said Arthur Augustus. "You promise to wead a copy of 'The Boys' Friend,' which I will lend you, you see, and then you are a new weadah."

"But we're old readers," said Tom Merry. "We read it every week."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of tha! No; certainly that won't do! I only want chaps who have not wead it befoah. You can run away and play."

Tom Merry and Blake departed grinning, and Arthur Augustus went on with his inky operations. When he had finished, a tremendous pile of ruled impot-paper had risen on the table, and Arthur Augustus retired to a bath-room for cleaning up. It was some time before he had finished rubbing and scrubbing. However, when *THE GEM LIBRARY*.—No. 395.

he returned to Study No. 6 the ink was dry, which was a blessing.

Arthur Augustus armed himself with a sheaf of paper and a fountain-pen, and started forth upon his mission. The idea was really a good one. In a school the size of St. Jim's there was a regular harvest to be gathered. Half a dozen copies of the green paper were sticking out of Arthur Augustus's pockets. Arthur Augustus regarded that motor-bike as practically a certainty. Indeed, he had already made some arrangements for the purchase of a side-car, in which he would take out Cousin Ethel—when the motor-bike was his.

"Goah, deah boy." He met Gore of the Shell in the passage, and started on him. "Goah, would you mind signin' your name?"

"Eh? What is it?" asked Gore, with a stare.

"My list, deah boy."

"Thanks, I'm not putting my name on any subscriptions," said Gore.

"It isn't a sub. Pway don't wan away, Goah. It isn't a—, Bai Jove, what an uttably wude boundah to walk away while I am talkin'."

Gore was gone, and Arthur Augustus bore down on Clifton Dane, who was chatting with Bernard Glyn in the passage. He held out a somewhat inky sheet and a fountain-pen.

"Dane, deah boy, I will have your name—"

"What's the matter with your own?" asked Dane humorously.

"I mean, I should like you to put your name on my list—"

"Sending all mine to the 'Weekly Dispatch' Fund," said Dane. "Come on, Glyn!"

"But it isn't—"

Dane and Glyn were walking away.

"The uttah asses!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Everybody seems to think I'm twyin' to waise a subscription. Hallo, Kewwuish, deah boy!"

Kerruish of the Fourth stopped.

"This isn't a subscription, Kewwuish," Arthur Augustus hastened to explain.

"Isn't it?" said the Manx junior, with a stare. "Well, what about it?"

"I'm not waisin' funds."

"Well?"

"I want you to put your name down. It will not cost you anythin'."

Kerruish grinned.

"It isn't a list for a soldiers' fund?" he asked.

"No, no!"

"Nor a fund for the Red Cross?"

"Not at all!"

"Nor a subscription for Cabinet Ministers who have got the sack?"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"Not a patriotic list at all?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then I won't bother," said Kerruish. "If it had been, of course I'd have put my name down, as often as you liked. Good-bye!"

"Weally, Kewwuish—"

But Kerruish was gone.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This is watah exaspewatin'! Some sillay asses won't put down their names because they're afraid it's a subscription, and some sillay asses won't put down their names because it isn't. Pewpaws that boundah Kewwuish was only pullin' my leg, though. Skimpole, deah boy—"

Skimpole of the Shell was coming out of his study. He paused, and blinked at D'Arcy through his big glasses.

"Yes, my dear D'Arcy."

"Pway look at this, Skimmay. It is a copy of 'The Boys' Friend.' I want you to promise to wead it, and sign your name heah as a new weadah. See?"

Skimpole shook his head.

"My dear D'Arcy, I fear that I cannot undertake to read a publication that is merely intended to amuse."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"If it were a magazine devoted to Socialism or Determinism, I would read it with pleasure," said the learned Skimpole. "Is the editor of that paper a Determinist?"

"Bai Jove, no! He is quite sane, I believe."
 "Are there any articles on social problems, or the influence of evolution upon heredity and environment?"
 "G'wreat Scott! No!"
 "Then I fear I cannot undertake to read it, D'Arcy. A merely amusing paper—"
 "The object of 'The Boys' Fwied' is to instruct, as well as amuse," explained Arthur Augustus.
 "Skimpole smiled compassionately.
 "I am not in need of instruction, my dear D'Arcy. I am, in fact, in a position to impart instruction. Suppose you throw that paper away, and read instead the great work of Professor Balmcrumpet, entitled—"
 "Oh, deah!"
 "Determinism Explained; or, The Indubitable Proof that Whatever Is, Is!—a really great work, D'Arcy. I—pray do not hurry away, D'Arcy—"
 This time it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who fled.

CHAPTER 6. A Good Joke!

TOM MERRY & Co. came in cheerfully from cricket practice. They found the swell of St. Jim's in Study No. 6.
 "Tea ready?" demanded Blake.
 "Wats! No."
 "You didn't come down to the cricket," said Herries warmly.
 "Why couldn't you get tea, you slackers?"
 "I wufuse to be called a slackah. Hewwies! I have been vew busy. I am gettin' up my list. It is not so easy as I supposed. On reflection, I think pewwaps a certain amount of twouble will be wequired to win a motah-bike."
 "Go hon! Let's have tea."
 "I weally think you fellahs might back up and help me. When I get the motah-bike, I shall let you fellahs wide it."
 "When, when, when, when, when!" sang Monty Lowther.
 "Howevah, I have some names," said D'Arcy. "I have used up all my copies of 'The Boys' Fwied,' howevah. Fellahs who promise to become new weadahs seem to fweeze on to the papah. Aftah tea I shall collect them up again, and start fweeh. I hope to get several hundred names. I have seven already."

Arthur Augustus was not long over his tea. When Arthur Augustus had an idea in his noble head, he was always very keen to get it going. He believed in striking the iron while it was hot.
 Leaving his chums talking cricket in the study, Arthur Augustus went forth tirelessly on his mission again. Obliging fellows signed his paper, and promised to read a copy of the "Green 'Un," while disobliging fellows told him to go and eat coke, or locked their study doors when they saw him coming. But Arthur Augustus was not to be discouraged.

Quite a large crop of signatures was secured in the School House, and then the swell of St. Jim's started for the New House, seeking, like Alexander of old, new worlds to conquer. School House and New House at St. Jim's were rivals, and foes more or less, but Arthur Augustus justly considered that on an occasion like this the hatchet should be buried.

Three grinning juniors watched him coming from the window of Figgins's study in the New House. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. Figgins & Co. had heard of Arthur Augustus's new idea, and they were sympathetic. They were quite willing to add their signatures; but they were still more willing to pull the leg of the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

"Here he comes!" murmured Figgins. "I've been expecting this. Remember the motto of the Scouts—'Be Prepared!' Let's prepare for Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The three cheery juniors made rapid preparations for Gussy.

The study door was placed a couple of inches ajar, and a large paper bag was lodged on top of it. The paper bag contained flour, with an admixture of soot. It was

all ready for the swell of the School House when he arrived.

Figgins & Co., satisfied with their preparations, awaited his arrival with great expectancy.

There was a footstep in the passage.

"Look out for squalls!" murmured Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! Don't give the alarm!"

The chums of the New House waited in breathless silence.

The footsteps approached. They stopped at the study door.

Tap!

"Come in!" sang out Figgins, suppressing a chuckle.

The door was pushed open, and the applicant for admission stepped in as it opened.

"Whoosh!"

Biff!

"Yaroooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins & Co., in great delight.

"Grooooooh!"

A weird-looking figure stood in the doorway, simply smothered with flour and soot, and quite unrecognisable.

Figgins & Co. yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerrrooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. almost doubled up with mirth. The weird figure coughed and sneezed, and sneezed and coughed and spluttered.

Then there was another footstep in the passage, and a surprised exclamation:

"Bai Jove! What on earth is the mattah?"

"D'Arcy!" yelled Figgins.

Behind the weird figure in the doorway appeared the elegant form of the swell of St. Jim's. His eyeglass was turned upon the floury and sooty figure, in great astonishment. Figgins & Co. blinked at him. Evidently it was not Arthur Augustus who had walked into the booby-trap.

"G'wreat Scott! What a feahful object!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's. "Has there been an accident, deah boys?"

"G-g-gussy!" stammered Fatty Wynn.

"G-g-gussy!" stammered Kerr.

"Yas; I've called to ask for your signature on my list. But what—"

"Yurrrrrgh!" stuttered the unhappy recipient of the flour and soot. "Groooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Who is it?" yelled Figgins.

"Groooh! I'm Redfern," stuttered the weird object. "You silly athes—groooh!—you thundering iddiods—groooh!—I'm chook-chook-chooking!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

It was Redfern of the Fourth, of the New House. Figgins remembered—a little late—that he had asked Redfern to tea.

"Gerrroooooh!" spluttered Redfern. "Ooooh! You rodders. So that's why you asked me here, is it? Groooh!"

"Oh, dear! Quite a mistake!" gasped Figgins. "We—we meant it for Gussy—"

"Bai Jove! You wottah—"

"You thilly ath!" shrieked Redfern. "Grooh! I'll mop up the study for this! Yow!"

"I—I say—"

"You see, old chap—"

"Here, hold on!"

But Redfern did not hold on. He was sooty, and he was fony, and he was wrythy. He gonged soot and flour out of his eyes and mouth, and he rushed at Figgins & Co. He crashed into the study table, and it went flying, and there was a terrific smash of crockeryware on the floor.

Figgins & Co. jumped up in wild alarm.

"Keep off!" roared Figgins.

"Gerront!" shrieked Kerr.

Under ordinary circumstances, Figgins & Co. could have dealt with Redfern quite easily. But in his present state he was not nice to deal with at close quarters.

They dodged him wildly round the study.

But the infuriated Redfern was not to be dodged. It

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was all very well to explain that the booby-trap was meant for Gussy. For whomsoever the soot and flour had been meant, Redfern had got it—there was no doubt about that.

He charged after the dodging juniors, and caught Figgins round the neck. He closed with him, rubbing his sooty and floury head on Figgins with feendish delight.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Figgins. "Draggimoff!"

Kerr and Fatty Wynn came manfully to the rescue, and Redfern clutched at them. The four juniors went rolling on the floor in a wild struggle.

"Chuck him out!" gasped Kerr.

Arthur Augustus looked on, his eye glimmering behind his eyeglass.

"Go it, Weddy!" he shouted. "Pile in, deah boy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh!"

"Boot him out!"

"Keep him away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Go it, Weddy! Hurray! Upon reflection, Figgins, I will not stay for your signature now, I will see you another time. Good-bye! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus went down the passage chuckling.

With a final deadlift effort, the clums of the New House hurled Redfern forth from the study. But by the time he was ejected, Figgins & Co. were in as deplorable a state as the victim of the booby-trap. They blinked at one another through the flour and the soot.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Figgins.

"Oh, crumbs!" moaned Fatty Wynn. "Grooogh!"

"Where's that villain D'Arcy?" roared Kerr. "It's all his fault."

"Collar him!"

Figgins & Co. rushed out in search of Arthur Augustus. But at that moment Arthur Augustus was cheerily sauntering across the quad to the School House. He had deemed it judicious not to wait for the signatures of Figgins & Co. on his list just then.

Certainly it was not signatures that he would have received from Figgins & Co. if he had been within their reach just then.

"Lots of luck—what?" asked Blake, as Arthur Augustus came back grinning into Study No. 6.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Arthur Augustus sank into the study armchair and roared. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And when he explained, Blake & Co. roared, too. But in Figgins's study there was a complete failure to see anything funny in the matter at all.

CHAPTER 7.

Very Tactful!

"SMITH, deah boy."

Teddy Smith looked up from his work with a bright smile. He was in the stable-yard, cleaning a set of harness, and he looked very cheerful. Arthur Augustus had dropped in to see him, to inquire how he was getting on; but he had brought a copy of "The Boys' Friend," a list, and a fountain-pen with him. Teddy had now been some days at St. Jim's, but the juniors, naturally, had seen very little of him.

"How are you gettin' on, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"First-rate, sir."

"Comfy—what?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Vewy good," said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy pleased, deah boy. I suppose you have let your people know that you are in employment—what?"

Teddy Smith coloured.

"I—I haven't written, sir," he stammered.

"Bai Jove! You shouldn't forget these things, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Your mater will want to know how you are gettin' on."

Teddy was silent.

"By the way, have you evah seen this papah?" asked Arthur Augustus, holding up the celebrated green journal that was now known by sight to nearly everybody within the walls of St. Jim's.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Would you like to give me your signature, deah boy?"

"My signature, Master D'Arcy?" said Teddy puzzled.

"Yaas, I am gettin' new weadahs, you know, and if I get the biggest list I shall get a motah-bike," explained Arthur Augustus. "You will promise to read this copy of the papah—"

"But I am an old reader, sir," said Teddy. "I read it every week—that is, I used to, only I've been short of tin lately, and haven't been able to get it."

"Bai Jove! I keep on wunnin' up against old weadahs when I am lookin' for new weadahs," said Arthur Augustus. "Nevah mind; thank you all the same. William."

"Sir!" said the coachman.

"Would you like to read this papah? It is a vewy intewestin' papah, and there are some school stowies in it that will make you laugh like anythin'."

The old coachman blinked at the paper and at Arthur Augustus.

"Thank you, sir; I'm rather too old for that kind of reading."

"Not at all, William. It will help to keep you young," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway take this copy, and peway it at your leisure. You will find it vewy intewestin'. And, pway, give me your name as a new weadah."

William grinned, and obligingly put down his name, and tucked the "Green 'Un" into his pocket. Then Arthur Augustus sauntered down to the porter's lodge. Arthur Augustus had secured a great many juvenile signatures by this time, and the brilliant idea had occurred to him of bagging older readers for his favourite paper. There was no reason, as Arthur Augustus declared, why a fellow shouldn't read "The Boys' Friend" if he were a hundred years old. Why should the old fogies be left out of a good thing. That was Arthur Augustus's idea.

Taggles the porter was sunning himself on the oaken bench outside his lodge. He gave Arthur Augustus a rather suspicious look as he came up. Sad to relate, Taggles was frequently the victim of little jokes on the part of the juniors, and he had learned to look upon them with suspicion.

"Good-afthnoon, Taggles," said Augustus gracefully.

"Artemoon, sir," said Taggles gruffly.

"Vewy fine weathah, Taggles."

"Ugh!"

"You seem to have some leisure time at your disposal, Taggles."

"Ain't a 'ard-working man entitled to a rest?" demanded Taggles aggressively.

"Certainly, deah boy! I am suah that I am not suggestin' anythin' to the contrary. I was only thinkin' that I might be able to prowide you with a little amusement and instruction for your leisure houahs."

"Hub!"

"Pway take this copy of 'The Boys' Fwiend,' Taggles—"

"Eh?"

