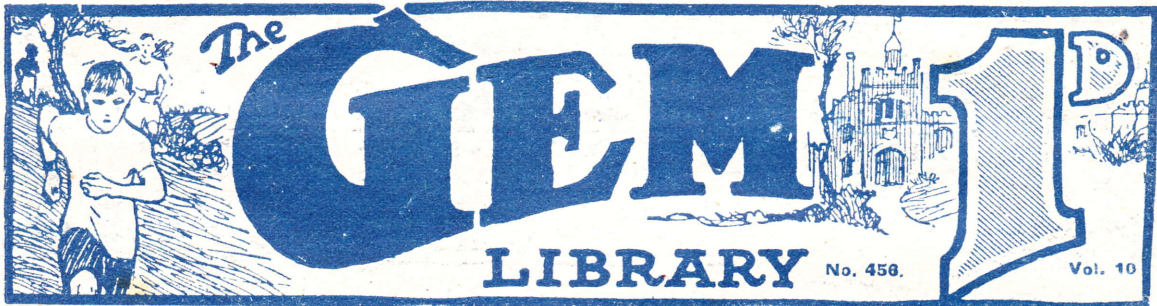


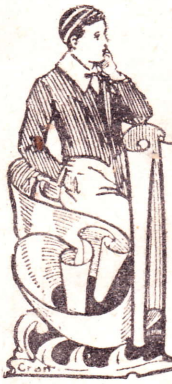
D'ARCY IN DISGRACE!

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



OVER THE BANK WITH BANKS!

(An Exciting Scene in the Grand Long Complete Story in this issue.)



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGDON 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 :

"ALL THE WINNERS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's great yarn will appeal to all who like genuinely humorous stories, and especially to those who are interested in the egregious Baggy Trimble. This fine specimen of the British boy as he ought not to be goes in for a "get-rich-quick" notion, not quite on the lines of those started by Fisher F. Fish, of Greyfriars, for Fish is more astute than Baggy, and would gather in the shekels if only public opinion were not so strongly against his methods. Baggy's idea is to scoop the pool in a racing competition. Of course, he has not the necessary money for the entrance fees, and equally of course, he tries to borrow it. In the course of his efforts in this direction he issues broadcast invitations to spend Christmas with him at "Trimble Hall"—invitations which lead to a good deal of fun and, in the long run, to some anxiety and perplexity. Readers will learn next week what happens after Baggy has, by the most gigantic fluke on record, picked out

"ALL THE WINNERS!"

OUR GREAT SPECIAL WINTER NUMBER.

Week after next—absolutely top-notch—story of more than double length, by Martin Clifford—extracts from that epoch-making publication, "Tom Merry's Weekly." Not a dull line from start to finish. Price twopence, and worth—Well, that's for you fellows to say!

DON'T FORGET ABOUT IT!

AN IRISH READER'S GRUMBLE.

I have often wondered what made the Irishman of a certain type an enemy to England. I know that there are centuries of oppression and mismanagement in the past for England to answer for; but we are not living in the past, but in the present, and nowadays Ireland not only has all the rights and privileges accorded to England, Scotland, and Wales, but also gets preferential treatment in many respects.

But now I know what is the matter. I have found out by reading a letter from an Irish reader—one of the very silliest letters I ever saw. If I believed he was a fair specimen of his race I should say that the attempt to reason with them, or to be friendly with them, was a hopeless one. But I have had the good fortune to know many Irishmen, and better fellows than my Irish friends I never want to meet!

Here is the letter. I have not cut it down or altered it by so much as a word. Let it go on record in all its native folly—but not as a fair specimen of what a decent Irishman thinks—only as a sample of the utter wrong-headedness of the kind of Irishman who gives trouble because he broods on purely imaginary grievances.

"Dear Sir,—I am sorry for having to complain that none of my jokes have appeared yet in your paper, in which I took so much trouble in sending them to you, they were jokes, and I sent them for the benefit of the readers and not for you to keep or sling in your waste-paper basket.

"I am quite comprehensive to the way you treat us Irish. You think, like all the English, that every Irishman is a rebel, but that is where you are mistaken. My father, and the majority of my cousins, are fighting under the Union Jack; and allow me to tell you that it is only Irishmen who are really fighting England's battles, and, what's more, our lads are winning them.

"Ireland never received much from England, NOT EVEN A PRIZE FOR A JOKE THAT WELL DESERVES ONE.

"It is this treatment that is making Irishmen, that cannot

suffer any longer, rise and revolt. I would be glad if you would put this letter into your paper, and I will tell you the consequence. Irishmen are easily led to believe, and maybe a few hundred instalments would be closed.

"If the letter does not appear in your paper, I know you are a coward, and would not honour the men of Erin who are so gloriously shedding their life-blood for a nation who despises them. Trusting this will convince you,

"Yours,—J. T."

Convince me of what? That the writer has no sense of fair-play or of decent manners? Yes, it convinces me of that, but of nothing else. I honour, as highly as anyone, the splendid men of the Irish regiments; I despise the young, able-bodied Irishman who is deaf to the call of honour, and the Sinn Feiners who fight Germany's battle for her, and the hopeless irreconcilables who would have strife for the sake of strife. And I have no respect whatever for the sort of person who thinks that when he enters a competition he should be judge as well as competitor, and who has no more respect for his own countrymen than to accuse them of being easily led, and to think that such as he can lead them! By the way, what are the "instalments" that will be closed? I am left guessing.

And what will our thousands of loyal Irish readers—here's good luck to them!—think of "J. T." as spokesman for their fair, green isle?

NOTICES.

Football.

[In order to get in as many notices as possible, those included have been cut down to the shortest possible limits. It should be understood that the figures in brackets always refer to age, and that "r." means "radius." Where these particulars are omitted they were not supplied by sender of notice. All applications may be taken for home and away matches.]

Con Caulfield (16) wants to join footer team in Liverpool; right-half or outside-forward.—Address, 22, Carlisle St., Southdown Lane, Liverpool.

E. and J. Jarvis, 41, Pemdevon Rd., West Croydon, would be glad to hear from readers up to 14 in district who want to join team.

John Wingrove (12), 2, Mount Pleasant, North Hyde, Southall, wants to join a team within 6 miles.

Correspondence, Leagues, &c.

H. Thomas, 422, Caerleon Rd., Newport, Mon., wants more members for his patriotic "Gem" and "Magnet" Social League. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Miss Vera Smalley, c.o. Mrs. H. Vernon, Normanton Lane, Plumtree, Nottingham, would like to correspond with another girl reader of about 15, and Miss Nellie Vernon, of the same address, with one of about 12.

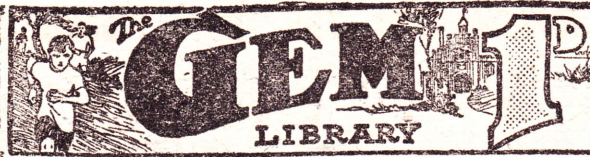
Signaller V. E. Troode, 5472, Australian Imperial Forces, attached to R.H.A. Training School, No. 8 Camp, D Lines, Bulford, would be glad to hear from some boy readers.

A. Seaton and W. Bulbeck, Ivydene, Mayles Road, Milton, Portsmouth, are forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would like to hear from a reader who would join and type the club notices; also from readers who would support them in bringing out a small amateur magazine.

W. J. Sanderson, 15, Mountjoy Place, Newport, Mon., would like to join a "Gem" and "Magnet" League.

Your Editor

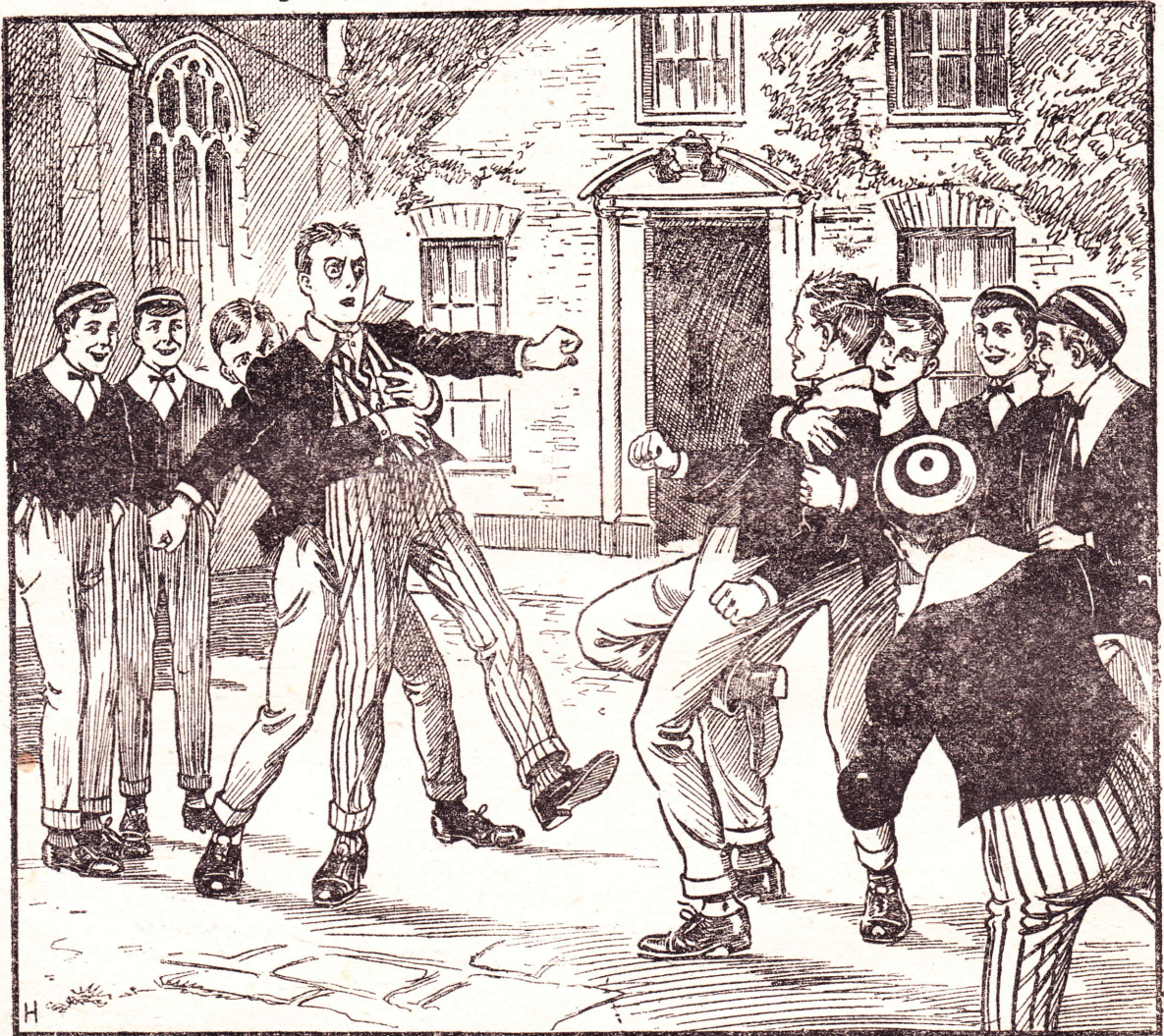
PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

D'ARCY IN DISGRACE!

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



Talbot ran forward, and Tom Merry followed him, and the two combatants were dragged apart. "Wolose me!" gasped Arthur Augustus. (See Chapter 8.)

CHAPTER 1.

Astonishing!

"LETTER for you, Gussy!"
D'Arcy of the Fourth elevated his eyebrows in surprise.

He had just come into the School House from the playing-fields, when two or three voices greeted him with the announcement that there was a letter for him.

There were half a dozen juniors gathered round the letter-rack in the hall, and they were all grinning.

"Lettah for me?" repeated Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"I do not see any cause for mewwiment, Levison, in the fact that a lettah has awvived for me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most stately manner.

"Perhaps you will when you see it!" grinned Levison of the Fourth.

And there was a chortle from the rest.

Arthur Augustus gave the juniors a lofty glance, and crossed with a stately tread to the letter-rack.

There was the letter.

Next Wednesday:

"ALL THE WINNERS!" AND "CORNSTALK BOB!"

No. 456. (New Series.) Vol. 10.

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As Arthur Augustus' eyes fell upon the superscription, he understood why Levison & Co. were grinning. The address ran:

"Master augustus Darcey,
"School House,
"saint James' School."

The writing was thick and heavy and crabbed, and there were two or three erasures and re-writings, and several spurts of ink.

D'Arcy took the letter quietly from the rack. Then he jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the grinning juniors.

"I weally do not see why you are amused," he said calmly. "Who's your aristocratic friend, who spells Augustus with a small 'a'?" chuckled Levison.

"And St. James' without a capital?" grinned Racke of the Shell.

"A lack of education, deah boys, is wathah a weason for wegwet than for mecwimint," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "A well-bwed chap would feel a respectful sympathy in such a mattah."

"Is it from your pater, D'Arcy?" cackled Trimble. And there was a howl of laughter at the idea of Lord Eastwood writing such a fist.

"Certainly not, Twimble! I wegard the question as impertinent!"

"A begging letter, I suppose?" said Racke. "Let's see it, D'Arcy."

"Wats!"
Arthur Augustus took out his little pearl-handled pen-knife, and slit the envelope. Nothing would have induced the elegant Gussy to open an envelope with his thumb.

Levison & Co. gathered round him curiously. They were very interested in D'Arcy's unknown correspondent, who wrote and spelt so weirdly.

"Bai Jove! Banks!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Banks!" repeated Levison.

"Banks!" shouted Racke. "Is that letter from Banks?"

"Yaas!"

"My hat! Lucky for you the Housemaster didn't spot it, then!"

"Weally, Wacke, I t'rust you do not mean to imply that I weceive lettahs I should not care for Mr. Wailton to see?"

"Ha, ha! I can fancy his face if he knew you had a letter from Banks!" chuckled Racke. "Better keep it dark!"

"I fail to undahstand you, Wacke!" said Arthur Augustus haughtily. He looked at the letter again, and looked at his watch. "Bai Jove! I shall have to huwwy!"

"You're not going to meet him?" shrieked Levison.

"I fail to see how it concerns you, Levison."

"Oh, great Scott!"

