

THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!

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



HOMAGE TO THE GREAT GUSSY!



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON. E.C.
 OUR .. THREE .. COMPANION .. PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."
 — LIBRARY — ; — POPULAR — ; — — 1/2° — —
 EVERY MONDAY ; EVERY FRIDAY ; EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday :

"KILDARE'S ENEMY!"

By Martin Clifford.

The grand, long, complete story which appears next week introduces to St. Jim's a South African boy of a particularly wideawake and joking disposition. Sidney Clive walks right into the arms of the Grammarians immediately upon his arrival at Rylcombe, before he has even seen St. Jim's. But it is not the Grammarians who score; it is Clive. He falls foul of Figgins & Co., and again he does more than hold his own. He also incurs the enmity of Sefton, the black-guardly prefect of the New House, head of the House for the time being, as Monteith is away. Sefton is plotting to bring about the ruin of Eric Kildare, the popular captain of the school; but, through Clive and Figgins, Kildare comes out on top, and St. Jim's sees the last of

"KILDARE'S ENEMY!"

"GEM" AND "MAGNET" LEAGUES.

These leagues have been springing up like mushrooms lately, and I see reason to fear that the average life of them is not much longer than that of a mushroom. I think my readers are very much inclined to underrate the difficulty of running successfully a correspondence league which they are willing, in their uncalculating generosity and ambition, to throw open to the whole world—or, at least, to that considerable portion of it which reads the "Gem" and "Magnet." These difficulties are very real, and they soon choke off all but the most enthusiastic and industrious.

A favourite type of league is that which aims at sending parcels of back numbers to our gallant men in khaki. I have never seen much hope for any big success in this way. Not because the men don't want the back numbers. They do! But, you see, we insert their appeals whenever received, and those appeals are promptly answered by many scores of readers, who, for their part, would naturally prefer sending the numbers they have to spare direct to a soldier to sending them to the secretary of a league to be forwarded to soldiers.

Many readers have suggested from time to time the formation of a big league under my direct control, with badges by which members may recognise one another. I believe there is room for such a league; but if I started it I should only do so after I had come to feel fully assured that it would not be of the here to-day and gone to-morrow type.

No register of the many "Gem" and "Magnet" Leagues organised by readers has ever been kept in this office. Though the labour of compiling one will be by no means small, I am prepared to undertake it if my readers will help me. Understand this—I do not mean that I have any intention of assuming control over the leagues now existing. I would prefer that they should go on as in the past, for I am quite sure that the promoters of all of them are keen on my papers, and are honestly doing all that they can to aid them. But it would help me in arriving at a decision as to whether the kind of big league I have thought of is possible, if the president or secretary of each "Gem" or "Magnet" League now in existence would send me particulars somewhat as follows: (a) When started; (b) objects of the league; (c) number of members; (d) whether merely local or of wider scope; (e) anything else likely to be of help to me in coming to a decision as to the formation of the possible big league, to which the smaller leagues could later be affiliated if their members desired it.

OUR NOTICES.

These have been increasing altogether too fast of late. Apart from the work involved, I really cannot find room for so many as are now pouring in upon me. It would help me if readers would remember that I am not prepared to insert notices of the sale or exchange type from would-be sellers,

though I do not object to the comparatively small number that come from would-be buyers. I cannot insert notices from readers who want to correspond with other readers of the opposite sex. And I cannot, except for soldiers and sailors, insert notices asking for back numbers of the papers free. As regards the first and the third class thus cut out, my reason is simply that space does not allow. Once I began to insert them I should be fairly flooded out with them, and even the dealing with the letters involved would be a heavy addition to the work of my staff.

OUR COMPANION PAPER, THE "MAGNET."

Most readers of the "Gem" are readers of the "Magnet" also, and will no doubt see there what I have to say on both the subjects just discussed. But if anyone interested in either does not read the "Magnet," I want him or her to make sure of getting this week's number, for my chat here is not a mere repetition of that in the other paper; and I should like readers to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest both. Moreover, everybody who takes my hint will get full value for the money expended.

NOTICES.

Cricket and Football.

D. Stonehouse, 53, Cambridge Street, Uplands, wants to arrange matches for his club (average age 17) with other footer clubs in and around Swansea.

Trinity Old Boys (15) want matches for the coming footer season with clubs within a four-mile radius of Tooting. Hon. Sec., A. Buttress, 181, Lessingham Avenue, Tooting, S.W.

F. Pyatt, 86, Silverman Road, Catford, S.E., wants away matches for his club within five miles of Catford for the coming footer season.

Fairfield F. C. (15-16) want home and away matches within four-mile radius of Woolwich for coming season. Hon. Sec., H. Burt, 20, Gildersome Street, Woolwich, S.E.

Christchurch United F. C., want matches for the coming season. Hon. Sec., W. F. Collier, 132, Coventry Road, Ilford.

Red Crusaders F. C. (average age 17) want home and away matches for the coming season within a 6-mile radius. Apply Sec., 127, Knight's Hill, West Norwood, S.E.

Brigade Athletic medium (14-15) want home and away cricket matches within three miles of Harringay. S. W. D., 105, Warham Road, Harringay, N.

Lynton Juniors C. C., (11½) want matches for Saturdays and holidays within three miles of Turnham Green church. Hon. Sec., S. Aylard, 83, Acton Lane, Chiswick Park.

Back Numbers, &c., Wanted.

Miss E. Thompson, 8, North Row, New Delaval, Newsham, wants to buy back numbers of the "Gem" containing stories in which Tom Merry, or Talbot, or D'Arcy play the leading parts.

By Miss Doris Blyth, Woodbine Cottage, Leamore, near Walsall, back numbers or volumes of the "Gem."

By Rifleman F. Harman, 1346, Lewis Gun Section, 17th Rifle Brigade (I.F.), B.E.F., France, any books or magazines which readers have to spare.

By Private C. Davies, A.S.C., 095902, 46th Remount Squadron, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, Egypt, back numbers of companion papers since beginning of this year, if any reader will be kind enough to send them.

Your Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

THE PATRIOTS OF ST. JIM'S!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Skimpole entered the study, evidently prepared for business, for he had a huge volume under each arm, for reference. (See Chapter 12.)

CHAPTER 1.

More Important Than Tea.

"SLACKER!"

Jack Blake came into Study No. 6, pitched his cricket-bat into a corner, and addressed that remark in emphatic tones to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy was seated at the study table, with a pen in his slim fingers, a sheaf of foolscap before him, a thoughtful frown on his brow, and a spot of ink on his nose.

Herries and Digby followed Blake in, red and ruddy from cricket practice. And they remarked in unison:

"Shirker!"

"Lazybones!"

D'Arcy did not even look up. He seemed totally unaware of three wrathful glares that were fixed upon him.

"When a chap slacks instead of coming down to the cricket," said Blake, "a chap expects a chap to get tea ready."

"When a silly ass is too lazy to play cricket, the least a silly ass could do is to get the kettle boiling," said Herries.

Next Wednesday,

"KILDARE'S ENEMY!" AND "CORNSTALK BOB!"

"Pway don't wowwy, deah boys!"

"What?"

"I'm wathah busy."

"Do you know it's half-past six, fathead? What about tea?"

"Nevah mind tea, Blake! I am wathah busy. Pway go and have tea with Tom Mewwy, or Kangawooh, or somebody. Pewwaps I will join you latah. Pway don't interrupt me when I'm w'itin' as hard as I can. I've got to get this finished by half-past seven."

"Lines?" asked Digby.

"No. Somethin' more important than lines!" said Arthur Augustus. "Would you mind goin' out of the studay quietly?"

"We've come in for tea!" roared Blake.

"How can you have tea heah when I've got the table covahed with papahs?" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't be an ass, Blake!"

"Oh, I'll soon shift the papers!" said Blake.

"Let those papahs alone, you ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus, springing to his feet. "You will get them mixed!"

"Well, what does that matter? If it's your contribution for the 'Weekly,' I dare say it will read as well mixed as unmixed."

"It is not a contwibution for the 'Weekly,' you duffah! It is my speech!"

"Your what?"

"Speech! I pwesume you know what a speech is? Haven't you seen the notice I have put on the board? I am callin' a meetin' for half-past seven in the Form-room, and I have to get my speech weady."

"And do you think," said Blake, in measured tones, "that anybody's going to listen while you reel off rot from a dozen sheets of foolscap?"

"Certainly not! It is not wot. It is a wippin' speech, pointin' out how to win the wah—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I suppose you will admit, Blake, that the wah has been dwaggin' on long enough? I am goin' to address the school on the subject. I twust that my ideah will catch on, and that it will spwead."

"You've got an idea?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I suppose you ought to celebrate the occasion, as it's the first you've ever had," said Blake considerably. "But the important matter just now is, not winning the war, but tea—tea, you know! We shall always have the war; but we can't always have tea. So clear off the table and lend a hand!"

"Wats!"

"Then here goes!"

Blake proceeded to clear the table. There was a yell of wrath from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as the sheets of foolscap went flying in all directions. The study carpet was quite snowed under by them.

"You uttah ass! You feahful wuffian! Leave my papahs alone!"

"Give me some of them," said Herries, taking the frying-pan out of the cupboard. "This pan wants cleaning out."

"Hewwies, you ass, if you use my speech for cleanin' the fwyin'-pan—"

"And I want some to light the fire," said Digby, raking at the grate. "Half a dozen sheets will do."

"You feahful wottah, Dig—"

"The meeting will be grateful, you know," remarked Blake. "The shorter the speech, the better they'll like it. Here you are, Dig!"

Arthur Augustus rushed to the rescue of his manuscript. Blake & Co. did not seem to attach any importance whatever to the speech their noble chum was to deliver at the meeting in the Form-room. Only Arthur Augustus himself understood the great importance of it.

He clutched a handful of written sheets from Blake, just in time to save them from becoming fuel. But Herries was already rubbing the frying-pan out with another handful, and Arthur Augustus pounced upon him in great excitement.

"Give me my papahs, you feahful wottah!"

"Here you are!" said Herries, handing them over.

"They're greasy. Give me a fresh lot."

"You—you howwid beast!" gasped Arthur Augustus, looking at the greasy sheets in horror. "Weally, Hewwies—"

"Give me some more of them, Gussy."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I wegard you as a howwid beast!"

"Here's some more, Herries—" began Blake.

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Arthur Augustus made another rush. He grabbed the manuscripts from Blake.

"You uttah wottah! You feahfully howwid monstah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to write a lot of that speech ovah again now!" howled Arthur Augustus. "And I must have it weady for half-past seven! You can see vewy well that you cannot have tea in this studay! Go and have tea with Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, I think we can have tea here!" grinned Blake.

"We'll try, anyway! Shove those rashers on, Herries!"

"Right-ho!"

"Where's the cloth?"

"I wegard you as wottahs! I wegard—"

"I'll tell you what," said Blake, as if struck by a sudden bright idea. "You can go and write your speech in Tom Merry's study. Those Shell bounders haven't come in yet. And we're on rather short commons, too. I'll have your rasher."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his noble nose. He gathered up the loose sheets of scribbled manuscript.

"I wegard you with uttah scorn!" he said witheringly.

"At a time when the Huns are at the gate—"

"What rot! There aren't any Huns at the gate!" said Blake. "Unless you mean old Taggles. Taggles is a bit of a Hun."

"I am speakin' figuwatively—"

"You shouldn't speak figuratively at tea-time. Can't you cut the rind off those rashers instead of speaking at all?" demanded Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! At the tewwible hour when the foe is at the gate I have a mind above tea!"

"Is that part of the speech?"

"Wats! I wefuse to wemain in this studay with a set of wotten, unpatwiotic boundahs!"

Arthur Augustus, with his aristocratic nose in the air, marched out of the study, his hands full of valuable manuscript. Blake and Herries and Digby cheerfully went on getting tea. Arthur Augustus marched along to Tom Merry's study, which he found vacant. Quite oblivious of tea-time, he sat down to dash off the eloquent sentences which were to elicit roars of cheering at the meeting—perhaps!

"I wonder what bee he's got in his bonnet this time?" Blake remarked reflectively. "One thing's jolly certain—if Gussy expects the fellows to listen to him speechifying, Gussy is booked for a disappointment. What the deuce does he know about winning the war, and what good will it do to gas here on the subject? The House of Commons is the proper place for gassing."

And Blake & Co. sat down to tea; and as Arthur Augustus did not return, and they were hungry, they disposed of his "whack" for him.

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus Calls a Meeting.

"M Y hat!" remarked Monty Lowther.

Lowther had paused before the notice-board in the hall. Tom Merry and Manners stopped also.

"Anything new?" asked Tom.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Several fellows were grinning round the notice-board. There was a new paper on the board, and apparently it was the cause of the hilarity.

"Sure, it's Gussy again!" remarked Reilly, of the Fourth.

"Good old Gussy—always playing the giddy ox!" said Tom Merry, and he approached to read the notice. Then he chuckled, for it ran:

"NOTICE!

"A meeting will be held at 7.30 in the Fourth Form-room. A. A. D'Arcy, Fourth Form, will take the chair.

"A. A. D'Arcy will deliver an address on the subject of
'WINNING THE WAR!'

With especial reference to the principle of

EQUALITY OF SACRIFICE!

"Discussion encouraged after the address. Seniors as well as juniors are invited—and masters are welcome.

"(Signed), ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

"Good old Gussy!" said Manners. "When the seniors see this there will be a rush of the Sixth to the Fourth Form-room. I don't think!"

"And the masters will be simply breaking their necks to get there—perhaps!" chuckled Levison.



The juniors surrounded Levison of the Fourth in the quadrangle. Levison was wheeling out Gussy's handsome jigger—the extremely expensive and select jigger which had cost D'Arcy's pater seventeen guineas. "You uttah wottah! What are you doin' with my bike." (See Chapter 13.)

"Silly ass!" remarked Crook, of the Shell. "Nobody will go."

"Might go and rag him," suggested Mellish.

"Sure, that's not a bad idea. Let's all go and take peashooters," said Reilly. "We could make it quite lively for Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I'm goin'!" said Hammond. "Gussy's a good little ass! Why shouldn't 'e gas about the war if 'e wants to? Everybody's doin' it."

"True, O King!" said Monty Lowther. "Gassing about the war is the order of the day. Our great statesmen set us an example, and it's up to us to follow it. Gussy is only getting into training for the House of Lords. They'll have to stand it there some day."

"Oh, we'll go!" said Tom Merry. "The war's really lasted long enough, and if Gussy knows how to finish it next week he ought to be given his head."

"Ha, ha!"

"Then we shall have to buck up with tea," said Manners.

"It's past seven now."

The Terrible Three went up to their study. They stared

as they entered at the sight of D'Arcy seated at the table, which was covered with written manuscripts.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Make yourself at home, you know."

"Yaas, deah boy; that's what I'm doin'," said Arthur Augustus, looking up. "I suppose you chaps don't mind my w'itin' my speech heah? Those wottahs in my study have tweeked me in a spirit of wibaldwy."

"Horrid!" said Tom Merry gravely. "You don't mean to say, Gussy, that Blake doesn't comprehend the importance of the matter?"

"He doesn't, weally. Blake is wathah an ass in some things!"

"But have you explained to him that you are out to win the war?" asked Tom. "If you made that quite clear, I can't understand Blake failing to realise how really important it is."

Arthur Augustus looked at the captain of the Shell suspiciously.

"If you are wottin', Tom Mewwy—"

"Not at all," said Tom cheerily. "The sooner the war's won the better; and if you've got a dodge for doing it the

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY

"KILDARE'S ENEMY!"

country is entitled to know it. If it's a really good wheeze, we'll have a whip-round, and send a telegram to Lloyd George, and put him up to it. I believe he's rather keen on it, and he will be grateful for good advice from an expert."

"As a matter of fact, Tom Mewwy, I could give Lloyd George some wathah good advice."

"Oh!"

"You know, it is an old sayin' that the lookah-on sees most of the game," said Arthur Augustus. "I have weflected on the mattah. Our gweat statesmen are so busy lookin' aftah their jobs and their salawies that they haven't weally time for weflection."

"So you are rushing to the rescue? It's really kind and thoughtful of you, Gussy. But what about tea? We've come in for tea."

"I twust you are not goin' to wepeat all Blake's wemarks on that subject, Tom Mewwy. Havin' tea at a time like this is like old Newo fiddlin' while Wome was burnin'."