"And wead it—"

"Wot?"

"And give me your signature on this papah as a new weadah."

"My heye!"

"You will find it vewy amusin', Taggles. Although you are seventy years old—"

"Sixty!" snorted Taggles.

"Bai Jove! Appearance are vewy deceptive," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Howevah, if you are only sixty, Taggles, you are certainly not too old to wead 'The Boys' Fwiend.'"

"Hub!"

"There is a vewy funny stowy in this numbah, about some chaps who wagged a cwusty old school portah—"

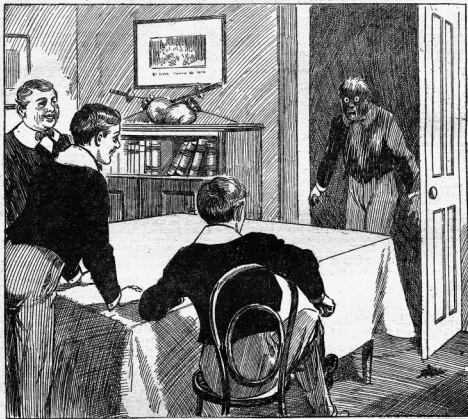
"Hey!"

"A vewy cwusty old boundah, you know, and they wagged him. Ha, ha! It is vewy funny indeed, and I am suah you will enjoy it."

Slam!

Taggles had retired into his lodge.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Taggles seems feahfully bad-temperah to-day. Just as I was doin' him a good turn, too. Taggles, deah boy!"



A weird-looking figure stood in the doorway, simply smothered with flour and soot, and quite unrecognisable. Piggins & Co. yelled, "Há, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 6.)

Arthur Augustus tapped on the door. "Weally, Taggles—"

"Will you get hout?" roared Taggles. "I'll report yer."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus walked away, very puzzled by Taggles's bad temper. The swell of St. Jim's was getting very keen on signatures. Having exhausted the Lower School, he was a little puzzled where to turn next. Some of the Sixth had signed his paper, but some of them had cut up rusty at his request. He caught sight in the quad of Cutts of the Fifth, taking to his friends St. Leger and Gilmore. Arthur Augustus resolved to give the Fifth a chance. Certainly he wasn't on good terms with Gerald Cutts, but he was quite willing to forget all little differences at a time like this.

"Cutts, deah boy—"

Cutts of the Fifth stared at him. The dandy of the Fifth did not exactly appreciate being addressed as a "deah boy" by a fag of the Fourth Form.

"Well, yon cheeky little sweep!" said Cutts.

"Ahem! Pway don't be watty, Cutts. I am goin' to make a suggestion—"

"Cut off!"

"Pway listen to me," said D'Arcy, standing manfully to his guns. "I am sorry to say, Cutts, that I have observed that you have a taste for vevy pernicious literature, such as sportin' papahs and wacin' calendahs."

"Wha-at!"

"I suggest that you should make a change, which would be a great improvement. I have leeah a copy of 'The Boys' Fwiend'—"

"By gad! You—you—" gasped Cutts.

"I wecommend you to wead this copy, Cutts. It will improve your taste considerably, I am suah. The papah has a vevy high moral tone, which is particularly necessary in your case. I am suah you don't mind my mentionin' it."

There was a chuckle from Gilmore and St. Leger, and Cutts turned pink with wrath. But Arthur Augustus went on regardless.

"Weadin' about weally decent chawacters, Cutts, may fish you with an ambition to imitate them," he explained. "It may pewwaps lead to the weform of your chawactah. Pway take this copy, and pewase it at your leisure. And if you would like to put your name down on my list— Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! What evah are you doin', yon uttah beast! Yawwoh!"

It was pretty plain what Cutts was doing, and the question was really superfluous. He was gripping Arthur Augustus by the collar and shaking him.

D'Arcy's eyeglass fell out, and his necktie streamed to the wind. He gasped and wriggled.

"Leggo, you wottah! Bai Jove! Wescue! Gwooh! Oh, my hat!"

"You cheeky young rascal!" roared Cutts. "Take that—and that!"

"Yawwoh!"

Cutts grasped "The Boys' Friend" and jammed it down Arthur Augustus's back, and knocked his topper over his eyes, and walked away. Arthur Augustus was left struggling with the "Green 'Un." It was not easy to extract it from inside of his tight Eton jacket.

"Oh, cwumps!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "The uttah wottah! Gwooh! Tom Mewwy, pway lend me a hand!"

"What on earth's the matter with you?" asked Tom Merry, as he came up.

"Gwoop! Pway dwag that papah frowm down my back!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That uttah cad Cutts has stuffed it down my back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatever to laugh at, Tom Mewwy. I cannot undstand why Cutts acted in such a wuffianly mannah. I was pointin' out to him vevy tactfully that weadin' this papah would impore his mind, and pewpaws cause him to wopent of his blackguardly ways, and then he lost his tempah, for some weason—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway stop cacklin', and dwag that beastly papah out!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry dragged the paper out, but he did not stop cackling. He couldn't. Arthur Augustus's tactful way of getting new readers for the paper struck him as funny. He roared.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus Puts His Foot In It.

"**F**ATHEAD!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Ass!"

"Weally, Hewwice—"

"Chump!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Duffer!" shouted the chums of Study No. 6 together.

"Weally, you fellahs—"

Tom Merry put his head into Study No. 6. The argument in that celebrated apartment was waxing warm. It could, in fact, be heard at the end of the Fourth-Form passage.

"Gently does it, my infants!" smiled Tom Merry. "You'll have a prefect up here soon. What's the trouble? Tell your uncle all about it."

"That silly ass—" began Blake wrathfully.

"Those silly duffahs—" began Arthur Augustus.

"The burbling chump wants to go and get a licking, and we want to stop him," explained Digby.

"If he wants a licking, we'll give him one here, and there's no need for him to go and ask Lathom for one," said Herries.

"Wats!"

"In fact, we may as well give him one anyway," said Blake thoughtfully. "Hand me that cricket-stump, Dig, and hold his neck—"

"Weally, you uttah ass—"

"Peace, my children," said Tom Merry soothingly.

"Let an older head decide the matter for you. Tell your uncle."

"Older rats!" growled Blake. "How many weeks are you older than I am, fathead?"

"Age," said Tom Merry oracularly, "is not counted only in weeks, or even years, but in brains. Now, in brains I am about a thousand years older."

"Why, you fjabrous ass—"

"Pway don't wov with Tom Mewwy, Blake. You are vevy wovey this aftnoohn. I am willin' to heah Tom Mewwy's opinion. I weward him as a sensible chap, so he is practically certain to agree with me. If he does, I am willin' to make him unpiah in the mattah."

"You can't stipulate with an umpire to agree with you in advance, fathead!" said Tom Merry severely. "Now pile in!"

"The silly ass—" began Blake again.

"Pway allow me to explain to Tom Mewwy, Blake. The fact of the mattah is, deah boy, that Blake is an ass, and Digby is an ass, and Hewwice is another ass."

"Regular home for assee, this study," agreed Tom Merry.

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Merry. "But we knew that all along. Get on with something new."

"I think you will agree, Tom Mewwy, that when a fellah is in possession of a weally good thing, it is his duty to whack it out with othah fellahs."

"Quite so," agreed Tom Merry. "If you've had a remittance, and you are standing a feed, you can depend on Lowther and Manners and me."

"Wats! It is not a feed, you duffah. However, to continue. A fellah who has a weally good thing ought to whack it out, not only to fellahs of his own age, but among 'older fellahs—even respectable old gentlemen?"

"Ahem! That depends! I shouldn't recommend offering the Head a bite out of your jam-tart!"

"You uttah ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I don't mean anythin' of the sort. I am alludin' to 'The Boys' Friend.'"

"Oh, dear! Are you on that again?"

"Yaas, wathah! I have secured quite a large numbah of new weadahs, and I have, in fact, exhausted the school. Now, I considah it only the pwopah thing to give the mastahs a chance."

"The—the masters?"

"Yaas. I am thinkin' of beginnin' with our Form-mastah, Mr. Lathom. He is a vevy decent old boy, and he heads a lot—geological books, and that stuff. I think it vevy pwob that he has nevah come across 'The Boys' Friend.' Why should I not introduce it to his notice, and ask him to sign my list as a new weadah?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I believe it is only wight and pwopah to whack out a good thing instead of keepin' it all to oneself. It will provide Mr. Lathom with harmless and necessary amusement, weadin' the 'Gween 'Un.' In his hours of relaxation I am suah he would like to wead healthy and excitin' fiction. Pwobably he has nevah thought of it, or pewwaps he may be undah the ewwoneous impression that boys' litewature of the present day is like that of his youth, when they used to pwint howid wubbish about Sweeney Todd and Deadwood Bill. I should like to see Mr. Lathom enjoyin' 'The Boys' Friend' in his leisure moments."

"Oh! Oh! Ah!"

"That's the fathead's idea," said Blake. "Lathom will think he is pulling his leg, and will lick him, of course."

"Wats!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"My advice is to leave the Form-masters alone," he said sagely. "Schoolmasters are rather an uneducated class, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you can never depend on a Form-master to understand things as we do. They have queer prejudices. Well, we can't cure 'em. Best thing is to leave 'em alone."

"That's what we've been telling the chump," said Herries.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I wefuse to believe that Mr. Lathom is a prejudiced ass," he replied. "Anyway, it is only fair to give him a twial. I assuah you fellahs that it will be all wight, and I shall get a new weadah."

"You'll get a licking!" roared Blake.

"Wubbish!"

"Now the question is," said Digby, "whether we tie him to the table with his necktie or put Towser's chain on him."

"Here, stop him!" shouted Blake, jumping up.

Arthur Augustus suddenly stepped out of the study. He closed the door after him and fed. There was evidently no convincing his chums, and that was the quickest way out of the argument.

Blake jerked the door open, and rushed into the passage.

But the swell of St. Jim's was already fleeing downstairs. Blake pursued him as far as the lower landing. He could not pursue him further, for Arthur Augustus was tapping at Mr. Lathom's study door.

Blake shook his fist over the banisters at his elegant chum, who waved his hand back reassuringly.

"Come in!"

Arthur Augustus entered his Form-master's study cheerily, with the green journal in one hand, and a paper and fountain-pen in the other. He was ready for business.

Little Mr. Lathom was seated at his writing-table with a big volume open before him, and a sheet of paper, upon which he was making notes. Mr. Lathom was "mugging up" his next geological lecture. He blinked benignly at Arthur Augustus over his glasses. Mr. Lathom was a good-tempered and benevolent gentleman; indeed, all the Fourth Form at St. Jim's agreed that Lathom was a good little ass, though, of course, they did not tell him that.

"What is it, D'Arcy?" asked Mr. Lathom kindly.

"I trust I am not intewwuptin' you, sir."

"You are, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Lathom. "But I can spare you a few minutes. What is it, pray?" "I wish to introduce this papah to your knowledge, sir," said Arthur Augustus, laying the green journal on the table. "It is a papah most of the fellahs are very fond of weadin'."

"Ah, quite so!" said Mr. Lathom. "You wish to have my opinion upon it. Very right and proper."

"There is also a competish, sir, for gettin' new weadabs, and I should like to put your name down, sir," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Ahem!"

Mr. Lathom took up the paper, and blinked at it. Then he frowned severely.

"Dear me! This paper, D'Arcy. I am really surprised at you. I should not have supposed, D'Arcy, that you were a reader of penny horrors."

Arthur Augustus drew himself up.

"I trust, sir," he said very distinctly, "that I have nevah impressed you as the kind of fellah who would wead penny howribles."

"This paper is undoubtedly such," said Mr. Lathom.

"I see the price is one penny."

"The price of the 'Times' is one penny, sir."

"Ahem! Ahem! That is quite beside the point, D'Arcy. I am surprised, indeed shocked, to find that you read such horrible things as the murderous doings of Sweeney Todd and Dick Turpin."

"There is nothin' about Sweeney Todd or Dick Turpin in that papah, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"The stories are doubtless on the same level," said Mr. Lathom. "I remember, in my youth, that such stories were printed, full of horrible incidents, such as murders and robberies, perpetrated by the heroes of the stories. Such characters as highwaymen are held up to admiration instead of contempt and disgust. I remember also there were stories of American desperadoes, who perpetrated heinous crimes with—with six-chambered revolvers—stories that could only have a debasing effect upon the minds of the readers. D'Arcy, I repeat that I am surprised and shocked to find that you read such things!"

"But I don't, sir."

"You read this paper?" said Mr. Lathom sternly.

"Yaas, evrey week, sir."

"And other boys in your Form do so?"

"Certainly, sir; it is vevy populah."

"I am glad I have made this discovery," said Mr. Lathom; "very glad indeed. You may leave this paper here, D'Arcy. I shall address the whole Form on the subject this afternoon in very severe terms."

"But, sir—"

"You may go, D'Arcy."

"But if you will allow me to explain, sir—"

"The paper explains itself, D'Arcy. I will not allow you to read such pernicious stuff."

"But, sir, until you wead it yourself, is it quite cwicket to condemn the papah, sir?"

"I am not likely to read such a paper, D'Arcy. Pray leave my study."

"If you please, sir—"

Mr. Lathom rose to his feet, and picked up his cane. Arthur Augustus decided to retire from the study. He retired in a state of great dismay.

His visit had not been a success. Evidently Mr. Lathom was not likely to sign the form as a new reader.

"Well?" said Blake and Herriot and Digby and Tom

Merry, with one voice, as Arthur Augustus joined them in the passage.

"Bai Jove, it's wotten!"

"Licked?"

"No, nas! Lathom is goin' to stop us weadin' the papah at all."

"What!" yelled the juniors.

"He seems to be a pwejudiced ass, aftah all!" confessed Arthur Augustus. "He thinks the 'Gween 'Em' is like the wotten howribles he used to see when he was a kid—murderous highwaymen and demon barbabs and things, you know. He doesn't know that that sort of wot isn't wead in the twentieth century. His poor old bwaïn is yabs behind the times. And he is goin' to stop us—"

"Oh, you ass!" roared Blake. "And what am I to do for the next instalment of the serials?"

"I weally do not know, deah boy!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally, you fellahs—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "Lathom's bark may be worse than his bite. But if he really comes down on our paper we'll snatch Gusey baldheaded. I suggest that we lynch Gassy if 'The Boys' Friend' is stopped here!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Done!" said Blake. "We'll lynch the silly ass with his own necktie, and boil him in oil, and then bump him."

"Weally, you know—" said Arthur Augustus feebly. "Br-r-r-r-r!"

When the news spread, there was a good deal of anxiety in the Fourth Form, as they waited for afternoon lessons to begin. But Arthur Augustus looked forward to the afternoon with the keenest anxiety.