Arthur Augustus gave Levison a lofty stare, and turned away. There was a buzz of excitement among the juniors as he disappeared.

That was not surprising. The fellows had wondered from whom that letter could be, and the discovery that it was from Banks simply staggered them. The name of Banks was well known.

Mr. James Joseph Banks, an exceedingly respectable bookmaker, sometimes made his headquarters in Rylcombe, and some of the bold blades of the school had had dealings with him. Levison of the Fourth and Racke and Mellish knew Mr. Banks; and that frowsy gentleman was not unknown to Cutts of the Fifth and Knox of the Sixth.

But no one had ever dreamed of suspecting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of having such acquaintances.

The swell of St. Jim's regarded the dingy blackguardism of Levison & Co. with a lofty disdain he did not take the trouble to conceal. But, as Levison sagely remarked, you never knew a fellow till you had found him out. If that letter was from Banks, it was evident that D'Arcy had dealings with the man—to such an extent that Mr. Banks ventured to write to him at the school.

"The silly ass!" said Racke. "No harm in a little flutter; but to risk letting that man write here—the innocent duffer!"

"Suppose Railton had spotted it?" grinned Mellish.

"Why, it would be a flogging at least," said Levison.

"The sack, perhaps, though Gussy's such a favourite. The Head would simply have to come down heavy, though his pater's a governor of the school."

"And he's going to meet him!" chortled Mellish.

"Oh, the ass!"

"Here he comes!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came quickly downstairs. He did not glance at Levison & Co. as he hurried to the door.

"I say, D'Arcy!" called out Levison.

"Yaas, Levison?" D'Arcy paused. He was in a hurry, evidently; but he was always courteous.

"Put a bob on for me!" said Levison.

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"What?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I'll have a bob each way!" chuckled Levison; and there was a fresh roar.

Arthur Augustus looked perplexed.

"I fail to compwehend you, Levison," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have no time to waste listenin' to wibald laughtah, you ass!" said Arthur Augustus, and he walked out of the house.

"He's really going!" exclaimed Mellish, as he watched the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus crossing the quadrangle to the gates. "I say, let's follow him! Let's see him meet the giddy bookmaker!"

"Ha, ha!"

The juniors rushed out of the School House and after Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's observed them as he turned out of the gateway, and he halted.

"What are you following me for?" he asked.

"We want to see Banks!" yelled Mellish.

"I wefuse to allow you to do anythin' of the sort, Mellish! If you follow me anothah step, I will give you a feahful thwashin', although I am in wathah a huwwy!"

Levison winked at his comrades.

"Come on! I've got a weeze!"

They marched on, and Arthur Augustus stood like a lion in the path.

"I shall hit out, you wottahs! Yawoooh!"

Arthur Augustus did hit out, and then three or four pairs of hands collared him. He went down in the dusty road in a sprawling heap, with the juniors clinging to him.

"Gwooh! You wottahs! Ow!"

Levison jumped up.

"All serene!" he exclaimed.

He held up his hand—there was a letter in it. The ragers, with a yell of merriment, followed Levison back to the gates.

Arthur Augustus sat up and gasped.

"Gwooh! The feahful wottahs! Gwooh!"

He struggled to his feet. He was quite prepared to put up a fight if the young rascals followed him any further, but they did not follow. Levison & Co. had disappeared within the gates. Quite unknown to Arthur Augustus, Levison's light fingers had abstracted the letter from his pocket as he struggled on the ground with Mellish and Racke.

Arthur Augustus dusted his coat, set his cap straight, and hurried away down the road, oblivious of the fact that the tell-tale letter was in the hands of the ead of the Fourth. Whatever dealings the swell of St. Jim's had had with Mr. Banks were not likely to remain a secret much longer.

CHAPTER 2.

The Amazing Letter!

TOM MERRY and CO. came in from the footer with ruddy faces.

There had been a House match that afternoon, and the School House had won it by a single goal.

It was a narrow margin, but Figgins & Co. of the New House had been beaten, and the School House fellows rejoiced accordingly.

"Late for tea," remarked Tom Merry. "Never mind; we've beaten the New House!"

"You fellows come up to Study No. 6," said Blake. "We've got rather a spread. Gussy's got tea ready by this time."

"Good egg!"

The Terrible Three cheerfully accompanied Blake & Co. to Study No. 6. But that celebrated apartment was empty. There was no sign of tea, and no sign of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Jack Blake looked round the study in an exasperated way.

"My hat! Where's that slacker?"

"We agreed that the chap who was bowled over first should come in and get tea!" exclaimed Herries warmly. "Who's the blessed shirker?"

"And Gussy's got all the tin!" hooted Digby.

Tom Merry laughed.

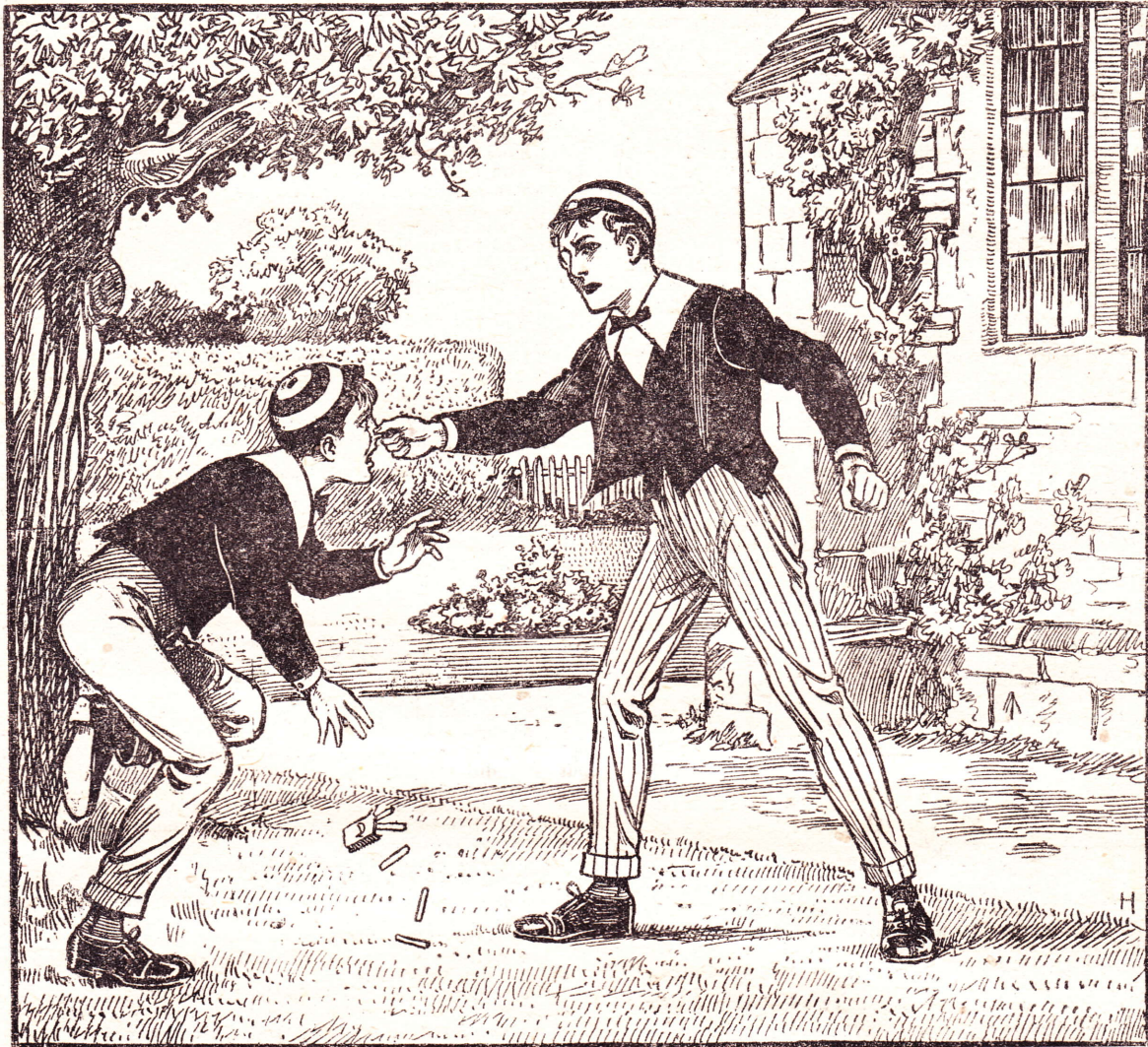
"Then it doesn't look much like tea," he remarked.

"Better come along to our study," suggested Monty Lowther. "We've got several biscuits—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"And a sardine," said Lowther temptingly. "A real sardine, with a splendid flavour—much stronger than those you buy at shops. We've had it a week. In fact, we're really keeping it for visitors."

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" growled Blake. "I'm hungry!"



Mellish offered Arthur Augustus a cigarette. Gussy stared at him blankly, and then pulled his nose.
(See Chapter 8.)

"Where's that howling duffer?" growled Herries. "Where's tea?"

"He may have gone out," grinned Manners. "It would be just like Gussy to decide at the last minute to spend the tin on a new silk hat."

"If he has, we'll pulverise him!" breathed Blake. "I told him I was hungry, too. Let's look for the ass! He's got all the tin."

There was evidently nothing doing in Study No. 6. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were short of cash, and tea in their own study would have been a very frugal meal; and they were hungry. So they joined Blake & Co. in looking for Gussy.

"The howling duffer!" said Blake indignantly, as they went downstairs. "He had a remittance this morning, and we were relying on it. He wasted his last quid yesterday on something, and we've all been stony since. If he's blued his remittance, we'll boil him in oil!"

"Cleared right out, all of us," growled Herries; "and I'm as hungry as Fatty Wynn! Where has that duffer got to? Julian—I say, Julian—have you seen Gussy?"

Julian of the Fourth looked round.

"I think he's gone out," he said.

"Gone out!" yelled Blake.

"I believe so. He came in before you fellows, and cleared off at once."

"Well, the ass!"

"The burbling jabberwock!"

"The dangerous lunatic!"

"And it's too late for tea in Hall," said Digby plaintively.

"Where's he gone?" exclaimed Manners. "We'll go after him, and yank him home by his back-hair!"

Julian did not reply. There was a very peculiar expression on Julian's handsome face, which Tom Merry & Co. did not notice at first.

"Anything up?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm afraid there's something up with D'Arcy," said Julian.

Blake's expression changed at once.

"Something up with him? What do you mean, Julian?"

"I was coming to look for you fellows," said Julian. "There's something going on in the Common-room, and if you want a helping hand, I'm ready to back you up."

A shout of laughter rang from the junior Common-room, at the end of the passage. The juniors looked in that direction.

"What the deuce are you driving at, Julian?" exclaimed Blake. "Gussy isn't there, is he?"

"No, but—"

"But what?"

"His letter."

"His letter!" repeated Blake. "Has he had a letter? And what does it matter if he has?"

"You'd better go and see!"

"Blessed if you're not talking in blessed riddles!" said Blake crossly. "Here, come on, you chaps, and we'll see what's on!"

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"ALL THE WINNERS!"

Tom Merry & Co. headed for the Common-room, and Julia went with them.

There was a crowd in the room.

Some of the fellows—especially Levison & Co.—were laughing loudly; some looked astonished, and some concerned. They were gathered before a letter that was pinned up on the wall. Kangaroo of the Shell came hastily towards the Co.

"You chaps know anything about this?" he asked.

"About what?" hooted Blake.

"That letter. If it's genuine, it ought to be taken down," said the Cornstalk. "Might be only one of Levison's rotten jokes!"

"Blessed if I catch on!" growled Blake. "Do you mean that somebody's got hold of a letter belonging to D'Arcy?"

"So it appears."

"Well, it's a cheek, but nothing to look so jolly serious about, I suppose."

"I can't believe it's genuine," said Kangaroo. "But if it is, you'd better get it out of sight before a master sees it."

"What thumping rot!" Blake was getting cross. "Nothing in any of Gussy's letters that a master shouldn't see, I know that."

"Well, look at it!"

"Yes, look at it!" chortled Baggy Trimble. "Gussy has been going the pace! Gussy has been painting the town red! He, he, he! Yow-ow!" wounded up Trimble, as Blake took him by the collar and sat him down forcibly on the floor.

Blake, with knitted brows, elbowed his way through the crowd of juniors, and looked at the letter on the wall.

Then his glance became fixed.

He stared at the letter as if he could scarcely believe his eyes. And Tom Merry & Co. stared at it, and rubbed their eyes, and stared again. There was cause for the chums of the School House to stare. For the letter ran:

"Dear Master Darcy,—Thank you for sendin the pound. If you could come over this afternoon, we could ave a talk about the orse. Thankin you kindly, J. BANKS."

CHAPTER 3. Fists to the Fore!

"BANKS!"

"Banks, the bookie!"

"Gussy! Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the letter. Blake was taken aback, and could only blink at it. Then he looked round with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. He had forgotten all about tea now. There was something more important than tea to be considered.

"Who put that letter up there?" he asked very quietly.

"I did," said Levison.

"Where did you get it?"

"Picked it up."

"You say that letter belongs to D'Arcy, and that it came from Banks?"

Levison laughed.

"Read it, and see for yourself!"

"I've read it," said Blake. "I couldn't look at it without reading it. Will you shut the door, Dig, and see that nobody comes in for a bit? I've got to talk to Levison!"

"You bet!" said Dig.

Jack Blake quietly peeled off his jacket, and turned back his shirt-sleeves. Levison of the Fourth viewed those preparations in some alarm and uneasiness. He was not looking for a scrap with the sturdy Yorkshire junior.

"What are you up to, Blake?" inquired Kerruish.

"I'm going to show Levison how Study No. 6 appreciates his ripping jokes," said Blake. "I dare say it's very funny to write a letter like that, and stick it up on the wall for silly fools to cackle at. I don't quite see the fun myself, but we won't argue about that. But Levison can't use my chum's name in connection with Banks the bookie! Are you ready, Levison?"

"I'm not going to fight you," said Levison sullenly. "That letter is D'Arcy's, and every fellow here knows it."

"That letter isn't D'Arcy's," said Blake calmly. "That letter isn't genuine. You wrote it!"

"Of course he did!" said Tom Merry. "It's exactly one of Levison's monkey-tricks."