"But aren't we to have tea again till the end of the war?" demanded Tom Merry. "My hat! We should be rather peckish by that time. My dear kid, the war is a permanent institution. Under the new law, we're going to be conscripted when we grow up, and then we shall have to take our turn in the trenches. We've got to keep ourselves fit, or we sha'n't be allowed to go out and get killed! So we really must have tea. From patriotic motives, we require that table."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Couldn't you write your speech on the floor?" suggested Monty Lowther. "If it were merely tea-time, of course, we could miss tea; but we've got to be careful of our health. Otherwise, we might die in our beds, instead of having our heads shot off at the Front. So we really must have tea. As patriots, it's strictly necessary for us to have that table. Can I help you to clear that rubbish off?"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"I wegard you as inhospitable beasts!" he said. "I will go and finish the speech in the Form-room. I twust you are comin' to the meetin'?"

"Wouldn't miss it for worlds!" said Tom Merry. "But why not stay to tea, and leave the speech unfinished? The audience will like it better."

"Wats!"

And the swell of St. Jim's marched off, with his hands full of written papers. He sought refuge in the Form-room, where the great speech was finished at last. There were about fifteen sheets of foolscap—a total of four or five thousand words. Arthur Augustus was under the impression that those four or five thousand words would be delivered at the meeting, and that the meeting would listen to them all. Arthur Augustus was a very sanguine youth.

CHAPTER 3. The Meeting.

"HERE we are again!"

Tom Merry made that announcement as he entered the Fourth Form-room after tea. The Terrible Three were the first to arrive.

Arthur Augustus had finished his literary labours. He was numbering the sheets at his desk—a somewhat difficult task. It would really have been more judicious to number the sheets as he wrote them, but Arthur Augustus had not thought of that in time.

"Not finished yet?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas. Pewwaps you would like to help me numbah these sheets, Lowthah? I don't want to get them mixed when I am deliverin' the speech. The fellows will be comin' in soon."

"Anything to oblige," said Lowther readily.

Arthur Augustus was of a very trusting disposition, or he certainly would not have asked the humourist of the Shell for assistance.

Monty Lowther was quite ready to render aid. He proceeded to number the sheets very cheerfully.

"Pway get them wight, you know!" said Arthur Augustus. "Look at the last lines, and then at the first lines, and they will fit togethah, you know."

"What-ho!" said Lowther.

Lowther looked at the last lines and the first lines, though not with the intention of making them fit together.

As his object, in fact, was anything but making them fit together, he was very rapid with the numbering—much more rapid than D'Arcy.

By the time the numbering was finished, fellows were crowding into the Form-room.

Most of them were grinning.

The meeting, certainly, was a very serious affair, on a very

serious subject, but the juniors seemed somehow to regard it in a humorous spirit. They did not appear to understand that the question of winning the war, so troublesome to the authorities generally, could be solved at one fell swoop by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Many of them had brought pea-shooters to enliven the proceedings, and some were provided with oranges and potatoes, and Levison, of the Fourth, had a couple of eggs.

"Time!" called out Gore, of the Shell. "It's turned half-past seven, Gussy."

"I am just goin' to begin, deah boy."

"So are we!" murmured Reilly, and there was a chuckle.

Arthur Augustus, having pinned together the numbered sheets, which he fondly imagined were in consecutive order, mounted on a form.

Two or three dozen juniors were in the Form-room now, and the meeting was still growing in numbers. Somewhat to D'Arcy's disappointment, no seniors had yet come in. He had hoped that Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, would honour the meeting with his presence, and that there would be a good sprinkling of the Fifth and the Sixth. He had hoped, too, to see Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton and Mr. Lathom there. But the masters, if they had read the notice on the board, had neglected to avail themselves of the kind invitation.

However, there was a meeting—of sorts. The Fourth Form and the Shell were really supporting the meeting in great style, and a crowd of the Third had come in, headed by D'Arcy minor. Perhaps it was Wally D'Arcy's intention to support his elegant major—as an affectionate minor was bound to do. But as Wally had a pea-shooter in his hand, it was possible that his motives in attending were not wholly brotherly.

"Gentleman," said Arthur Augustus, looking over the grinning juniors from the form he was mounted upon—"gentlemen, I am glad to see you heah."

"Hear, hear!"

"Heah, heah!" said Monty Lowther, with an imitation of D'Arcy's beautiful accent, which was followed by a yell of merriment.

"Ordah!" rapped out D'Arcy, with a severe glance at Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" replied Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' to be a widiculous ase, Lowthah—"

"Not at all! I'm not going to poach on your ground, Gussy. This is your meeting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Heah, heah!"

"Pway do not intewwupt me with shoutin'! Pway weserve your applause till latah—"

"Heah, heah!"

"Wing off, Lowthah, you wottah! Gentlemen, I have called this meetin' for a vevy important object. You are awah that for some time we have been at wah with a bar-bawous countwy—"

"I rise on a point of order," said Monty Lowther. "I ask the honourable member whether he is quite certain of his facts?"

"You uttah ass, you are perfectly awah that we are at wah!"

"What I am aware of is not evidence. When you make these sudden, startling communications, you ought to back them up with evidence."

"Weally," said Arthur Augustus crushingly, "it might be supposed that we are not at wah, when a silly ass thinks of nothin' but makin' wotten jokes."

"Oh, I see! Your remark was a rotten joke?"

"I am alludin' to your wemarks, Lowther, as you know vevy well! Blake, may I wequest you to keep an eye on Lowthah, and punch his sillay head if he does not shut up."

"Certainly!" said Blake.

"I wequest you to punch the head of any silly ass who begins to talk wot," said Arthur Augustus. "I wely on you as a pal!"

"You can rely on me," said Blake.

"Thank you, deah boy! Now to get to business. Gentlemen, we have now been at wah with Germany for a considewable time, and mattahs are gettin' wathah sewious, Owin' to wah economy, my patah does not send me fivahs as he used to, and I have found it wathah a twouble—yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus broke off with a yell, as Blake reached over and punched his head.

"You uttah ass, what are you up to?" he roared.

"Why, you asked me to," said Blake, in surprise.

"You howlin' duffah, what do you mean?"

"I appeal to the meeting," said Blake. "Didn't Gussy

make me promise to punch the head of any silly ass who began talking rot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shwiekin' ass, I was alludin' to othah sillay asses—I mean I was——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall give you a feahful thwashin' aftah the meetin', Blake! I wegard you as a pwactical jokin' beast!"

"Well, if that's your gratitude, I'm not going to assist you any more," said Blake indignantly.

"Wats! Gentlemen, we are out to win the wah." D'Arcy referred to his speech, and proceeded to read out the written eloquence: "At the pwesent tewwible time, our bwave boys are wollin' in mud and blood on the stwicken fields of Flandahs. Evewybody who is fit to go is goin' to the Fwont, and all the west are stayin' at home and gassin' on the subject. Wah is ewewywhah. Militawy ardour is flamin' in ewewy bwcast, especially the bwcasts of those ovah militawy age——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, you villain, you have been makin' an altewation in my speech! I did not word it like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard these wotten twicks with scorn!"

"Hold on," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "Military ardour is flaming in every breast isn't a rotten trick, is it?"

"No, you ass! I was alludin' to Lowthah's wotten twick in altewin' that sentence!"

"Oh! That's not part of the speech?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then how are we to know which is the speech, and which isn't?" demanded the Cornstalk.

"Weally, Kangawooh——"

"I've got an idea," said Blake. "Hold up your left hand when it's the speech, and your right hand when you're slangin' Lowther, Gussy."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. Pway lend me your cahs. Militawy ardour is flamin' in ewewy bwcast, and the fiah of self-sawifice is spweadin' ovah the countwy like a conflagration. Even the Government have wealised that it is a sewious mattah."

"Hear, hear!"

"Millions of chaps have gone to the wah, thwowin' up ewewythin', and banishin' fwom their minds all considewations of wotten money. In these stirrin' times, is it not our duty to see that the bwave fellows who are fightin' for us weceive the—hardest blows we can possibly give them, till they go down on their knees and howl for mercy— Bai Jove! You uttah villain, Lowthah, you have numbahed the pages w'ong——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not weally mean to say that. That uttah wottah was pwetendin' to help me, and he has put the w'ong page——"

"Hear, heah! Ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! The whole thing is mixed——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pewwaps I had bettah adjourn the meetin' while I sort out the pages and put them wight, and give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'——"

"Look here, we didn't come here to see a dog-fight!" remonstrated Manners.

There was a howl of laughter as Arthur Augustus hastily and wildly examined his manuscripts. The pages were hopelessly mixed. But it was pretty evident that the meeting would not wait while Arthur Augustus sorted them out. The swell of St. Jim's gave Monty Lowther a basilisk glare, and threw down the precious speech.

"Gentlemen, I will address you fwom memowry. Aftah all, I have the mattah at my fingah-tips. Gentlemen, it is our dutay to see that the bwave fellows who are fightin' for us weceive our whole-hearted support. If we look aound us, what do we see?"

Monty Lowther looked around him.

"The wall-maps," he suggested.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"And old Lathom's desk——"

"Wing off, you ass! I am speakin' figuwatively. When we look aound us, we see the best fellows in the countwy backin' up against the Huns like anythin'. But we see also a lot of selfish wottahs who are makin' money out of the wah. It is vewy humiliatin' for a Bwiton to have to admit it, but there are wottahs in this countwy who bloat and fatten on wah-pwofits!"

"Horrid!"

"They're doing it in Germany, too!" suggested Lowther. "That's one of their reasons for going to war. People will do these things!"

"Yaas, that kind of thing is good enough for Germany, but it is not good enough for the Bwitish Empiah. Gentlemen, a suggestion has been made, which I am sowwy to see has not

been adopted, which would fwustwate all these knavish twicks. That is what I am goin' to put to the meetin'. I allude to the Conscwiption of Wealth!"

"The which?"

"My hat!"

"That, gentlemen, is the subject of this address," said Arthur Augustus triumphantly, greatly pleased at having made an impression at last. "Now lend me your cahs, and I will explain."

CHAPTER 4.

Gussy's Idea!

"**H**EAR, hear!"

The pea-shooters did not come into play. Arthur Augustus had made an impression. The meeting generously decided to give the swell of St. Jim's his head, so to speak, for a little while, before the ragging began. As Arthur Augustus was one of the wealthiest fellows at St. Jim's, his views on the subject of the conscwiption of wealth had a certain interest.

"Go it, Gussy!" sang out Kangaroo.

"On the bawl, old chap!"

"Gentlemen, you have pewwaps heard of the suggestion of the conscwiption of wealth. The ideah is to conscwipt money as well as men. Undah the pwesent law, when a chap is a shirkah, you take him by the scwuff of the neck and march him off to bawwacks. But that only applies to chaps undah fortay-one. Now, we are all undah fortay-one——"

"Go hon!"

"We are weally——"

"Passed unanimously!" said Monty Lowther. "It's quite common for chaps in the Fourth Form to be under forty-one——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But not bein' of militawy age, there is no weason why we should not be doin' our bit," said Arthur Augustus. "Take the case of a conscwipt. Suppose the chap keeps a shop——"

"What kind of a shop?" asked Lowther.

"The kind of shop does not mattah, Lowthah! Suppose he keeps a shop, and he is undah fortay-one. He is chucked into the Army, and what becomes of his shop? His business goes to wack and wuin. But the Bwitish Empiah, deah boys, is gweatah than any business. The Bwitish Empiah must be saved, if ewewy cornah gwocery in the land goes to wack and wuin. The splendid fellows wealise that, and they do not gwumble. They put up their shuttahs, and march away cheewily, content to sawifice ewewythin' in ordah to help the boys at the Fwont!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But what about the man ovah forty-one? He goes on with his business just the same, and makes more money, in fact, thwough the othah chap bein' away? Of course, we know that in ewewy case he would give anythin' to be undah forty-one, so that he could go, too!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"I don't think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to believe that there is a single instance in which a man is not willin' to thwow ewewythin' up in ordah to do his bit. But the fact of the mattah is that the old johnnies cannot go. So heah, you see, is where that wippin' ideah of the conscwiption of wealth comes in. The man who goes gives ewewythin'—he loses all his money. Why shouldn't the man who stays at home lose all his money, too? There is no special virtue in stayin' at home——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take the case of a plumbah or gasfittah who earns ten pounds a week——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He gives it all up when he joins the Army. But a plumbah or gasfittah ovah forty-one goes on earnin' his ten pounds a week—and keepin' it. But plumbin' and gasfittin' isn't such hard work as the work in the twenches!"

The juniors yelled. Arthur Augustus evidently had a very vague idea of the average amount of the earnings of plumbers and gasfitters.

"There is nothin' to laugh at, deah boys! If one man gives up all his money to go to the wah, anothah man ought to give up all his money to stay at home. That is the conscwiption of wealth. Undah forty-one, you go youahself; ovah forty-one, you hand ovah all your money to the Government to cawwy on the wah. This is playin' the game, you know. My ideah, therefore, is to establish a Gwoup System for fellows ovah militawy age. Accordin' to the amount of your cash, you join the gwoup. Millionaires will be put in the first gwoup, and will be called up first, and then the

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hundred-thousand-poundahs, and then the fifty-thousand-poundahs, and so on, till you come down to poor people who live on five hundred a yeah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rather hard on the giddy millionaires!" grinned Kangaroo.

"Wats! It is no hardah on a shirkah to lose his money than on a man who goes to the Fwont. Besides, I wefuse to believe that the chaps who stay at home are not willin' to agwee to equality of sacwifice. Why, there are quite a numbah of vevy wich people who are callin' out for equality of sacwifice!"

"Not in money matters, though!" chuckled Levison.

"No fear! Ha, ha!"

"Wubbish! As a mattah of fact, most of the millionaires are ovah militawy age. Think of their humiliatin' position! Burnin' to take their pwopah share in the wah, they are pwevented from doin' so by the age limit. The conscription of wealth will give them their chance. There will be a wush to join the gwoups. Ewevy chap who has a lot of money will go and attest—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to doubt it for a moment. A man who has a stwong set of limbs goes and attests, and offahs them in the service of his countwy. A man who is too old, but full of the same spiwit of self-sacwifice, will rush to the wecwuitin'-office to attest his wealth—"

"Good old Gussy!" said Blake affectionately. "I think I can see the millionaires doing it—in my mind's eye, Horatio! I think so—perhaps!"

"It should not be left to their choice, Blake. I demand a new conscription law, makin' the attestation of wealth compulsory!"

"My hat!"

"Money is wequiahed for the wah—millions of it! Money is quite as important as men. The men at the Fwont have thwown ewevythin' in. Why should not the stay-at-homes do the same?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then we should have lots of money for the wah. Chaps who are fightin' the Germans could get salawies as big as chaps who stay at home and talk. I wegard a couple of hundred a yeah as the vevy least that can be offahed to a Tommy!"

"Bravo!"

"I therefore put the wesolution to the meetin': That this school—the most famous public school in England—demands the conscription of wealth, in ordah to give the stay-at-homes a chance of doin' their bit. A copy of the wesolution will be forwarded to Mistah Asquith!"

"My hat!"

"You will all sign your names to the document. And I have not the slightest doubt that when the new gwoup system becomes known, it will be adopted at once, and there will be a tewwific wush to fill the gwoups!"

The juniors yelled. Arthur Augustus' faith in human nature was, as Monty Lowther remarked, deserving of a prize medal.

"And, in ordah to show the thing can be worked, a gwoup system will be adopted for St. Jim's—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And all the fellows will be expected to attest."

"Great pip!"

"Othahwise, compulsion will be adopted."

"And who's going to compulse?" roared Gore.

"I shall form a Conscription Committee to apply the necessawy compulsion, Goah! I twust it will not be necessawy. Ewevy fellow is bound in honah to give up ewevythin' for the wah, the same as the Tommies and the sailahs do. Where would you be if the Army and the Navy left you in the lurch? Very well, you cannot weconcile it to youah conscience to leave them in the lurch! I twust you have a conscience, Goah?"

"Oh, you're too funny to live!" said Gore. "You howling ass, conscription of wealth is a bit different from other kinds of conscription! When you're about a thousand years older, it may dawn on you that people conscript others, not themselves!"