He did not believe that the exasperated juniors would really lynch him with his necktie; but he knew that he had a high old time to expect if the Form-master came down heavy on the favourite paper. And it was with much inward misgiving that the swell of St. Jim's entered the Form-room with the Fourth that afternoon.

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Lathom Comes Down Heavy!

MR. LATHOM wore a very severe expression that afternoon.

The usual benevolent smile was absent.

Mr. Lathom was a gentleman with a strong sense of duty towards the boys in his charge. It was unfortunate that he had come to a hasty judgment; but, his opinion being what it was, he was undoubtedly right in the course he intended to take. His knowledge of youthful literature was entirely founded upon a dim remembrance of certain wildly sensational periodicals he had seen in his own youth—which was a considerable time before any of the St. Jim's fellows had been born.

It did not occur to him that matters had changed since then—that the new generation of boys had no taste whatever for "Sweeney Todd" or "Deadwood Bill," and that any editor who published such stuff would be courting financial disaster.

Neither was he aware that, in the present age, boys are far more particular in their reading than many grown-up people, and that most of the readers of such a paper as "The Boys' Friend" would be shocked and revolted by the sensational and disgusting details so freely reported in the newspapers perused by their elders.

It is a fact that much of the grown-up literature of the present day is on a par—morally and intellectually—with the boys' literature of thirty years ago. It has not by any means made the same progress towards "sweetness and light."

But Mr. Lathom had never thought about the matter, and he did not think it necessary to think about it.

Lessons did not begin as usual in the Fourth-Form room at St. Jim's that afternoon.

When Mr. Lathom came in, he held the green journal in his hand, and the fellows waited in silence for what was to come.

Mr. Lathom held up the paper before the class.

"My boys," he said, "I have to speak to you on a

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

most serious subject. It has come to my knowledge that a great many of you are in the habit of perusing the most pernicious juvenile literature. I blame myself for not having observed you more closely, and for not having made this discovery before. However, it is not too late. I wish every boy here to understand distinctly that he is forbidden to buy, or to read, such papers as this in the future."

"There was a murmur.
"Such rubbish," said Mr. Latham, "can only have an unsettling and pernicious effect upon the mind. I have heard of a case in which a weak-minded boy actually desired to become a highwayman, or a pirate, I forget which, entirely owing to the influence of such papers as this, which exalt those depraved characters into heroes."

"Bow-wow!" murmured Blake.
Mr. Latham looked round sharply.
"Did someone speak?"
Silence.

"This paper," resumed Mr. Latham, "I shall burn. If any of you possess copies of it, I command you to bring them to my study, so that they may be destroyed. Henceforth such papers are forbidden in the school. I regret that there is no law against their publication. I appeal, my dear lads, to your good sense. Of what interest to you are the doings of a barber, for instance, who is supposed to have committed a number of murders in his shop in Fleet Street?"

Some of the Fourth-Formers grinned. They could not help it. The thought of the deeds of Sweeney Todd being described in the "Green 'Un" made them smile.

"How can you," went on Mr. Latham, "take and read a paper which deals with murderers and bloodthirsty personal assaults, supposed to have taken place among impossible persons, bearing such names as Deadwood Bill and Pirate Dick?"

The Fourth Form burst into a chuckle. Deadwood Bill and Pirate Dick tickled them immensely.

"This is no laughing matter!" exclaimed Mr. Latham sternly. "Silence—silence at once! I shall now burn this paper, and I trust that every boy who possesses a copy of such pernicious nonsense will follow my example."

Then up rose Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in his place, his noble eye gleaming with indignation.

"Pway allow me to speak, sir—"
"There is nothing you need say, D'Arcy."

"You have condemned our favourite papah, sir. I trust you will allow me to say a word in its defence."

"Nothing can be said in defence of such utter rubbish, D'Arcy."

"I have heah a copy, sir," said D'Arcy, producing one from his pocket. "Pway look at it—"

"Nonsense!"
"Then allow me to wend out a few lines. Take the editah's page, fwinsabance. Is there anythin' pernicious about this? Advice to a chap about ewin' bunions—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Then a tip about oilin' a ewicket-bat—"

"D'Arcy!"
"Then a pawgwap of information about the flags of the Colonies—"

"H'm!"
"And then a notice about a lost kid, whose parents are anxious to communicate with him—"

"Really, D'Arcy—"
"Pway let me wend it, sir," said Arthur Augustus, and he read out the paragraph. It ran—Mrs. Smith, of Ferndale Cottages, Hexham, is anxious to hear news of her son Edward, who left home two months ago, and has not been heard of since. As Master Smith was a constant reader of this journal, it is hoped that this may meet his eye, and that he will communicate at once with his anxious mother. His uncle is willing to forgive his disobedience, and to welcome him with open arms."

"D'Arcy!"

"That pawgwap may do a lot of good, sir," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "And now heah what the editah says—"

"I have no desire to hear it, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir; but he says—My advice to Edward Smith is to return to his home at once, and to remember always that a boy's first duty is to his parents, and that no consideration whatever can excuse neglect of their wishes. Is their anythin' pernicious about that, sir?"

"I will not allow you to argue with me, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Mr. Latham angrily. "Give me that paper at once!"

"But, sir—"
"Take a hundred lines, D'Arcy, and sit down at once."

Mr. Latham almost snatched the paper from Arthur Augustus's hand. Then he strode to the grate, and struck a match.

The two copies of the "Green 'Un" were soon in flames. Arthur Augustus sat down.

He had done his best, but Mr. Latham was not in a reasonable mood. An examination of the contents of the paper would doubtless have disabused his mind; but evidently he could not examine the contents now that he had reduced them to ashes.

"Remember," snapped Mr. Latham, "that paper, and any other paper of the kind, must never be introduced into the school again. I forbid it. We will now proceed."

And the Fourth Form proceeded.

There was thunder in the air in the Form-room that afternoon. The juniors were naturally indignant and resentful, and Mr. Latham was annoyed. He felt that the boys regarded his action as unjust and tyrannical, and as he was acting from the best motives, that thought naturally annoyed him.

Both master and boys were glad when the hour of dismissal came.

In the passage, a crowd of the Fourth gathered round Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with decidedly hostile looks.

"Now, what am I going to do for the next instalments of the serials?" demanded Blake.

"Tain't the serials so much as the complete story—that's a regular corker," said Digby.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three came out of the Shell.

"Dished!" growled Blake. "Mustn't take the paper any more. Jolly good mind to take it all the same, only—"

"It would be bad form to disobey our Form-mastah, deah boy, although he is wathah an ass in the present case," said Arthur Augustus.

"And you'd get licked, too," jeered Mellish.

"I'm not thinking of the licking," growled Blake. "But we must let Latham have his head. The best thing is to boil Gusey in oil for causing all the trouble."

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, deah boy, I feel it as much as you do," said Arthur Augustus despondently. "I shall not be able to entah the competish now, and I shall not get the motah-bike."

"Oh, blow the motor-bike!" grunted Herries. "It's the paper we want."

"I'll lend you my copy," grinned Tom Merry.

"Mustn't read it."

"And Latham will keep on, too!" snorted Herries. "He will speak to the Housemaster next, and get him to stop it for the whole House."

"Railton wouldn't do it!" said Tom Merry warmly. "He's got too much sense. More sense than your blessed Form-master!"

"You let our Form-master alone!" said Blake, rather unreasonably. "Our Form-master's a jolly good sort, even if he is an ass in some things."

Tom Merry laughed.

"My mistake!" he agreed. "Well, I'll tell you what—I'll read 'The Boys' Friend,' and you can watch me enjoying it. That's the best I can think of!"

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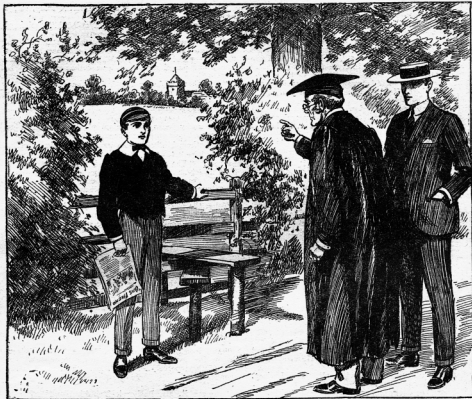
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"Merry!" said Mr. Lathom, "I am surprised to see you reading that paper. Pray excuse me a moment, sir, while I speak to this junior. Merry, you are aware that I have forbidden my boys to read that paper. Surely you know better?" (See Chapter 14.)

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Burling idiot!"

Which was all the thanks Tom Merry received for his kind offer.

CHAPTER 10. A Little Mistake.

THERE was a sort of procession into Mr. Lathom's study that afternoon. Fellows came in with green journals in their hands and deposited them on the study table, and departed, with somewhat sulky looks. As fast as a copy of the "Green 'Un" was laid on his table Mr. Lathom tossed it into the fire with a flourish. Evidently he considered that he was doing a good and kind work, and that he was really entitled to the gratitude of the Fourth Form. The Fourth-Formers, however, did not look very grateful.

More than a dozen papers were added before Mr. Lathom had completed his burnt-offering, and his gaze was in a state that was certain to provoke dissatisfied comment from the housemaid next morning.

"My dear Blake," said Mr. Lathom, when Jack Blake came in, the last of the procession, "I trust you are not feeling discontented and dissatisfied with a decision taken for your own good."

Blake's grim brow relaxed. After all, Mr. Lathom was a good sort, and he meant well. And it was really kind of him to be concerned about how the juniors took his decision.

"We don't like parting with our favourite paper, sir," said Blake.

"You will miss your usual reading? I understand," said Mr. Lathom. "However, when you desire to pass a leisure hour in pursuing really beneficial works, Blake, you are at liberty to borrow any of my books. This volume upon 'Geological Formations of the Tertiary Period'—"

"Oh, dear!"

"Ahem!" Or this really instructive book on old red sandstone—"

"Ow!"

"Such books, Blake, are more improving than horrors of the 'Sweeney Todd' variety," said Mr. Lathom severely. "However, as probably your juvenile taste runs to lighter literature, I will see that some suitable volumes are provided for boys of my form at my own expense."

"You are very good, sir," said Blake, a little touched.

"What books would you prefer, Blake?"

"Well, there's 'Treasure Island,'" said Blake, brightening a little. "That's as good as 'The Boys' Friend.'"

"Some rubbishy book about pirates, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"More nonsense—"

"It's by Robert Louis Stevenson!" almost howled Blake.

"Dear me! Is it? However, I do not like the title. I will select some books for you and your friends,
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Blake, and will distribute them myself in the Form-room."

"Thank you, sir," said Blake, with a grimace. He left, the study, hardly knowing whether to be angry or to laugh. But Mr. Lathom's kindness had touched him, and he could not feel sulky. He told his comrades of the treat in store, and the Fourth Form waited with a good deal of interest for the arrival of Mr. Lathom's books. There was likely to be a good deal of difference in taste between a middle-aged gentleman and youths of fourteen or fifteen. The juniors did not expect to be pleased.

But they met with a surprise. It was a couple of days later that the parcel arrived by post, and it was handed to Mr. Lathom as he was dismissing the Fourth after lessons.

Mr. Lathom placed the parcel on his desk and beamed. "Ah, here are the books!" he said. "I cannot remain to distribute them now, my boys, as Mr. Railton is expecting me. Pray open the parcel, Blake, and hand out the books to your Form-fellows."

"Certainly, sir!" said Blake. Mr. Lathom quitted the Form-room, and Blake cut the cord of the parcel and unwrapped the thick brown paper. The juniors gathered round.

"Hardly worth while looking at the rot!" grunted Kerruish. "Some awful muck about good little Georgie, I suppose."

"The Boy Who Loved His Kind Teachers!" grinned Digby.

"Or 'From Pot-Boy to President,' I suppose!" snorted Herries.

"Or 'What Earnestness Will Do; or, How Edwin Won His Prize'!" said Lumsley-Lumsley.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Blake rolled out the books. They were in paper covers, with nicely-designed coloured pictures on the front cover. Blake gave a shout.

"My hat! These are all right!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The Boys' Friend Threepenny Library!" read out Blake. "Three dozen assorted volumes. Hurrah!"

"Bwavo!"

"Lathom isn't such an ass after all," said Levison. "Give me the war story!"

"I'll have the Jack, Sam, and Pete," said Reilly.

Blake looked puzzled as he handed out the books to the eager claimants.

"There must be some mistake about this," he said; "Lathom can't have meant to get us these, he doesn't know how ripping they are."

"Oh, it's all right," said Herries. "Anyway, we've got the books!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Fourth was not in a hurry to leave their Form-room that afternoon. They collared the volumes eagerly and opened them, and half the Form sat down on the desks to read. Mr. Lathom had intended to give them a treat—and certainly he had done so!

A little later the Form-master looked in, and blinked at the juniors benevolently over his glasses. He was delighted with the satisfaction he saw on all sides.

"Ha! You have seen the books, my dear boys? Are you satisfied with them?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Thank you very much, sir."

"They're ripping!"

Mr. Lathom beamed. Such a chorus of satisfaction he had certainly not expected to hear.

"I am very gratified indeed!" he said kindly. "These books are better than 'Sweeney Todd' and 'Blood-Stained Bill,' I think."

"Much better, sir!"

"Toppin', sir!"

"Nearly as good as the 'Green 'Ua' itself, sir!"

"Couldn't be better, sir!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom, peering at Blake's volume. "What—what is that, Blake?"

"My book, sir."

"Indeed! Surely—What is the title?"

"'King Cricket,' sir. A county cricket story, and a regular ripper!"

"That's not one of the books I ordered!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom sharply. "There must be some mistake. Let me see those books! Bless my soul! 'Jack, Sam, and Pete'—I have never heard of them! 'King Cricket'—pish! 'The Boy Without a Name'—tush! The wrong parcel must have been delivered here."

"Oh!"

"Put those books on the desk at once!"

"Oh, sir!"

"You certainly must not read them!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Silence! Obey me!"

With sulky looks the juniors piled the volumes on the desk. Their treat had been short-lived.

Mr. Lathom blinked at the wrappings of the parcel.

"Ah, here it is—Mr. Tathon, bookseller, Rylcombe," he said. "The wrong parcel has been delivered here. This is not at all the kind of literature I had ordered. I will take steps to obtain my own parcel and then distribute the volumes I have selected for you. Dear me, who is this?"

Toby, the page, was showing a visitor into the Form-room. The visitor had a large parcel in his hand, and a peculiar expression, between a grin and a frown, upon his face. It was Mr. Tathon, the local bookseller.

"This is your property, sir," said the bookseller.

"It has been delivered at my shop by mistake, instead of a parcel I was expecting. Perhaps my parcel has come here, sir?"