Levison set his lips.

"A dozen fellows can prove that it's D'Arcy's letter," he said. "Lots of them heard him say it was from Banks, when he opened it."

"Liar!"

"That part's thrue enough," said Reilly of the Fourth. "Gussy did say that, Blake, when he opened a letter about an

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hour ago. Sure, I was surprised meself when I heard him!"

Blake was a little staggered. He knew that the Irish junior's word was as good as gold.

"You heard Gussy say that he had a letter from Banks?" he exclaimed.

Reilly nodded.

"I did! He said so right enough."

"You misunderstood him," said Blake. "Gussy isn't the chap to have a letter from that scoundrel Banks, and go to see him about a horse."

"If the letter's D'Arcy's, how did Levison get hold of it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"He dropped it," said Levison sullenly. "We had a bit of a rag with him when he went out, and he dropped it in the road."

"And you read it!" exclaimed Tom scornfully.

Levison sneered.

"I picked it up. I knew he'd had a letter from Banks, and I meant to show him up. He's talked enough about me and other fellows for having a little flutter now and then. Now he's bowled out himself, and it's time his humbug was shown up."

"Hear, hear!" said Mellish.

"That's what we all say," chimed in Crooke. "He's found out."

"A clean show-up!" cackled Trimble. "Who'd have thought it of Gussy?"

"You never know a chap till you find him out," sneered Racke. "I've suspected something of the sort all along. Gussy was a bit too good to be true."

"That's five!" Blake said, as the cads of the School House made their remarks in a kind of chorus. "One each for us, and two over for me. I'm ready, Levison!"

"Come on, Crooke!" said Herries.

"Come on, Racke!" chimed in Digby.

And Tom Merry added:

"Come on, Mellish!"

And Monty Lowther, always ready to oblige, advanced invitingly towards Baggy Trimble, and said: "Come on, Trimble!"

There was a ripple of laughter in the Common-room. The five detractors of the absent swell of St. Jim's did not seem anxious to come on. They seemed much more eager to beat a strategic retreat.

But there was no retreat for them.

The sight of the letter had given Tom Merry & Co. a shock at first, but a moment's reflection convinced them that it was not D'Arcy's. It was exactly like one of Levison's impish tricks—they knew him of old.

For once he was telling the truth, as it chanced, but Le did not find believers.

"You don't seem keen to begin, Levison!" said Blake sarcastically. "It's more in your line to slander a chap than to answer for it, I suppose! But I'll oblige you by beginning!"

And Blake began with a tap on Levison's nose that elicited a howl of pain. The cad of the Fourth put up his hands then. He had to be punched, and he thought he might as well take it fighting.

Herries advanced on Crooke and Digby upon Racke, and they put up their hands very unwillingly. Three fights were soon going strong in the Common-room in a ring of crowded juniors.

Mellish and Trimble dodged round the table. Mellish was soon stopped, with Tom Merry's grip on his collar.

"I'm ready for you, Percy dear!" said the captain of the Shell.

"Hands off!" yelled Mellish. "That letter's genuine—"

Smack!

"Yaroo!"

Mellish put up his hands.

But Trimble was in full flight round the big table, with Monty Lowther grinning in pursuit. He made a wild break for the door, but Manners was there, with his back to the door. There was no escape for Baggy Trimble.

He yelled wildly as Lowther's grasp fell on him.

"Yaroo! Leggo! I—I say, Lowther, you know, I know that letter's spoof—that's what I was going to say! Levison wrote it—I—I saw him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we'd better have a fight all the same," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "I can see you're thirsting for gore—"

"I ain't!" yelled Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the fact is, I—I was going to lick Levison for putting it there!" wailed Baggy. "I was really, you know! I knew all along it was spoof. The fact is, D'Arcy didn't get a letter at all to-day, and he didn't say it was from Banks."

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^D.

"I—I've never heard of Banks, in fact. Keep off, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you go down on your knees and confess that you're a miserable, slandering worm, perhaps I could let you off with a thick ear," said Lowther, with an air of deep reflection.

"Look here, you know—" mumbled Trimble feebly.

"Sharp's the word!" roared Lowther, flourishing his fists within an inch of Baggy's fat nose.

"Yaroooh! Keep off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble dropped on his fat knees with a bump. There were four fights going on in the Common-room, but the School House juniors were all watching Trimble. Baggy was the cynosure of all eyes.

"Now," chuckled Lowther, "repeat after me: I am a miserable, slandering worm—"

"Oh, dear! You are a miserable slandering worm—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are, you ass!"

"Yes, I said you are," mumbled Trimble.

"Repeat after me: 'I, Baggy Trimble, am a miserable, slandering worm—'" roared Lowther ferociously.

"Yow! I, Baggy Trimble, am a miserable, slandering worm!" groaned the fat Fourth-former.

"And I beg humbly to be let off with a thick ear!"

"Look here, you know—yah—keep off! I beg humbly to be let off with a thick ear!" yelled Trimble.

"Then I shall be happy to oblige!" chuckled Lowther.

Whack!

"Yaroooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble rubbed his ear ruefully. He did not much mind eating humble pie, but the thick ear was more unpleasant.

"Now, open the door, Manners, and help me kick him out!" said Lowther cheerfully. "Everybody takes one free kick, and if you land him at the end of the passage that counts as a goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble did not wait for the free kicks to be taken. As soon as the door was opened he bolted through like a rabbit.

"Here, come back!" roared Lowther. "We haven't finished yet."

But Baggy Trimble did not come back.

CHAPTER 4. Bitter Blood!

"H

A, ha, ha!" Tom Merry burst into a laugh. His brief combat was over. Percy Mellish had gone down. He had rolled under the table and stayed there. He did not intend to come out again.

"Two off the list," grinned Kangaroo, "and there goes Crooke!"

Crooke of the Shell had been driven across the Common-room under Herries' heavy attack, till he brought up against the wall. There he could go no further, and he had to stand his ground. But the slacker of the Shell was not much use against the bulky Herries. He went down, and lay gasping on the floor, glaring savagely at the muscular Fourth-Former.

"Had enough?" asked Herries.

"Yow! Ow! Yes!"

"Well, you'll beg Gussy's pardon. I'll accept the apology for him, as he's not here."

"I won't!" yelled Crooke.

"You'll be kicked till you do," said Herries coolly, and his big boots started on the sprawling Shell fellow without ceremony.

"Yow-ow-ow! I beg Gussy's pardon!" shrieked Crooke.

"Good! That's good enough!"

And Herries turned his back on the unfortunate Crooke.

"Three wickets down!" commented Monty Lowther. "And Racke looks as if he's had nearly enough."

Racke, as a matter of fact, had had quite enough. He was bigger than Robert Arthur Digby, but he was not in such good condition. And Dig was so indignant at the aspersions on his absent chum that he seemed to have the strength of two fellows. He slogged Racke right and left!

Racke dropped his hands at last and jumped back.

"I give in!" he gasped.

"Righto! You'll beg Gussy's pardon!"

"I won't!"

"Then you won't give in!" said Dig. "You're going on till you take back your slanders, you rat!"

Racke backed away from the attack. He stopped when he reached the wall, glaring furiously at Dig's grim face. Dig was generally one of the best-tempered fellows in the Fourth, but he was merciless now.

"I—I'll apologise!" panted Racke at last. "I—I beg D'Arcy's pardon, hang you!"

"That's good enough, you cad!"

Jack Blake and Levison were still going strong. Levison had a good deal more pluck than his associates, and, since he had to fight, he put his beef into it. He gave a better account of himself than most of the fellows expected, and Blake had his hands full for some time.

But at last Levison could keep it up no longer, and he dropped his hands and backed away.

"That's enough, hang you!" he snarled.

"That isn't enough, unless you confess that you wrote that letter, and stuck it up there to slander D'Arcy!" said Blake, between his teeth.

Levison's eyes glistened.

"I'll confess nothing of the sort! That letter is D'Arcy's. I took it out of his own pocket."

"You said you picked it up!" said Gore of the Shell.

Levison snarled.

"Yes, I said so, but I didn't. I took it from his pocket on purpose to show him up, and Mellish and Crooke saw me do it."

"I don't think they'll say so now," laughed Tom Merry. "You'd better own up, Levison!"

"I've told you the truth."

"If it were the truth, you want licking for stealing a fellow's letter and reading it, on your own showing. But it isn't true."

"It's true, every word," said Levison, gritting his teeth. "You want me to own up to a lie, and I won't!"

"Sure, you ought to be pleased," said Reilly. "Lies are more in your line than the thruth, intirely!"

"Are you going to own up, you slandering cad?" asked Blake, advancing menacingly.

"No!"

"Then I'll hammer you till you do!"

Talbot of the Shell interposed.

"Draw it mild, Blake! Levison's had enough."

Blake glared at him. He was usually very friendly with Talbot of the Shell. But he would not have brooked interference from his best chum at that moment.

"Get out of the way, Talbot! You know what he's done—slandered my chum, who's out and can't speak for himself!"

"Yes, cheese it, Talbot!" said Tom Merry. "The cad ought to be made to own up that it's a slander. That's only fair!"

"Hammer him till he does!" shouted Herries.

"I'm going to," said Blake. "I don't want to quarrel with you, Talbot, but if you don't get out of the way, you'll get hurt!"

"Levison's had enough," said Talbot firmly. "He says that letter is D'Arcy's, and you don't want to make him tell lies about it, I suppose!"

"He's told lies already!" shouted Blake furiously. "Are you idiot enough to think that that letter is D'Arcy's?"

"I think very likely D'Arcy will have some explanation to give," said Talbot quietly. "I don't believe that he's been playing the giddy goat, or anything of the kind. That's all rot. But he had a letter from Banks—"

"He hadn't!"

"Reilly heard him say so."

"Reilly's a silly ass!"

"Same to you, and many of them!" said Reilly cheerfully.

"Dash it all, Talbot!" exclaimed Tom Merry, almost angry with his chum. "You can't believe that Levison got that letter out of Gussy's pocket! If he did, he ought to be thrashed for such a dirty trick!"

"Well, he has been thrashed," said Talbot. "It was a dirty trick, and he's paid for it!"

"He's going to own up that he wrote that letter," said Blake.

"Why not leave the matter till D'Arcy comes in? If D'Arcy says that isn't his letter, it will be time to hammer Levison for writing it."

"I'm not going to wait one second! Levison will own up that he forged that letter, or else I'll hammer him till he can't crawl!" roared Blake. "And if you don't get out of the way, I'll jolly well hammer you!"

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Talbot's face set a little. He stood in front of Levison, and Blake could not get at the Fourth-Former without pushing the handsome Shell fellow aside. And Talbot evidently did not intend to move. Levison, cad as he was, had done Talbot more than one good turn; and Talbot was the one fellow in the School House who was able to see any good in Levison. It was clear that Talbot meant to stand up for the cad of the Fourth.

"Are you going to move, Talbot?" asked Blake, setting his teeth.

"No!"

"I say, though, Talbot!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Levison's had enough, Tom!"

"He ought to be made to own up that he forged that letter!" exclaimed Tom angrily. "And you jolly well know it!"

Talbot flushed.

"I don't believe Levison wrote that letter," he said. "He did a mean thing in taking it from D'Arcy's pocket and sticking it up here. He's been punished for that."

"He didn't take that letter from Gussy's pocket!" shouted Blake.

"He says he did."

"And you believe him?"

"Yes."

Blake's eyes blazed.

"Then you can have it instead of Levison!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you rotter!"

Blake rushed right at Talbot. In another second there would have been another fight in progress—a good deal more serious than the previous scraps. But just then the door of the Common-room opened, and Mr. Railton strode in. The din had brought the Housemaster to the spot.

"Blake!" rapped out Mr. Railton.

Monty Lowther quietly jerked the tell-tale letter from the wall, and slid it into his pocket. It was not judicious to let that meet the eyes of the Housemaster, whether it was genuine or not.

Mr. Railton's eyes were fixed on Blake. The Fourth-Former stopped reluctantly. The row was over.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus is Late Home!

MR. RAILTON looked sternly at the juniors. There was silence in the Common-room, so noisy a minute before.

"Now, what does this mean?" exclaimed the Housemaster. "What is this fighting about? Are you aware that I have heard the noise in my study?"

"Ahem! Sorry, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"What is it about?"

"A—a—a difference of opinion, sir!" stammered Tom.

"You must settle your differences of opinion in a less riotous manner," said Mr. Railton. "Which of you have been fighting? Come forward!"

Blake and Herries, and Dig and Tom Merry came forward. Monty Lowther joined them. His little affair with Trimble could scarcely be called a fight, but he was ready to face the music all the same.

"What! You have been fighting with one another?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Ahem! No, sir!"

"Then with whom have you been fighting?"

Levison and Racke and Crooke and Mellish came forward reluctantly. Baggy Trimble was far away.

Mr. Railton scanned them sternly.

"Very well," he said, "each of you will take three hundred lines for fighting in the Common-room. If there is any repetition of this disturbance, I shall cane the offender severely. You had better go and bathe your faces. You look disgraceful!"

Mr. Railton quitted the Common-room.

"Gentlemen, the circus is over," said Monty Lowther, when the Housemaster had gone. "Now, I appeal to everybody—was my fight with Trimble worth three hundred lines? Have I had my money's worth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake gave Talbot a bitter look.

"Will you come into the gym?" he asked.

Talbot shook his head.

"Not till after D'Arcy comes in," he said. "If you still want me to then, I'll come any time you like."

Blake's eyes glinted.

"If Gussy says that letter is his, I'll beg your pardon," he said. "But as he won't say anything of the kind, I tell you

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out straight that you're a slandering cad, as bad as Levison!"

Talbot's handsome face flushed.

"Draw it mild, Blake!" growled Tom Merry.

"I say what I mean! Any fellow who says that letter is Gussy's, is a slandering cad! Any fellow who says Gussy ever had anything to do with Banks is a cowardly rotter and a slanderer!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Dig.

"I did not say D'Arcy had anything to do with Banks," said Talbot quietly. "I don't believe anything of the kind for one moment. We all know D'Arcy too well for that. I think that letter's his, and that he has some explanation to make."

"Then you're a silly fool!"

"Thanks!"

"And if you're not a rotten funk, you'll come into the gym, where we can have it out!" roared Blake.