"I wefuse to believe anythin' so wotten for a moment, Goah! I am quite assuahed that ewevy conscriptionist is eegah to be at the Fwont, and is only pwevented by the age-limit!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Gentlemen, I put the wesolution to the meetin'! St. Jim's will have the honah of first dwawin' the gweat Mistah Asquith's attention to the mattah. He has not had time to think of it for himself; but he is quite an intelligent gentleman, and he will see at once what a wippin' ideah it is. And it will give him a splendid opportunity for thwovin' the gem library.—No. 445.

up his salawy, the same as a chap does when he goes into khaki!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The wesolution will now be put, and I must wemark—Yawwooh! Yow-ow-ow! What uttah beast is shootin' peas at me? Gwoogh! What uttah wottah thwew that egg? Oh, cwumbs!"

The meeting evidently considered that the eloquent Gussy had been given his head long enough. Fifty pea-shooters came into view, and a deadly volley was directed at the chairman of the meeting. Several oranges and potatoes were added to it, and an egg came from Levison.

Arthur Augustus rolled off the form, and sat on the floor.

"You uttah wottahs! I was goin' to put the wesolution! Gwoogh! Yow-ow! I wegard you as beasts! Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus dabbed at the egg on his chin in great wrath. He was still dabbing when the meeting, yelling with great laughter, streamed out of the Form-room. The resolution was not put, and the great Mr. Asquith was left in ignorance of the splendid wheeze for winning the war.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus on His Dignity!

"AHEM!"

Jack Blake coughed a diplomatic cough when he came into Study No. 6 later to do his preparation.

There was a lofty frown upon the brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He fixed a steely eye on his chums, and did not speak. It was evident that the dignity of the swell of St. Jim's was suffering from the rag in the Form-room.

"Ahem!" repeated Blake

"Just so!" said Herries. "Ahem!"

"Ripping meeting, wasn't it?" remarked Digby affably.

There was no reply from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Deaf, old chap?" inquired Blake.

D'Arcy spoke at last.

"I am not deaf, Blake; but I wequest you not to address me. I do not desiah to pwolong my acquaintance with pwo-Huns!"

"Pro-Huns?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Ewevybody who does not back up my wippin' ideah for winnin' the wah I wegard as pwo-Hun!"

"If you call me a pro-Hun, I'll jolly well mop up the study with you!" said Herries warmly.

"Wats!"

"Look here—"

"Pway do not address your wemarks to me, Hewwies! I have dwopped your acquaintance, and I wefuse to uttah a single word to you!"

"Peace, my infants!" said Blake soothingly. "The fact is, Gussy, we are expecting you to thank us!"

"Bai Jove! What is there for me to thank you for, pway?"

"For backing you up at the meeting, of course."

"You did not back me up!"

"Well, we came and listened to your chin-wag. You can't get anybody but a real chum to do that—now, can you?"

"I wefuse to heah my patwiotic speech chawactewised as chin-wag! My speech was wuined by Lowthah's wotten twicks. I am goin' to dwop Lowthah's acquaintance. I saw you with a pea-shootah, Digby."

"I—I didn't mean—"

"You didn't mean to shoot peas at me?" asked Arthur Augustus, unbending a little.

"Ahem! No—I mean, I didn't mean you to see me."

"You uttah wuffian, Dig! And you thwew an owange, Blake!"

"Did I?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas, you did! It hit me on the chin!"

"It was an accident, Gussy."

"You thwew the owange by accident, you ass?"

"No. It hit you on the chin by accident."

"You did not mean it to hit me on the chin?"

"Certainly not!"

"Oh, vevy well, in that case I ovahlook the mattah."

"You see," added Blake blandly, "I meant it to hit you on the nose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you uttah wottah—"

"Now, look here, Gussy, you must admit that you had gassed long enough—"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort!"



Arthur Augustus broke off with a yell, as Blake reached over and punched his head. "You uttah ass, what are you up to?" he roared. "Why, you asked me to," said Blake, in surprise. (See Chapter 3.)

"And nobody would have come to the meeting but for the rag," said Blake. "What's the good of going to a meeting if you can't rag the speakers? What else do people ever go to meetings for? You could hear a silly ass gassing any time, without the trouble of going to a meeting."

"I wegard you as thwee unpatwiotic wuffians," said Arthur Augustus, "and unless you back up the new Gwoup System I wefuse to speak to you! If you pwove yourselves to be shirkahs, I wegard you as pwo-Huns!"

"But, my dear ass, it's all rot!" explained Blake patiently. "We don't want to get this study cackled at!"

"This study is goin' to lead St. Jim's in the wight path. Fwom heah the ideah will spwead, and when ewevybody has agweed that it is a good ideah, even the House of Commons will take it up, the same as they did the Daylight Saving. The House of Commons only wesists common-sense for a certain pewiod on any subject. If I had pwopah backin', I have no doubt that the attestation of wealth would soon be compulswy all ovah the countwy."

"But you don't believe in compulsion?" said Digby.

"I believe in faiah play all wound. If one chap is compelled—I mean, compelled, all the chaps ought to be compelled."

Blake gave a dismal groan. "But it's above your weight, Gussy. You will only make the fellows cackle."

"They're cackling already," said Digby.

"Like old hens," remarked Herries.

"You see, it's really quite possible that even the example of St. Jim's mightn't be followed," said Blake. "And it's barely possible that Mr. Asquith mightn't be willing to take advice from a Fourth-Former."

"Just possible," grinned Herries.

"And it's all rot, anyway! You must admit that yourself."

"Nothin' of the sort. If some chaps give their lives, why shouldn't othah chaps give theah money?"

"Well, you see—ahem!—any chap would risk his life; but cash is cash," said Blake. "Only a funk would be afraid to risk his life; but money is money. People don't part with money if they can help it—see?"

"I see nothin' of the sort. Think of the joy of the millionaires when they hear of this easy and wippin' way of doin' their bit."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Blake. "I don't know any millionaires, but I've got a strong suspicion that they would give the marble-eye to any fellow who proposed conscripting their millions."

"Wubbish! But if they are shirkahs, as you suppose, then they ought to be compelled—I mean, compelled."

"Ye-es; perhaps they ought, but they won't be. So chuck up rotting, and get on with your prep, Gussy!"

"I desiah to have this mattah settled," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am willin' to ovahlook your wuffianly conduct in the Form-woom, but I wefuse to wegard as a fwiend any chap who is not willin' to attest his wealth to win the wah, and to back me up genewally."

"Oh, dear!"

"This study could take the lead, and compulse all the othah fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "It would be as easy as wollin' off a form."

"Bow-wow!"

"Rats!"

"Vewy well. I wegard you as pwo-Huns, and I wefuse to speak to you!"

"Well, that's a blessing!" said Herries.

"For this relief, much thanks!" quoted Digby.

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and devoted his attention to his prep. It was rather exasperating to have to do preparation when his mighty brain was seething with tremendous ideas

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for winning the war—a task which seemed beyond the power of less mighty brains. But there it was—prep had to be done! Otherwise, Mr. Lathom would have to be reckoned with in the morning. And Mr. Lathom probably would not attach any importance whatever to Gussy's mighty ideas. It was said of old that a prophet is without honour in his own country.

Prep was done in grim silence. It was over when the Terrible Three looked in.

"Finished?" asked Tom Merry. "There's baked chestnuts in our study."

"Verb, sap!" said Manners.

Blake jumped up.

"Right-ho! Come on, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus did not reply.

"Come on, Gustavus!" said Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to come on, Tom Mewwy!"

"Eh?"

"I decline to wecognise you as an acquaintance!"

"My hat!"

"The same applies to Mannahs and Lowthah. I weward you as pwo-Huns, and I wefuse to speak to you unless you back me up in bwingin' about the Gwoup System of St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway do not cackle at me! I wefuse to be cackled at by a pwo-German!"

Monty Lowther tapped his forehead significantly.

"I've seen this coming on," he remarked.

"You uttah wottah—"

"I suggest a strait-waistcoat."

"If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Lowthah—"

"Please, I'm a Pacifist," said Lowther. "Come and have some of the chestnuts, Gussy, and don't play the giddy ox!"

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus remained in Study No. 6, while Blake and Herries and Digby followed the Terrible Three. The swell of St. Jim's was very much on his dignity.

CHAPTER 6.

A Rift in the Lute.

HARRY HAMMOND of the Fourth looked into Study No. 6 a little later. The Cockney schoolboy was very much attached to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had stood by him like a good pal when he first came to St. Jim's. And 'Arry 'Ammond, as the cheerful youth called himself, had a grateful and affectionate heart.

"'Allo!" said Hammond. "I 'ear from Mellish—" He paused.

Mellish of the Fourth had already learned that there was a rift in the lute in Study No. 6, and he had retailed his news with great satisfaction. But Hammond was far from sharing the satisfaction of the cad of the Fourth.

"Been 'avin' a row—wot?" said Hammond.

"Pway come in, deah boy! Yaas; I have dwopped the acquaintance of my study-mates. I am compelled to weward them as pwo-Huns. I twust you are not a pwo-Hun, Hammond?"

"No bloomin' fear!" said Hammond, emphatically if not elegantly.

"Then you will back me up—what?"

"Like anything," said Hammond. "Wasn't I at the meetin', shoutin' all the time? It's all rot, of course—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, it's a rippin' idea; but it won't catch on," said Hammond. "Bless your innocent 'eart, 'tain't no good! But it shows that your 'eart is in the right place, old feller!"

"Wats! By the way, Hammond, I undahstand that youah governah is a millionaire?"

"Well, I dunno about that," said Hammond. "He's made his pile out of 'Ammond's 'Igh-class 'Ats, all one price—three-and-nine. He's got plenty of oof."

"It would be wippin', Hammond, if your patah would take up this idea! A few millionaires backin' it up would make it go like anythin'!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Hammond.

"I have a vewy gweat wespert for your patah, Hammond. I think it vewy pwobable that he will spwing at the idea if it is suggested to him."

"My 'at!" murmured Hammond.

"I am goin' to put it to my patah," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, my patah is not a millionaire, but he is wathah wich. I am goin' to point out to him that it would be a wippin' wheeze for him to suggest it in the House of Lords. He has appawntly nevah thought of the mattah, and I am suah that he will be gwateful to me for pointin' it out."

Hammond had his doubts about that.

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"P'r'aps he'll think it cheek," he suggested.

"Imposs! My patah is vewy well awah that I weward it as bad form for a chap to be impertinent to his pawents. I am goin' to suggest it in a wespertful way."

"But—but I say," stammered Hammond, "suppose 'is lordship did what you suggest, what would you do for pocket-money?"

"I am pwepared to sacwifice my pocket-money for the duwation of the wah, Hammond."

"Oh, jiminy!"

"I am just w'iting the lettah," said Arthur Augustus.

"Pway look ovah it, deah boy. I trust you will agwee that it is perfectly wespertful. Of course, it would be howwid for a fellow to assume the posish of givin' advice to his fathah. But there is no harm in makin' a wespertful suggestion."

Hammond grinned, and looked at the letter.

"Dear Father,—I have been reflecting on the subject of the war, and have thought of what seems to be a ripping wheeze. My idea is that men over military age should attest their wealth, which should be placed wholly and totally at the service of the country during the war. This would be equality of sacrifice, and the rich could then feel that they would be doing as much as the poor for the Empire. I sincerely hope that you will raise this question in the House of Lords, and help to bring about a law making the attestation of wealth compulsory. It is only playing the game to conscript money as well as men. I am prepared to go without pocket-money till the end of the war, and to wear the same clothes for the same period. Please let me know what you think of the idea.

Your affectionate son,

"ARTHUR."

"You—you—you're going to send that letter to Lord Eastwood?" asked Hammond in a faint voice.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My 'at! He won't 'arf be waxy!"

"I fail to see any weason why he should be waxy, Hammond. I twust you will w'ite a similah lettah to your patah."

"Hum! I think I'll wait and see the effect on your pater, if you don't mind!" grinned Hammond.

"It is hardly necessawy to wait for that. My patah will see it at once, and I have vewy little doubt that he will waise the question in Parliament immediately."

"But—but your pater won't want to hand over all his cash?" ejaculated Hammond.

"Why not? Pwactically every man who goes to the Fwont gives up all his cash. Some get their salawies paid all the time, but the majowity thwow up ewewythin'. Ewewy gwocah who goes loses his business, sometimes aftah workin' at it for ten yeahs. It would be watah wotten if the stay-at-homes could not do as much."

"Bet you they won't, all the same," said Hammond sagely.

"That wemark is a weflection on my governah's patwiotism, Hammond," said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Ahem! Well, let's wait and see what his lordship says," said Hammond soothingly. "If his lordship agrees, then I'll write to my father, and I dessay he'll agree, too."

"Vewy well, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus sealed the letter, and stamped it.

"Just time to catch the collection," he remarked. "Excuse me, Hammond."

The swell of St. Jim's hurried out of the study, leaving Hammond staring. Hammond's faith in human nature was not quite so strong as Gussy's, and he could imagine the effect of that suggestion on Lord Eastwood. Without detracting in the least from his lordship's patriotism, it was extremely unlikely that his lordship would see his way to placing his bank-account and his family estates at the disposal of the country for the purposes of the war. There was not any conclusive reason why he shouldn't; but it was pretty certain that he wouldn't.

Arthur Augustus, however, came in very cheerily. He had no doubt that his suggestion would be acted upon, and his lordship's example would "buck up" his projected Group System at St. Jim's.

Blake & Co. looked into the study before bedtime. They received a frigid stare from Arthur Augustus. He was playing chess with Hammond.

"Time to get a move on, Gussy," said Blake.

"Pway do not address me, Blake!"

"Still keeping it up, fathead?"

"Wats!"

In the dormitory Arthur Augustus maintained the same frigid attitude. And when the Fourth Form turned out in the morning, Blake's cheery "Good-morning, Gustavus!" was answered only by a steely stare.

"You silly ass!" roared Blake, getting exasperated. "Are you still in the sulks?"

Arthur Augustus turned pink with wrath.

"You wiculous wottah, I am not sulkin'! I am wegardin' you with contempt!" he shouted.

"Fathead!" growled Blake.

"Ass!" said Digby.

"Burling idiot!" said Herries.

To which Arthur Augustus replied scornfully and monosyllabically:

"Wats!"

And he declined to say another word to his former chums.

CHAPTER 7.

Giving Gussy His Head!

TOM MERRY & CO. were perplexed.

It had lasted for two days.

Arthur Augustus, so far from dropping his new and extraordinary wheeze, was keener on it than ever.

He pursued the conscription of wealth in season and out of season—chiefly out of season.

He found some converts, too. Skimpole, of the Shell, who was a Socialist and an "ist" of many kinds, backed up the idea whole-heartedly. Trimble and Mellish, and some other fellows, whose people were poor, considered it a ripping idea. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, whose father was a railway magnate and a millionaire, stated his opinion that it was rot. Indeed, it was remarkable that the more money a fellow had, in possession or in prospect, the less eager he seemed to see wealth conscripted. But the fellows who hadn't any considered that Gussy's idea was the catch of the season, so to speak.

But even his supporters grinned at the idea of the great Mr. Asquith accepting advice from the juniors of St. Jim's, and doubted whether the example of a Wealth Group System at St. Jim's would be followed by the country generally. Arthur Augustus' idea was that there had to be a "beginnin'." He instanced the case of the Daylight Saving Scheme—which was as irrefragably unanswerable when it was first mooted, as when it was adopted—but which was not adopted until the powers that be had been hammered for years on the subject.

Gussy explained that the politicians were too busy looking after salaries and jobs, and tripping up one another, to have time for reflecting on the best method of winning the war. Under the circumstances, they were bound to welcome a ripping suggestion how to do it.

If a general resolution from St. Jim's were forwarded to Downing Street, D'Arcy's opinion was that it would be discussed immediately at the next Cabinet council, and adopted unanimously. He pointed out that the politicians must live in daily fear of being sacked for incompetence, and that, therefore, they would simply jump at such a splendid suggestion.

Whereat the fellows cackled, and Arthur Augustus preached to the desert air.

Meanwhile, relations were strained between the great Gussy and his former friends. There was a rift in the lute in Study No. 6, and Gussy would pass the Terrible Three in the passages and the quad with a stony stare.

Blake, who was growing fed-up, was inclined to bestow a record bumping upon his noble chum. But bumpings would only have made Gussy more obstinate. He was, as Blake said, that kind of a mule. The only alternative was to rally round, and back up Gussy's scheme.

Blake & Co. consulted the Terrible Three on the subject.

"If we give the silly ass his head, he will soon get fed-up himself," he remarked. "Suppose we take up the idea, and spoof him?"