"Ah, quite so!" said Mr. Lathom. "These are your books, Mr. Tathon. Pray take them away. You will excuse me if I express my surprise at your selling such books—you, a very respectable man, and the father of boys yourself!"

Mr. Tathon stared.

"What's wrong with 'em?" he demanded. "Why, I read them myself!"

"Bless my soul!"

"And good they are," said Mr. Tathon. "None better. As for the books that were sent to me by mistake, sir, in that there parcel, I wouldn't have them found in my shop!"

"Sir!"

"I mean it, Mr. Lathom! Rubbish like that!" said Mr. Lathom scornfully. "Let me catch my boys reading such stuff! I don't want my boys to grow up into young prigs and boobies, sir!"

"Please take your books away, Mr. Tathon!" said the Form-master, with great dignity.

The bookseller wrapped up his volumes and departed with them, followed by longing glances from the Fourth-Formers. Then Mr. Lathom proceeded to undo his own parcel. But there was no enthusiasm on the part of the Fourth. They knew what to expect, and they did not feel in the least inclined to "enthus."

CHAPTER II.

Ending in Smoke!

MR. LATHOM opened the parcel, and a couple of dozen books came into sight. They were prettily bound in cloth, and certainly more expensive than the entertaining volumes the bookseller had carried off. Mr. Lathom must have expended a sovereign, at least, upon that consignment, which really was very generous of him.

"Now, my dear boys, here is something you will really enjoy, and that will improve your minds," he said.

Grim silence.

"Come and take your volume, Blake."

Jack Blake advanced, not looking very joyful.

"This volume is called—"

"It is called 'Kind Jimmy; or, a Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed.' Take it, Blake!"

Blake took it.

"D'Arcy! Here is a book entitled 'The Sinful School-boy; or, How Tommy Stole an Apple, and What Were

the Results.' You will find that book very improving, D'Arcy."

"It weally needs improvin', sir."

"I mean very improving to your mind, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom sharply. "The conduct of Jimmy—I mean Tommy—in the story will be a warning to you."

"But I have nevah stolen an apple, sir, and I think Tommy must have been a young wascal to do anythin' of the sort."

"Ahem! Reilly, you may have this volume, 'The Truth-Teller; or, the Cost of a Lie.'"

"Bejagers! I—I mean thank you, sir."

"Then here is 'Waste Not, Want Not!—The Story of a Boy Who Rose to Fortune from Saving His Old Trousers Buttons.' You may have this, Herries."

Herries' face was a study as he took the precious volume. Herries had not the faintest expectation of rising to fortune from saving his old trousers buttons.

"Ah! And here is a really excellent volume," said Mr. Lathom. "'Dad's Pet—The Story of the Little Boy Who Died.'"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations, Digby, but take the volume. You may have this one, Lumley-Lumley: 'The Slave of Drink—A Story With a Purpose.'"

"Thank you, sir," said Lumley-Lumley demurely. "I guess, sir, that I shall go and throw away all my whisky after reading that volume, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Lathom. "Lumley-Lumley, you will kindly not make absurd jokes to me."

Mr. Lathom continued to hand out the volumes till the parcel was exhausted. Then he beamed benevolently upon his Form.

"Pray read your books, and you will see at once the difference between them and 'The Boys' Friend,'" he said. "I will leave you to enjoy them."

And Mr. Lathom rustled out.

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another.

"My only hat!" said Blake. "We shall see the difference between the piffle and the 'Green 'Un'! No doubt about that! Listen to this!"

Blake opened his valuable volume, and began to read out.

"No, I will not lend you my new shilling, Jimmy Jones," said Thomas Williams, who was a selfish boy.

"Jimmy began to cry.

"But I want to send it to the fund for providing tracts and trousers for the Snoozey-Boozey Islanders, 'Thomas,' he said.

"Thomas Williams sneered mockingly.

"What do I care about the Snoozey-Boozey Islanders?" he said, with a scendish heartlessness. "I will not lend you my new shilling. I am going to spend it in toffee and ginger-beer."

"Oh, Thomas!" exclaimed Jimmy. "How can you eat toffee and drink ginger-beer, when good Mr. Mugwump has told us that the Snoozey-Boozey Islanders are crying out for tracts?"

"Let them cry!" said Thomas Williams, with demonic scorn. "Yah! Cry-baby!"

"Reader, did Jimmy Jones' mind being called a cry-baby by wicked Thomas Williams? He did not. For he knew—"

"Chuck it!" shrieked Herries.

"Dry up, you ass!"

"Ring off!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I wish Lathom had to read it himself!" snorted Blake. "I wish we could get him into a quiet place, and read these precious volumes to-him!"

"Bai Jove! Listen to this! Let me wead you some—"

Arthur Augustus proceeded to read out:

"As Tommy Thompson was walking to school one day, he saw a ripe apple on a tree that overhung the wall.

"Oh, how I should like that apple!" said Tommy Thompson. "But I must not take it, for it is not mine!"

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't!"

"Here goes mine!" roared Levison, and he executed

a punt with the volume that had fallen to his lot. And "Little Georgie's Prize" flew across the Form-room and landed in the grate.

"Yass, wathah! And heah goes mine!"

"And mine!" howled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was really somewhat ungrateful of the Fourth-Formers, considering the trouble that Mr. Lathom had taken to provide them with entertaining literature of a decidedly harmless, if somewhat irritating nature.

But the Fourth were fully fed-up. There was a certain amount of satisfaction in dealing with those precious volumes, and they dealt with them. "Little Georgie's Prize" started a conflagration in the grate, as Levison applied matches to it, and "Waste Not, Want Not!" was added, thus depriving Herries of the lesson on rising to fortune by the simple method of saving his old trousers buttons. Lumley-Lumley added the "Slave of Drink," and Blake tossed "Kind Jimmy" on the pile. Volume after volume was tossed to the flames, till the chimney was in a roar.

"Huwway! Now all that wubbish is gone, anyway," chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Stir it up! Don't leave a cinder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, suppose Lathom asks us how we're getting on with the books?" suggested Mellish, rather nervously.

Blake chuckled.

"He can see for himself, if he looks in," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fire roared, and the juniors poked and stirred industriously with rulers, determined that not a fragment of that valuable and enlightening literature should survive the conflagration.

They were still busy, and looking a little black and smoky, when the Form-room door opened and Mr. Lathom came in, with a benevolent smile.

"Well, my dear boys," said Mr. Lathom, blinking over his glasses, "how do you like your books?"

"Hem!"

The Fourth-Formers retreated from the grate. The last flames of the pyre flickered and died, and nothing was left but ashes and smoke.

Mr. Lathom gave a start. He blinked at the smoky juniors, and he blinked at the heap of ashes in the grate. He understood.

There was an awful pause.

A pin might have been heard to drop in the Fourth-Form room. The juniors wondered what was going to happen. They were prepared for lises or lickings all round.

But Mr. Lathom was a just gentleman.

"You do not appear to appreciate the books I have provided for you," he said at last. "I am sorry! I shall take no further trouble in the matter. You may go."

The Fourth-Formers went. Mr. Lathom watched them out of the Form-room, and then rustled away to his study with a heightened colour. He was very much offended.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "I am sowsy we have hurt his feelin's, deah boys. But he weally has no right to be such an ass!"

"He's a good little ass," said Kerr. "But 'Kind Jimmy' is the limit. I bar 'Kind Jimmy!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom did not provide any more literature for his Form. Once was enough.

CHAPTER 12.

News for Teddy.

"COME in, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus spoke in response to a timid tap at the door of Study No. 6. The study was at tea, and over tea in deep consultation with the Terrible Three. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were very sympathetic. A new number of the "Green 'Un" was due, and Study No. 6 naturally missed their favourite paper. Tom Merry had his copy, which, of course, would have been at the service of his friends. But Blake & Co. could not very well borrow it. Unreasonable as Mr. Lathom's command was, the juniors felt bound to obey it. That they could have disobeyed it

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in secret was certain; but, as Arthur Augustus had remarked, it would have been bad form. It was up to them to regard their Form-master's wishes, though they felt extremely sore about it.

Blake wanted to know what was to be done. Monty Lowther had playfully suggested that someone should hold Mr. Lathom by the back of the neck, while he read out a copy of the "Green 'Un'" to him. But that suggestion evidently was not feasible. Certainly if Mr. Lathom had had a copy read to him he would have changed his opinion of the paper, but how to get it done was a question the juniors could find no answer to. They were willing to stand or fall by his verdict if he would only read the paper and judge it fairly. But he would not do anything of the sort.

The timid tap at the door interrupted the consultation. It was Teddy Smith who came in as Arthur Augustus called out cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus's face fell. He had promised Teddy his copy of the "Green 'Un'" every week as he finished with it. But only one copy so far had been handed to Teddy. Last week's number had been burned by Mr. Lathom, and this week's number had not arrived.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm sowwy, Smith, deah boy. There won't be any more 'Boys' Friends'."

Then Teddy's face fell, too. "We're not allowed to take it any more, kid," explained Blake. "Our Form-master's come down on it."

"Has he?" said Teddy. "Never mind; thank you all the same, sir. I suppose I must not take it either?"

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "It doesn't apply to you, deah boy. You can take it if you like, unless Mr. Waitton tells you not to, and he won't."

"Here's a copy for you, my son," said Tom Merry, producing his paper from his pocket. "Take it, with my blessing."

Teddy grinned and took the paper. "Thank you, Master Merry. I'm sorry you mustn't read it, Master D'Arcy."

"Yas, it's vewy hard," said Arthur Augustus. "But Lathom is a washah good little ass, and we're givin' him his head. If you have last week's numbah also, Tom Mewry, you can give that to Smith."

"Certainly!" said Tom. He fetched the paper from his own study, and Teddy departed, satisfied, so far as he himself was concerned. The little wail paused in the passage downstairs to look at the carrier of the two numbers. His work for the day was done, and he was anxious to get on with a certain serial which interested him greatly. Teddy was deep in that serial, in the alcove of the passage window, when Mr. Lathom came along.

The master of the Fourth paused, and observed the boy with a frown.

Teddy Smith was not under Mr. Lathom's orders, and so the little gentleman hesitated to interfere with him. But the sight of the green paper was to Mr. Lathom like a red rag to a bull.

With his strict sense of duty he felt that he could not allow Teddy to go without at least a kindly word of advice. He felt that it must do the boy harm to peruse the gory adventures of Deadwood Bill and Sweeney Todd, for Mr. Lathom was convinced that the green pages contained such stuff, never having looked into them.

Teddy had come to the end of his instalment, and was reading the editorial page. He gave a sudden start as his eyes fell upon a paragraph at the end of a column.

"Oh!" muttered Teddy aloud. His eyes were glued upon that paragraph. There was a dimness of moisture in his eyes now.

Mr. Lathom regarded him with astonishment. What was there in the pages of the green journal to move the boy so deeply?

"Smith!" Teddy did not hear. Mr. Lathom approached him, rustling.

"Smith!" he rapped out.

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Then Teddy started from his brown study. He blinked at the Form-master, his eyelashes wet.

"Smith, I am sorry to see you reading this pernicious paper," said Mr. Lathom, kindly enough.

"Eh, sir?" stammered Teddy.

"I would willingly provide you with something better to read, Smith. Dear me! What is the matter with you, my boy?"

"I—I—excuse me, sir. I—I want to see Mr. Railton," stammered Teddy.

And leaving the Form-master greatly astonished, Teddy Smith hurried away to Mr. Railton's study.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Lathom: "Reading that pernicious paper has a very bad effect upon the manners of young persons. Dear me!"

Teddy tapped at the Housemaster's door, and Mr. Railton's deep, pleasant voice bade him enter. The School House master greeted him with a kindly smile.

"What is the matter, Smith?" Mr. Railton's keen eyes noted the suspicious moisture on Teddy's trembling lids.

"I—I— If you please, sir, if you'll let me, I—I should like to leave, sir," stammered Teddy.

Mr. Railton looked surprised.

"Come, come, my boy! What is the matter?" he said. "Have you had any disagreement with William?"

"No, no, sir."

"I hope none of the boys—"

"The young gentlemen have all been very kind to me, sir," said Teddy. "It ain't that I'm not satisfied, sir. I've had only kindness here. But—but I want to go home."

"Certainly, my lad, if you wish," said Mr. Railton.

"It's here, sir," said Teddy. "I—I only just saw it. I—I didn't have the paper last week, owing to Master D'Arcy's copy being taken away. P'raps you'll be kind enough to read this, sir, and you'll understand. I wouldn't like you to think me ungrateful, sir, after all your kindness."

Mr. Railton, greatly wondering, took the copy of "The Boys' Friend" that Teddy held out to him. He glanced at the paragraph the boy indicated.

It was the paragraph on the editorial page that Arthur Augustus had read out to Mr. Lathom a few days before in the Form-room.

"Mrs. Smith, of Ferndale Cottages, Rexham, is anxious to hear news of her son Edward, who left home two months ago, and has not been heard of since. As Master Smith was a constant reader of this journal, it is hoped that this may meet his eye, and that he will communicate at once with his mother, who is very anxious about him. His uncle is willing to forgive his disobedience, and to welcome him with open arms."

Mr. Railton glanced at Teddy.

"Does this refer to you, Smith?"

"Ye-es, sir. And—and you see what the editor says, too?"

Mr. Railton read on: "My advice to Edward Smith is to return to his home at once, and to remember always that a boy's first duty is to his parents, and that no consideration whatever can excuse neglect of their wishes."

"That is very excellent advice," said Mr. Railton. "I happen to be acquainted with the gentleman who edits this paper, and it is such advice as I should have expected him to give. You will do well, Smith, to act upon it."

"I—I'm going 'to, sir," said Teddy. "I—I never thought they'd miss me at home, and—and uncle was hard on me. I—I thought he was, only I've thought since that perhaps I—I was a bit in the wrong, too. Mother was a bit cross with me for falling out with him, and—and I thought she wouldn't care if I went, so I—I had to earn my living, too, so I went. I didn't know she was anxious about me. I suppose I ought to have known. I wish I'd seen this last week, only Mr. Lathom took Master D'Arcy's paper away. If you don't mind my going at once, sir—"

"Certainly not, my boy; go at once by all means.

Teddy Smith left the study after a few more words. Mr. Railton was left with a very thoughtful expression upon his face.

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CHAPTER 13.

Good-bye to Teddy!

"SMITH'S gon', bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brought the news into the junior common-room in the School House.

"Smith!" said Crooke of the Shell, with a yawn. "Smith minor, do you mean?" "I do not mean Smith minah, Crooke. I mean Teddy Smith."

"So he's going?" drawled Crooke. "What the dooce does it matter whether a stable kid goes or not?"