"Not until D'Arcy comes in."

"Oh, go and eat coke, you rotter!"

Blake stamped out of the Common-room with his chums. Talbot's face was flushed, but he did not speak. Levison left the Common-room, after the chums of Study No. 6 had disappeared.

Levison had suffered severely in the fight with Jack Blake, and he was quite spent.

He walked unsteadily as he went, and Talbot hurried after him and gave him his arm. Levison shot him a grateful look.

"Thanks!" he muttered.

"You'd better bathe your face," said Talbot. "Let me help you to the dorm."

In the Fourth-Form dormitory Levison splashed his heated, bruised face with refreshing cold water. Talbot sat on a bed and watched him.

"I'm awfully obliged to you for chipping in," said Levison, as he towelled his face. "I couldn't have raised a finger for myself."

"Blake had lost his temper," said Talbot quietly. "I don't blame him. He believed that you had written that rotten letter for a rotten joke on D'Arcy."

"I didn't!" said Levison.

Talbot nodded.

"I believe that; but Blake doesn't, and perhaps you can't quite expect him to. As for what you've got, you asked for that."

"Thanks!"

"Why couldn't you let D'Arcy's letter alone?" said Talbot, frowning. "It was a rotten trick to take it out of his pocket, and you know it. What do you do such rotten things for?"

Levison sneered.

"To show him up," he said. "You know how those cads have been down on me because I smoke and have a fluffer on geegees occasionally. Well, it turns out that D'Arcy does the same kind of thing, the rotten hypocrite! Oughtn't the humbug to be shown up?"

"You are making a mistake, Levison! D'Arcy does nothing of the kind."

"I suppose Banks doesn't write to him for nothing?" jeered Levison.

"He might have written that letter simply to cause D'Arcy trouble. He's rotter enough!"

"He might—but he didn't. D'Arcy said himself that it was from Banks, and something about having to hurry off, or he'd be late. Then he rushed off. He went to keep the appointment in the letter."

Talbot was silent.

It was evident enough that so far Levison was quite correct, though Blake & Co. could not, and would not, see it.

"You can see it for yourself," sneered Levison. "D'Arcy has been taking the fellows in all the time—making out he was a good little Georgie, and all the time playing this game."

"That's impossible!"

"Then how do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it. It's not my business, for one thing. That letter may not even be from Banks, the book-maker, at all."

"I suppose there aren't two Banks knocking about," sneered Levison. "Banks is at Rylcombe now. He's been seen there the past week. D'Arcy has gone to meet him. Besides, the letter said he was to see him for a talk about a horse. What does that mean?"

Talbot did not reply.

"And thanked him for the pound he sent," went on Levison. "That was owing over a bet, of course."

"I am sure D'Arcy can explain."

"Oh, rats! Great pip, look at my face!" said Levison, peering into the glass. "A pretty picture I look! Never mind, I've shown that hypocrite up!"

Talbot left the dormitory quietly. He had felt bound to interfere on Levison's behalf; but all his sympathy was with



"Then you won't give in," said Digby. "You're going on till you take back your slanders, you rat!" Racke backed away from the attack. (See Chapter 4.)

Blake & Co., as a matter of fact. The mean trickery of the cad of the Fourth jarred on all his nerves. He was uneasy in his mind, too, about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The letter was D'Arcy's. He could not doubt that. What did it mean? Was it possible that the swell of St. Jim's, in his simplicity of heart, had been led into shady and disreputable ways? It seemed impossible. Yet how was the letter to be accounted for?

Talbot went to his study, where Gore and Skirapole were having their tea. George Gore looked at him very curiously.

"You've got a fight on with Blake this evening," he remarked.

"I hope not," said Talbot.

"You could lick him!"

"Perhaps. But I shall not fight him if I can possibly help it."

"After what he said to you?" said Gore, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Yes."

"Oh, you're too good to live!" growled Gore. "If I didn't know you had more pluck than any other chap in the House, I should think you were a funk."

Talbot laughed, and made no rejoinder.

Meanwhile, tea was going on in Study No. 6. A frugal tea, for Arthur Augustus had not yet returned. Funds were low, and the only moneyed member of the Co. was absent.

Blake & Co. were in a glum humour.

They had visited dire punishment upon the slanderers of Arthur Augustus, and they refused to believe for a moment that the letter belonged to D'Arcy. But there was an uneasiness at the back of their minds, all the same. Monty Lowther had handed the letter to Blake. Blake was inclined to burn it at once, but he decided to keep it till the swell of St. Jim's returned, to let Arthur Augustus see it.

But Arthur Augustus did not return.

His chums wondered where he was. It was an odd coincidence, to say the least of it, that D'Arcy should have hurried away as he had done, in this unexpected manner, at the same time that Levison was showing the letter from Banks speaking of an appointment. Blake & Co. were anxious for his return. But when the time came for evening call-over, the swell of the Fourth had not put in an appearance.

But as the juniors gathered in the Hall for the roll-call to be taken, Arthur Augustus came in breathlessly, and

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joined the ranks of the Fourth in time to answer to his name.

"Jolly near missed it, you ass!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus nodded cheerfully.

"Yaas, wathah. But a miss is as good as a mile, you know."

There was no time to ask questions just then. The roll-call finished, and the St. Jim's fellows streamed out of Hall. And then Arthur Augustus was immediately seized by Tom Merry & Co., and marched away to Study No. 6, to give an account of himself.

CHAPTER 6. The Culprit!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY blinked at the six juniors in surprise.

Apparently he did not understand their serious looks.

"Bai Jove, you look wathah like a collection of boiled owls, deah boys!" he said. "I twust there is not anythin' the mattah. You need not wowwy about my missin' my tea. I have had a snack out of doors."

"We're not worrying about your silly tea," growled Blake. "By the way, pewwaps you fellows have seen somethin' of a lettah!"

"What? A what?"

"A lettah. I have lost one."

"You—you've lost a letter?" stammered Blake, utterly taken aback.

The juniors exchanged startled glances.

"Yaas."

"You—you—you've lost a letter?"

"Weally, Blake, I do not see any cause for surprise in that! Any chap might lose a lettah, you know. As a mattah of fact, I should not be surprisid if that cad Levison collahed it out of my pocket. Those wottahs wagged me as I was goin' out, and I missed the lettah aftahwards."

"Great Scott!" muttered Blake.

He stared at Arthur Augustus aghast.

He had refused to believe a word of it from Levison. This confirmation from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's own lips was simply staggering.

The juniors could not speak. They could only stare speechlessly at Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's became more and more puzzled. He looked from one face to another, unable to make out the cause of the general consternation.

"You weally perplex me vevy much," he said. "I do not see any weason for starin' at a chap as if he had a face like the Kaisah. What's the mattah?"

"Oh, hang it, Gussy!" muttered Blake. "So—so that was really your letter?"

"Have you found it?"

"Is this it?"

Blake took the letter from his pocket and laid it on the table, and Arthur Augustus turned his eyes on it.

"Yaas," he said, with great satisfaction. "I am glad you found it, Blake."

"I didn't find it, Gussy. Levison had it—he's owned up, he took it from your pocket."

"The uthah wottah! I shall give Levison a feahful thwashin'!"

"He pinned it up on the wall in the Common-room," said Tom Merry. "Half the fellows in the School House have read it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Never mind about thrashing Levison," went on Tom, "Blake's done that!"

"Thank you vevy much, Blake! It is wathah a fag thwashin' a chap. Is that what's the mattah with your nose?"

Jack Blake rubbed his nose.

"Never mind my nose," he said. "Levison's got a nose that would take a prize in a beauty show. You own up that that's your letter, Gussy?"

"Certainly!"

"Most of the fellows wouldn't believe it," said Digby. "There were five chaps who said it was genuine, and we took them one each and licked them."

"Bai Jove! What did you do that for?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"I should think you could guess!" said Blake tartly. "We thought it was a rotten slander. I—I suppose we owe them an apology?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We thought Levison had written that letter for a rotten trick," said Herries.

"I weally fail to see why you should have thought anythin' of the kind, Hewwies! You are talkin' in widdles!"

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"Talbot was right," said Tom Merry.

Blake nodded.

"Yes; I'll tell Talbot I'm sorry," he said.

"What has Talbot to do with the mattah, Blake?"

"Talbot said he thought it was your letter. I was going to hammer Herries till he owned up that he had written it. I should have had a scrap with Talbot if Railton hadn't come in!" growled Blake. "I've been calling him rotten names, too, all on your account, you thundering ass!"

"It was wathah wude to call Talbot names, Blake, and I weally fail to see why you should call him names on my account."

"Look here, we've got to have this out!" said Blake angrily. "That is really your letter, Gussy?"

"Yaas, certainly!"

"You received it from Banks to-day?"

"Yaas!"

"And then you went off to keep the appointment in it?"

"Yaas!"

"About a horse?" said Manners.

"Yaas!"

"And you've sent him a pound previously?"

"Yaas! It is wathah wotten to have the mattah browth to ewevybody's knowledge like this; but that is the case, deah boy."

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Who'd have thought it?"

"It beats me," said Blake, aghast. "How he can stand there and tell us, without even blushing, beats me hollow!"

"I fail to see any weason for blushin', Blake," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner. "I twust I have nevah done anythin' to blush for!"

"Aren't you jolly well ashamed of yourself?" hooted Herries.

"Certainly not, Hewwies!"

"Then you jolly well ought to be!"

"Hewwies, you uthah ass—"

"You've been down on Levison and Crooke hard enough for doing the same kind of thing!" growled Digby.

"Bai Jove! If you mean to imply, Dig, that my conduct wesembles that of Levison and Cwooke, I can only say that you are a silly idiot!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If you were not a fiend of mine, I should call you a fabwicatah."

"A—a what?" said Dig.

"A feahful fabwicatah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his eye gleaming with wrath behind his eyeglass. "If any chap but a fiend of mine made such a wemark, I should call him a fabwicatah. I should considah him a liah, but I should wefuse to uthah so coarse a word as liah undah any cires. Howevah, I will not call you a fabwicatah, Dig. I wegard you as a howlin' ass!"

"Oh, don't get on the high horse!" snapped Digby. "This isn't a time for any of your rot! What have you done it for?"

"Weally, Digby—"

"Blessed if I ever thought this study would be disgraced in that way!" said Blake. "You live and learn!"

"Disgwaced!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"What do you call it, then?"

"Am I to undahstand, Blake, that you imply that I have disgwaced the studay?" Arthur Augustus's voice was not loud, but deep. Terrific wrath was gathering on his noble countenance.

But Blake was angry, too. He had fought Levison, and was still feeling the effects of it. He had quarrelled with Talbot, and called him unjust names. And all the time he had been in the wrong. Arthur Augustus had not been slandered, after all. It was all true! It was enough to make Blake angry. He did not care twopence for D'Arcy's gathering wrath. In fact, it seemed to him sheer cheek for D'Arcy to be angry under the circumstances.

"You can understand what you like, if your silly brain is capable of understanding anything!" he snapped. "You've disgraced the study, and what I want to know is, how you came to do it, and who led you into it? You're a silly ass, but you didn't get into this kind of thing without being led by some rotten blackguard."

"What kind of thing, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus, his eyes glittering.

"Betting, and being a blackguard!" said Blake savagely. D'Arcy started back.

"Playing the giddy goat!" said Herries.

"Meeting rotten bookmakers!" growled Dig.

The Terrible Three were silent. They were there as friends of D'Arcy. But this was a family concern, so to speak, of Study No. 6, and they were not called upon to express an opinion. Their opinion was pretty clear, all the same. It was not only that they had a deep contempt and repugnance for Mr. Banks and all his works, but Arthur

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Augustus had always been loftily down on the dingy blackguardism of the blades of the Lower School. He had never concealed his contempt for Levison and Crooke and Cutts of the Fifth, and that kind of fellow generally. It looked now as if D'Arcy's lofty attitude had been spoof all along, and that he was no better than the fellows he had professed to despise; and that savoured of a very unpleasant kind of humbug, which might be called by a harsher word. Hypocrisy and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed as wide apart as the poles; yet what were his friends to think at this moment?

Arthur Augustus' face had crimsoned, but the colour died away, and now it was quite pale. He looked steadily at his chums.

"You believe that I have been guilty of that kind of wotten conduct?" he asked at last.

"Haven't you?" growled Blake.

"I wefuse to ansawah such a question! It would be beneath my dig to do so!"

"Oh, don't play the giddy ox now!" said Blake. "This is serious!"

"It is certainly vewy sewious, Blake—so sewious that if you and Dig and Hewwies do not immediately apologise for your wotten wemarks, I shall nevah speak to any of you again!"

"Yes, you'll catch us apologising, after you've disgraced the study, and made us make dashed fools of ourselves!" granted Herries. "We've been licking chaps for saying you've done what you're owing up to now! We wouldn't have believed it for a moment from anybody else!"

"There appears to be some mistake. What have I owned up to?"

"Have you been to see Banks this afternoon—the fellow who wrote you that letter—or haven't you?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas!"

"That settles it!" said Blake. "I suppose nothing could be plainer than that! I suppose it's not our business, if you choose to do it!"

"Certainly it is not your business, Blake! Howevah, I should pwobably have told you about the mattah, but—but—"

"But what?" snapped Blake.

"But, on reflection, I decided not to mention it. A fellow does not want mattahs of that kind chattered about. It looks wathah wotten, just as if a fellow was doin' it in ordah to show off. In such mattahs, it is wathah bettah for a fellow to hide his light undah a bushel, you know."

"Yes, a good deal better, I should say!" said Blake bitterly. "If fellows knew, they'd tell you what they thought of you, and if the Head knew, you'd get the sack before you could say knife!"

"I fail to undahstand you, Blake! You are talkin' in widdles."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, if you can help it! Put that letter in the fire, and promise us never to see the man again!"

"You have no wight to make such a wequest, Blake, and I shall certainly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. There is no weason at all why I should not see Mr. Banks!"

"No reason!" exclaimed Blake.

"None at all! As a mattah of fact, I am bound to see him again, as we have some business to get through."

"You—you—you admit that you've got business with Banks?" stuttered Blake.

"Yaas! Why not?"

"He must be potty!" said Dig. "That's the only thing—he's potty!"