"Good wheeze!" said Monty Lowther. "Pulling Gussy's leg is a relief from war worry. Besides, there would be a lot of fun in compelling the slackers. The chaps would back up this study, as leaders of the House."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Blake. "The chaps would back up Study No. 6, as leaders of the House."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Peace, my infants!" said Tom Merry. "It's not a bad idea. We could work up a Local Tribunal in the Common-room, and it would be funny—as-funny as the real thing. Let's give Gussy his head."

"Hands up for giving Gussy his silly head," said Blake.

Six hands went up.

"Good! Then let's go and look for the silly ass, and tell him we're going to give him his fat head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The six juniors accordingly proceeded in search of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They found him in the quadrangle. He was reading a letter under the elms, with a somewhat perplexed expression on his face.

He looked up loftily and uncompromisingly as the juniors approached.

Monty Lowther raised his cap respectfully, and bowed until his nose almost touched his knees.

"Hail!" he said.

"Hail, great chief!" said Digby.

And all the juniors bowed to the ground.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed them with wrath and surprise and disdain.

"Pway wun away, you young asses!" he said.

"Young asses, by Jove!" ejaculated Blake. "I suppose you are an old ass, what?"

"I wefuse to weply to you, Blake."

"You misunderstand," said Lowther solemnly. "Here you behold us repentant and remorseful. We are, in fact, six prodigal sons who have come home to roost."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Behold us in sackcloth and rashers—I mean ashes. Now, the proper caper is for you to kill the fatheaded calf—only suicide is bad form."

"You uttah ass—"

"We have come round," explained Tom Merry. "We are going to back up that ripping wheeze of yours, like—like old boots."

Arthur Augustus' face cleared.

"Bai Jove! Now you're talkin'!" he said cordially.

"Rely on us," said Blake seriously. "We are ready to attest our wealth, and devote it to the cause of the country. I intend to attest, and, if necessary, to sacrifice, my total monetary possessions—"

"That's wippin', Blake!"

"Amounting at the present moment to twopence-half-penny," continued Blake. "I shall appeal to the Tribunal for exemption for the halfpenny. I want to save that towards the expenses of the next war."

"Pway be sewious, Blake!"

"Sober as a judge," said Blake. "We are taking this matter very seriously. In solemn conclave, we have decided to give you your head."

"And to back you up through thick and thin," said Manners. "We are going to see that whenever you get a fiver, it goes to a war fund. No more spending money in riotous living."

"Bai Jove!"

"We're also thinking of selling off your fancy waistcoats and silk hats," Monty Lowther remarked. "That ought to raise a tidy sum, which would pay the expenses of the war for a fraction of a second."

"Lowthah, you ass—"

"We are at your orders, Gussy," said Blake, with owl-like gravity. "We simply wait for instructions. Organise us!"

"Organisation is in the air, you know," remarked Lowther. "Efficiency is the order of the day. The fashion will change; but at present the game is efficiency. We pine to be efficient. Ergo—that's Latin—we're waiting to be organised. If it should be necessary to purchase an organ for the purpose, we will have a whip-round for it."

"Lowthah, deah boy, I must weally wequest you to keep these wotten jokes for the Comic Column in the 'Weekly.'"

"Good idea!" said Digby. "That will save Lowther the trouble of raiding 'Chuckles' for jokes."

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther. "I've told you a dozen times that I've never raided a single joke from 'Chuckles.' There have sometimes been slight superficial resemblances—"

"There have!" assented Blake. "I've noticed it."

"If you silly idiots—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry severely. "At present, it is Gussy who is being given his head, not you, Lowther. Get out of the limelight! Gussy, we're waiting for orders. We are ready to roll up to confess—I mean attest—if you'll tell us the way to the confessional—I mean attestation—I suppose you call the place where you attest an attestation?"

"Nothin' of the sort, Tom Mewwy! I am vevy glad you fellows are backin' me up. The othah chaps will follow our lead; and, latah on, we will compulse Figgins & Co. of the New House."

"Hurray!" said Herries. "It will be rather a lark conscripting the New House chaps. It means thick ears all round."

"Pway don't wegard the mattah as a lark, Hewwies! It is a vevy sewious mattah."

"My mistake," said Herries blandly.

"Now that you duffahs have come wound, I shall be vevy pleased to westore you to my fwieship—"

"I breathe again!" said Lowther.

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

Arthur Augustus took no notice of that remark, nor of the buckle from the other juniors. He went on:

"Aftah tea, we will hold a meetin' in the study, and dwaw up a manifesto—"

"A maniwhicho?" asked Lowther.

"A maniwhatto?" asked Blake.

"A manifesto. I pwesume you know what a manifesto is?"

"Well, what is it?"

"A—a manifesto is—is, in fact, it is a manifesto," explained Arthur Augustus. "In our manifesto we will explain to the fellows that they have got to woll up of their own accord, or else we shall conscript them. Now that we are friends again, I should like you fellows to look at this lettah fwom my patah, and tell me what you think of it. It is wathah perplexin'. I suggested to my patah to pwopose the conscription of wealth, in the House of Lords, you know, and demand a law—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors' gravity was not equal to the strain. They burst into a roar. The idea of Lord Eastwood rising in his place in that august assembly, and proposing to strip himself of his worldly possessions, and demanding a law for the purpose, was too much for them. Arthur Augustus surveyed them frigidly.

"Pewwaps you wouldn't mind explainin' the joke, deah boys?" he remarked.

"My dear chap, you're the joke!" said Lowther. "But what does his lordship say? I suppose he has jumped at the idea with both feet."

"I don't think!" grinned Blake.

"Not at all, Lowthah! He seems to be undah the impwession that my lettah savahs of impertinence. I am sure I did not mean anythin' of the sort. But wead the lettah, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus held out his lordship's letter, and the grinning juniors perused it. The letter was brief, but to the point.

"Dear Arthur,—I have long regarded you as a young donkey. I should be sorry to have to regard you as an impertinent young donkey. Please be more careful.—Your affectionate father,
"EASTWOOD."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not wegard that lettah as comic, deah boys. My patah seems to be quite undah a misappwehension. Fancy his wegardin' me—me, you know—as a young donkey!"

"Amazing!"

"Astounding!" said Lowther. "His lordship should not judge merely by appearances. Appearances are deceptive."

"You uttah ass!"

"What are you going to do to him?" asked Digby. "I suppose after this you will disown him, and refuse to be responsible any longer for his upbringing?"

"If you cannot be sewious, Dig—"

"I should recommend cutting him off with a shilling," said Lowther. "Only when Gussy has attested all his wealth, he won't have any shillings. Perhaps, however, we could wangle it with the Tribunal for one shilling to be exempted—"

"If Lowthah has finished makin' feahfully wotten jokes, we will go in to tea," said Arthur Augustus.

"We'll have an extra special tea to-day," remarked Blake. "If we're going to attest our wealth this evening, we may as well get rid of some of it. If there's any cake or sardines left, we can attest them—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"My dear Gussy, we must be firm—all things must be attested which are useful for the war. If the war lasts seventy-seven years, the result may depend on the last sardine if things really go to extremities."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not deign to make a rejoinder; indeed, his mighty brain did not even perceive the atrocious pun which lurked in Blake's remark. The juniors went in to tea, and—as their wealth was, as Blake said, booked, they took in supplies on an unusually lavish scale, and did not leave themselves much wealth to be conscripted after tea.

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CHAPTER 8.

The Manifesto.

S EVEN juniors sat down to tea in Study No. 6. Harmony had been restored; the great Gussy condescended to smile again. It was quite a change, and Blake considered that it was quite worth the exertion of pulling Gussy's noble leg. During tea the company persisted in talking cricket, and seemed to have forgotten the impending conscription of wealth, and D'Arcy's remarks on the subject were passed unheeded. But tea was over at last, and it was necessary to come to business.

"Gentlemen—" began Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther held up his hand.

"Is it a speech?" he demanded. "If it's a speech, I beg to retire from the meeting, and look in later. Human endurance has its limits."

"It is not a speech, you wude duffah! I was about to wemark that the meetin' is now open."

"Oh, good! Any more jam in that jar, Blake?"

"No."

"Then I'm ready for the meeting. Pile in, Gussy, and cut it short. It's only three years before we're going to be conscripted in real earnest, you know."

"Gentlemen, pway be sewious! I shall now move—"

"Oh, don't bother to move," said Blake. "I'm not going to move. We can hold the meeting just as we are, I suppose?"

"You misappwehend me, Blake. I shall now move that this meetin' constitutes itself into the Conscription Committee of St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!"

"I move to take the chair—"

"You've got one!"

"I mean, I take the chair of the committee."

"Dash it all, the committee has more than one chair!" said Lowther. "I believe it's the rule for members of a committee to have a chair each."

"You are affectin' to misundahstand me, I am suah, Lowthah. I mean that I am goin' to be chairman. Gentlemen, the committee will now pwocceed to dwaw up the Conscription Manifesto, which will be posted up in the Hall and the common-room, to let the fellows know what to expect. The chairman is willin' to heah suggestions."

Arthur Augustus took a sheet of impot-paper, and dipped a pen in the ink. He scrawled "NOTICE!" along the top of the sheet, in big letters. Then he gnawed the handle of the pen.

"Something in this style," said Blake. "It is hereby decided that the St. Jim's chaps shall forthwith and on the spot proceed to attest their spondulicks, and the said fellows are ordered and commanded by these presents to roll up in their thousands, otherwise they will be fetched. Any fellow who has to be fetched will be invested with the Order of the Thick Ear, without the option of a fine, and will be handed over to a military escort—by the way, we're short of military escorts."

"The committee will constitute itself into a militawy escort whenever necessary," said D'Arcy. "I twust, however, that there will be no shirkahs. I am glad to see you takin' the mattah sewiously, Blake."

Jack Blake closed one eye at the committee, while Arthur Augustus proceeded to draw up the manifesto.

It was really a telling document when it was finished. It ran:

"NOTICE!"

"Manifesto of the Conscription Committee of St. Jim's in session in the committee-room, Study No. 6, Fourth-Form passage.

"Conscription of wealth, for the purposes of the war, having been decided upon by the Committee, composed of the Leaders of the House, the public—of St. Jim's—is hereby informed:

"THAT every member of the School House of St. Jim's is REQUIRED to be present in the junior common-room this evening not later than eight o'clock.

"THAT the fellows will be REQUIRED to fill in attestation forms, giving a full account of their personal resources, and stating whether they are willing, or not willing, to hand over all they possess for the purpose of carrying

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BOYS' FRIEND
OUT TO-DAY!
ONE PENNY.**



Bump! George Gore descended on the floor, and several strings and cords were produced, and his ankles and wrists were attached to the legs of the table. (See Chapter 10.)

on the war, the same as is done by the chaps in the trenches.

"THAT attestation is voluntary; but those who do not attest will be compelled, and that shirkers will be brought in by a military escort.

"Appeals to the School House Tribunal will be allowed, and the Tribunal, sitting in the study, will decide whether exemption be granted or not granted. Total exemption or partial exemption may be granted at the discretion of the Tribunal.

"Given under our hand and seal,

"Signed, A. A. D'ARCY,

"Chairman of the Committee."

"I wathah think that will fetch them," remarked Arthur Augustus complacently. "What do you think, deah boys?"

"Topping!" said Blake. "If the fellows won't attest, let em be fetched. This isn't a time for half-measures. Of course, that applies to the seniors as well as juniors. I move that the job of fetching Kildare be left to D'Arcy, as chairman of the committee."

"Passed unanimously," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"I don't see why the masters should be left out, either," remarked Digby. "But the job of roping in Railton and the Head had better be left to D'Arcy. He has more tact and judgment than we have."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ahem! Of course, seniahs as well as juniahs ought to attest," said Arthur Augustus slowly. "I twust they will roll

up fwom patwiotic motives. But if they do not it will be wathah difficult to apply compulsion to the Sixth."

"Gentlemen," said Blake, "I repudiate the suggestion that this tribunal is a respecter of persons, and has two weights and two measures. Seniors as well as juniors are to be conscripted; the means of doing so to be left to the discretion of the chairman."

"We rely on our chairman's tact and judgment," said Lowther. "We refuse for one moment to entertain the suggestion of exempting the seniors, simply because there are difficulties in the way. Difficulties were only made to be overcome."

"I agwee with you in pwinciple, Lowthah, but I weally do not see how I can make Kildare come if he won't come."

"That is for you to decide. Aren't you chairman?"

"Ya-a-as. I will do my vevy best. Now I will make a copy of this manifesto, and post them up downstairs."

A copy of the manifesto was made, and Arthur Augustus departed to post the two up—one in the hall and one in the common-room.

Tom Merry & Co. grinned at one another when he had gone.

"We're going strong, ain't we?" said Blake.

"We are—we is! Mind, we've got to insist on conscripting the seniors," said Tom. "By the time Gussy has tried his hand at conscripting the Sixth, he may be willing to give the whole idea a rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And it was agreed unanimously by the Conscription Committee that the honourable chairman should be kept up to the difficult task of conscripting the senior Forms.

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CHAPTER 9.

The Attestation of "Wealth"!

"HOWLY mothah av Moses!"
 "Great pip!"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

A tremendous crowd gathered before the manifesto, stuck in a prominent position on the wall in the junior common-room.

The juniors read it, and roared. Arthur Augustus' ripping ideas had excited their risibility before. But the news that they were to be conscripted by order of the committee sitting in Study No. 6 fairly took the juniors by storm. They roared and they shrieked.

"So they're going to fetch us, are they?" bellowed Gore. "Let 'em try fetching me! There will be some black eyes going about afterwards."

"Sure, I'd like to see the spalpeen who'll conscript me!" chuckled Reilly of the Fourth. "And, sure, you can't conscript an Irishman intirely!"

"I object to the whole thing," said Skimpole of the Shell. "I regard the attestation of wealth as a timely and reasonable suggestion, but the proposal of compulsion is foreign to every idea of personal freedom. I shall elaborate that point in argument with D'Arcy."

"Oh, let's back up Gussy!" said Kangaroo. "Shirkers are going to be fetched by a military escort, you know. Let's give Gussy his head, and egg him on to fetch Cutts of the Fifth and Knox of the Sixth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "But is D'Arcy going to attest his own wealth?" sneered Levison. "He's generally got three or four pounds about him."

"Of course he will," said Talbot. "But I rather think Gussy is the only chap who will go so far as that."

"And what's going to become of the money?" Trimble of the Fourth wanted to know. "If D'Arcy wished me to act as treasurer, I should be prepared to give him my support."

"And that would settle what would become of the money!" grinned Kerruish. "It would go in jam-tarts and ginger-pop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Hallo, here comes Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked into the common-room with a stately tread. He was followed by his backers, six juniors who looked as solemn as owls. There was a roar of laughter.

Arthur Augustus did not heed it. He marched up to the table, and laid upon it a large account-book and a bundle of papers. Then he sat down, and his escort stood round him, ready for business.

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus, "the office is now open, and fellows are wequested to come and attest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Begin with the family," suggested Clifton Dane.

"Yaas, that is a good idea. Pway come and attest, deah boys, and set the chaps an example!"

Monty Lowther stepped forward at once. He was prepared to attest. The juniors crowded round with eager interest. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was taking the proceedings seriously. But all the fellows were interested.

There was a glimmer in Monty Lowther's eye which hinted

that he had humorous intentions, but his features were composed to an expression of great gravity.

Arthur Augustus dipped his pen in the ink. "Name?" he said. "My hat!" said Gore. "His brain's going! He's forgotten Lowther's name!"

"I have not forgotten Lowthah's name, Goah! But it is necessawy for a wecuit to give his name."

"Montague Lowther, of that ilk," said the Shell fellow gravely. "It is spelt with a capital 'M' and a capital 'L.'"

Arthur Augustus wrote down the name. "Are you pwepared to attest the pwecise amount of your cash wesources, to be called up when your Gwoup is called?"

"Certainly!"
 "Vewy good! Pway give me the details."

"One threepenny-piece—"
 "Eh?"

"Which I am prepared to devote, without deduction, to the purpose of the war, all the more readily because it has been refused at the tuckshop."

"Weally, Lowthah—"
 "And one French penny—"

"You ass!"
 "And a farthing. In order that my patriotism cannot be doubted, I am prepared to expend my last farthing in the service of this great Empire. And here it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You will kindly sign that papah, Lowthah. You are assigned to the Shell Gwoup, and will weceive latah a notification of youah bein' called up. Pway make woom for the next wecwuit! Mewwy!"

Tom Merry stepped forward.