"It does not mattah to you, Crooke, but it mattahs to his friends," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "As a mattah of fact, I was not addressin' my remarks to you."

"What is he going for?" asked Tom Merry. "Been found boning something?" asked Crooke, with a chuckle.

"I regard that question as a wotten aspersion upon Smith, Crooke, and unless you immediately withdraw it—"

"Bow-wow!" "Unless you withdraw it instantly, I shall give you a fearful thwashin!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry. "I'll hold your jacket, Gussy!"

"And I'll hold your eyeglass!" grinned Blake. "Somebody had better hold Crooke, too," chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" But Lowther's remark came too late; Crooke of the Shell had beaten a hurried retreat from the common-room, and slammed the door after him.

"The uttah wottah!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I have a jollay good mind to go aftah him and mop up the ground with him, bai Jove!"

"Hold on! What about Smith?" said Tom Merry. "What's he going for?"

"It's thwough 'The Boys' Friend.'" "Lathom down on him now!" groaned Blake.

"Wats! No! You wembah that pawgawph about a kid bein' gone away, and his matah bein' anxious about him—"

"Well?" "Well, that's Tedday!" "Gammon!"

"Fact, deah boy. Tedday's told me. Tedday is goin' to be wostored to his anxious parents, all thwough 'The Boys' Friend.'" "My hat!" said Tom Merry. "You ought to tell Lathom that!"

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I call for three cheers for the 'Gween 'Un'!"

The cheers were given with a will. They rang through the common-room and the passages.

"And anybody who wishes to see Tedday off, can come along with me," added Arthur Augustus.

There was a crowd after Arthur Augustus as he walked out of the common-room. Tom Merry & Co. were all anxious to say good-bye to Teddy.

The trap had come to take Teddy Smith to the station, and Teddy's little box was in it. Teddy, looking much more prosperous than he had looked on his arrival at St. Jim's, was about to enter the trap. The juniors surrounded him with a rush, and insisted upon shaking hands with him all round.

"Good-bye, Teddy!" "Best of luck, kid!" "Thank you, all very kindly, gentlemen!" faltered Teddy.

Teddy waved his hand as the trap bowled away down the road, and the juniors waved their caps after him. They all liked Teddy, and were sorry that he was going.

"I wathah think Mr. Lathom ought to be told about that," said Arthur Augustus, as the juniors came in at the gates again. "I am sناه it would atah his opinion of the papah, you know."

"Hum!" said Blake doubtfully. "Who's going to tell him?"

"I am goin' to, deah boy."

"Better leave it alone," said Blake judiciously. "You see, he's made up his mind, and he won't give you a hearing."

Arthur Augustus sniffed. "I shall insist upon a heavin', deah boy, and I shall then wequest him to withdraw his ordah, and also to sign the new wendahs' form for me."

"Now look here, fathead—" "I wufuse to be called a fathead—"

"I tell you—" "Wats!"

Arthur Augustus had to be given his head. He proceeded at once to Mr. Lathom's study. That gentleman received him with a somewhat severe countenance.

"If I may twespah on your time for a few minutes, sir—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy very respectfully. "What is it, D'Arcy?"

"It's about 'The Boys' Fwiend,' sir—" "Enough!" said Mr. Lathom sharply. "I decline to hear a single word on the subject."

"But weally, sir—" "I am shocked and astonished, D'Arcy, by your desire to take that paper, after I have pointed out its pernicious character to you."

"I was goin' to say, sir—" "Absurd and disgusting stories of murderous characters, such as Swooney Todd—"

"Oh, cwumbs!" "And Pirate Dick, and so forth, are not fit reading for you. I absolutely forbid the paper to be taken by any boy in my Form!"

"But weally, sir—" "You need say no more. I may add that I intend to mention the matter to Mr. Railton, and request him to forbid the paper to be taken into the School House at all," said Mr. Lathom sternly. "I shall also speak very severely to the bookseller."

"Yaas, but—" "You may go, D'Arcy."

"I must weally insist, sir, upon speakin'. You are not awah that—" "D'Arcy," thundered Mr. Lathom, "go at once!"

"Certainly, sir, but I desiah to say— Oh, cwumbs! Oh, cwiky!"

That was not really what Arthur Augustus desired to say at all. He said that because Mr. Lathom had taken him by his collar, and was shaking him.

The angry Form-master jerked him out of the study into the passage.

"Now go, and take a hundred lines!" he snapped. And the door closed on the ruffled and indignant Arthur Augustus. Arthur Augustus gasped, and set his collar straight, and ejaculated:

"Bai Jove!" But he did not enter the study again. The master of the Fourth was evidently not to be reasoned with.

CHAPTER 14.

Mr. Lathom Makes a Discovery!

"BLESS my soul!" Mr. Lathom uttered that exclamation in tones of utter dismay.

The Fourth-Form master was on his way to Rylcombe, to carry out his intention of speaking very severely to the bookseller who supplied the St. Jim's juniors with such papers as "The Boys' Friend." He was taking the short cut across the fields, and he was in the middle of a wide meadow when he suddenly halted with that ejaculation.

Mr. Lathom was a very short-sighted gentleman, and, moreover, he had been walking along deeply buried in thought. His mind was running on geological subjects; his thoughts, in fact, were harking back some millions of years, to a period long before Farmer Snooks's bull had been born or thought of. It was not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Lathom very nearly walked into the bull, which was taking its ease in the grass, quite quiet and sedate, till Mr. Lathom trod on his tail.

The best-tempered bull might have been annoyed by being trodden on by a short-sighted gentleman, though

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unintentionally. And Farmer Snooks's bull was not in the least good-tempered.

He gave an indignant bellow and reared up from the grass, and then Mr. Lathom ejaculated "Bless my soul!" and stood petrified.

Bellow!

"Oh, dear! It is a—a bull!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Oh, goodness gracious!"

Probably the bull, indignant as he was, would have let Mr. Lathom alone, if the little gentleman had stood his ground. But Mr. Lathom, naturally, ran for it. He spun round, and started for the fence by the road, his coat-tails wildly flying behind him.

Seeing Mr. Lathom running, naturally the bull's instincts of the chase were aroused, and he bellowed again and lumbered in pursuit.

Half-way to the fence, Mr. Lathom looked round, and his eyes almost started through his spectacles at the sight of the bull thudding in pursuit.

"Oh, dear! I shall be gored!" stuttered Mr. Lathom. "Bless my soul! Oh! Ah! Oh!"

Never had Mr. Lathom distinguished himself on the cinder-path. But he distinguished himself on that field-path, and had any of the St. Jim's fellows been present, certainly they would have cheered him enthusiastically. Mr. Lathom fairly flew. The lowered head and the threatening horns behind him seemed to lend him wings. He came towards the high fence beside the road like a deer, panting, throbbing, palpitating, and covering the ground in wonderful style.

A young man who was sauntering down the road from the village towards St. Jim's paused, and looked over the fence. He was a tall, athletic-looking young man, with a pleasant face and kindly eyes. If he had been of smaller proportions, in fact, he would not have seen Mr. Lathom's peril, for the fence was a good five feet high. As he glanced over, Mr. Lathom came panting up on the inner side of the fence, to make the dismaying discovery that it was too high for him to get over, and that the gate was nowhere near.

The Form-master stopped, his heart throbbing. There was a muffled roar behind him; Farmer Snooks's bull had his blood up now, and he meant business.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Lathom helplessly. "Oh, what shall I do?" Then he sighted the face over the fence. "Help! Help!"

The young man in the road acted promptly. He had not waited for Mr. Lathom's desperate cry for help. He laid his hands upon the fence, and swung himself up, and, gripping the woodwork with his knees, he bent down on the inner side, and grasped Mr. Lathom in his strong arms. The little Form-master was a light weight, which was fortunate at that moment. To his astonishment, he was swung off the ground, and lifted to the top of the fence, just as the bull came thudding up.

"Bless my soul!" stuttered Mr. Lathom.

There was a disappointed snort from the bull. Mr. Lathom was lifted down easily into the road, and his rescuer dropped lightly after him. The Form-master leaned against the fence, and gasped for breath.

"All right now," said the rescuer cheerily.

"Oh, dear! Grooh! Oh! Ah! I—I am completely breathless!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "My dear sir, how can I thank you for your timely aid? Bless my soul! I should certainly have been gored! Oh, dear!"

"It is very fortunate that I was passing, sir," said the young man, with a smile.

"Very fortunate, indeed!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "Certainly very fortunate for me. Dear me! I feel quite upset. I think I had better go back to the school." Mr. Lathom did not feel in a fit state for speaking severely to the bookseller just then. "I am no longer young, and violent exercise does not agree with me. I cannot say how much I am obliged to you."

"Perhaps you will accept the assistance of my arm, sir?" said the young man politely. "I shall be glad to be of service to you."

"Thank you so much!" said Mr. Lathom. "If you are going in my direction—"

"I am going to St. Jim's. If that is the school you referred to—"

"It is. I am a master at St. Jim's—the master of the THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 335.

Fourth Form," said Mr. Lathom. "I shall be glad to accept your kind offer. I feel very much shaken—very much shaken, indeed."

Mr. Lathom leaned heavily on the strong arm that had rescued him as he started for St. Jim's.

"You are going to the school?" he remarked, when he had recovered his breath a little. "You are, perhaps; the friend Mr. Railton is expecting this afternoon?"

"Probably," said the young man. "I am certainly visiting Mr. Railton. We are both interested in the Home Defence Corps, of which I am a member."

Mr. Lathom paused, and glanced at a junior who was seated upon a stile by the side of the lane. It was Tom Merry, and he was reading a green journal. Mr. Lathom's eyes sparkled at the sight of that green journal. Tom Merry raised his cap respectfully to the master of the Fourth and his companion.

"Merry," said Mr. Lathom, "I am surprised to see you reading that paper! Pray excuse me a moment, sir, while I speak to this junior. Merry, you are aware that I have forbidden my boys to read that paper. Sarely you know better?"

Tom Merry coloured a little. He did not like being rated under the eyes of a stranger.

"I like the paper, sir," he said sturdily. "There's no harm in it either."

"I shall speak to Mr. Railton on the subject, Merry," said Mr. Lathom. And he walked on with his companion.

The young man glanced at him whimsically. "You do not like the paper that lad was reading, sir?" he asked.

"I condemn it utterly!" said Mr. Lathom emphatically. "I have had considerable trouble with my boys about it. A most pernicious paper, sir, describing the ridiculous and impossible deeds of murderous characters like Wild-West desperadoes and demon barbers, and such things, quite unfit for a boy to read."

"Such a paper as you describe would be quite unfit for anyone to read," said the young man, with a nod; "but that paper—"

"They are all the same."

"Indeed! I have always understood that 'The Boys' Friend' was quite a different sort of paper," said the young man, with an amused smile. "But you have, doubtless, perused it carefully before forming your judgment?"

Mr. Lathom coughed.

"I have not even looked into it," he said. "It was not necessary. I remember only too well the sensational rubbish that was printed for boys in my own youth. I was on my way to the bookseller's when I met you to speak to him very severely about selling such rubbish. I regard it as very reprehensible. As for the editor of that paper, I should like to meet him, and give him my plain opinion!"

"Doubtless he would like to hear it," said the young man, laughing heartily. "It would be most emphatic, I have no doubt."

"Very emphatic, indeed," said Mr. Lathom, with energy. "I would tell him what I think of his stories of Sweeney Todd and Deadwood Bill and Pirate Dick, and such rubbish. I would ask him how he can reconcile it with his conscience to publish such trash."

"He might reply that he does not publish such trash," suggested the young man mildly. "He might tell you that such trash is rarely published nowadays, and never by a respectable editor. He might explain that he takes a great deal of trouble to provide only healthy reading for an immense number of boys, who look forward every week to their favourite journal."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Lathom, rather taken aback. "You appear to have an opinion of the paper very different from mine. Probably you have not read it."

"On the contrary, I read it every week, for excellent reasons," said the young man. "I have, indeed, a copy in my pocket at the present moment."

"Dear me!"

"Perhaps you would care to look at it, sir?" Mr. Lathom stared a little, as the familiar green journal came into view. It really seemed to haunt him. "If you find in its columns a single reference to Sweeney Todd, or to any subject that could possibly do harm to any

boy, I am willing to concede that the paper ought to be stopped immediately."

"Then I shall very quickly convince you," said Mr. Lathom, smiling.

He took the paper and opened it. The young man waited, with a quiet smile on his face. For the first time Mr. Lathom made an examination of the famous journal he had so hastily condemned.

His face changed strangely as he proceeded to read.

A smile appeared there, the smile broadened into a wide grin, and the grin developed into a hearty laugh.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "This story is very comic—a school story—and I must confess that it is quite harmless. Certainly there is nothing in this story that any person could justly complain of. But surely the rest of the paper is not on the same lines? If so, matters have changed very much since my young days."

"Perhaps they have," suggested the young man. "Most things have changed very much during the past two decades, and why not boys' literature with the rest?"

"Ye-es; why not?" assented Mr. Lathom, quite soberly. He turned the pages hastily, glancing at one after another.

"Certainly there appears nothing pernicious here," he confessed. "Indeed, the editorial page contains some very excellent advice to boys. I do not see a single reference to such characters as Sweeney Todd, certainly."

The young man laughed.

"If Sweeney Todd should appear in those pages, sir, the editor would be inundated with indignant letters from his readers," he said; "and if such slaughterous stories as you imagine should be published in those columns, the falling-off of sales would very soon check such a proceeding. Boys are very critical in these days, my dear sir. They want something decent to read, and they know how to get it."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom.

He glanced again at the paper from time to time as they walked on to St. Jim's. Mr. Lathom was looking very thoughtful indeed.

It was not pleasant to realise that he had, from sheer want of consideration, made a serious mistake. But Mr. Lathom was a just man, and, having seen his mistake, he was willing to acknowledge it and rectify it.

"My dear fellow!" Mr. Railton met the two as they entered the school gates, and shook hands with Mr. Lathom's companion. "I was afraid you had missed your train. You have taken your time in walking from the station?"

"I fear I have delayed this gentleman," said Mr. Lathom. "But for him, Mr. Railton, I should have been gored by a ferocious bull—a very deadly, savage, ferocious animal. This young gentleman lifted me over the fence—a feat of great strength."

"Ah, that is what cricket and training in the Yeomanry have done for you!" said Mr. Railton. "I am particularly glad that you have made Mr. Lathom's acquaintance, as you may be able to relieve his mind of a curious misapprehension. Mr. Lathom, as I have discovered, has been very severe upon a certain green journal for boys with which you are well acquainted."

"Very well indeed!" said the young man, laughing.