"I am not pottay, Digby, but it weally seems to me as if all you fellows are uttaly pottay, to be makin' a widiculous fuss like this about nothin'. And most certainly I shall see Mr. Banks again on Satahday, to finish our business."

"About a horse?" sneered Herries.

"Yaas!"

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "This beats me—beats me hollow!"

There was silence in the study for some minutes. The juniors simply did not know what to say.

If Arthur Augustus had shown some signs of contrition or shame, it would have been different. Whatever he might have done in a moment of folly, his chums would have stood by him and seen him through.

But this cool audacity—for it seemed like nothing else—took their breath away. They could imagine Levison or Cutts of the Fifth talking in such a strain. But D'Arcy!

Arthur Augustus broke the silence. His aristocratic face was quite grim.

"You fellows have been callin' me wotten names," he said. "I am willin' to accept an apology, and ovahlook the

mattah. Othahwise, our fwendship is, of course, at an end. Have you anythin' to say?"

"Yes," growled Blake; "I've got a lot to say. If you've some explanation to make, and will say you're sorry for having been a fool and a blackguard, we'll overlook the matter. Otherwise, you can go and eat coke!"

"Exactly," said Dig.

"My sentiments, too," said Herries.

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

"That fin shes the mattah!" he said. "Now, Tom Mewwy, will you be awf'ly kind enough to say wethah you agwee with these wottahs?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I don't want to chip in," he said; "but I do agree with Blake. If you've got any explanation to make—"

"I have nothin' to explain; and, under the cires, I should wefuse to explain in any case. You wegard me as Blake does, do you?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry at once.

"And you, Mannahs?"

"Certainly," said Manners unhesitatingly; "and I think you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

"And you, Lowthah?"

"Though thy wrath smiteth me to dust and ashes, I do," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Vewy well! You have called me a blackguard, and accused me of bein' a wottah like Levison and Cutts. You are labahin' undah some vewy weamarkable misappwehension; but that does not excuse you for entahtainin' such an opinion of me. Afiah this, you will oblige me by nevah speakin' to me again!"

Arthur Augustus turned on his heel, and walked out of the study.

CHAPTER 7.

Under a Cloud!

JACK BLAKE drew a deep breath.

D'Arcy's footsteps died away down the passage.

On many and many an occasion there had been rows in Study No. 6. It was no new thing for the great Gussy to get on his dignity and "wefuse" to speak to his chums, till in the course of time he came round. But the matter was different this time. For this time Blake & Co. were equally determined. If D'Arcy's ways were not their ways, they were content to see him go.

"Well, that settles it!" said Blake at last. "But—but who'd have thought it?"

"It beats me!" said Tom. "Gussy can't be so very much to blame; somebody got him into this."

"He might show a bit of shame about it," said Herries; "and the least he could do would be to promise never to see Banks again."

"Well, that's so!"

"But when a chap says that he's going on with the same bizney, whatever his chums think about him, that finishes it," said Digby. "We're not going to have this study disgraced by a betting blackguard!"

"No jolly fear!"

"It's odd, though," said Tom Merry musingly. "If Gussy has taken to betting and blagging, what is he indignant about?"

"Oh, that's only his dashed high-horse bizney! I suppose a fellow never sees himself as others see him. What's blackguardly in Levison and Cutts isn't blackguardly in oneself, I suppose."

"Well, there's a lot of that kind of thing in human nature," remarked Manners. "People who speculate on the Stock Exchange turn up the whites of their eyes sometimes at betting on races. A chap never can see himself as others see him."

"But that's no excuse," said Blake. "Unless Gussy chucks it up, at least, he's done with this study. And—and to think I was going to fight old Talbot for thinking that the letter was his, when it was his all the time! I—I think I'd better get along and speak to Talbot."

Jack Blake left the study and went along the Shell passage. Talbot and Gore and Skimpole were at their preparation when Blake looked in, with a very red face. His task was not a pleasant one.

"Talbot, old chap!"

Talbot rose to his feet with a smile. Blake's mode of address showed that the Fourth-Former was not on the war-path.

"Yes, Blake?"

"I'm sorry I called you what I did!" blurted out Blake. "It—it turns out that I was wrong."

Gore whistled.

"Do you mean to say that that letter was Gussy's all the time, Blake?" he exclaimed.

"I don't mean to say anything!" said Blake savagely.

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"Oh, keep your wool on! I thought it was, all the time," said George Gore coolly. "I couldn't quite swallow it, that's all. But if you say so—"

"Oh, rats!"

"What lovely manners they have in the Fourth!" grinned Gore.

"My dear Blake," said Skimpole, in his solemn way, "I am shocked and surprised! Do you think it would do any good if I were to speak a word in season to that unhappy and misguided youth?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, Skimpole!" said Blake irritably.

"My dear Blake—"

"I'm sorry for what I said, Talbot. You were right. But—but if you want me to come into the gym all the same, I'm ready."

"But I don't want you to," said Talbot quietly. "There's nothing for us to fight about that I can see."

"All serene, then! Chap can't do more than say he's sorry."

"That's all right. But—but there's some mistake in the matter, I think," said Talbot. "I could see that the letter was D'Arcy's—it seemed plain enough to me. But I don't believe for one moment the construction Levison put on it."

"D'Arcy's owned up!" growled Blake.

"Impossible!"

"But he has. He admitted that he went out to see Banks directly after he got that letter."

Talbot started.

"Are you sure, Blake?"

"He said so himself in our study."

"I can't understand it!"

"Oh, we're all human at times!" grinned Gore. "Gussy has had a bit of a flutter. I've done the same myself in my time."

"Yes, and a pretty muck you made of it, too! You've been sacked from the school once, and deserved it half a dozen times!" granted Blake.

Gore jumped up in wrath.

"You cheeky rotter!" he shouted.

Talbot pushed him back into his chair.

"Hold on, Gore!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, let him come on!" said Blake disdainfully. "I feel just inclined to hammer somebody now; and Gore will do!"

"Rot!" said Talbot, still holding Gore in his chair. "Cut off, old fellow! Scrapping won't do any good!"

Blake turned away.

"Look here, I'm going after him, Talbot!" growled Gore angrily. "What are you chipping in for, you ass?"

"Let it drop," said Talbot. "Blake's cut up over this, you can see that. You don't want to go for a fellow when he's down."

Gore grunted. It was curious the influence Talbot had over the bully of the Shell. Gore gave a sulky nod.

"Oh, all right! I'm as sorry as anybody to see D'Arcy playing the fool like this. I know what it meant for me once. If you hadn't got me clear—"

"I hope D'Arcy will get clear, too," said Talbot. "But I can't quite believe the thing yet. There's a mistake somewhere."

Blake returned to his study to do his prep. The Terrible Three had gone. Digby and Herries were looking glum.

Blake sat down discontentedly.

The affair had been a painful shock to the chums of Study No. 6. That study, so long happily united, was hopelessly divided now. Arthur Augustus had many peculiar little ways, and he was sometimes a little exasperating, but the friendship of the four had been deep and sincere, though they said nothing about it. The thought that their chum had got himself into trouble was worrying; the knowledge that he had not only taken to vicious ways, but was obstinately determined to persist in them, was worse. And the fact that he was angry and indignant at their condemnation of him only fanned the flame of their resentment and exasperation. They felt keenly enough the breaking off of an old friendship.

But they did not regret that D'Arcy had gone. There was no room for a blackguard in Study No. 6.

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During the evening Hammond of the Fourth came in. He came for D'Arcy's books and other personal belongings. Blake & Co. watched him while he was collecting them.

"D'Arcy's goin' to come into my study," explained the Cockney junior. "Me and Kerruish and Reilly and Julian are willin'."

"You're welcome!" growled Blake.

Hammond sniffed.

"You're down on Master Gussy, 'cause he's been and gone and done somethin'," he said. "That what you call pally?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Herries. "If you like betting blackguards in your study, you're welcome to them! We don't."

Hammond's eyes gleamed. He believed the same thing that Blake & Co. believed, but his loyalty to the swell of St. Jim's, who had been a good friend to him, was proof against any strain.

"I don't care what Master Gussy done!" he said. "I know he was a good pal to me—when I wanted one bad, too. I'm stickin' to 'im, and if anybody says a word agin' 'im for me to 'ear there'll be a scrap! That's all!"

And Hammond, with an emphatic snort, marched out with D'Arcy's books. Blake and Herries and Digby looked at one another rather queerly. Harry Hammond's unwavering faith in the swell of St. Jim's gave them a feeling that they had been wanting in loyalty. But facts were facts. Blake & Co. resumed their prep. with grim faces. The sun had gone down upon their wrath.

CHAPTER 8.

Kangaroo Means Well!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was an object of great interest to the School House fellows the next day.

Everybody was surprised.

That the swell of St. Jim's should have taken to playing the giddy ox was simply astounding.

But there did not seem room for doubt about the matter.

He had admitted that the letter from Banks was his—that was known. It was known that he had hurried off to see the writer of the letter.

And his own chums had quarrelled with him about it, and he was no longer a member of Study No. 6.

After that, it seemed, there was nothing more to be said.

Fellows who liked D'Arcy—and nearly everyone did—were sorry to see that change in his ways. That it was a change they all believed. Only Levison & Co. believed that this was merely the accidental discovery of what had been going on for a long time.

The curious thing was that Arthur Augustus did not seem in the slightest degree ashamed.

The least he could have done, his friends thought, was to look ashamed of himself now that he had been bowled out! But Arthur Augustus only looked puzzled and perplexed. It was really as if he did not know what his chums had quarrelled with him for, or why they thought so badly of him all of a sudden—which, of course, from Blake & Co.'s point of view was absurd.

It was not easy to discuss the matter with Arthur Augustus either.

When Mellish of the Fourth, feeling that they were on a footing now, offered him a cigarette, Arthur Augustus first stared blankly, and then delivered his opinion of Mellish in the plainest of plain English. And when Mellish contended that smoking a cigarette, at least, wasn't quite so bad as backing gee-gees with bookies who had been warned off the turf, Arthur Augustus pulled Mellish's nose—emphatically—to Mellish's breathless indignation.

It seemed, as Mellish remarked to Levison, that D'Arcy of the Fourth still wanted to ride the high horse, in spite of the indubitable fact that he had been found out.

Better-natured fellows than Mellish spoke to D'Arcy on the subject that day. Harry Noble of the Sliell, though not much given to preaching, felt that it was up to him to say a word, and he tackled D'Arcy in the quadrangle after lessons. Arthur Augustus greeted him cheerily—he was feeling a little lousy now that he had broken with

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BOYS' FRIEND

OUT TO-DAY!

ONE PENNY.



Arthur Augustus stood like a lion in the path. "I shall hit out, you wottahs—yawoooo—" (See Chapter I.)

his chums, though nothing would have induced him to admit it.

"You don't mind my speaking seriously, old chap?" said Kangaroo.

"Not at all, deah boy. I quite approve of a chap speakin' seviously," said Arthur Augustus. "But, pway, don't speak about my little wov with my formah fwinds. That is watah an unpleasant subject."

"Well, I won't, though I'm sorry to see that you've got on bad terms in your study. But about your little game—"

"Eh?"

"Is it good enough, Gussy?" urged Kangaroo. "You're not the kind of chap for that kind of thing. I know it's not my bizney, but we've always been friends, so—"

"Are you alludin' to Blake's wotten suspicion wegardin' me, Kangawooh?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe that I have done somethin' of a disgwaceful nature?" asked Arthur Augustus, his eyes beginning to glitter.

"I know you wouldn't mean to," said Kangaroo pacifically. "But getting mixed up with a blackguard like that fellow Banks isn't very nice, is it?"

"Mr. Banks is a gentleman whom I wespect highly!"

"You're about the only fellow who does, then," said Kangaroo drily. "For of all the rotten rotters—"

"I wefuse to heah you speak of Mr. Banks in that way, Kangawooh! If you wepeat, such wotten wemarks I shall punch your nose!"

"Oh, will you?" exclaimed the Cornstalk, nettled. "Well, I'll repeat them fast enough. Banks is a thorough scoundrel, and ought to be in prison!"

"Kangawooh, I should be sowwy to punch your nose, but I shall do so unless you withdwaw that wemark at once!"

"Rats!"

"You heah me, Noble?"

"Yes, Banks is a scoundrel, and you are a silly ass!" exclaimed Kangaroo, quite angry now. "Ah! Would you, you duffer?"

The next moment they were fighting.

There was a rush from all quarters at once. The Cornstalk was a great fighting-man, though he was very peaceable until roused. He had always been on good terms with D'Arcy, as had most of the School House fellows. But they were fighting hammer and tongs now; and Arthur Augustus, though hardly a match for the stalwart Australian, was putting up a great fight.

"A fight—come on!" sang out Wally D'Arcy of the Third, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 456.

Gussy's younger brother. "Go it, Gussy! You're going to get licked—but go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in, Kangy!"

"Hurray!"

Blake and Herries and Digby came running up from the footer-ground. What on earth the fight was about they could not imagine! It was really no business of theirs, as D'Arcy was no longer their pal or study-mate—but they felt concerned for him. The Terrible Three also were soon on the spot. The fight was taking place under the elms, fortunately at a good distance from the house.

"What in thunder's the row?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"Goodness knows! I don't!"

"Only Gussy looking for trouble and finding it!" grinned Levison.

"Separate them!" said Talbot.

"Oh, let 'em alone!" said Mellish. "Gussy has wanted a licking for a long time. Yah! You rotter, Blake, keep your elbow out of my ribs!"

"I'll put my fist in your eye if you don't shut up!" snapped Blake.

Talbot ran forward, and Tom Merry followed him. The two combatants were dragged apart.

"Welcme me!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

But Kangaroo only grinned.

"There's nothing for you two to scrap about," said Talbot. "For goodness' sake, chuck it!"

"I don't mind," said Kangaroo laughing. "I didn't want to scrap. But I can't have my nose punched."

"You said a wotten thing about a friend of mine!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"Well, if he's a friend of yours, I'll say no more about him," said Kangaroo. "But I don't compliment you on your choice of friends!"

"What the deuce——" began Blake.

"Don't you fellows run away with the idea that I've been slanging anybody behind his back," exclaimed Kangaroo, flushing. "I was speaking of Banks."

"Banks!"