"Threepence-halfpenny!" he said cheerfully. "The whole sum is at the disposal of the authorities for the purposes of the war. But I should like to earmark the halfpenny for the Red Cross Fund, the remainder of the sum to be equally divided between the Army and the Navy."

"Wecwuits are not allowed to make conditions! Sign that papah, please, and make woom for the next!"

Henry Manners was the next. Manners attested his wealth cheerfully enough; it consisted of sixpence-halfpenny. Truly, as a subsidy towards carrying on the war, the sum was not large. But Manners declared that he was prepared to devote every penny of it to national purposes—when his Group was called up.

Then came Jack Blake, who was, unfortunately, stony. He requested to be informed whether he could attest a knife with a broken blade, worth at least twopence if a purchaser could be found. Herries, however, was better provided. He had five shillings; but he demanded exemption for four out of the five, that sum being required for the purchase of dog-biscuits for his bulldog, Towser.

Arthur Augustus filled in an exemption-form, and handed it to Herries. Then Digby attested his wealth. Dig had seven-and-sixpence—quite a respectable sum—but he claimed exemption for seven-and-threepence, which amount he owed at the tuckshop.

Arthur Augustus looked at his chums a little suspiciously. The other fellows were chuckling. Still, a fellow could not do more than attest the wealth he actually possessed.

"Now it's Gussy's turn!" grinned Levison.

"I am perfectly pwepared to attest, Levison. I attest

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the sum of three pounds six shillings and sixpence, which I am prepared to hand over as soon as my Group is called up. I am in the Fourth Form Group. Now, you fellows, wolla up! Kangaroo, I trust a Colonial is not going to hold back when it is a question of proving his patriotism?"

Harry Noble grinned, and rolled up. "Tenpence!" he said. "I claim exemption for ninepence-halfpenny."

"On what grounds?"

"Tea in the study to-morrow." "Tea in the study is not a necessity in war-time! The chaps in the trenches do not have tea in the study. Exemption is refused!"

"There goes my tenpence!" sighed Kangaroo. "But, I say, suppose I spend it before my Group is called up?"

"Bai Jove, I never thought of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"However, a chap will be expected to replace any of his resources that he squanders before his Group is called up. Twimble, are you the next?"

Baggy Trimble came forward, amid laughter. Trimble of the Fourth was perpetually hard up, and, though he told impressive stories of the splendours of Trimble Hall, he found nobody to believe him. Indeed, Monty Lowther declared that Trimble Hall was only Trimble's way of describing the Trimble Arms. But Baggy Trimble saw in attestation a dodge for impressing the fellows with his wealth. As for the time when his Group should be called up, he did not bother about that.

"Name?" said Arthur Augustus, dipping his pen into the ink.

"Bagley Trimble, of Trimble Hall."

"Ahem! What are your cash resources, dear boy?"

"Twenty-five pounds!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Twenty-five rats!" said Levison of the Fourth.

"Pway shut up, Levison! Are you willing to attest that very considerable sum, Twimble?"

"Every shilling," said Trimble unblushingly. "I can get as much more as I like by dropping a line to Trimble Hall."

"Very good! Sign the paper! Gentlemen, I trust you will all wolla up, after Twimble's wippen' example!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When the Wealthy Group System has been firmly established at St. Jim's, there is no doubt—no doubt whatever—that the idea will catch on, and it will shortly be the law of the country. St. Jim's will have the honour of leading the way. What St. Jim's thinks to-day, England thinks to-morrow! Goah, will you kindly step up and attest?"

"Rats!" said Gore.

"I trust, Goah, that you are prepared to devote the whole of your resources to the service of your country in time of need?"

"You always were a trust sort of chap!" remarked Gore.

"Pway step up, Goah! Remember that if you do not attest voluntarily, compulsion will be applied to shirkahs!"

"I'd like to see anybody compulse me!" said Gore, with a warlike look.

"Goah, do you refuse to attest?"

"Yes, fathead!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the committee.

"Gentlemen, this shirkah refuses to attest! A military escort is required! Pway fetch that shirkah heah!"

CHAPTER 10.

Compulsion!

GEORGE GORE pushed back his cuffs.

Gore was one of the numerous individuals who believe in any amount of compulsion for others, but none for themselves. And certainly Gore didn't mean to be "compulsed" by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's egregious Conscriptio Committee.

The crowd of fellows looked on with interest. They were keen to see compulsion in action.

The military escort were ready. The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. advanced upon Gore.

"Better come, dear boy!" said Tom Merry.

"Rats!"

"You see, it's the law of the land—at least, of the house—"

"Silly ass!"

"Seize him!"

"Hands off!" roared Gore, as the military escort closed in on him. "Look here, I shall jolly well hit out!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Blake, as Gore's heavy fist clumped on his nose.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next moment Gore was swept off his feet in the grasp

of many hands. Jack Blake sat up on the floor, and rubbed his nose.

"Yow-ow! I'll smash you!" Blake leaped to his feet. "Let him go, while I smash him! Come on, you rotter!"

"Order!" shouted Tom Merry. "Military escorts don't scrap with their prisoners, you duffer!"

"I'm going to lick him, I tell you!"

"Let him come on!" roared Gore. "I'll smash him!"

"Order! Shut up!"

"Stand back, Blake! Order, you ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are detwactin' from the judicial calm of the proceedings, Blake!"

"Blow the proceedings!" growled Blake, rubbing his damaged nose.

"Ordah! Bwing that shirkah heah!"

Gore, struggling violently in the grasp of the military escort, was marched up to the table. Arthur Augustus eyed him sternly.

"Name?" he rapped out.

"Go and eat coke!"

"That is not a name. Name, please!"

"Fathead!"

"Judgin' by appearances, Goah, that might be your name!" assented Arthur Augustus, quite brightly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" roared Gore.

"The prisoner's name is Gore, of that ilk," said Monty Lowther—"a name celebrated in the war, your worship."

"Bai Jove! Have any of your relations distinguished themselves at the Front, Goah?"

"I am not alluding to his relations," explained Lowther. "But Gore has been prominent in all the great battles."

"This is not a time for wotten puns, Lowthah! Pway wemembah that these are judicial proceedings. The prisoner's name is George Gore. Goah, will you kindly attest your wealth at once?"

"Rats!"

"What is the amount of your cash resources, Goah?"

"Find out!"

There was a pause. The juniors looked on, grinning. Gore, whose sense of humour was somewhat wanting, scowled. But the amateur recruiting-officer was equal to the occasion.

"Compulsion will be applied if you do not answer freely, Goah."

"Silly ass! Lemme go, you idiots!"

"You are not allowed to call the weewuitin'-officah a silly ass!"

"Excuse me," said Monty Lowther, "as a prisoner at the bar, Gore is bound to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you do not wewain from wotten jokes, Lowthah, I shall have you ejected for contempt of court! We shall now proceed to administer some military punishment to Goah. I ordah him to be tent-pegged."

"Hear, hear!"

"Lemme go, you silly idiots!" roared Gore.

"The legs of the table will answer the purpose of tent-pegs," said Arthur Augustus, after some consideration. "The legal period for tent-peggin' a chap is, I believe, three hours. Goah can remain tent-pegged till bedtime."

Bump! George Gore descended on the floor, and several strings and cords were produced, and his ankles and wrists were attached to the legs of the table. Gore disappeared under the table, but his voice could still be heard. And his remarks were more emphatic than polite.

"We will now proceed with the next weewuit," said D'Arcy. "Weilly of the Fourth will kindly come forward."

Reilly of the Fourth came forward, with a grin.

"Name, please?"

"Patrick O'Hara Reilly, your worship."

"Kindly attest your wealth."

"Can't be did. You can't conscript an Irishman," said Reilly cheerfully. "It's not quite good enough for us, you know."

"Bai Jove! However, you must attest, and apply for exemption as an Irishman. If you do not attest, you will be tent-pegged."

"Will you let me out of this?" roared Gore, from under the table.

"Pway shut up, Goah! You are intewwuptin' the proceedings. Patwick O'Hawah Weilly, kindly attest your wealth. You can take an exemption form."

"Fourpence," said Reilly. "But I claim that my wealth, if not exempted, is to be devoted to the rebuilding of the damaged parts of Dublin. After this is done, the remainder of the wealth, if any, is to be devoted to purchasing smokes and socks for the Irish Rifles. The residue to be invested

"Pway shut up, Weilly! Julian will now come forward. Name, please?"

"Richard Julian."

"Amount of your cash wesources?"

"Fifteen pounds."

"Bai Jove! That's bettah! Are you pwepared to devote your wealth to the cause of your countwy, Julian?"

"Quite!"

"Bravo! Sign the papah."

"Certainly! But when the wealth is called up, what is going to become of it?" asked Julian of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"That hasn't been decided yet. But it will be taken charge of by the conscription committee, and forwarded to the pwopah quartah for the use of the Government in cawwyin' on the wah."

"But suppose they use it for paying salaries to one another?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is a difficulty which always occurs in mattahs of Government, deah boy. It is pwactically imposs to keep politicians fwom that sort of thing. But the wah must be cawwied on all the same. And the more money that is handed over, the more will be left aftah the politicians' salawies are paid, for the purposes of the wah."

"But they may give one another a rise all round," grinned Lowther.

"That must be wisked. I twust, howevah, that latah on, the Wah Office may see its way to closin' the House of Commons for the pewiod of the wah, and conscriptin' the membahs. That is a much-needed weform. But we must pwoceed by degwees, and at pwesent we are attestin' our wealth. Your turn next, Talbot."

Talbot of the Shell cheerfully attested his wealth. Then came Wally of the Third, and he attested a chunk of butter-scotch and a pen-nib. Meanwhile, the voice of George Gore, tent-pegged under the table, was incessant and emphatic. But nobody minded Gore.

There was quite a rush to attest. As the juniors were convinced that their pocket-money would all be expended long before it was called up, they did not mind attesting their wealth, and they entered into the spirit of the thing. Arthur Augustus's face glowed with satisfaction. By the time bedtime drew near a great majority of the juniors of the School House had attested their wealth. When the last name had been taken, Arthur Augustus deigned to become conscious of George Gore's frantic ravings from under the table.

"Are you gettin' wathah tired of bein' tent-pegged, Goah?" he asked.

"You silly ass! You frabjous chump! I'm getting the cramp!" roared Gore. "I'll smash you for this!"

"Are you willin' to attest your wealth?"

"No!" yelled Gore.

"Then you can wemain where you are."

"Look here, will you let me go?" howled Gore.

"Not until you attest, deah boy."

"Oh, you frabjous idiot! I'll attest!" groaned Gore.

"Bwavo! Get him out, deah boys!"

Gore was released from his uncomfortable position. His face was crimson with fury when he was dragged out. He attested the sum of six shillings and sevenpence halfpenny, adding a demand that the recruiting-officer should put up his hands on the spot.

"Pway eject that wowdy wecwuit!" was the disdainful reply of the recruiting-officer.

And Gore was assisted out of the Common-room.

Skimpole of the Shell came in. Arthur Augustus was closing his ledger, but he opened it again.

"Bai Jove, heah's Skimmay! Come and attest, Skimmay, deah boy."

Skimpole blinked at him through his spectacles.

"I have come to protest, not to attest," he said. "I scorn the whole proceedings! As a Socialist, I decline to be compelled to do anything I do not choose. I am a conscientious objector!"

"Bai Jove! I weally did not think there was a conscientious objectah at St. Jim's! Howevah, fair play's a jewel, and conscientious objectahs are entitled to exemption. How-

ovah, I think you had bettah attest, and then apply for exemption. Kindly give the amount of your cash wesources, to be devoted to the purposes of the wah, Skimpole."

"At the present moment, D'Arcy, my financial resources amount to the rather inconsiderable sum of one halfpenny. The dictates of conscience, however, compel me to decline to attest."

"Pway take him by the scwuff of the neck, somebody!"

"Yaroo!"

"Are you weady to attest, Skimpole?"

"Yow-ow! Lowther, you are causing me considerable agony by manipulating my auricular appendage in that exceedingly inconsiderate manner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you weady to attest?"

"I will attest under protest, and claim exemption. As a free-born citizen, I decline to acknowledge the validity of any proceedings based upon compulsion."

"Sign your name, you sillay ass, and don't talk so much!"

Skimpole signed his name and rubbed his ear. The recruiting-officer closed his ledger with a snap, and rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen, the pwoceedings are now ovah! The Twibunal will sit in Study No. 6 aftah lessons to-mowwow, when claims for exemption will be considahed."

"Bedtime!" said Kildare of the Sixth, looking in.

"Kildare, deah boy, would you like to attest?"

"Eh?"

"We are attestin' our wealth, for national purposes. Compulsion is applied to shirkahs," explained Arthur Augustus. "It applies to the Sixth Form. You are at liberty to appeal for exemption if you like."

Kildare laughed.

"Would you mind getting off to the dormitory?" he asked.

"Go it, Gussy!" chorused a dozen voices. The juniors were keen to see how Arthur Augustus would compel the captain of the school.

"Stick to your guns, Gussy!" said Lowther. "We look to you as a leader, you know. No surrender!"

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath. The tug-of-war had come, and Gussy was not the fellow to shrink from his principles.

"Kildare, I have no wesource but to insist most positively upon youah attestin' youah wealth!" he said firmly.

"Bravo!"

Kildare stared at him.

"Are you asking for a licking?" he inquired.

"Certainly not! Moreovah, it is against all wules to lick a wecwuitin'-officah in the execution of his dutay. If you do not attest, Kildare, compulsion will be applied. We cannot have two weights and two measures."

"My hat!" said Kildare.

"Pway give me your name!"

"What?"

"And the amount of your cash wesources to be devoted to national purposes."

"I suppose you're off your rocker," said Kildare. "I don't generally take part in kids' games."

"You uttah ass, this is not a kids' game—the pwoceedin's are perfectly sewious and wegulah. I give you one minute—"

"What?"

"Othahwise, compulsion will be applied!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kildare.

Arthur Augustus's eyes gleamed.

"You are not allowed to laugh at a wecwuitin' officah, Kildare."

"You young ass—"

Arthur Augustus pointed to Kildare.

"Seize him!" he commanded.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Draw it mild, you ass!" murmured Kangaroo.

"Wats! We are heah to do our dutay, without feah or favah!"

"I'm waiting for you to clear off to the dormitory," Kildare remarked.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort till you have attested. Militawy escort, kindly do your dutay at once. Seize that shirkah!"

The military escort looked at one another.

They were not likely to seize the head of the Sixth and tent-peg him under the table. They compromised the matter by seizing the recruiting-officer. Arthur Augustus gave a yell of surprise and wrath as the military escort collared him.

"You uttah asses, you are to seize Kildare, not me! Welease me at once! Yawwoh!"

"Kim on!" said Blake.

"Yawwoh! Welease me, you wottahs!"

With his arms and legs wildly flying, Arthur Augustus was



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borne out of the common-room and up to the dormitory. There he was plumped on a bed. "You uttah wottahs!" he roared, as he rolled on the bed. "This is mutiny, bai Jove!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "I wegard you as mutinous wottahs!" "Now then, turn in!" called out Kildare. Arthur Augustus snorted, and turned in. The military proceedings were over for that evening.

CHAPTER 11. The Tribunal Sits!

"My hat!" "Gussy again!" There was a new notice on the board the following day, in the elegant handwriting of the swell of the School House. It ran:

"The St. Jim's Groups are called up this day. Applications for exemption will be heard by the Tribunal in Study No. 6, at five o'clock.

"Signed, A. A. D'ARCY,
"For the Committee."

"There'll be a crowd of applicants for exemption," remarked Lowther. "I think every chap who attested has taken an exemption form."

"Except Gussy!" grinned Blake.

"Gussy's three pound six-and-six will be the total product," huckled Manners. "And when he's parted with it, and can't get a new silk hat, he will be willing to chuck up the game." The swell of St. Jim's, however, was still taking the proceedings with great seriousness. He was quite unaware that the crowd of fellows who had attested had done so for the special purpose of pulling his aristocratic leg. During lessons that day, Arthur Augustus was thinking chiefly of his splendid scheme, and of the far-reaching results that were likely to follow.

In his mind's eye he already saw the attestation and con- scription of wealth adopted far and wide, with wonderful results towards winning the war. In his mind's eye he saw the example of the juniors of St. Jim's adopted and followed by the House of Commons. He saw—always in his mind's eye—bloating millionaires and war-profitmongers rolling up to attest their wealth, overjoyed to be able to do as much for their country. He was never likely to see it with any other eye but the eye of the mind.