"Mr. Lathom, pray allow me to introduce the Editor of 'The Boys' Friend'!" Mr. Lathom almost fell down. "The—the—the," he stammered—"the—the Editor—"

"Certainly!"

"Of—of—of 'The Boys' Friend'!"

"Undoubtedly."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom. "My dear sir, I owe you a thousand apologies! I—I blush for the remarks I made to you concerning that paper. My mind has already been disabused, Mr. Railton, from a perusal of the paper which your friend lent me. But I had no idea— Really—really, how can I apologise?"

"Do not trouble," said the editorial gentleman, smiling. "If you decide to do my paper justice, I shall take that as more than sufficient."

"Most certainly!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "You—you are very kind to take it in this way. I—I really feel very much ashamed—"

Mr. Lathom became almost incoherent. But ten minutes later, when he called the Fourth Form together in the Form-room, he was quite himself again and very eloquent. The juniors had come there in some surprise at the summons. They were still more surprised when Mr. Lathom announced that the embargo upon the "Green 'Un" was removed, and that the journal had his heartiest approval, and that he hoped to see every boy at St. Jim's a constant reader of the same.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Gweat Scott!" Forth came the famous list and the fountain-pen. "Mr. Lathom, would you be so very kind as to sign my list of new wehdahs? I am in gweat hopes of winnin' a motab-bike—"

And Mr. Lathom signed his name with a flourish.

THE END.

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MISUNDERSTOOD.

A large number of the young men in a certain rural village had gladly responded to Lord Kitchener's call for men, and in honour of the occasion the old squire gave all the new recruits a grand feast in the village school-room.

During the proceedings one of the recruits, having disposed of all the courses as fast as they were placed before him, then stood up, removed his serviette, and unbuttoned his tunic.

One of the waiters, seeing this, hurried to him and whispered in his ear:

"Dessert, sir—dessert!"
"Dessert!" exclaimed the new recruit. "No fear! Not as long as I can get a good feed like this for nothing!"—Sent in by C. R. Taylor, Blackley, Manchester.

A SPARKLING RETORT.

First Camper-out: "I have been trying hard to get this fire to burn, and it simply won't. Do you think it wants some more wood?"

Second Camper-out: "Of course it does! Why don't you use your head, you chump!"—Sent in by W. Brion, High Wycombe.

THE HEALING ART.

Doctor: "Did you give your children the physic I sent along for them last night?"

Mother: "Yes, sir."
Doctor: "And how are they to-day?"
Mother: "Well, the youngest one is very bad, to be sure; but it don't seem to have done the others any harm as yet."
—Sent in by H. Shephard, Tottenham, N.

SLACKERS NOT WANTED!

Mr. Morratt, born tired, also father of a large family, had spent most of his married life in bed, while Mrs. Morratt worked hard at the glass-factory just to keep things moving.

One morning Mr. Morratt became impregnated with the large idea of getting out of bed at last and offering his services to his country.

On calling at Mrs. Morratt's one day last week, a lady friend found her in tears.

"Why, Mrs. Morratt, what is the matter? Has your husband been wounded?" asked the friend.

"No, my dear." (Loud sniffles.)
"Well, dear me! I hope he has not been killed!" said the friend anxiously.

"Oh, it's worse than that, my dear! He's coming home!"—Sent in by F. Bartrup, Bow, E.

FOREWARNED.

The scene was the village green, and on it was taking place the annual cricket match between the tradesmen and the local factory.

The bowler sent down a straight ball, which caught the batsman on the pads.

"How's that?" yelled the bowler triumphantly.

"Not 'out!" exclaimed the empire. "But if he does it again he will be."—Sent in by W. Sykes, Millbrook, Stalybridge.

SWEET SOUNDS.

"To-day, for the first time, I was delighted to hear my neighbour's piano going."

"Something worth listening to, I suppose?"
"I should say so! They have got behind with the instalments, and the shopkeeper sent his men to fetch it away."—Sent in by W. Hargreaves, Accrington, Lancs.

SMART BOY!

A Canadian teacher recently gave his pupils a lecture on patriotism. He pointed out the motives which moved Canadians to leave their homes and fight for Great Britain. The teacher noticed that one boy had not paid much attention to the lecture, and, as a test question, he asked him:

"What motives took the Canadians to the war?"
The boy was puzzled for a moment, then, remembering the public "send off" to the local battalion at the railway-station, he replied:
"Locomotives, sir."—Sent in by J. MacFadden, London-derry.

NOT ON THE MAP.

Farmer Brown: "Look here, mister, the war-map you sold me ain't correct!"

Shopkeeper: "Really! How do you know that?"
Farmer Brown: "My boy has written home, and says he's just going to reconnoitre. But I'm hanged if I can find the place marked on the map!"—Sent in by E. Watts, Finsbury Park, N.

SATISFIED HER CURIOSITY.

The Hundred and Twentieth Inquirer: "What is the matter, constable?"

Policeman: "Motor-bus ran over a cat, mum."
Hundred and Twentieth: "Dear me! Was the cat in the road, constable?"

Policeman: "No, mum; the motor-bus chased it up a lamp-post."—Sent in by J. Dunn, West Hartlepool.

HE WENT TOO FAR.

A young man went into a wood-yard and asked for work.
Manager: "Are you strong?"

Young Man: "Yes."
Manager: "Start on Monday."

When he had taken his first week's money, the young man asked:

"Can you give my brother a job?"

Manager: "Is he strong?"
Young Man: "Yes, sir."

Manager: "Tell him to start on Monday."

When he had taken another week's money the young man asked:

"Can you give my father a job?"

Manager: "Is he strong?"
Young Man: "Why, he's stronger than my brother and me put together!"

Manager: "All right; tell him to start on Monday. You and your brother are sacked."—Sent in by G. Bond, Forest Gate, E.

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The little band is overcome by thirst, and Melville, refusing to share his water with the others, pushes onward through the desert, leaving his companions to their fate. Fortunately, however, Yen How lights upon an oasis, and the danger is averted.

After a week's tramping the couple come upon the residence of a wealthy mandarin, and a fight ensues with the servants in the courtyard. Norris Brent is only saved from death by the timely intervention of Silver Pearl. An attachment springs up between Norris Brent and the beautiful Chinese maiden, who is the ward of Ming Yung, the mandarin. Whilst the young Englishman is holding a conversation with Silver Pearl, Ming Yung appears on the scene, and Brent is urged to flee for his life.

Norris Brent returns to England, and is walking through the grounds of the old family mansion, Eagle's Nest, when he comes face to face with his cousin, Guy Melville.

Guy Melville pretends to be pleased at meeting his cousin again, and informs him that through the death of their uncle he is now owner of the estate, Eagle's Cliff. He then offers Norris a position on the estate, which he accepts.

One day Yen How surprises his master by informing him that he has witnessed the arrival of Ming Yung and his ward at Eagle's Nest.

(Now go on with the Story.)

On the Tower—Recognition—The Warning—In the Grove.

On the tower balcony at Eagle's Nest, a rapt, eager look in her dark eyes, Silver Pearl stood gazing out across the sea. The sense of strangeness and loneliness that had weighed upon her spirits of late was forgotten for the time being. She loved all things that were beautiful, and with Nature, in all its aspects, she was at home.

The sound of a light footstep caused the girl to look round, and when she saw Guy Melville at her side a dark shadow seemed to come between her and the sunlight. The instinctive fear and suspicion with which she had regarded the man on first seeing him came back to her mind.

"So you are here alone!" said Melville, with a quick smile. "I expected to find Ming Yung with you."

"He is down below somewhere," Silver Pearl answered. "Do you wish to see him?"

"I do," said Melville; "but not immediately. Finding you here gives me an opportunity of telling you how anxious I am that you shall be perfectly happy while you are my guest. This is a lonely place, of course, and visitors are few

and far between, but whatever I can do to make you feel at home shall be done. Will you always remember that? If you do, I shall feel much more content than if I thought that you did not regard me as a friend eager to be of service to you."

"There is no need for you to worry about my welfare," Silver Pearl replied. "When I need help or advice, I look to him who has always given it to me."

A shade of annoyance and displeasure darkened Guy Melville's face for a moment.

"You mean Ming Yung?" he said. "It is only natural that you should turn to your guardian; but you must not forget that he is now in a strange country, where circumstances are different in every way to what they were in China, and that he will be so preoccupied by the work he is taking up as to have little time to devote to you."

Silver Pearl looked thoughtful. "That is true," she said; "but I never have seen a great deal of him. He has always been a very busy man. Do you know his reasons for coming here?"

Melville, surprised by the question, shook his head. "No," he answered. "I do not, for Ming Yung hasn't taken me into his confidence."

"That is curious," remarked the girl, with disconcerting frankness; "for unless you were his friend you would never have allowed him to come here, and between friends there is no secrecy."

Melville's eyes shifted uneasily before the other's steady gaze.

"You are slightly mistaken," he remarked. "Friendly though we are, Ming Yung and I have not known each other long enough to be much more than acquaintances. He was able to render me some assistance once when I was in China, and in return for that I invited him to stay at Eagle's Nest when I heard that he was looking for some such place, where he could carry on his work without fear of disturbance."

Now Silver Pearl remembered something that brought a sudden flush to her cheeks.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "You were the leader of an expedition that met with disaster in the desert? I heard of you then, although your name, so far as I remember, was not mentioned to me. Your cousin, Norris Brent, was with you?"

"He was," said Melville, in a tone of studied unconcern; "and he was saved, and returned home. His escape from death was as remarkable as my own."

An insistent desire to learn more of Norris Brent possessed Silver Pearl, but she did not voice it. Her instinctive mistrust of Melville kept her silent; yet she could not refrain from asking one question.

"Is he well?" she inquired.

"I believe so," Melville muttered. "His health did not suffer from his experiences abroad."

A glad light showing in her eyes, Silver Pearl turned her head, and looked away from her companion, whose very existence she seemed to forget in her joy and delight that overwhelmed her at knowing that he who had won the love of her young heart had reached his native land in safety.

As she looked down, her glance was arrested by a tall, thin figure.

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youthful figure walking rapidly along the footpath leading to the brow of the cliff.

Her heart seemed to cease beating for a moment. Leaning forward, she gazed intently at the youth, and even before a movement of his head gave her a quickly-fleeting glimpse of his face she knew that he was Norris Brent.

He was out of sight a second later, and Silver Pearl, speechless with amazement, stared down at the place where he had been with wide open eyes.

Was she the victim of some passing illusion? Almost she believed that she was, and, thrilling with eagerness to know the truth, she turned to Melville to question him.

The words she would have uttered never left her lips, for the expression on Guy Melville's face gave her warning. It was dark, threatening, and full of a malignant hate. Swift as a flash it was gone, but she had seen it, and it kept her silent.

"You look startled," Melville smilingly remarked. "Have you seen anything to alarm you?"

The girl smiled back at him, and shook her head.

"Oh, no!" she replied. "What is there that I could see to alarm me?"

"Nothing, I hope," said Melville carelessly; "but your guardian might not think the same as we do in such a matter. It will be as well, I think, for you to bear that in mind."

There was a threat in the words that Silver Pearl was quick to appreciate; but, giving no sign that she understood it, she left the tower, a whirl of conflicting thoughts in her mind.

The knowledge that Norris Brent was near her thrilled her with glad emotion. Never had she imagined that she would see him again so soon.

He had gone out of her life, and no news of him had come to her, for she had no means of ascertaining his whereabouts. Yet she had never despaired of meeting him once more in the future, for hope belongs to youth, and with hope she had love and trust.

The look she had surprised on his face told her that Guy Melville suspected that she had seen his cousin, and that he was more than angry because of it. There was no love lost between him and Brent; thought the girl, but it puzzled her to account for this.

While Silver Pearl was marvelling over the unexpected discovery she had made, Guy Melville went to see Ming Yung, whom he discovered in the old picture-gallery.

The Chinaman, seated at a large table, was inspecting a drawing that he had just made. The light from above fell sharply upon his head and face, showing up his remarkable features in bold relief against the dark oak panelling of the wall behind him, and he took no notice of Melville for some moments.

"Now," he said at last, looking fixedly at his visitor, "you are disturbed in mind. What is the cause?"

He spoke as he would have spoken to a child.

"Your ward has seen Norris Brent," Melville answered, silently cursing the other for having so easily pierced beneath his mask of assumed calm and unconcern. "That is the cause. Silver Pearl was with me on the tower a few moments ago. She looked down and saw my cousin."

Ming Yung showed not the slightest sign of interest in this statement.

"Sooner or later," he said, "she was bound to make the discovery. Did you think otherwise? I foresaw it directly I heard that the lad was living with you."

"In that case," Melville retorted, "you would have been wiser to have allowed me to act as I wished to, and send Brent away. There would have been no danger of him and Silver Pearl meeting then."

Ming Yung gave the other a look that was nearer one of amused contempt than anything else.

"Have no fear for Silver Pearl," he said. "The day will never come when she will think seriously of disobeying my commands. But should she offend me, I shall know how to deal both with her and with your cousin."

"Then, am I to do nothing in the matter?" inquired Melville, dissatisfied and impatient. "There is no reason why I should not order Brent to leave the place to-day, and never return to it again. That would be the best and easiest way of simplifying the situation."

"You may think so," said Ming Yung, "but I do not, and that is sufficient reason for you to agree with me. You want your cousin to be put out of your way, not for a time, but for ever. Exercise patience and foresight, and the realisation of your desire will the sooner come to pass."

When Melville, despising himself for his subjection to the iron will that was imposed upon him, and yet fearing to oppose it, had gone, Ming Yung summoned Ho Beng into his presence.

"And Silver Pearl," he said, "and send her to me at once."

Noiselessly as he had come Ho Beng withdrew, and a minute or two later Silver Pearl stood before her guardian.

"You have seen the lad Norris Brent?" said Ming Yung, in the flat, monotonous tone of voice she knew so well. "So I have heard," he continued, giving her no time to reply to the question. "Now that you know he is here, bear in mind that the between him and you there is a great gulf fixed that cannot be bridged over. Avoid him when you can, but when it is impossible to do that, and you meet and speak with him, repeat to him what I have told you. My vengeance he escaped once. He will not do so a second time."

He waved his hand as a sign of dismissal, and Silver Pearl, who had not spoken a word, turned and left him.

As she was crossing the hall at the foot of the gallery staircase a shadow fell across the sunlight streaming in through the open door. Looking round, she saw Yen How, who, motioning to her to be silent, thrust a note into her hand. Opening it, she found that it was from Norris Brent, asking her to meet him that evening.

"Watch for your opportunity to leave the house any time after sunset," ran the written words. "Cross the drive to the grove of trees in front of the terrace. I will be waiting for you there."