"Yes, Banks. Gussy didn't like my calling him a scoundrel. I think most of the fellows here will agree with me about that."

"Yes, rather!"

"But, since he's Gussy's friend," grinned Kangaroo, "I'll keep my opinion to myself. I won't shove my oar in again, D'Arcy, and you can keep your wool on, and go to the giddy bow-wows without any advice from me."

And Kangaroo put his hands in his pockets, and sauntered away whistling.

"So you've been fighting about Banks?" said Blake grimly. Arthur Augustus gave him a steely look.

"Pway do not address me, Blake! I wefuse to speak to you!"

"Dash it all, Gussy, Banks isn't a friend of yours?" exclaimed Hammond.

"Not exactly a friend, Hammond; but I have a great respect for him, and I wefuse to heah him called by opprobrious names!"

"Well, my 'at!" ejaculated Hammond, overcome with astonishment.

Arthur Augustus walked away, leaving the juniors in a buzz of excitement. For a fellow to admit publicly such an acquaintance was amazing. And the swell of St. Jim's did not seem in the least ashamed of it. To most of the fellows it looked as if he was lost to all sense of shame.

After Kangaroo's experience, the fellows let the subject alone. If D'Arcy meant to fly out at a disparaging word about Mr. Banks, it was evidently useless to reason with him. The juniors wisely decided to let him "gang his ain gait," without troubling him with good advice, which would most likely lead to fisticuffs.

But at tea-time Kangaroo came into Tom Merry's study, with a thoughtful expression on his face.

"You fellows ready for a scrap?" he asked.

"Any old thing," said Tom Merry. "What is it—a raid on the New House?"

"Oh, blow the New House! I'm thinking of that rotter Banks."

The captain of the Shell looked very grave.

"He's in Rylcombe now," he said. "I've seen him about there. I heard from Wharton, of Greyfriars, that the rotter had got mixed up with somebody there, and had to clear out of the neighbourhood. He's come back to Rylcombe—to stay, it seems."

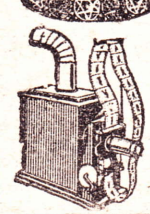
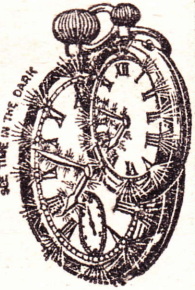
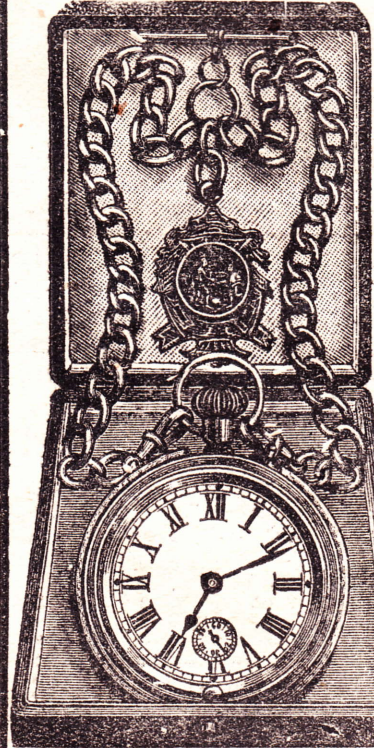
"He's got Gussy under his thumb somehow," said Kangaroo. "Gussy is a good little ass, though he's playing the giddy ox now. That rotter has got an influence over him

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somehow. He fired up when I called the man a scoundrel!"

"The man is a scoundrel," said Tom.

"Well, suppose we chip in?" suggested the Cornstalk. "The rotter has no right to meddle with a St. Jim's chap! Levison's saying that Gussy has an appointment with him for Saturday. He heard them speaking of it in Study No. 6, I believe. At this rate, Gussy will get the sack. He's made himself the talk of the Lower School already, and it won't be long before some of the prefects get to hear of it! That means being hauled up before the beaks, and flogged or sacked!"

"I know," said Tom, looking worried. "You can't blame Blake for getting fed-up; but, as a matter of fact, what Gussy needs just now is a pal to see him through, and save him from making a fool of himself. I simply can't understand him. I'd never have believed it, excepting from his own mouth!"

"Well, suppose we chip in and stop that giddy appointment for Saturday?"

"But how?"

"By going to look for Banks, and giving him such a thundering hiding that he won't be able to keep any appointments!"

Tom Merry laughed. The Cornstalk's plan was a little drastic, but it quite chimed in with the ideas of the Terrible Three. They were concerned about the swell of the School House, and certainly an unscrupulous rascal who was leading a schoolboy on the road to ruin deserved no mercy.

"I'm on!" said Tom. "The rotter ought to be made an example of! Gussy will certainly get it in the neck if this goes on. It isn't only that he's playing the fool, but he's so jolly reckless about it!"

"Then when you're done tea we'll go on the warpath!" grinned Kangaroo. "We'll save Gussy from the giddy road to ruin without asking his permission!"

"Right-ho?"

After tea the Shell fellows started. Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, Kangaroo's chums, joined them. And the six juniors went to look for Mr. Banks full of grim determination to make him sorry that he had honoured Ryleombe with his presence once more.

CHAPTER 9.

A Painful Duty Well Done.

"MY hat! What luck!"

Kangaroo uttered that exclamation.

The chums of St. Jim's were sauntering down the lane to Ryleombe. They knew where Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, was to be found—at the Green Man, in the village. Not that they intended to venture into that disreputable haunt; but they hoped to find the rascal hanging about somewhere where they could handle him, and before they were half-way to the village Kangaroo pointed across the fields towards the towing-path.

A fat figure was visible there, in the sunny autumn evening. It was Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, and he was strolling along, with his bowler hat on the back of his head, smoking a cigar.

"What luck! There's our bird!" said Kangaroo.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The six juniors pushed through the hedge, and broke into a run towards the river.

Mr. Banks did not observe them. He was sauntering back now at an easy pace, evidently pacing to and fro on the towing-path while waiting for somebody to join him. The juniors could not help wondering whether it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy whom the fat rascal was there to meet.

They came out on the towing-path with a run, and Mr. Banks stopped in his walk and looked at them.

"Evenin', young gents!" he said affably.

"Waiting for somebody—what?" asked Tom grimly.

Mr. Banks nodded.

"A St. Jim's chap, perhaps?" said Lowther.

"That's telling!" smiled Mr. Banks. "Never tell tales out of school, young gents—that's a good maxim!"

"Are you waiting for a St. Jim's chap?" demanded Tom.

"Find out!" retorted Mr. Banks.

"Well, we don't need to find out—we know!" said Tom. "You've been away from this neighbourhood for some time, Mr. Banks. It would be better for your health if you were to go away again!"

"That's my business, I suppose?" said the bookmaker, staring at him.

"Not entirely!" grinned Kangaroo. "We're making it our business, too. Would you like to take a vacation, and keep away from this district altogether?"

"No, I wouldn't!" said Mr. Banks.

"It would be better for your health," said Kangaroo.

"I don't see it. Whatter you mean?"

"I mean that you're not going to be allowed to get St. Jim's chaps into mischief! You're going to clear off, or take the consequences!"

"P'raps you're goin' to make me?" sneered Mr. Banks.

"Exactly!"

Mr. Banks backed away a pace or two, and gripped his stick.

"You touch me——" he began.

"You're going to rag you," said Tom Merry. "You're going to give us your word to clear off, or else we're going to duck you in the river!"

"You cheeky young 'ound!" roared Mr. Banks indignantly.

"Are you going?"

"No blooming fear!" said Mr. Banks emphatically. "And if you lays a 'and on me, I'll thrash yer, and then come up to your 'eadmaster and complain!"

"Collar him!" said Tom.

The juniors made a rush, and Mr. Banks' stick lashed at them savagely. Kangaroo caught his arm, and wrenched the stick away. The next moment the fat bookmaker was on his back in the grass.

He lay there somewhat like an overturned turtle, and roared.

"In with him!" shouted Kangaroo.

"Elp!" roared Mr. Banks. "Perlice! 'Elp!"

But there was no help for the sporting gentleman. He was whirled up, heavy weight as he was, in six pairs of young, strong hands.

The juniors rushed him into the reeds, and held him suspended over the shallow, muddy water of the river's margin. Mr. Banks' eyes almost bulged from his head.

"Put me down!" he roared. "You young raskils, put me down!"

"We're going to—into the water!" grinned Clifton Dane.

"You don't dare!" shrieked Mr. Banks.

"Will you promise, honour bright, not to have anything more to do with any St. Jim's chap?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

"Go and chop chips!" howled Mr. Banks. "You don't dare!"

"In with him!"

Splash!

There was a squelching splash as Mr. Banks' heavy, bulky form dropped into the water.

The fat bookmaker squelched and rolled in mud. There were only six inches or so of water, but the mud was deep and thick.

Mr. Banks sat up in the water, smothered with ooze.

"Gerroooogh!"

"That's the first lesson," said Tom Merry, eyeing him grimly. "We'll look for you again on Saturday, Banks. If we find you anywhere near St. Jim's, look out for another ducking!"

"Groooogh!"

Mr. Banks scrambled and floundered wildly out of the water. Tom Merry & Co. walked away along the towing-path towards the school. They felt that they had done their duty, and done it well. The unfortunate Mr. Banks felt that they had done it only too well.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Lowther. "Cutts, by Jove!"

"Cutts!" repeated Tom Merry. "My hat!"

Gerald Cutts, the dandy of the Fifth, was coming towards them with a hurried stride. He looked like a fellow who was going to keep an appointment for which he was already late.

Cutts of the Fifth gave the juniors a glance in passing, and hurried on.

Kangaroo whistled.

"My hat! Was Banks waiting there for Cutts, after all, and not Gussy?" he said.

"Ha, ha! I shouldn't wonder! We know Cutts meets him!"

"Well, he wanted a lesson, all the same, and he's got it," said Manners. "We knew D'Arcy was going to meet him on Saturday, anyway!"

"Yes, that's so."

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"ALL THE WINNERS!"

"It will be rather a surprise for Cutts if he's going to meet him!" chuckled Lowther. "He can help Banks get the mud off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The juniors walked on to the school gates. As they entered they sighted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walking in the quadrangle with Harry Hammond. Evidently the swell of St. Jim's had no appointment with Mr. Banks for that evening, at least.

Arthur Augustus bestowed a friendly nod upon Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, and a steely look on the rest. Tom Merry & Co. were on the list of fellows whom Arthur Augustus wasn't speaking to. That list seemed likely to increase.

Talbot met the Shell fellows as they came in. He laughed when they told him of the happenings to Mr. Banks.

"Well, he's asked for it, even if he wasn't there for D'Arcy," said Talbot. "It seems to be an open secret that D'Arcy is going to see him on Saturday!"

"Banks may think better of it after that ducking," said Kangaroo.

"It's a jolly queer business," said Talbot musingly. "I can't help fancying there is a mistake somewhere. It's rather a risky business talking to Gussy about it, according to your experience, Kangy."

Kangaroo chuckled.
"You'll only come to punching noses, if you speak about Banks," he said. "Better let the young ass rip."

Talbot nodded. But he was thinking very seriously over the matter. In spite of the apparently conclusive evidence on the subject, Talbot was not satisfied. Yet how there could be a mistake somewhere, baffled even Talbot's clear brain. Arthur Augustus' own word could not be doubted, and Arthur Augustus had admitted everything. But Talbot was not satisfied, nevertheless.

CHAPTER 10.
The Cold Shoulder.

REILLY of the Fourth came into No. 5 Study with a somewhat grim expression on his face. No. 5 belonged to Reilly, Julian, Hammond, and Kerruish; but there were five in the study now. Harry Hammond had insisted upon D'Arcy sharing his quarters now that he had left No. 6. His study-mates had gracefully concurred, hoping that the swell of St. Jim's would soon make it up with his chums, for five was certainly a crowd in a junior study.

As for D'Arcy's disgrace, Julian & Co. did not make any remark on that. They considered that it was no business of theirs. In fact, they had shown almost a painful politeness in avoiding any reference to D'Arcy's undesirable acquaintances. But Reilly was looking quite grim as he came in now. Tea was going on in the study. Arthur Augustus was seated at the table, urbane as usual, though looking somewhat thoughtful.

"A word wid ye, Gussy!" said Reilly.
Arthur Augustus looked up.
"Yaas, deah boy."

"I've just heard some jaw downstairs," said Reilly, in his direct way. "I hope there's nothing in it. I know Levison! But I'd rather you told me."

"Pway go on, Weilly!"
"They're saying that you've got an appointment with Mr. Banks for Saturday afternoon."

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.
"I weally fail to see why my private affairs should interest the fellows as they appear to do," he remarked. "It is vevy surpwisin' to me."

"Sure your private affairs don't interest me," said Reilly, rather tartly. "But I'd like to know whether that's true or not?"

"Yaas, it is quite cowweet. I suppose one of those eave-dwoppin' boundahs heard me say so in Studay No. 6 when I was speakin' to Blake."

"You're going to meet Banks on Saturday?"

"Yaas."
"Howly mother av Moses!" exclaimed Reilly. "You own up to it as cool as a graven image!"

"I see no weason for concealin' it, Weilly."

Reilly granted.
"Hammond asked us to let you into this study, as your pals turned you out," he said. "It's rather a squeeze, but we don't mind that."

"Look 'ere—" began Hammond.
"You misundahstand, Weilly," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I was not turned out of Studay No. 6. I wefused to wemain there. I shook the dust of that studay twom my feet."

"Sure, an' you can shake the dust of this study from your feet, too," said Reilly grimly. "Your private affairs don't matter to me a twopenny rap, but if you're going to keep on blagging—"

"What?"
"After disgracing your own study, you can't expect to be allowed to disgrace ours," said Reilly.

"Gweat Scott!"
"I thought you'd played the fool just once, and that was an end of it," said the Irish junior. "If you're keeping it up, we'd prefer your room to your company."

"If you do not appreciate my company in this studay, Weilly, I should be the last person to wemain," he said icily.
"Well, good-bye!" said Reilly, quite unmoved by the elegant Fourth-Former's chilly dignity.

"Old on!" exclaimed Hammond. "You're not goin', D'Arcy! You can shut up, Reilly! Gussy's my pal."

"I advise you to be a bit more particular about your pals, Hammond."