Naturally, Arthur Augustus' attention wandered considerably from his lessons. It was difficult, under the circumstances, to fix his mind upon Latin prose and Roman history. Mr. Lathom rewarded him with a hundred lines, which was rather hard upon an enthusiastic recruiting-officer.

But Arthur Augustus did not mind the lines. He was prepared to make sacrifices for the great cause.

After lessons that day he made his preparations for the exemption tribunal, which was to sit in Study No. 6, to hear applications from slackers. There was likely to be a rush on the Tribunal. A hasty tea was soon over, and then the Tribunal sat round the study table. Kangaroo of the Shell acted as doorkeeper, to admit the applicants one by one.

The Terrible Three and the four chums of Study No. 6 were the Tribunal. Skimpole had claimed a seat on the Tribunal, pointing out that at least one fellow with brains was needed there. But the claim was disallowed. Monty Lowther said that the Tribunal was to be run strictly on the lines of a real Tribunal.

Wally of the Third was the first applicant for exemption. He was admitted by Kangaroo, and Arthur Augustus fixed a stern glance upon him.

"I am sowwy to see a welioun of mine applyin' for exemption," he said. "I weally wondah that you are not ashamed of yourself, Wally."

"Oh, come off!" said Wally.

"Ordah! You are not allowed to tell the chairman of a Tribunal to come off. Upon what gwounds do you claim exemption for your wealth?"

"The applicant attested a chunk of toffee and a pen-nib," remarked Tom Merry. "Upon what grounds, young man, do you claim exemption for one or both of these articles of national importance?"

"Exemption is claimed for the toffee," said Wally, "because owing to the stony state of the money market, toffee is scarce.

The pen-nib remains at the disposal of the Government for the purposes of the war."

"I wefuse to have the pwoceedin's of the Twibunal turned into wicidule by a cheeky fag! Both the wotten toffee and the silly pen-nib are exempted, and the applicant will be kicked out."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Lowther. "This Tribunal has a voice in the matter. The chairman isn't the only pebble on the beach."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It goes by a majority," said Blake. "The chairman will kindly shut his head while the Tribunal considers the case. I have several questions to put to the applicant."

"Weally, Blake—"

"In the first place," said Blake sternly, "suppose the Germans landed, and that chunk of toffee was required to enable the defending troops to stick to their guns. In that case, would you be unwilling to devote that toffee to the use of the nation in its hour of extremity?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Blake—"

"In the case of the pen-nib, this may be still more necessary. Several tons of letters are written every day in the great departments. If the war lasts fifteen years, pen-nibs may be entirely exhausted, and it may be impossible for the head of the Red Tape and Chinwag Department to make up the nineteenth report on the seventh finding of the eighty-seventh committee on Warjaw. I move, therefore, that exemption be not granted."

"I suggest exemption in the case of the pen-nib, but not in the case of the toffee," said Tom Merry. "Toffee is not required for the support of the applicant's family. I understand that the applicant is not married?"

"Not that I remember," said the applicant.

"Then the toffee is not exempt."

"I beg to submit to the Tribunal the fact that I have already eaten the toffee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In that case, the toffee is exempted, but the pen-nib must be held at the disposal of the Chinwag Department at Whitehall. Next case!"

Wally departed, grinning, and Arthur Augustus frowned. The next applicant was shown in. It was Julian of the Fourth.

"I am sowwy to see you applyin' for exemption, Julian. I twust you are not a conscientious objectah."

"Never had a conscience," said Julian hopefully. "I hope I am too patriotic to be bothered by conscientious scruples on any subject whatever."

"I did not quite mean that, Julian. A fellow ought to be conscientious, of course, but only accordin' to the views taken by the Twibunal. On what gwounds do you appeal for the exemption of your fifteen pounds?"

"On the ground that it will be required for the next war."

"There is nevah goin' to be anotheh wah. This is a wah to end wah."

Julian shook his head.

"I am sorry to differ from the honourable chairman's view. But it appears to me that all countries will be governed by the same kind of silly idiots in the future as in the past, so there will always be war, on and off."

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps you are wight, deah boy. It is wathah discouwagin'."

"I therefore claim exemption until a law is passed in all countries, compelling politicians to enlist on the outbreak of war, and go into the front trenches. Then war will never be declared again."

"A vevy wippin' ideah, if it could be cawwied out! However, I feah that it is impwacticable. Exemption is wefused. Next case."

Next case was Levison of the Fourth. Levison came in grinning, and did not seem at all abashed by the frowns of the chairman.

"The applicant attested the sum of one shilling and three-pence," said Manners, referring to the ledger. "Exemption refused, as the applicant is a well-known slacker, and will very likely spend the money on cigarettes."

"I claim to be heard," said Levison. "Tribunals are supposed to keep up an appearance of going into the matters they have to investigate!"

"Yaas, wathah! It is customawy to let a chap talk for a few minutes befoah wefusin' him exemption, deah boys. Kindly state your gwounds bwieffy, Levison."

"I claim exemption on the grounds of fair play all round. The laws of cricket demand that members of tribunals should make the same sacrifices as the chaps they have to try."

"Yaas, that is quite twue. I appwove of that. This twibunal is quite pwepared to play the game, and set an example to othah twibunals. We have all attested our wealth, Levison."

ANSWERS

"And all your other property?" asked Levison.

"Ahem! We are pwepared to hand ovah evewythin'."

"Are we?" murmured Blake.

"I don't think!" remarked Lowther.

"We are pwepared to sacwifice evewythin'," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"And in case of refusal, compulsion may be applied?" asked Levison.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Honour bright?"

"Certainly!"

"Very good. Under those circumstances, I withdraw my application."

Levison left the study grinning. The Tribunal looked after him rather suspiciously.

"That boulder has some jape on!" said Blake.

"Wubbish, Blake! He is goin' to follow our example. He has a wight to expect a Twibunal to set him an example of patwiotism. Next case!"

Skimpole of the Shell came in.

CHAPTER 12.

The Conscientious Objector!

SKIMPOLE was prepared for business. He had a huge volume under each arm, apparently for reference. He blinked solemnly at the Tribunal. Skimpole was as serious as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy himself. It was a glorious chance for the amateur Socialist to spread himself, and Skimmy meant to make the most of it.

"State your gwounds briefly, Skimmy!"

"It is impossible for me to be brief," said Skimpole. "The liberty of the subject is not a subject to be dealt with summarily."

"Wats!"

"Order!" said Lowther. "The chairman of a Tribunal is not allowed to say 'Rats!'—or even 'Wats!'"

"I claim exemption as a conscientious objector," said Skimpole.

"Kick him out!"

"I claim to be heard. I will state my reasons as briefly as possible, but it will take about three hours!"

"Will it?" said Blake pleasantly. "Three minutes will be nearer the mark, I think!"

"I object to all warfare, on principle."

"What would you do if the Germans landed?" demanded Manners, in quite the manner of a Tribunal member.

"The Germans will not land, Blake. The Navy prevents that, and therefore the question of the Germans landing has nothing whatever to do with conscription for the Army."

"Bai Jove, there's something in that! I nevah thought of that befoah!"

"Moreover, if the Germans did land, I should conscientiously object to treating them roughly."

"My hat!"

"A German is a human being. I admit that this is a somewhat startling statement, and a great deal of evidence tends to the contrary. But it has been scientifically established that the Germans are members of the human race, though in a degenerate condition, approximating more to the mental and moral state of the beasts of the field. If I met a German invader, I should endeavour to convert him to a better frame of mind by means of sweet reasonableness."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I should request him to suspend warlike operations for a time, while I read him some extracts from Professor Balmycrumpet's volume of 'Pacifism'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I expected ribald merriment from this Tribunal," said Skimpole disdainfully. "I am sorry to say that the general level of intelligence in Tribunals is very low. I take my stand upon the brotherhood of man. The German, sunk as he is in brutality and slavish submission to military tyrants, is our brother!"

"Rats!" said the Tribunal, with one voice.

"As Socrates says—"

"For mercy's sake, don't give us Socrates!" implored Monty Lowther.

"Socrates says—"

"Help!"

"If a man is afflicted with bodily ailment, you would not think of hating and despising him for it. You would be ashamed to do so. Why, therefore, should you hate and despise him for suffering from mental and moral ailments? Such is the case of the Germans. They have groaned for ages under military tyranny. Conscription has existed in their wretched country longer than the memory of the oldest inhabitant. What result could be expected? The result that

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has come about, my dear friends, the German has become a wild beast in the form of a man. Crushed under the heel of militarism, a slave and dog from birth to death, the miserable Hun seeks to compensate himself by dominating others abroad. But—"

"Cut it short!"

"A sincere Socialist never cuts it short, Blake. But are we to hate the miserable Hun for these bad qualities, induced by bad government? No, my friends! We should rather pity him, and endeavour to lead him into better ways. We cannot cure him of his military lunacy by establishing a similar military lunacy in this country. Let us offer him the right hand of friendship!"

"And suppose he won't take it?"

"Then we must mourn over his blindness and perversity."

"And suppose he cuts short your mourning by sticking a bayonet into you?"

"That would be exceedingly painful, of course, but a pacifist must be prepared to perish for his opinions, otherwise he would be a shirker."

"Bai Jove, I always knew that Skimmy was a howlin' idiot, but I weally did not think he was quite such a howlin' idiot. If I met a German invadah, I should certainly give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"That is because your intelligence is of a low order, my dear D'Arcy!" said Skimpole benevolently.

"You uttah ass!"

"And suppose a German set fire to your house, Skimmy?" asked Tom Merry.

"I should request him to lend me assistance in extinguishing the conflagration, my dear Merry."

"Great Scott! And suppose you saw him shooting women and children, as the beasts do in Belgium?" demanded Manners.

"I should regard his proceedings with horror, and should endeavour to reason with him. At the same time, I should be prepared to subscribe liberally towards the funeral expenses of the victims!"

"I wegard you as a howlin' ass, Skimmy! I weally did not think it possible for such an idiot to be allowed outside a lunatic asylum. Exemption is wefused!"

"Exemption refused!" chorussed the Tribunal.

"I hurl back your sentence in your teeth!" said Skimpole.

"I will now read what Professor Balmycrumpet says on the subject."

"You jolly well won't!" roared Blake.

"My dear Blake—"

"Exemption is wefused, you uttah ass! You will be compelled to hand ovah your cash wesources for the cawwyin' on of the wah."

"I refuse. I am prepared to suffer for my opinions. The cause needs martyrs!" said Skimpole heroically. "I welcome suffering! I look forward eagerly to suffering in the cause of humanity! I—"

"Then we won't disappoint you," said Blake. "Bump him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Tribunal rose as one man and collared the conscientious objector. Skimpole roared:

"My dear friends— Yaroooooh!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Yooop! Groooh! Help! Oh, my hat! Leggo!"

Bump! Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear! You ruffianly—yow—rotters—groooh—I def you—yah!"

Bump! Bump!

"Ow! Yow! Stoppit! On second thoughts—yow-wow—withdraw my application—yooop! I do not desire at present—yaroooooh—to be a martyr to the cause—groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole of the Shell departed from the study with several boots behind to assist him.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus, "I have fwequent been wathah down on the Twibunals for the wuff way they tweet conscientious objectahs, but weally, if they are like Skimmy, it is not surpwisin'. I think I should vewy soon get fed up with conscientious objectahs!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

The voice of Skimpole was heard in the passage, as he departed, a sadder, if not a wiser conscientious objector.

Julian of the Fourth looked in.

"Pway wetiah, Julian! Your case has been settled. Next case!"

"All serene," said Julian. "I've looked in to tell you that Levison is—"

"Bothah Levison."

"Oh, all right!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "What is Levison doing?"

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"He's taking Gussy's bicycle out! I thought Gussy might like to know that he is going to sell it."

Arthur Augustus jumped up as if he had received an electric shock.

"Levison is goin' to sell my bike?" he shouted.

"Yes. You see—"

Arthur Augustus did not wait for Julian to finish. He rushed from the study, with great wrath upon his noble countenance.

"This is where the Tribunal chucks it!" grinned Monty Lowther. "What on earth is Levison going to sell Gussy's bike for, Julian?"

Julian chuckled.

"In order to devote the proceeds to national purposes, for carrying on the war. He says Gussy agreed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Tribunal roared.

"He's going to sell your camera next, Manners!"

Manners suddenly ceased laughing.

"My camera!" he stuttered.

"Yes. And Herries' bulldog—"

"My bulldog!" shrieked Herries.

"Yes, and Blake's bike, and Dig's cricket-bat, and—"

"Let's go and collar Levison!" gasped Manners.

And the whole Tribunal rushed after Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They were all very anxious to see Levison.

CHAPTER 13.

Gussy Gives It Up!

LEVISON, you wottah—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Here's Gussy!"

"Stick to it, Levison!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

A crowd of juniors surrounded Levison of the Fourth in the quadrangle. Levison was wheeling out Gussy's handsome jigger—the extremely expensive and select jigger which had cost D'Arcy's pater seventeen guineas.

Levison nodded coolly to D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was highly excited, but Levison was quite calm.

"Hallo, Gussy! I thought you were busy on the Tribunal."

"You uttah wottah! What are you doin' with my bike?"

"Only taking it down to Wayland to sell it!" said Levison calmly.

"To—to—to sell my bike!" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"Certainly! The proceeds will be forwarded to the proper quarter to assist in carrying on the war, along with my one-and-threepence," explained Levison.

"You uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you haven't applied to your own Tribunal for exemption for your bike, have you?" asked Levison.

Arthur Augustus' face was a study for some moments. The juniors shrieked as they looked at him.

"Nunno!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Exemption would be refused, I suppose? A bike is not a necessity in war-time. Besides, you agreed!"

"I did not agwee—"

"Yes; I asked you while you were sitting on the Tribunal. Everything is going to be thrown in, when the conscription of wealth comes about," said Levison cheerfully. "No reason why bikes shouldn't go, is there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope to raise quite a tidy little sum on this bike," pursued Levison. "After that I am going to call in a rag-and-bone man, and sell him all your silk hats!"

"Mum-my silk hats?"

"Certainly! And your fancy waistcoats!"

"You—you uttah wottah—"

"And everything else of yours that I can lay hands on. I'm not going to give anybody an excuse for doubting my patriotism. There's no amount of trouble I wouldn't take to help in wining the war," said Levison innocently. "It has been decided by the St. Jim's conscription committee—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That the conscription of wealth is necessary to win the war, and also in the interests of fair play. All personal belongings not strictly necessary are included in the term wealth, course!"

"You—you—"

"Chaps in the trenches don't have bikes," chuckled Levison, "and they don't have silk hats and fancy waistcoats. They haven't have eyeglasses and gold watches. I'm going to sell off a lot for you, and then we shall be getting on towards paying the Tommies two hundred a year, as you suggested!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was fairly caught. Like many great re-

formers, he had not fully reflected on the possibility of his reforms being applied to himself.

"We shall raise quite a lot of tin," went on Levison, as Tom Merry & Co. arrived on the scene. "Manners' camera is worth a good bit. Herries' bulldog will fetch something, at least—"

"Let me catch you touching my camera!"

"Let me see you fooling with my bulldog!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you claimed exemption for your camera, Manners?" asked Levison calmly. "If so, the public are entitled to know upon what grounds?"

"Faith, and that's right! On what grounds?" yelled Reilly. "Why shouldn't your camera be conscripted, Manners darlint?"

"Because I'll smash any silly ass who meddles with it!" roared Manners. "That's why!"

"Compulsion will be applied," chuckled Levison. "That has been decided by the Conscription Committee of St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, if you'll get out of the way, D'Arcy, I'll wheel this bike off—"

"I wefuse—"

"If one of you fellows will bring out Manners' camera, I'll sell it at the same time. Bring Tom Merry's bat, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"I suppose you don't object, Merry?"

"I jolly well do!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "Gentlemen, the conscription of wealth is hereby chucked, dropped, and done with! We were really only pulling Gussy's leg—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But if Gussy wants to stick to the idea, we will give him his head," said Tom. "We are all willing to help carry Gussy's belongings down to Wayland and sell them. Would you mind handing over your watch, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to hand ovah my watch, Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! Is the conscription of wealth over?" asked Levison, in surprise. "I rather thought it would be when Gussy's things began to go!"

"Nothin' of the sort, Levison! I wegard you as an insinuat' wottah! But it occurs to me that there are several details that will have to be thought out vevy carefully—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon weflection, the callin' up of the Gwoups will be postponed for a time, while the committee weflects on the mattah."