When she had read the note through Silver Pearl stood motionless for some time, her head bent in thought. The warning she had received from Ming Yung was, as she knew perfectly well, no idle one.

Her guardian had commanded her to avoid meeting Norris Brent on pain of incurring an anger that would not only be visited upon herself, but also upon her young lover.

Did she go, there would be a great risk of discovery. Yet she longed to speak with Brent with an ardent desire that recked little of any danger.

Once more Silver Pearl read the note. Then she made up her mind to go and meet her lover in the grove.

Seizing her chance to do so, she stole out of the house, and made her way to the spot where Brent was waiting for her. He ran to meet her, and, clasping her in his arms, kissed her lips again and again.

"Sweetheart," he murmured, "we meet again at last. When you left Hong Kong so mysteriously, without a word of farewell to me, I thought at first that you wished to forget me. Then I felt ashamed of myself for doubting you, and followed you to England, confident that I should find you once more. And now I have found you at Eagle's Nest, of all places in the world, and it makes me feel that I'm the luckiest fellow alive. What did you say when my cousin told you that I was here?"

"He did not tell me," said Silver Pearl; "nor, until I happened to catch sight of you from the tower this morning, did I know where you were."

Brent looked at the girl in startled surprise.

"Not know that I was here!" he exclaimed. "Why, on the very morning after the day you came Yen How told me that he had seen you, and I went at once to my cousin and asked him if it was true. He said that it was, and he also informed me—of course, I didn't believe it—that you had expressed a wish not to see me."

"He lied to you," said Silver Pearl slowly; "with what object you may know better than I do."

Brent shook his head.

"I'm blessed if I do!" he said emphatically. "His manner was most strange. He insulted me, and refused to give me any explanation. Do you suppose that Ming Yung has in some way poisoned his mind against me?"

"That is very likely," Silver Pearl agreed. "Ming Yung would have killed you once, as you remember, and even now you are in danger of your life."

Brent uttered a bantering little laugh.

"Do you still go in fear and trembling of Ming Yung, then?" he inquired. "Why, he is as powerless to harm you, now that you are in England, as he is to harm me!"

"You are wrong," answered Silver Pearl gravely. "You do not know Ming Yung as I do, or you would fear him now as you had cause to fear him in China. Norris," she continued, a little break in her voice, "I have risked a great deal to come here and see you, and I must not come again, for your own sake far more than mine."

Brent drew back a step, and stared at her with puzzled eyes.

"Oh, I say!" he remarked, with a protesting laugh. "You can't mean that, Silver Pearl! It would be absurd for you to be frightened out of seeing me whenever you wanted to now that everything is in our favour. More than that, you must see me, for we love one another, and nobody can keep us apart."

Silver Pearl, her lips quivering, looked away from the eager, handsome face so close to her own.

"You must not speak of love to me," she said, in a low tone of voice. "It is folly to do so. There is nothing in common between your race and mine. We are far as the poles asunder."



Silver Pearl's heart seemed to cease beating for a moment. Leaning forward, she gazed intently at the youth, and, even before a movement of his head gave her a quickly-fleeting glimpse of his face, she knew that he was Norris Brent. (See page 24.)

"Once before you told me practically the same thing," Brent interrupted her impetuously, "and I would not listen to you."

"You must listen to me now," said Silver Pearl, and there was a firmness in her look that startled him, "for it is true."

Brent gazed at her in growing surprise and consternation.

"Then you do not love me?" he said at last. "Is that it?"

Before Silver Pearl had time to speak again the crackle of a breaking twig was heard a short distance off. Instantly Brent crept silently in the direction whence the sound came, and peering round a bush, caught a glimpse of Ho Beng gliding away into the deeper shadows of the grove.

That the Chinaman had followed Silver Pearl from the house with the intention of spying upon her there could be little doubt.

Troubled and anxious, but believing that Ho Beng had been disappointed so far in his eavesdropping, Brent retraced his footsteps.

But he did not find Silver Pearl waiting for him to return. She had gone.

Mystery—The Stranger in the Hut—Karl Marrok—Conspiracy.

"Yen How, what is the meaning of it? Being Chinese, you ought to know something."

Yen How spread out his hands with a gesture of helpless ignorance and perplexity.

"No man can read what Ming Yung have got inside his head," he said. "He velly clever fellow. Suppose you knew what for he come this side my make my fortune quick. But my can tell you one thing. Ming Yung means mischief to you white people."

"How do you make that out?" inquired Norris Brent, who, comfortably ensconced in a basket-chair, was spending a

rainy evening in Yen How's cottage. "Like someone else whom I could mention, you seem to believe that Ming Yung can do the same in this country as he can in China."

"No," answered Yen How, who was squatting in front of the wood fire that was burning in the grate and smoking a chipped and blackened clay pipe. "My no believe any such thing. In China he is a velly powerful man. Nobody more powerful than he. In England people not afraid of him because they think him Chinese, allee same me."

This ingenious pronouncement evoked a laugh of amusement from Brent, who, nevertheless, saw the point of it.

"I understand," he remarked. "You mean that when Ming Yung is at home there is nothing to prevent him from making it extremely uncomfortable for anybody who gets in his way, but that in a foreign land he has to be more careful in his behaviour? That is my opinion. Then what is there to fear in him?"

Yen How significantly tapped his shining forehead. "Blains!" he said. "His blains are to be feared. He come here to find out at your expense something he no can find in China. When he have found it out, then all the world will soon hear of him. My think so."

The crudely-uttered opinion impressed Norris Brent more than he would have cared to own to anyone.

Strange Chinese mechanics had been at work in the left wing at Eagle's Nest for several days past making various structural alterations in the interior of that part of the building and fixing into position electrical apparatus and appliances that had been sent down from London and other places.

What the purpose was behind all this activity Brent did not know, for everything was kept a profound secret from him as well as from everyone else whom he had spoken to on the subject. He greatly doubted if even his cousin shared the smallest shred of Ming Yung's confidence.

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Debarred as he was from entering the left wing of the mansion, he could only vainly puzzle his wits as to the real meaning of what went on there, and this naturally intensified his curiosity, which caused him many sleepless hours at night.

Speculating so much in his own mind as to the probable reason for Ming Yung being at Eagle's Nest had caused him to think less of Silver Pearl than he otherwise would have done.

His frank and generous nature had been stabbed to the quick by the strange and mystifying behaviour of the beautiful girl whom he loved, but he refused to believe that she had ceased to care for him, and assured himself that all would come right in the end.

Since their interrupted conversation in the grove he had not seen Silver Pearl, nor had he attempted to see her, for his pride had been hurt. If it was her wish, he told himself, for him not to meet her, then he would do so. Not until he was sure that she was in need of him would he seek her out again.

"Oh, well," he said to Yen How, replying to the laud observation on Ming Yung made by the other, "you may be quite right in your belief. Still, I hold to the opinion that Ming Yung is harmless so long as he is in England, and shall continue to hold it until I am proved to be wrong."

Rising from his seat, he crossed over to the window and looked out. It had stopped raining, and the setting sun was shining faintly between rolling banks of black cloud piled up in the western sky.

"It's fine again now," he said. "We'll go to the hut for those things we left there this afternoon. It's scarcely safe, I've been thinking, to let them remain there until the morning."

Leaving the cottage, the comrades followed an open path for some distance; and then turned off into the woods. Here it was dry and hard underfoot, for the matted foliage of the great trees whose branches met and intertwined overhead was impervious to the heaviest fall of rain.

For nearly a mile the pair had tramped on, speaking but seldom, when Yen How suddenly stopped and pointed to the ground.

"Somebody come this side," he said. "You see?"

The belt of spongy green turf he was pointing at bore the sharp impress of heavily-nailed boots. The marks appeared to be freshly made, and they led towards the hut, which was now but about thirty yards farther on.

As he could think of no one likely to have been there, Brent became suspicious, and, cautioning Yen How to be silent, went on a little way ahead.

Coming in sight of the hut, he saw the flash of a light through the window. This convinced him that someone was there who had no right to be, for he had himself locked the door that same afternoon, and had the key in his pocket.

Reaching the hut, he found that the door had been broken open, and that a tall, thin man, shrewdly dressed and of gipsy-like appearance, was kneeling on the floor, rolling up into a bundle everything that he had been able to put his hands on.

"Hallo!" said Brent. "How did you get here?"

The intruder started as though he had been shot. Then, seeing who had addressed him, he rose to his feet, with a sly, sallow look in his face.

His eyes were black as jet, matching the colour of his hair, which covered his head in a profusion of little ringlets. A red scarf was knotted round his neck, and Brent noticed, with the scornful amusement of youth, that he sported a couple of thick gold earrings.

"You let me go," he said, speaking with ever so slight a foreign accent, "and I'll clear out, and never come here again."

Brent laughed at the naive impudence of the request. "I dare say you would," he said; "but, unfortunately for you, the matter is not so easily ended. You must come along with me."

The man moved a step or two nearer towards the door. "And what if I refuse to?" he asked, with a looming grin. "You're forgetting that, my young cockerel!"

"Stay where you are!" ordered Brent, as the other took another forward step. "You're not going to slip past me."

The fellow halted. His right hand flew to his belt with an incredibly quick movement, and then there was a flash of bright light as he struck at Brent with a long steel blade.

The lad swung his head aside, and the blade, missing his throat, pierced its way a good two inches into the door-post.

Then Brent, setting his teeth, led drive a blow with his hand, clenched fist that sent his assailant spinning to the far wall of the hut, which shook and shivered to the force of the impact.

The man went down, and before he could rise again Brent was kneeling on him, and shaking him until he turned black and blue in the face.

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OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1D.
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"You miserable skunk!" said Brent, a cold, grim rage possessing him. "What you need is a thirty-minute birching. Stop cursing, or I'll set you up and knock you down again. Yen How, you'll find some cord in that bundle there. Give it to me, and we'll hamper this beauty a little. He's not safe otherwise."

The cord being found, was fastened tightly over the miscreant's crossed wrists. Then he was forced to stand up, and, cursing volubly in some strange tongue, was marched out of the hut, and conducted to Eagle's Nest, where Guy Melville, sent for by Brent, received him and his captor in the hall.

"What's the meaning of all this?" demanded Melville sharply of his cousin. "You seem to have brought me a strange visitor at this hour of the night."

All the time he was listening to the report made to him his gaze never left the prisoner's dark, scowling face. And when he heard of the murderous blow aimed at Brent, a savage regret that it had missed its intended mark swept over him.

"I'll have a talk to the fellow myself," he said to his cousin, when he had heard all there was to be told him. "You can go."

Brent looked astonished. "But you'll not be safe with him alone," he expostulated. "He's a wild beast of a man!"

Melville laughed—a harsh, grating laugh. "He'll not seek to harm me," he said. "If he does, I can easily summon assistance. Leave him to me."

When Brent and Yen How had gone, Melville beckoned the other to follow him into an alcove of the hall. Switching on an electric light, he stared full into the dark, gleaming eyes regarding him, and slowly his lips parted in a sinister smile.

"You should have aimed a surer, straighter blow," he said, in a voice that was almost a whisper. "A chance once lost may never return again."

The listener started, his gleaming eyes glowing now with an unholly light of understanding, and his lips, too, opened in an evil smile.

"Tell me something of yourself," said Melville. "You can trust me."

As he spoke, he took out his penknife, and severed the cords binding the other's wrists. A look of brutish gratitude and surprise rewarded him for the act.

"My name is Karl Marrok," said the man, "and I was born in Hungary, where my parents were Romanies, or gipsies, as you in this country call them. When a lad I took to a seafaring life, and have travelled in many ships all over the world. My last ship was a sailing-vessel. It called at Rocksbay two days ago to take on a supply of fresh water. There I deserted."

"A hard ship to work on?" interrogated Melville.

"No harder than any other," was the answer; "but the men laughed and jeered at me for being what I am—one with gipsy blood in his veins—and just before the ship left Rocksbay I drew my knife on one of them. He did not die, but he will remember me for the rest of his life. Before they could catch me I dived overboard. It was night, and in the darkness I swam ashore without being seen. Since then I have lived in the woods."

"Would you be safe at Rocksbay?"

"I know of a place there," Marrok answered, "where I could live without any fear of the police finding me, even though they searched for me high and low, and I don't think any complaint against me has been lodged with them. Rows and fights on sailing-ships are too common to be taken serious notice of, and the shipmasters never like to set the law in motion, as that wastes their time, and so gets them into trouble with their owners."

"That's true enough," said Melville. "What is the place you refer to?"

"The Smugglers' Tavern," Marrok answered. "It stands about half a mile on the other side of Rocksbay."

"I know it," said Melville. "You'll be quite safe there. Here is some money," he added, taking some gold and silver from his pocket, and putting it into the other's hand. "With that you can do and live as you like until you hear from me. But you avoid getting into trouble. If you do, you cannot expect me to make any further interest in you."

Again the look of brutish gratitude that it had shown before swept across Karl Marrok's swartly face.

"You can trust me," he said—"trust me to the death. I will never fail you after this."

A look of dark and evil understanding passed between the two men. Then Melville took his new associate to a side door, and let him out into the night.

He alone saw Karl Marrok depart. He only knew what it was that he intended Marrok should do for him when some favourable opportunity presented itself.

The Yellow Wizard.

Ming Yung worked late into the night. He was in the Magicians' Room, where centuries before learned astrologers had studied the stars and predicted the fate of the great ones of the earth.

Since he had entered into possession of it, the Magicians' Room had been transformed in its appearance.

It was now the working study of a modern day scientist, whose knowledge is only bounded by the limit of the ever-advancing discoveries made by the human mind.

What is a mystery to-day is known to-morrow. In the realm of science there is no immutably fixed halting-place beyond which the searchlight of the pioneer cannot go.

Farther and ever farther travel the beams of the lamp of knowledge, held aloft by the worker who devotes his life to enriching human progress and existence.

Among the great thinkers and scientists of his day, Ming Yung held a foremost place, although the world had heard nothing of his attainments.

That he was brilliantly clever, his fellow-students of years before had cause to remember; but he had long since been unheard of by them, and if any of them ever thought of him now it was as the Chinese genius who had vanished for ever from human ken.

Unlike those with whom he had studied and triumphed with in past days, Ming Yung had turned his brilliant powers of intellect to the acquirement of knowledge for dark and evil purposes, as men of the West would have declared, although he himself fervently believed that he was working for good.

Before all else he placed his country, that immense continent with its teeming hundreds of millions of the yellow race, and, with the fiery vision of a prophet of old, he foresaw the time when the East, and not the West, would lead the nations of the world.

But in the march of progress and civilisation the yellow race had been left far behind. The Japanese alone had, by dint of tremendous effort and untold national sacrifices, struggled to a position which had gained for them the respect of Western peoples.