"I'll ask you for advice when I want it. Look 'ere—" "Order!" rapped out Dick Julian. "Reilly's in the right, and I back him up. Gussy ought to chuck up that kind of thing. If he does, he's welcome here—welcome as the flowers in May. If he doesn't, the sooner he goes, the better."

"Hear, hear!" said Kerruish heartily.
"Well, I don't say so!" said Hammond doggedly. "This 'ere is my study. Wotever Master D'Arcy 'ave done, he's goin' to stay 'ere."


"Thank you vevy much, Hammond," said Arthur Augustus. "But it is impos for me to wemain anywhaw where my pwesence is unwelcome. Your fwiends seem to have atahed their opinion of me, for some weason I cannot quite compwehend. If they wepeat such wemarks outside this study I shall call them to account. I do not wish to make a wow in anothah fellow's quartahs, but I must wemark that any person who accuses me of questionable conduct is a wotten slandewah!"

Reilly flushed red.
"That's for me, I suppose!" he exclaimed. "But, sure, I don't call your conduct questionable—there isn't much question about it! On what you say yourself, you're a shady blackguard!"

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"You uttah wottah—"

"And I'll repeat that outside this study, if you want me to," said Reilly. "I'll repeat it in the passage, and shout it in the quad, and sing it over in the New House, if you like."

"Vewy well. I shall ask you to come into the gym," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "You also, Julian, and you, Kewwuish, and any fellow who considahs that there is anythin' shady in my conduct."

"Oh, Master Gussy!" faltered Hammond.

Arthur Augustus carefully adjusted his eyeglass, and turned it on the Cockney junior.

"Hammond, you have made a wemark which appeahs to me to wequiah some explanation. You wemarked that I should be welcome heah whatevah I had done. I am vewy much obliged to you, but I must ask you to explain that wemark. Are you undah the impresson that I have done anythin' to be ashamed of?"

Hammond could only stare.

"You have always been a fwient of mine," continued Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not suppose that I desiah to quawwel with you, Hammond. But I must weally ask you to answah that question."

"I—I—" stammered Hammond blankly.

Arthur Augustus' eye glittered behind his monocle.

"Do you agwee with Weilly's wotten wemarks, Hammond?"

"No, I don't," said Hammond sturdily. "Whatever you done, I stand by you. And whatever you does again, I stand by you, though I wish you'd think better of it."

"You are implyin', Hammond, that you believe me guilty of shady conduct?"

"Well, you—you see—" stuttered Hammond. "You always looked on that there kind of thing as shady yourself, D'Arcy. When I first come 'ere, you told me so. I always looked up to you. Now you gone and done it yourself."

Arthur Augustus looked at him fixedly.

"There appeahs to me to be a growin' pwejudice against me in this House," he said. "You are the vewy last person, Hammond, I should have expected to believe a wotten slandah against me. I should have welied upon you even more than upon my formah fwients."

Hammond looked bewildered, as well he might.

"But—but it ain't a slander, if you admit it yourself!" he faltered.

"I admit nothin' of the sort."

"But—but you have admitted it!" stammered Hammond.

"Unless I'm dreamin', you 'ave."

"Then you are certainly dweamin', Hammond!"

"Blessed if I understand the silly spalpeen at all," said Reilly, puzzled. "D'Arcy knows as well as we do what all the fellows think of what he's done."

"I wefuse to speak to you, Weilly! I will not address a single word to you undah any circumstances whatevah!"

Reilly grinned.

"But I am sowwy, Hammond, to see that you are undah a mistakent impresson. You have allowed some slandewin' cad to deceive you, I pwesume. But until you change your opinion of me, and expvess your wegwet for havin' entahained it at all, I am sowwy to say that I must dwop your acquaintance."

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus turned his back, and walked out of the study.

The chums of No. 5 stared at one another as the door closed behind the aristocratic figure of the swell of St. Jim's. Hammond rubbed his nose.

"This 'ere beats me," he said slowly.

Reilly snorted.

"I suppose everybody's got to change his views at the same time as D'Arcy," he said sarcastically. "When father says turn, we all turn! Poof!"

"Well, it does look like it!" said Julian, in perplexity. "Gussy seems to think we're all bound to swallow Banks because he's swallowed him. Why, only the other week he joined in ragging that blackguard Weeks, for getting Skimpole into a fix. Now he's changed his views, but he really can't expect us to follow suit."

"He'll be disappointed if he does!" growled Reilly.

Hammond left the study, with a subdued and troubled face. He was ready to stand by the noble Gussy, even if it came to the sack for the swell of St. Jim's. But to believe that he was doing right when he knew that he was doing wrong—that was rather too great a strain even for the faithful Hammond. He looked for Arthur Augustus, and found him in the quadrangle. But he had no chance of speaking to him. Arthur Augustus gave him one steely glare entirely without recognition, and walked in another direction. Hammond stood dismayed. Even Hammond had been added to the list of fellows whom Arthur Augustus no longer knew.

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CHAPTER 11.

Before the Beaks!

"GREAT Christopher Columbus!"

"Banks, by thunder!"

"And here!"

Mr. Banks did not seem at all discomposed by the sensation he made, as he came lounging across the quadrangle from the gates in the cool evening.

Tom Merry & Co. spotted him, and stared.

Mr. Banks had threatened to come to their headmaster, and complain of the rough handling he had received that afternoon. But that the disreputable rascal would have the nerve to come to St. Jim's and face the grave and reverend Head they had never dreamed.

But he had come! Here he was—newly swept and garnished after his muddy ducking, but looking as fat and boozey and coarse and disreputable as ever.

Mr. Banks was evidently out for vengeance.

The juniors exchanged glances. Their treatment of Mr. Banks had been high-handed, they could not deny that—but they felt that it was justified. Almost any means were justified in driving away an unscrupulous rascal, who was seeking to lead a thoughtless schoolboy into vicious ways. They believed that the Head himself would not blame them if he knew the facts.

But it occurred to Tom Merry & Co. now that there was a "but."

If they explained to the Head that they had ducked Mr. Banks for leading a St. Jim's fellow into his own rascally ways, Dr. Holmes would certainly take a lenient view of the matter—provided they proved their assertion. If they had acted on suspicion, the Head was bound to visit condign punishment upon them. They could prove their assertion easily enough—but only by giving Arthur Augustus away. And that was not to be thought of for a moment.

Mr. Banks came up to the School House, and gave the chums a leering look as he passed them. It was clear that the vengeful rascal considered his hour of triumph had come.

"I told you I'd come, young feller-me-lad!" he said jeeringly. "We'll see wot your 'eadmaster has to say about ducking a man—wot?"

Tom Merry gave him a contemptuous look.

"We're quite ready to answer for it," he said. "And you'll get another ducking if we catch you near this school again!"

"And a bumping along with it," said Lowther.

"We'll see about that," said Mr. Banks. "We'll see!"

And he strode on.

Levison spotted him from the doorway, and Levison chortled with glee. This was such a showing-up as Levison had never hoped for.

"Hallo, Bankey!" he exclaimed. "Have you come to see D'Arcy?"

"I come to see the 'Ead," said Mr. Banks surlily.

Levison looked startled. As a matter of fact, the worthy Levison had had his own dealings with Mr. Banks in his time, and he always had a lurking fear that something might come to light.

"To see the Head!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Banks read the uneasy thought in his mind, and he grinned.

"I got to complain to the 'Ead," he said. "I been 'andled by a gang of young 'ooligans!"

"Oh, I see! I wish you luck!" said Levison.

Mr. Banks passed in at the open doorway.

"What do you want here?"

It was a sharp voice. Mr. Railton had seen the fat bookmaker, from his study window, and he came out into the hall to meet him.

Mr. Banks faced the Housemaster coolly.

"I've called to see the 'Ead," he replied.

"Then it is unparalleled impudence on your part!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "You have no business with Dr. Holmes!"

"I been ducked by a gang of young 'ooligans belonging to this 'ere school," said Mr. Banks sullenly. "If I don't see the 'eadmaster, I'm going to the police to lay a charge of assault!"

"You say that boys belonging to this school have molested you?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, taken aback.

"Yes, I does, and if you think I'm goin' to take it lyin' down—"

"That will do. In those circumstances, you have a right to lay a complaint before Dr. Holmes. Follow me!"

Mr. Banks, abashed in spite of his impudence, followed the Housemaster. He was taken into the Head's study.

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Jack Blake joined the Terrible Three in the quad. Blake was looking almost scared.

"You've seen that beast?" he asked, referring to the estimable Mr. Banks.

"Yes. He's gone to the Head."

"Does that mean that it's all up with D'Arcy?" said Blake, biting his lip. "Has the cad gone to give him away?"

"No, no! It's us."

"Eh? You haven't been blagging with Banks, I suppose?" Tom Merry laughed.

"No; we gave him a ducking, as a warning to keep clear of St. Jim's—same as you kids did with that rotter who swindled Skimpole!"

Blake looked relieved.

"Oh, I see! And he's got the nerve to come here and complain!"

"Looks like it. I—I suppose he knows we sha'n't mention Gussy's name, and so we haven't much excuse for handling him."

Monty Lowther rubbed his hands anticipatively.

"Query—caning or flogging?" he remarked. "Really, Blake, you might have kept your prize idiot in better order. We're lauded in something now. I never thought the cad would have the cheek to come here!"

"Well, I'm glad it's nothing worse," said Blake.

"Worse, you ass! What could be worse than a licking all round for us?" demanded Manners indignantly.

"Well, I thought it was all up with D'Arcy, when I saw that rotter coming in. Of course, you can't give Gussy away."

"Of course not, ass!"

"D'Arcy ought, really to own up, and see you clear," said Blake uneasily. "It's up to him!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Don't speak to him. He doesn't know anything about it so far. We don't want to drag him into a serious row to get out of a licking."

"We did it of our own accord, without asking Gussy's permission," grinned Lowther. "It wouldn't be fair to drag Gussy into it now. But really I do wish you'd get the prize duffer on a chain!"

Kangaroo came up, looking quite cheery.

"We're in for it!" he remarked. "Well, it was worth it, you know. And we'll take it out of Banks another time."

Mr. Railton looked out of the School House, and beckoned to the group of juniors. They approached reluctantly.

"Merry, you are wanted in Dr. Holmes' study; you, and all the juniors who were with you when you assaulted Mr. Banks."

"We didn't assault him, sir," said Tom. "We ducked him!"

"I think it comes to the same thing," said Mr. Railton. "You will be allowed to explain your conduct, if you can. Go to the Head's study at once."

"Yes, sir."

Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn were sent for, and the whole party followed the Housemaster to the Head's study. They found Mr. Banks there, looking surly. The Head was very grave.

"Are these the boys, Mr. Banks?" he asked.

The Head's manner towards the fat rascal was one of grave courtesy. His private opinion of Mr. Banks did not make any difference to that.

"They're the young raskins, sir," said Mr. Banks. "There was six of them; and I reckon they're the six. I could swear to three of 'em, anyway."

"Merry, you and your companions appear to have attacked Mr. Banks in an utterly lawless and unjustifiable manner," said Dr. Holmes. "Have you any explanation to offer? I desire to hear both sides of the matter."

"We ducked him, sir," said Tom Merry.

"You admit it?"

"It's true, sir. We thought we were justified."

"You mean that Mr. Banks gave you provocation?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's a lie!" growled Mr. Banks. "Never said a word!"

"What provocation did Mr. Banks give you, Merry?" asked the Head, apparently not hearing the bookmaker's interjection.

"We thought a rotter like that oughtn't to be allowed to hang round the school, sir."

"Merry! You ventured to take the law into your own hands in such an outrageous way—"

"It was really my idea, sir," said Kangaroo. "I thought of it, and asked these fellows to join me."

"We were all willing," said Glyn. "We thought the rotter ought to be stopped, and we think so still!"

"Stopped?" repeated the Head.

"He was up to no good, sir."

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"You must explain a little more fully than that," said the Head, regarding the juniors very curiously. "Of what do you accuse Mr. Banks?"

"He was getting a St. Jim's chap to bet and blag with him!" blurted out Tom Merry desperately.

"Blag!" repeated the Head. The reverend gentleman knew half a dozen languages, but he had no acquaintance with the verb "to blag." "What can you possibly mean, Merry?"

Tom coloured. "I—I mean to—to be a blackguard, sir," he stammered. "We call it blagging."

"Bless my soul! What a very remarkable expression!" said the Head. "I presume that that is some kind of slang?"

"Ye-es, sir." "Your statement is very serious, Merry. You imply that some boy belonging to this school has had dealings of a questionable character with Mr. Banks?"

"That's no secret, sir." "It was certainly a secret to me. Who is the boy you speak of?"

Tom Merry's lips closed hard. "I am waiting for your answer, Merry," said the Head sharply.

"I can't give you the name, sir," said Tom at last. "We chipped in to save a chap from making a fool of himself, not to get him into a row. We'd rather be flogged than give him away, if—if you'll excuse us saying so, sir."

There was a pause. Mr. Railton looked out of the window. Dr. Holmes drummed on his desk for a moment or two, then he turned to Mr. Banks.

"Mr. Banks, is it the fact that you had dealings with a boy belonging to this school?"

"No; it ain't," said Mr. Banks sullenly. "That's not true!" said Monty Lowther. "He was waiting on the towing-path for a chap to join him, when we ducked him, sir. As it happens, it wasn't the chap we were—were looking after. It was another chap. But there was no doubt about it. We saw the chap hurrying to meet him. And we know he's done it before!"

Mr. Banks' expression changed. He had not suspected that his connection with Cutts of the Fifth was known. Mr. Banks' connection with the Fifth-Form dandy was far too profitable for him to wish to risk anything coming to light. For the first time, the bookmaker understood that it was in the power of the juniors to "give away" the whole game, if they chose, so far as Cutts was concerned. The prospect was dismaying to the bookmaker.

The Head's keen eyes noted the change in his fat face. His eyes met Mr. Railton's, and the Housemaster nodded.

"I will not ask you the name of the boy you speak of, Lowther," said the Head quietly. "It has always been my object to discourage anything in the nature of informing. But I do not doubt your statement. A very strict inquiry will be made. Mr. Banks, this lets in a new light on the matter. I do not justify these boys in taking the law into their own hands. They should certainly not have done so, but—"

A tap at the door interrupted the Head.