"But what about this bike—"

"I am goin' to take that bike back to the bike-shed, Levison, and if you wheel it out again, I shall give you a feaful thwashin'."

Arthur Augustus jerked the bike away, and wheeled it off indignantly. He was followed by a howl of laughter. It was evident that the conscription of wealth at St. Jim's was at an end.

Arthur Augustus came into the study a little later, with a heightened colour. He found his friends there, apparently in a hilarious mood. The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass upon them severely.

"There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at, you duffahs! I admit that the mattah wequires weflection, and it is no good actin' hastily—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as cacklin' asses! Levison is an uttah wottah. Howevah, I feel that, undah the cires, it would only be a judicious pwoceedin' to postpone the callin' up of the Gwoups."

"Postponed sine die!" grinned Lowther.

As a matter of fact, that was how it proved.

The School House juniors grinned when a notice appeared on the board, announcing that the calling up of the St. Jim's Groups, for the purpose of conscripting their wealth, was put off indefinitely. As a matter of fact, the Groups never were called up. The juniors' wealth—such as it was—was allowed to remain in their pockets; the Tribunal sat no more in Study No. 6, and the shining example which St. Jim's was to set to the whole country never was set. Even Arthur Augustus no longer approved of conscription at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"KILDARE'S ENEMY!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

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NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"KILDARE'S ENEMY!"

Start Our Great Australian Serial To-day

CORNSTALK BOB



The Previous Instalments Told How

Old TOM HILDER, a cattle-farmer of Katfarit, Australia, is faced with ruin for the want of £1,000. He goes to a friend in Sydney, HENRY NORMAN, from whom he obtains the money, but is afterwards robbed, and, in recovering the notes, becomes mixed up, in the eyes of the police, with a gang of scoundrels.

His son, BOB, receives the £1,000 from his father, and takes it to SUMMERS, the bank manager, but gathers from the attitude of Summers that he is in league with BOARDMAN, a scoundrel who has plotted to ruin old Hilder.

Bob is afterwards arrested and charged with passing false notes at the bank, but is liberated from his prison cell by CAPTAIN DASHWOOD, a notorious outlaw. Later, he is overtaken by troopers, and, just when he thinks he is about to be recaptured, discovers that they are after his father. A bully, GELL, who has seen and recognised him, goes to Boardman with the news.

Eventually, Bob comes upon Dashwood, who has been wounded by a member of another gang of scoundrels, led by a man named SUTHERLAND, whom the lad discovers to be the man who robbed his father. He renders assistance to the outlaw, and returns with him and his black servant to his hiding-place, where he decides to remain until morning.

(Now read on.)

Bob Finds Trouble!

It was with a feeling of relief next morning that Bob led Brave Bess up the path, and rode away. Bad as his own predicament was already, it would only be made far worse were the police to hear that he had been in Dashwood's company. Yet he felt sorry for the outlaw. There was a streak of good in him. And that his end must be tragic was certain. All who took to his life were caught sooner or later.

Before leaving, he had asked for, and obtained, a description of the villain Sutherland. Also, Dashwood, with his knowledge of the country, had explained the course Sutherland was likely to take. Following his suggestions, therefore, Bob set out north-east, and covered many miles before he off-saddled at noon to give Brave Bess a feed and a rest.

He was having a meal himself when, hearing the far-away crack of a whip, he stood up and looked around.

Down an adjacent hill a man was approaching at an easy canter, and as he drew near and saw Brave Bess, he quickened his pace. Reining up, he gave Bob the cheery nod that bushmen always accord one another.

"Cheero! On the Wallaby—eh?" he asked. "So am I, bound for Mossfred. Got any grub to spare? I've run short."

"Mossfred!" Bob replied. "Why, I'm going there!"

"Good! Then we'll go together."

He jumped out of the saddle, slipped the reins through his arm, and squatted on the ground. Bob passed him a

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loaf and a hunk of salt beef, and the bushman, taking out his clasp-knife, began to cut the viands. The lad, meantime was observing him. Up-country one meets with all sorts, but the true bushman is unmistakable. Bob had met with other—those who never work, but tramp from station to station cadging for food and a night's rest, which is never refused them; those who join the shearing-sheds in the season and spend the interval loafing about the cities; and those who take to a bush life as a last resort.

It was hard to place this man. In dress he looked a bushman, but his manner lacked the quietness. He was glib, off-hand, a trifle superior. Nor was his face prepossessing. His eyes were shifty, and his smile unpleasant. But as the lad was well able to take care of himself, he had no uneasiness. He would sooner have travelled alone than in the company of a stranger whom he disliked at first sight, but they had been thrown together, and, after all, they would part at the end of the day.

The man took a big meal, and, after lighting his pipe, lay back on the grass and smoked and talked for an hour. Then at Bob's suggestion, they mounted again and jogged along side by side.

"What's taking you to Mossfred?" the man asked presently.

Bob had expected this question, and was ready.

"I'm going there on an off-chance," he replied. "I'm looking for someone who can do me a good turn if I come across him."

"Why, so am I!" the other replied. "Well, that's curious! Perhaps I know your friend? I know everyone there, and mostly all know Jack Bennett. That's my name. By the way, what's yours?"

Bob was on his guard. His name was on the lips of all the police, and, for all he knew, it might by this time be posted up outside every police-station. Possibly a reward had been offered for his capture, and this man might not be about betraying him.

"Bob Tracey," he replied, giving his dead mother's maiden name.

He thought that Bennett shot him a surprised look out of the corner of his eye, but that might have been his fancy.

"And your friend's name?" Bennett asked.

"Same as mine," Bob replied.

At this moment Bennett's horse began to plunge and buck as if touched by the spur. Looking sideways, Bob saw Bennett had partly turned, in his effort to hold him in, and there was either a grin or a grimace on his face. The rest of the animal was soon subdued, and Bennett rode back, his eyes shining and his face flushed.

"Does he often do that?" Bob asked.

"He's up to all manner of tricks!" Bennett growled.

"I thought you must have given him the spur."

"The spur! Why should you think that?" Bennett snapped. "What reason could there be?"

"None, that I know of," Bob answered.

"Then don't talk rot!"

The sharp and uncalled-for answer made the lad angry.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1st

but he did not retort. He rode on in silence, and Bennett did not speak, either. For two miles they travelled, without exchanging a word, and at last Bennett spoke again. From his manner it would seem that he had quite forgotten his rudeness, and that he did not think an apology was necessary.

"We haven't far to go now, and I'm not sorry," he remarked. "I've had a long day—in the saddle since dawn. Mossfred is yonder, beyond that clump of gum-trees. You can't mistake the way. Half an hour will get you there. I go off to the left, to where my friend lives. So-long! We'll meet again, sometime or other, most likely."

He nodded, set spurs to his horse, and galloped off along a bridle-path. Glad to be rid of his company, Bob rode on towards the clump of gum-trees. The sun was sinking. In half an hour it would disappear, and twenty minutes later darkness would fall. Brave Bess was tired, and the lad let her take her own pace. He presently walked her up a hill to the clump, and, arriving at the summit, he stopped and frowned. Bennett had directed him wrongly. In the fading light he could see the town, five miles away to the right.

Bennett had fooled him. Had he done that with an object, or simply out of malice? Puzzled, and a trifle uneasy, Bob rode down the hill, and, crossing the scrub, he struck the road leading into Mossfred. It lay in the direction Bennett had taken. When the lad entered the long main street, night had closed in.

He drew up at the first hotel. Some horses were standing outside, their bridles hitched on to posts; and as he led Brave Bess along he was surprised to see Bennett's horse already there. Indignant that a man with whom he had shared his meal that day should treat him so shabbily, apparently without any reason, Bob hesitated about entering the hotel. He had no wish to meet Bennett again, and probably he would find another hostelry farther down the town.

But, having dismounted, he decided to look in and see if Bennett was there. The bar was crowded, but Bennett was not of the company. So the lad strolled along the veranda which ran round the house. Presently he stopped, gasped, and staggered back.

There were two men in a private room. One was Bennett, and the other was the scoundrel Sutherland.

Bob almost shouted in his joy and amazement. The man lying back in the armchair, smoking a cigar, was Sutherland. There could be no doubt about that. He tallied in every particular with the description Dashwood had given of him. A feeling of wild exultation swept over the lad. Yonder was the villain who had robbed his father—the cur who had stolen the banknotes worth a thousand pounds. If Bob could get them back, his trouble and his father's would be at an end. His frame shook with excitement. With difficulty he restrained himself from bursting into the room.

He stepped back and leant against the veranda railing. The room was large and brightly lit. He could see into every corner. Bennett, standing by the mantelpiece, his hands in his pockets, was talking and laughing. A sinister smile was on Sutherland's face as he smoked. So Bennett was one of the gang! Ay, and Bennett knew more than he had pretended. Why had he asked those questions? Why had he dug his spurs into his horse, unless the action was involuntary when he had guessed at Bob's identity?

What were he and the villain, Sutherland, plotting now? As Bob gazed intently, his mind working with lightning speed, two men hurried into the room. Alarm was on their faces, and Sutherland, when he saw them, jumped to his feet. Hurriedly the villains gathered in a group. Sometimes they whispered eagerly; sometimes they all turned and looked at the door, as if listening. Then one man stepped behind the door. Another concealed himself in a corner between a wall and a press. Bennett got under the table, and Sutherland sat down again and continued smoking.

Three or four minutes passed, and Sutherland smoked on. Then very slowly the door was opened. Sutherland did not turn his head. The other scoundrels did not stir.

An old, grey-bearded man appeared, travel-stained and weary-looking. He stood on the threshold for a second, and then walked in. The door was closed at once by the villain lurking behind it.

Bob recognised the old man at once.

"Father!" he shouted.

Yes, it was old Tom Hilder, stooped with long journeying, weary in every limb, and yet indomitable to the end. Night and day he had followed on the villains' tracks, and at last had come upon them.

Bob jumped forward, crashing through the window to fight by his father's side. He saw the scoundrels spring upon the old man and bear him back as Sutherland upset the light.

"Father! Father!" shouted Bob.

Over the veranda railing two men vaulted. A terrible blow fell on Bob's head, and he went down as if shot. A blinding light flashed before his eyes. He heard a heavy moan in the

room, and, as his senses faded away, he saw Gell's evil face peering into his own, and heard his cruel laugh:

"I've got him!" the bully snarled. "And now I'll pay him out!"

A Night of Terror.

"Fire!"

As the scoundrel Gell bent down and clutched Bob by the throat this terrible cry rang forth. Through the window which the lad had broken smoke burst forth from the lamp the villain Sutherland had upset. The hotel, built of wood, flared up; the flames, fanned by the wind, shot along the walls and to the roof, and, amidst shrieks and imprecations, everyone in the hotel struggled to escape.

Down the street the cry rang, and from the shanties around men came rushing to the scene. The horses, secured by their bridles to the posts in front of the hotel, reared and kicked and whinnied in their terror. Some of the men cut the reins, and let them go galloping madly through the pitchy darkness into the scrub; others dashed towards the door to help in the salvage, and came up against those struggling to escape; others, again, ran round the veranda to gain the entrance at the back.

Gell heard the uproar, and knew the cause. Lifting Bob, he staggered along for a few yards, when, in the thick smoke, a couple of men collided with him, and he and the lad went crashing to the boards.

As he lay, someone stumbled over him, kicking him severely, and shouting in his excitement.

"Get out of this whilst you have the chance!" cried the man, picking himself up. "In a few minutes the place will be in cinders! Come along to the back! Men are wanted there!"

He dragged Gell to his feet. In the smoke-cloud he did not notice Bob. For an instant the scoundrel hesitated. Then a thought more cruel and vindictive even than had already weighed with him sprang into his mind. In a few minutes all would be in cinders! Let Bob lie there! That would be the end of him for certain.

So Gell shambled on after the other man to the back of the hotel. There hardy bushmen were defying the flames, and dragging out furniture while it was still possible. Gell flung himself into the task, partly to drown his hideous thoughts. And the flames grew brighter, and the clouds of smoke were shot with yellow streaks, and a crimson glow sprang forth in the sky, and presently, amidst warning yells, the roof crashed in, and a dense cloud shot up in its place.

All was over. All that was possible had been done. The bushmen mopped the sweat from their grimy faces, and beat out the bits of blazing tar that had fallen on their clothes. After the excitement the reaction came, and they stood in groups watching the dying embers and speaking in low tones.

None knew how the fire had originated; on this they speculated. Neither could they say whether any lives had been lost. The bar had been crowded. But the hardy fellows there were not likely to be caught. The landlord, half distraught, was unable to think clearly or answer any questions.

When the heat became less intense they scrambled into the debris. Gell slunk round to the veranda. The spot was piled high with charred wood and piping, and he tried to scrape it away. Feeling a tap on the shoulder, his guilty conscience made him jump, and, white-faced, he wheeled round. He recognised Boardman.

"Ah, it's you!" he gasped, much relieved.

"Yes. What are you doing here?"

"I'm looking for him."

A steely light shot into Boardman's eyes.

"You mean—the lad?" he asked hoarsely.

"Y-es."

Boardman put his face closer.

"I saw you knock him down," he whispered. "Then the shout went up, and I thought it better to clear out. You left him here?"

"He was knocked silly, and as I was trying to get him away a fellow banged into me, and I fell. Then I scooted."

Boardman grinned.

"Then that's settled," he said.

"And my work is done better even than we arranged," Gell replied. "You know the deal we made. Part up now, and let me get out of this."

"Look me up to-morrow."

"I can't! I can't stop here!" Gell rasped out, his voice trembling. "When all is said, I'm flesh and blood like anyone else. I want to leave miles between me and this place, and never think of to-night again. Give me the fifty quid. You showed me the other day that you had more than that in your pocket."

"Fifty!" Boardman snapped, his mean mouth growing hard.

"That was the bargain," Gell insisted. "And, here! I'll throw in some news worth another fifty, and not ask you anything for it. Not only the youngster is out of your way, but you've got rid of the old 'un, too!"

"What do you mean?"

"He was in the room where the fire broke out. You needn't stare like that—he was! The youngster saw him, and called out 'Father!' He tried to break in through the window. Some coves in the room were setting about the old man. I saw that. I clubbed the youngster, and you may bet your boots the old one didn't escape!"

Boardman drew a deep breath. With his horny hands he tugged at his long black beard, and his eyes glinted a yellow streak. He grinned horribly, showing his teeth.

"Strewth!" he muttered. "The farm is mine!"

"Then part up!"

Boardman did not parley any longer. He took a thick wallet from his pocket, counted out fifty pounds in bank-notes, and handed the sum over. Gell clutched it, and turned away.

"I'm off now," he said. "And you had better clear out, too! Mossfred is no place for us after this, with that guilty secret lying in the cinders."

Swiftly he disappeared in the darkness. Boardman looked at the charred remains of the hotel, tugged at his beard, shrugged his shoulders, hurried to the other hotel, mounted his horse, and galloped away in the direction of Katfarit to his own home. His heart was thumping with exultation. For years he had coveted old Tom Hilder's property; now he knew that he could get it for a song.

Darkness set over the town again. The reflection of the fire had died out in the sky, not a spark shot from the ruins of the hotel, and the townspeople began to disperse. Singly or in small groups they broke up and sauntered off, talking of nothing but the tragedy. The blacksmith's shanty was five hundred yards outside the town, on a hillock in the scrub to the left, and with his wife and daughter, he made for it.

"Come on, missus—come on, lass!" he said. "We'll only have a few hours' sleep before we must start work again. Good-night, boys! We've done all we could, and that's a satisfaction, anyhow."

His wife and daughter had moved ahead before his last words were said to his chums. He followed them, his brawny shoulders squared, his big hands deep in his pockets. Then he heard a startled cry, and saw them bending down, about seventy yards from the ruins they had left behind. Then his daughter came running back to him.

"Father, there's a lad lying yonder, and he looks mortal bad!" she cried. "Mother thinks that he is either dead or dying!"

The blacksmith quickened his steps. He bent over the prostrate form, and gazed at the pallid face and closed eyes. He felt for the lad's heart. Then he picked up the unconscious form as lightly as if it was a child. His kind-hearted wife was sobbing.

"He ain't dead!" he said. "Run on, missus, and boil a kettle! Susie, you go for the doctor! The lad is a stranger in these parts, but that's all the more reason why we should befriend him."

He strode on swiftly, and found his wife awaiting him at the door, the kettle already on the hob. He laid the lad on a bed, searched in his pockets, and took out an envelope.