The Chinese, great in number and the possession of natural riches though they were, had for countless generations been oppressed and trodden down by stronger nations, whose strength lay principally in the gifts that science had conferred upon them.

The handicap was too great to be overcome, Ming Yung reasoned, and what was necessary to give the yellow men such a commanding lead as would make them not only the equals but the conquerors of their rivals, was the possession of scientific knowledge unknown to the servants and professors of any other race.

Ming Yung believed that this requisite knowledge for the attainment by the Chinese of world-wide power and domination would soon be his.

The secret that he had devoted so many years of his life to wresting from the unknown was at last within his grasp.

There, in the Magicians' Room at Eagle's Nest, the ancient mansion that had witnessed the passing of the centuries in which England had grown from greatness to added greatness, he was on the threshold of the discovery that was, he believed, to make him the master of the universe.

In that same room, hidden but observant, was Norris Brent, sent there by a resolve to know the mysterious secret of the sphinxlike Chinaman that was implanted in his mind by Fate itself.

The lad against the man. The nimble English wit and resource pitted against the unfathomable deceit and treachery of the yellow genius.

Such was to be the silent battle that was ordained to begin this same night.

(The forthcoming instalments of this great story are exciting in the extreme. If your chum wants an adventure yarn of the very best, recommend to him "UNDER THE DRAGON!")

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For Next Wednesday:

"THE ST. JIM'S VOLUNTEERS!"

By **Martin Clifford.**

Under this title, the popular "Gem" author has given us a really rousing story of school life, in which Grundy of the Shell is conspicuous in forming a Volunteer Corps, with himself as commanding officer. Commissions in the Corps may be purchased, but those who cannot run to it have to content themselves with the humble rank of private. The fun rolls fast and furious, and when the Volunteers, taking the law into their own hands, start trench-digging on the senior cricket pitch, there is trouble! Not content with this diabolical deed, Grundy and his warriors proceed to wreck the annual cricket-match with Greyfriars; but eventually Monty Lowther thinks out a brilliant jape which, when put into effect, proves a decided death-blow to

"THE ST. JIM'S VOLUNTEERS!"

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY." A Plea for a Monthly Issue.

One of the greatest features of recent double numbers has been the inclusion of "Tom Merry's Weekly," the immensely popular little journal controlled by the chums of the Shell at St. Jim's.

My readers have expressed themselves as being highly delighted with the bright little amateur magazine, but, like Oliver Twist, they want more, and I have had a good many letters urging me to issue "Tom Merry's Weekly" every month.

This is an astounding suggestion, but I see no earthly reason why it should not be carried out with great success; but before taking any steps in the matter, I want every "Gemite" to write me a postcard giving his (or her) opinion of the matter.

If I eventually decide to publish the "Weekly," it will appear on the second Wednesday in each month, at the very nominal charge of a halfpenny. Needless to say, it will be packed full of incident and excitement, and will delight the heart of every "Gem" reader.

Write a line to your Editor on the subject TO-DAY!

JUST THE TALES FOR TOMMY.

The readers whose names I give below have very kindly sent me parcels of back numbers for distribution among wounded British soldiers.

I cannot but admire the good-natured generosity of these "Gemites," who have helped to brighten many a hospital ward in Great Britain. It is a splendid and unselfish way of "doing their bit," and they are bound to be rewarded in the long run:

"Dinah" (Hereford).
 George W. Butterworth (York).
 "A Reader" (Gillingham, Kent).
 "An Airdrieonian" (Airdrie).
 A. A. Withrow (Belfast).
 N. Roberts (Llandudno).
 Hector Macdonald (Highbury).

I have also received a very interesting letter from Miss Doris E. Frodin, who has been doing excellent work in order to cheer our brave soldiers in hospital. My girl chum writes:

"The 'Gem,' 'Magnet,' and other books of our ripping library have not only provided the men with good literature, but have also secured for them a standing invitation for lovely outings. Mrs. Bowers, of Sutton Park, sent me a big parcel of books, and invited the wounded to tea. We took three cars full of men, and had a lovely time. Altogether we numbered seventeen, and Mrs. Bowers provided a stunning feed, which included strawberries and cream.

"Will you please ask all 'Gemites' who meditate sending books to send them to my private address, because if they go to the hospital the letters get lost, and I cannot acknowledge them.

"Miss D. E. Frodin, Hampton-in-Arden, near Birmingham, always finds me."

When the war is over, and all those who have played a prominent part in it are bearing their blushing honours thick upon them, we must not forget Miss Doris Frodin and the warm-hearted Mrs. Bowers.

MISSING!

Mrs. H. K. Banks, care of John McCormick, R.R. No. 5, Watford, Ontario, Canada, is very anxious to obtain news of her daughter, who was a great admirer and regular reader of the "Gem" and "Magnet" Libraries.

Can any reader of the "Gem" assist the good lady in her efforts to trace the absent relative?

GRAND PICTURES GIVEN AWAY! Special Offer to "Gem" Readers.

If any "Gemite" would like to receive a copy of A. C. Michael's great war picture,

"THE BATTLE ON THE LAND!"

I shall have pleasure in posting one to him (or her) on receipt of a penny stamp to cover postage.

This picture is eminently suitable for framing, and is executed by a master-hand, for Michael's work in the weekly illustrated papers is world-renowned.

I have only a limited number of these superb pictures for distribution, and applications will be dealt with strictly in rotation.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

H. W. M. (Darlington).—The riddles you send in are antique and moth-eaten. They must have accompanied Noah from the Ark. Try something more original.

Ebel King (Salford).—The idea of a badge for "Gem" readers is already under consideration. Tom Merry is fifteen years of age.

P. D. O'Sullivan (Southampton).—A splendid idea, and one which I will carry out as soon as possible. Best wishes.

"Recto" (Streatham).—No three-penny-book story dealing with Talbot has yet been issued.

R. Mitchell (Limerick).—The characters you mention went to school in 1908.

J. M. (Ireland).—I passed on your letter of praise to Mr. Pearson, the author of "The City of Flame," and he wishes me to tell you that he blushes!

N. H. Cleverly (Newport, Mon.).—Koumi Rao is still at St. Jim's.

(Continued on page 31 of cover.)

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

Julie V. (Highbury).—Thanks very much for your nice letter. Your sister must be a remarkable girl if she can run 220 yards in eleven seconds. That same time is considered quite good for the 100 yards! You have made a mistake in your calculations, Julie. Still, I much appreciate the loyalty you and your sisters show to my papers.

Frank Bennett (Transvaal).—What! Another badgerer for badges? I must move in the matter very shortly, that's evident.

Lucile Michand.—Thank you very much for your letter condemning the cads who pick holes in the "Gem." I agree with you that only snobs would take exception to Talbot. The fact that his past was of a dark and doubtful character is all the more credit to him now that he has lived it down.

Driver Lane (Corton Colford).—Very many thanks for your loyalty. I hope the companion papers flourish exceedingly in your regiment.

Arthur G. (Christchurch).—We must certainly have another story of D'Arcy falling in love. I expect Mr. Clifford has a "whizzer" of some sort in the back of his head. With regard to the Tommies in India, I am making arrangements for current numbers of the companion papers to be sent out to them regularly.

Thomas Keenan (Belfast).—You certainly are a keen 'un, if you have invented such a wonderful model aeroplane all on your own. The address of the War Office is simply "London, S.W." I am glad to see that my chums in Belfast are banded together to "keep the tyrants down," as you express it; but you mustn't be too hard on poor old Bobby Carlton. He's reformed!

"Sportsman" (Hull).—I will endeavour to do as you suggest.

Frank Parry (Liverpool).—Send in your Storyettes on post-cards to Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.

A Regular Reader (Birmingham).—St. Jim's is situated in Sussex. I know it left a bad taste in the mouth of my "Gem" readers when they saw their champion, Tom Merry, defeated by Bob Cherry. But what would the "Magnet" readers have done had the result been reversed? You must take it smiling, as Tom Merry himself would advocate.

T. Crowther (Birmingham).—My knowledge of tame mice is so limited that I am afraid I cannot help you.

T. B. (Hamilton).—I will see what I can do for you.

Miss E. Mulcahey (Co. Cork).—No distinction is made between long and short Storyettes. Both are equally likely to pull off a prize. So wire in and win!

Archibald Murray (Winnipeg).—Your surmise is correct. Go up one!

Joseph Herriek (Manchester).—The "Gem" you mentioned has been out of print for a long time.

E. V. L. K. (Transvaal).—Thank you for your suggestion, which I will keep by me.

Valen Jones (Nantwich).—You have rather a nice style of drawing, and ought to get on if you stick to it.

A Satisfied Northamptonian.—"No, there are no Northampton boys at St. Jim's."

A Gemite (Monaghan).—I think you are rather off-side when you accuse the "Gem" of being all war and nothing else. I should think there was less about the war in the "Gem" than in any other boys' paper on the market.

"Anxious" (Sydenham).—The Correspondence Exchange cannot be revived until after the war.

"A Loyal Gemite" (Scotland).—You will soon grow out of the weakness you mention.

"Scotch" (Manchester).—Thank you for your suggestion, which has been duly noted.

G. Mallett (Battersea Park).—You may well be proud of your collection of "Gems." I wonder how many other readers possess a complete set from No. 1!

James Kernan (Lancaster).—Sorry to hear you cannot take much to "The Penny Popular." It ranks as first favourite with a good many boys.

L. W. S. (Sydenham).—Thanks for your suggestion. It is one which I have had in mind myself for a long time, and something will be done in the matter shortly.

"A Very Loyal Gemite" (Clapham Junction).—The place you name is in Clapham Road.

"A 'Gem' Reader" (Liverpool).—F.o.b. means goods bought (or sold) to be delivered "free on board." F.A.S. usually stands for "Fellow of the Antiquarian Society."

F. Brooke.—The true facts concerning Lumley-Lumley's "death" came to light recently in "The Penny Popular."

Leslie H. Christie (Canada).—I am sorry I cannot help you to get a Christian such as you name.

N. T. Roberts-Sutton (Darlington).—Thank you for the several letters you have sent me recently. In my own opinion, the inclusion of a girl character improves a story.

"Canny Scot" (Fife).—The "Empire" Library has ceased to exist for a long time now.

N. Lynn (London, N.).—You will doubtless have read by now Mr. Clifford's excellent stories of a Jewish character.

T. Crawshaw (Dewsbury).—Post-cards only, please! No Storyettes can be considered unless sent in in accordance with the conditions.

Elizabeth Board (Bermonsey).—See reply to T. Crawshaw, printed above.

"Disappointed" (Stockport).—I am aware that Tom Merry was made to sing small in the story called "Sportsmen All," but don't take it to heart so much. Tommy will be given a chance to win back his laurels shortly.

D. C. (Peckham).—The character you mention is still at St. Jim's.

Roland Walker (New Southgate).—Yes, I agree with you that 3s. 5d. is too great a tax on the average boy's pocket, and the book in question will be issued at a cheaper rate.

Joseph Simm (Liverpool).—I have neither time nor space to give you a detailed account of Talbot's past life. Sorry!

F. H. V. M. (Dalston).—The nearest town to St. Jim's is Wayland, Ryckombe being only a small village.

A Faithful Reader (Glasgow).—The Christian names of Redfern, Digby, and Herries are Harry, Robert Arthur, and George, respectively.

"Lestiana" (County Durham).—The rifle mentioned by you is now practically obsolete. The Christian name of the character you mention is Herbert.

R. E. Gigg (London, W.).—You're not a regular reader of the "Penny Pop," young man, or you would have seen that Jervoid Lumley-Lumley was merely in a trance.

B. Hill (Port Elizabeth).—If every reader of the "Gem" will only rally round and give the word, "Tom Merry's Weekly" will appear regularly on the market shortly. You might wake things up in Port Elizabeth.

Private M. Rosen (German West Africa).—Glad to hear that Botha's easy conquest enabled you to continue reading the "Gem." Good luck to you!

"A Girl Reader."—The authorities will not allow us to do as you suggest, although, for the personal comfort of the soldiers concerned, we should very much like to. Your drawing of the Terrible Three is quite good. I notice they are reading the "Gem." It's a habit every boy has nowadays.

C. H. J. (Princess Royal).—Sorry lack of space prevents me from reproducing the interesting newspaper-cutting you enclose. The poem you sent me was great.

G. P. (Norseman).—Thank you for your very interesting and entertaining letter. By my halibut, the "Gem" seems to be doing right well in your district. Advance, Australia!

"Enthusiast" (Subiaco).—So you're another Australian, are you? Good luck! I certainly agree with you that the "grumblers" would have something to grumble about if they had to pay fourpence for a copy of the "Gem," as you have had to do in your remote town. Please let me hear from you again.

Harold Baker (Sheffield).—You may be a staunch reader of the "Gem." Harold, but you haven't observed the rules of our Storyette Competition. Every day I have to disqualify jokes because they are not sent in on postcards, in accordance with the conditions.

"A Lover of the 'Gem'" (Johannesburg).—Your suggestion—a very good one, by the way—is already under consideration. Look out for the big sensation coming along shortly.

Miss W. White (Scotland) wishes to know if I can tell her of "a good career for girls, preferably one with spirit in it." Why not be a barmaid? Seriously, though, I know of few vocations for the fair sex, which are of a vigorous order. The best plan for my chum is to secure a situation of the usual kind, and to go in for athletic indulgences in her spare time. The Girl Guides is a very excellent organisation, and one which should appeal to every high-spirited maid. Next, please!

T. E. Coyne (Leicester).—Oh, so you're next, are you? Who is the better cricketer of Tom Merry and Talbot? Tommy, of course! We must stick to the old firm. Mario Rivers is seventeen years of age.

J. H. Jones (Johannesburg).—If ever there were a distant town where the "Gem" goes like hot cakes, that town is Johannesburg, and I am deeply indebted to you for all you have done for the companion papers there. May your shadow never grow less!

"Two Loyal Girl Readers" (South Africa).—I do not quite see the wisdom of letting Talbot throw in his lot with the Terrible Three, thus making that select circle the Terrible Four. Still, I appreciate your kind suggestion.

Gunner H. Jones (R.F.A., Woolwich).—I should not be permitted by the War Office to do as you suggest. Sorry!

W. Wilkin (H.M.S. Excellent, Portsmouth).—See reply to Gunner Jones, printed above.

J. Whiting (Shadwell).—Your previous letters to me must have been unaccountably overlooked. Talbot is an orphan.

"A Staunch Scottish Chum" (Glasgow).—There is no need for any loyal son of Scotland to go into hysterics just because some write mentions the word "English" instead of "British." No adverse personal reflection upon the Scots is intended at all.

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