"Robert Hilder!" he said.

Yes, it was Bob! Gell's final fiendish attempt on his life had been the means of saving him. He had been coming round as the scoundrel had fallen with him. He had heard the shouts of fire, and had felt the suffocating fumes of smoke. The longing to live had given him the strength and will of desperation.

On hands and knees he had crawled off the veranda and dropped to the ground. There, with senses reeling, he had still crawled on, not knowing where he was going. At last he had crumpled up again. And when, later, Gell had hurried away, he had passed within a few yards of him in the pitch darkness, little dreaming that the lad he had sought to kill was still alive, and might some day appear, like one from the grave, to brand him with his hideous crime.

But now it looked as if Bob's fight for life was over, as he lay upon the bed. The worthy blacksmith searched for burns, and found none. He presently saw a terrific weal on Bob's head, and he wondered, but kept silent.

The doctor soon arrived, and made a swift examination. No bones were broken. There might be concussion. He set to work to bring the lad round.

For three hours he did not succeed, but he kept Bob's

heart beating. At the end of that time the lad's eyelids flickered, for a moment he looked around, then he went to sleep. The doctor spoke cheerfully at last.

"He'll do. He'll pull through," he said. "He has recovered consciousness. He'll be much stronger when he awakes. Give him some milk, and don't let him ask any questions. If we can keep him quiet for twenty-four hours he'll be on the high-road to recovery."

Bob slept without moving till dawn. Then the blacksmith's wife held a cup of milk to his lips, and he took some, and fell asleep again. Four hours later he woke again, and the doctor, who was by the bedside, gave him some medicine. Again he fell asleep, and slept for twelve hours. When again he awoke he was feeling very weak, but all danger had passed.

He was alone, and his throbbing brain began to work at once. Slowly all the terrible incidents he last remembered began to knit together. He tried to rise, and was stumbling out of bed when the blacksmith hurried in, told him briefly where he was, and how he had been saved, and urged him to keep still.

Too exhausted to remonstrate, Bob complied. He took some food, again slept, and in the morning he had regained much of his strength.

He had his breakfast, and left the house. Across the scrub he walked unsteadily, and, alone, he stood gazing at the ruins of the hotel. With his mind in torture, he recalled the last scene there—the large room; the villains waiting; and the entrance of his father. Again he saw the door banged, the old man's start and horror, the desperate struggle.

A lump rose in his throat, and he put his hand across his eyes.

"And I was not able to save you!" he groaned. "But my life has been given back to me, and this at least I can do—I can live to avenge you. Ay, and I will! Though years may pass, I vow the day will yet come when I drag those scoundrels who compassed your death before the bar of justice!"

An Old Friend.

For ten days Bob remained the guest of the worthy blacksmith and his kindhearted wife. Then, despite their strong appeals to him to stay on until he was stronger, he left, being unwilling to tax their generosity more than he could help.

His heart was heavy as he rode away into the unknown. The old life was dead; all that he had lived for had gone. He was alone in the world now, without kith or kin; he was without a home to which he could return. Worse than that, he was, to all intents and purposes, outlawed. If ever the police identified him he would be flung into gaol.

He had to begin life again, but his stout heart did not quail on that account. He was young and in splendid health, and could carve out a prosperous career. Regret was useless, and it would be best to forget the past altogether, and look only to the future; but he felt that the duty lay upon him to avenge his father's wrong, and that he would do. For the rest he was content to work and build up his own fortune; and as the day wore on, and he left far behind the scene of his life's tragedy, his spirits rose. Fate had, so far, been against him, but he would triumph yet.

For ten days he travelled through the bush until he was in the heart of the great continent. Here, by the Murray River, were the outposts of civilisation; beyond was the unexplored country. Here, too, were the immense stations of the wealthy squatters, each station twenty miles in circumference or more. Here the police seldom came, and a man might drop his name and take another. Nothing would be asked of his past; he would be judged by his work and integrity. Here, Bob felt, he could start afresh, and live without fear or anxiety.

It was not long before he got employment on a great sheep station. He was employed as a boundary-rider, and he lived in a hut several miles from the big house. His duty was to ride round the estate and see that the fencing was kept secure, in order to prevent the sheep from straying. The life was very lonely, but he got a pound a week and his food, and he could save. With patience he would in time amass enough to buy land for himself and start farming. With that prospect he was content.

Thus the months passed until the shearing season began. Then all was changed. A great activity succeeded the dull routine. Bob left his hut, and joined the other hands who all the year round lived in the centre of the station.

For some days they were busy rounding up the thousands of sheep. During this time shearers and their assistants began to arrive. Many had travelled hundreds of miles; others had

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

CORNSTALK BOB!

(Continued from page 20.)

ridden over from the outlying stations where the shearing had been finished. They came in scores, and settled down in long buildings around the woolshed. The great silence of ten months vanished. At night the air pulsated with laughter, music, and songs; it was as if a town had sprung up suddenly in the heart of the bush.

Near to the woolshed was the store where everything the men might need was for sale—tobacco, matches, clothes, drugs, and odds-and-ends. Here the shearers signed their agreements, and for several days a crowd of them was outside the door waiting their turn. Bob had been told off to help the storekeeper in attending to their wants.

The night before the shearing was to begin he was particularly busy, and his thoughts were concentrated on his work, when he started and swung round on hearing a voice he recognised.

"Your name?" the storekeeper had asked.

"Phil Kerr," came the reply.

"Read over this agreement, and then sign it."

Bob stared hard. Yes, it was his true friend Kerr, the bullock-driver from his old home, and he had come here as a shearer. Bob's heart began to thump hard; he longed, there and then, to rush forward and shake Kerr's hand. But, as he had taken another name, he feared that Kerr, in the first impulse of the meeting might betray his identity. The lad bent over the large case in which he had been searching, nor did he stand up until the bullock-driver had withdrawn.

Darkness was gathering, and it was near to closing-time. It was not long before Bob was free, and at once he made his way to the men's huts. Kerr was standing at the door of one of them, and the lad waited until he sauntered away. Following, he came up behind him, out of earshot of the other men.

"Kerr!" he cried.

The bullock-driver turned. He gazed through the darkness.

"Don't you recognise me?" Bob asked. "I'm Hilder!"

Kerr strode quickly forward, his hand outstretched.

"Bob!" he ejaculated. "Well, this is a big surprise! I never expected to see you again. We heard that you were dead. I'm overjoyed to meet you!"

"I was nearly done for some months ago," Bob replied. "But as that was a long way from home, how ever did the news travel to you?"

"It wasn't long before it was all round Katfarit. That our Boardman spread it. But we never heard the full story."

"That's soon told," Bob said sadly. "I got on the track of the rogues who stole the thousand pounds from father. I was looking in through the window of the hotel, and I saw them. And, Kerr, what do you think? Father came into the room!"

"No!"

"It's a fact!" the lad continued, his voice growing a trifle husky. "They set upon him, and the lamp was upset; that's how the fire arose. I was standing on the veranda, and rushed forward to save him, when I was knocked down. It was Gell who attacked me—a man with whom I had had a fight a short time previously."

"And it was the hotel in Mossfred that was burnt down," Kerr remarked, thinking deeply.

"Yes. But what about that?"

"Boardman was there at the time," Kerr went on, his voice full of meaning. "And Boardman said that you were burnt to death there, and your father, too. He couldn't get your home at once unless you both were dead. If you both were living, there would have been a lot of legal technicalities to overcome."

"Then Boardman knew that father was in the hotel?" Bob asked.

"He did; and I've often asked myself since how it happened that the worst enemy of you both was there at the time," Kerr continued. "It's mighty suspicious, Bob, and I wouldn't put anything beyond that scoundrel. And the most suspicious thing of all is that I spoke to an old friend, less than a week ago, who insisted that he had seen your father since."

Bob's eyes began to shine like stars. But next moment the hope in them faded away.

"That's not possible," he said. "Father was in the room where the fire broke out, and he had been attacked, and probably knocked senseless. I don't believe that Sutherland and his gang escaped, either."

"As a matter of fact, I know that Sutherland escaped, whatever happened to his gang," Kerr affirmed. "For the police have nearly nabbed him since. It's my belief that they all cleared out, and that your father got away, too."

"And why do you think that?"

"There's the evidence that your father has been seen since the fire," Kerr reasoned. "And now you've told me that your father came into the room where the villains were. It's not likely, is it, that the old man would have run into a trap for nothing? There never was a man more shrewd than your father."

"I've been puzzled to know why he went after them," Bob explained. "When I met him in Sydney he thought he had got back the banknotes from the cur Sutherland. He did not know that Sutherland had given him forged ones."

"He found that out afterwards," Kerr said, with confidence. "You were arrested, and Dashwood, the highwayman, freed you. All that was in the Sydney papers, and the tale, too, that you had lodged the forged banknotes in the bank at Birchquill. Your father read that, and followed the gang up to save you. He's full of fight still, and dogged as they're made. He rushed out of the town after them, and kept on their track. That's my reading of the business, and time will show I ain't far wrong."

"If only I could think that he's alive, I wouldn't mind about anything else!" Bob sighed. "I'd chuck this job, and go in search of him!"

Kerr looked grave.

"I wouldn't do that just yet, if I were you," he replied. "Don't forget that there's a warrant out for your arrest, and that you're safe here. You can trust your father to look after himself; and, besides, you need money before you can really help him. Sit tight, and stick here and save all you can."

"But, still—"

"I know, my lad," Kerr interjected, with a kindly ring in his utterance. "You're all eager to help the old man, but if you ran against the police, you would only make things worse for him. He would be worrying then about you. I'll only be here a few weeks, and then I'll be on the Wallaby again all over the country, and I needn't tell you I'll keep my eyes skinned; and it's quite on the cards that I'll hear something. And if you hang on here, I'll be able to tip you the news. You mentioned a man named Gell a while back. I knew a fellow of that name, and I didn't think much of him."

"Gell used to work around our neighbourhood; I'm sure of that, for he knew my name," Bob replied. "I expect that must have been some years ago, when I was a nipper."

"Then it's the same," Kerr said. "The man I mean did work around Katfarit; and for Boardman, too, I remember now. And he set about you on the night of the fire, you tell me. All right! If I drop across him, I'll have a word to say to him."

"And Boardman has the old home!" Bob remarked bitterly.

"He has, worse luck!" Kerr commented. "And that's why I've taken to shearing. He wanted me to stop on and run the place for him, but I told him I'd sooner starve than take a penny of his dirty money. And now it's getting late, and we had better turn in. It would be as well, too, perhaps, for your sake, if folk here didn't know that we were old friends. But we'll find chances to have a quiet chat from time to time."

"I've taken the name of Tracey," Bob said.

"Good! I'll remember that. And now, lad, so-long!"

Very early next morning the shearing began, and it lasted for some weeks. During that time Bob and Kerr often managed to meet of an evening, and his old friend's sympathy and cheeriness did much to brighten the lad's heart. It was with a feeling of deep regret that he saw Kerr ride off at last, when all were leaving; and a great quiet settled down over the station after the bustle and merriment, bringing again to him a sense of great loneliness.

For ten months now nothing lay ahead but life in his log hut on the outskirts of the station. For weeks together he would canter round the boundary, repairing the fences where necessary, cooking and taking his meals alone, sleeping in the solitude of the bush, with nothing but his thoughts for company, and they would be beset with anxiety and sadness. But it had to be faced, and he did not flinch.

When the last of the shearers had left he went to the store to draw his rations before saddling Brave Bess. The storekeeper was making up his accounts. He looked up as Bob entered.

"Hallo, Tracey! You're just the fellow I want," he said.

"Why, can I help you any way?"

"No; it's not that. The boss has sent down word that you are to go up to the house."

"What does he want me for?"

"I haven't the least idea. But he sacked a couple of men this morning."

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LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT.

The old lady had become very deaf, in spite of every effort which had been made to allay the trouble. She had visited doctors and specialists by the dozen in her endeavour to find some means of preventing her affliction from growing worse, but with no success. Finally she gave up hope, and resigned herself to her fate.

One day a terrible dynamite explosion occurred near the small town in which she lived, and, hearing it, the old lady turned to the door of her sitting-room, and said:

"Come in, Bella!"

The servant happened to be entering at the moment, and the old lady said:

"Do you know, Bella, my hearing is evidently improving. I heard you knock at the door for the first time for five years!"—Sent in by F. Jeffery, Wimbledon.

A DOUBTFUL COMPLIMENT.

The old farmer was a kind-hearted individual, and believed in showing his appreciation for any service rendered him in some tangible way. One of his farm-hands had just completed his twenty-fifth year in the employ of the farmer, and the latter, walking up to him in the yard, said, pointing to a fine fat pig in a sty:

"Jim, I am going to make you a present of that pig!"

"Ah, sure," said Jim, "'tis just like you, sir!"—Sent in by G. Skelton, Crewe.

RIVALRY.

Isaacs and Moses were bitter rivals. Each were clothiers, and their shops were situated opposite one another in the same street. It was their frequent practice to stand at their shop doors, and solicit the custom of passers-by; and as they never missed an opportunity of insulting each other, they would hurl rude and personal remarks across the road, one to another, between whiles.

One morning Moses shouted to Isaacs:

"Go in, you great booby, and take that ugly face in with you! You might as well stick a donkey at the door!"

"I did one day last week, Mr. Moses," replied Isaacs; "but de people passing by only smiled, and said to it: 'Good-day, Mr. Moses—good-day! I see you haf removed from the oder side!'"—Sent in by Albert Fletcher, Rotherham.

SHOCKING.

Waiter: "Yes, sir, we're very up-to-date 'ere. We cook everything by electricity!"

Customer: "Really? Then you might just give this steak another shock!"—Sent in by S. Deemer, Rochdale.

WHY THEY SMILED.

In a certain town in the Midlands a grocer, who was a great believer in the display of catchy notices, one day inserted in his window a card bearing an announcement which he considered likely to prove very successful in attracting the attention of passers-by. It did so to such an extent that he was quite at a loss to understand why everybody who read it went on with broad grins on their faces. He rushed out to read the notice again: "Don't go elsewhere to be swindled—Walk right in here!"—Sent in by A. Hall, Nottingham.

REMARKABLE.

Bridget had been laboriously reading the newspaper for some time, when she suddenly looked up and asked her husband:

"Have you seen this, Pat? It says here that whin a mon loses wan of his sines, his other sines get more diviloped. For instance, a blind mon gets more sines of hearin', and touch, and—"

"Sure, and it's quoinde true!" replied Pat. "Oi've noticed it misself. Whin a mon has wan leg shorter than the other, begorra, the other leg's longer, isn't it, now?"—Sent in by J. Nicholas, Carmarthenshire.

YANKEE LAND AGAIN.

Two insurance agents, a Yankee and an Englishman, were bragging about their rival methods. The Britisher was holding forth on the system of prompt payments carried out by his people—no trouble, no fuss, no attempt to wriggle out of settlement.

"If a man died to-night," he continued, "his widow would receive her money by the first post to-morrow morning!"

"You don't say!" drawled the Yankee. "See here, now! You talk of prompt payments! Waal, our office is on the third floor of a building forty-nine storeys high. One of our clients lived in that forty-ninth storey, and he fell out of the window. We handed him his cheque as he passed!"—Sent in by A. F. Galloway, Glasgow.

MET BEFORE!

They were both retired officers, and had just been introduced in the smoking-room of the club.

"Do you know, colonel," said the major, "I cannot help thinking I have met you before!"

"And, strangely enough, sir, I have a very similar feeling with regard to yourself!"

"Were you at the storming of Flareupatum?"

"I was, major."

"And were you present when the fort exploded and blew up the entire place?"

"I had that honour!"

"Then now I know where I have seen you before. I passed you as you were going up and I was coming down. Your hand, colonel!"—Sent in by Robert Hall, Durham.

WELL BACKED.

Pat: "Did you ever back a horse in your life, Mick?"

Mick: "Yes, once; and I am not likely to do it again!"

Pat: "Didn't you win anything, then?"

Mick: "No, begorra, that I didn't!"

Pat: "Why, how was that?"

Mick: "Well, you see, I backed the blessed horse through a shop window, and had to pay five pounds!"—Sent in by Fred Hall, Derbyshire.

DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

Eating-house Proprietor: "Call yourself a cook! There's a nice way to send up a 'erring! Why, you ain't even cleaned it!"

New Cook: "Cleaned it! Not likely! Not when it's spent all it's bloomin' life in the water!"—Sent in by G. Marshall, Luton.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

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