CHAPTER 12.

Up to D'Arcy!

"HERE he is!"

While the interview was going on in the Head's study, Levison & Co. were looking for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

They found the swell of St. Jim's sauntering under the elms in the quadrangle in solitary state.

It was rather a new experience for the Honourable Arthur Augustus to be lonely; but he was certainly feeling lonely now.

There were so many fellows who had incurred his noble wrath, and whose acquaintance he had dropped in consequence, that Arthur Augustus was beginning to have a feeling as if he were the only possible pebble on the beach.

But he did not look pleased when Levison and Mellish and Croke and Racke came up.

He regarded them with a lofty stare. "Here he is!" chuckled Croke. "You're wanted Gussy!"

"Weally, Cwooke—!" "It's time for you to own up," chortled Mellish. "I remember you called me names for not owning up when Lathom ragged Lumley-Lumley for splitting his cane. Well, now you can show me a noble example!"

"Ha; ha, ha!"

"You've simply got to own up," grinned Racke. "No good sticking out here on your lonesome and pretending you don't know anything about it. We've come to tell you, Mr. Lofty Adolphus!"

"I fail to compwehend you, Wacke!" "Then I'll jolly well explain," grinned Racke. "If you don't own up, you jolly well won't be able to pretend you didn't know. Banks has come here!"

Arthur Augustus started. "Do you mean my friend Banks?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Yes, your friend Banks!" chortled Levison. "Tom Merry and his gang have been ducking him, and he's come to complain."

"They have been duckin' my friend Banks!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Imposs!" "They collared him on the towing-path, and ducked him," grinned Croke. "Why, you did the same kind of thing yourself once with Weekes, the bookie, when that idiot Skimpole got into a scrape with him."

"That was very different. Weekes was a wascal!" "Well, perhaps he was the bigger rascal of the two," said Levison. "Never mind that. Not much to choose between them, I fancy. Anyway, your dear friend Banks has been ducked, and he's come to complain, and Tom Merry and the rest are in the Head's study now, hauled up before the beaks."

"Serve them wight!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "If they have laid a fingah on poor old Banks, I will give them a feahful thwashin' all wound."

"Poor old Banks!" repeated Levison. "He's not so jolly old. Just about old enough to dodge conscription, I fancy."

"You uttah ass, he is sixty, at least!"

"What rot! But never mind his age. Are you going to own up? They chipped in on your account, and it's up to you to say so. They won't mention your name. You know that. But it's up to you."

"I weally do not undahstand you, Levison. And I wefuse to believe that Tom Merry would lay a wuff hand on a man old enough to be his grandfather, especially such a very respectable and worthy old gentleman as my friend Banks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "That means that you're not going to own up?" sneered Racke. "Well, all the fellows will know what to think of you, if you don't!"

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He turned his back on the ends of the School House, and hurried away towards the House. Talbot of the Shell had just come out, and D'Arcy hastened towards him. Talbot looked at him very quietly.

"Talbot, deah boy." Talbot was still a dear boy. Arthur Augustus had not quarrelled with him yet, doubtless owing to Talbot's tact in refraining from mentioning controversial matters. "Talbot, deah boy, has my friend Banks come heah? Levison says so; but he is such a Pwussian!"

"Mr. Banks has come here," said Talbot. "He's in the Head's study now, with Tom Merry and the rest. They ducked him!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. "I cannot doubt your word, Talbot; but it appears impos. What did they duck the poor old chap for?"

"Because he asked for it, I suppose," said Talbot drily. "And if you regard him as a poor old chap, you're quite alone in your opinion."

"Are you awah, Talbot, that that worthy old gentleman has three sons at the Fwont?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. Talbot stared.

"No, certainly not; and if it's true, his sons must be very different from him. Has he spun you that yarn, you young ass?"

"He has acquainted me with the circumstances, Talbot," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I twist you are not joinin' in this inexplicable and unreasonable pwejudice against my friend Banks!"

"Oh, my hat!" was all Talbot could say.

"If you have anythin' to say against my friend Banks, Talbot, I shall be obliged to dwop your acquaintance as I have dwopped that of the othah wottahs," exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Talbot hurriedly.

Kildare of the Sixth was coming towards them, and he had caught D'Arcy's words, and he glanced quickly at the two juniors. But D'Arcy did not see the prefect, who was behind him. And he went on in wrathful tones.

"I wefuse to shut up! Ewery detwactah of that vewy worthy old gentleman is a wottah. I am surprised at you, Talbot. My friend Banks—"

Arthur Augustus broke off as a hand dropped on his collar. "Bai Jowe! Leggo, Kildare!"

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Kildare looked at him grimly.
"So Banks is your friend, is he?" the captain of St. Jim's asked.

"Yaah, wathah!" replied Arthur Augustus undauntedly. "I see no reason for concealin' the fact, Kildare."

"You may see a reason after you've heard what the Head has to say about it," the prefect remarked drily. "Come with me! Some of your friends have got into trouble for ducking your friend Banks, and I rather think your evidence will be useful."

"If they have laid a fingah on my friend Banks, I regard them with uttah despision—I mean contempt, and I shall thwash them all wound!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"So you're in the habit of seeing Mr. Banks—what?" said Kildare.

"Not exactly, Kildare. I have seen him twice, and I have to see him again on Saturday aftahnoon—"

"You have business with him, do you mean?"

"Yaas—about a horse."

"Great Scott!"

Kildare was too astounded to say anything further. It was surprising enough that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy should be mixed up in such things; but that he should say so coolly to the head prefect of the house was almost unnerving. Kildare marched him away to the Head's study, and tapped at the door. Even then Arthur Augustus showed no signs of uneasiness. His nerve was unshaken as he entered the awful presence of the Head.

CHAPTER 13.

Light at Last!

"COME in!"
Dr. Holmes looked surprised as Kildare came in, with his hand on the Honourable Arthur Augustus' shoulder.

"Excuse my interrupting you, sir," said Kildare. "D'Arcy can throw some light on this matter, I think."

"Indeed! Then I shall be glad to hear him," said Dr. Holmes.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances of dismay.

They had kept the secret, at risk to themselves, but it was all up now. Kildare evidently knew, and the prefect's duty was to report the reckless young rascal. The game was up!

Arthur Augustus did not even glance at Mr. Banks. The juniors naturally expected some sign of guilt or alarm at the sight of the bookmaker; but D'Arcy seemed almost unaware of his presence in the study.

Dr. Holmes looked sharply at the Fourth-Former.

"Do you know anything about this matter, D'Arcy?"

"I am wathah in the dark, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I have been informed that these fellows have been duckin' my friend Banks—"

"What?"

Tom Merry suppressed a groan. Was the swell of St. Jim's out of his senses? He had talked in this strain among the juniors; but to the Head— Such reckless hardihood was simply unimaginable.

Dr. Holmes' brow was like a thundercloud. Mr. Railton looked startled, but Arthur Augustus went on cheerfully:

"My friend Banks, sir—"

"You speak of Mr. Banks as your friend, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly, sir! I regard him as a vewy respectable old gentleman, and any man who has thwee sons at the Fwont is my friend."

Mr. Banks looked astounded.

"Orf 'is onion!" he murmured.

"I think the matter grows clear," said the Head drily.

"D'Arcy is the boy here with whom Mr. Banks has had dealings, I presume? As he admits it, you need not hesitate to speak out, Merry?"

"Well, yes, sir!" almost groaned Tom. "But—but Gussy couldn't have meant any harm, sir. He's simply a silly ass, sir! I—I mean—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Everybody in the School House knows that D'Arcy is a silly idiot, sir!" said Kangaroo. "Not really quite responsible for his actions, sir."

"Kangawooh, you uttah wottah—"

"Blessed if I catch on to this!" ejaculated Mr. Banks. "I don't know nothing about that young gent—ain't never spoke to 'im, that I remembers. It was another young gent, I—I mean, it wasn't nobody—"

"Do you recognise this man as a friend, D'Arcy?" asked the Head, in a voice that resembled thunder.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Mr. Banks with a withering look.

"That man, sir? Certainly not!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 456.

"Are you out of your senses, boy?"

"I twust not!"

"You are aware that this man is Mr. Banks, I suppose, whom you have spoken of as your friend?"

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, I wemembah now that the wottah's name is Banks, sir!" he said. "I had weally forgotten all about it. I am not in the habit of takin' any notice of such disweputable persons, or takin' the twouble to wemembah their names."

The Head looked bewildered. Tom Merry & Co. wondered whether they were dreaming. But Mr. Railton struck in quietly:

"Are you acquainted with some other man of the same name, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Oh!" stuttered the comrades blankly.

"You were alluding to some other person as your friend Banks?" exclaimed the Head.

"Weally, Dr. Holmes, I am surprised at that question! Is it possible that you would suppose for one moment that I would wecognise that disweputable person as a friend? I am weally surprised!"

"Answer my question, boy!"

"Yaas, sir. My friend Banks is a vewy respectable old gentleman. He has thwee sons at the Fwont."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Oh, my heve!" murmured Mr. Banks.

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Tom Merry.

"D'Arcy, kindly explain who your friend Banks is, and your dealings with him, and how you made his acquaintance," said the Head sternly.

"I have no objection, sir. I did not mean to say anything about it, but it is no secwet. I first heard of him at the vicah's, sir, when I went to the vicawage to tea. The vicah happened to mention poor old Banks," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "He is an old soldier, sir, and he has fallen on wathah hard times. All his sons are mawwid men, so their allowances go to their wives, and the poor old boy is left swanded. The vicah is seein' about gettin' him some allowance from the War Office, but it takes time, and poor old Banks is stony—"

"What?"

"I mean he is hard-up, sir. He lives in a little cottage near Wayland, and I went ovah to see him."

"Then—then it was an old soldier chap you sent that pound to?" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wish you would not dwag out twifin' details like that! That has nothin' to do with it. You see, sir, old Banks could get a job as cawwiah, now the Wayland cawwiah has gone to the wah, and if he had a horse he could earn an honest livin'—"

"A—a horse?" stuttered Kangaroo. "That was in the letter. You went to see him about a horse—"

"Naturally, I went to see him about it, Kangawooh, as I had promised to manage it for him somehow. I have asked my father, sir, to find the money to buy a horse for poor old Banks, and Lord Eastwood has been makin' inquiries, and he is goin' to do it," said Arthur Augustus. "My friend Banks will be set on his feet, and he will be able to earn his livin' till his sons come home fwom Flandahs. I considered it my duty, sir, to look aftah the old chap, considewin' that he had thwee sons fightin' the wotten Huns—"

"I suppose your father will bear out your statements, D'Arcy?" said the Head, looking very curiously at Arthur Augustus.

"Yaas, sir; my patah would bear out my statements if necessary. But, of course, I expect you to wely on my word without cowwobowation."

The Head coughed, and Mr. Railton smiled, and Kildare grinned. Arthur Augustus was a little too much for them.

"It appears, then," said the Head, "that there has been a mistake. You boys heard of D'Arcy's connection with this vewy estimable Mr. Banks, and fancied that it was the bookmaker, with whom he was connected."

"Yes, sir," said Tom. "How could we think anything else? We'd never heard of any other Banks!"

"Gweat Scott!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Do you weally mean to say, you uttah asses, that you pwesumed that I was acquainted with this boundah?"

"How could we think anything else, when you never said a word about any other Banks, you crass idiot?"

"Ahem!" said the Head. "You may leave this argument till after you have left my study."

"Sowwy, sir; but, weally, these awful duffahs—"

"Mr. Banks"—the Head turned to the bookmaker—"these boys assailed you under a misapprehension. But it is clear to me that you have had dealings with a boy belonging

(Continued on page iii. of cover,

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 10.

OUR GREAT NEW AUSTRALIAN SERIAL!



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 money from his father, and takes it to SUMMERS, the bank manager, who 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.

Bob learns from him that his father was robbed by a man named SUTHERLAND, the leader of another gang of outlaws, and he sets out in pursuit of him. He traces the villain to an hotel, where he also sees his father. A fight ensues, and the place is burnt down. Bob narrowly escapes with his life, believing his father to be dead.

Later, old Hilder appears upon the scene again, and he and Bob and Dashwood succeed in capturing Sutherland, who had been in league with Boardman. Shortly afterwards, Bob finds GELL, another accomplice of Boardman's, who, full of remorse, signs a confession of his guilt in connection with the ruining of Bob and his father. Boardman manages to wound Bob, and steal the document.

Bob and Gell set off to meet the rest of the party at Monomoo, and BOGONG, Dashwood's black servant, who has appeared upon the scene, stays behind to watch the villain.

Bob becomes too ill, through the effects of his wound, to complete the journey, and Gell goes on alone and meets Dashwood, who at once sets off to the place where Bob is lying. On his arrival, he finds that the lad has been taken away.

(Now read on.)

Dashwood had to go very slowly, and to be out in the open in daylight was a big risk. After a while he saw a homestead in the distance, and he rode up to it. The men were at work. A woman came to the door, and he asked her if she knew anything about a sick lad. She could not give him any information, so he rode on.

Soon the path widened into a rough road, a sure indication that he was approaching a bush town, which, of course, it would have been folly for him to enter whilst daylight lasted. But if Bob had been taken to the town, he was in great danger. Before long he would be recognised from his likeness, which had been posted up outside every police-station.

Prudence urged Dashwood to clear off at once, but friendship would not allow of that. If necessary, he would stay on the outskirts of the town all day, and search there when night fell. But, meanwhile, he could make more inquiries. Around every town there are several homesteads.

So he rode on, glad to know that he was riding Bob's gallant steed, which was in splendid fettle, and could outpace

almost any other horse in the continent. If the worst came, she could carry him into safety.

At the next house he got news that gave him a clue. No one knew of a sick lad, but a doctor had passed that way in his buggy that morning.

Dashwood turned back, and took a path over a hill. At the top he could see a homestead a mile away. He put Brave Bess over the fence, and cantered through a paddock. When near the house he tethered her to a tree, and advanced on foot. Here, too, the men were out at work; he could hear the crack of whips. They had started rounding up bullocks to carry wood to the town. A pleasant-faced woman answered his knock.

Yes, Bob was there!

"And he's very bad, poor lad," she said. "My husband chanced to find him as he was riding home from Greystown, where he stopped last night. It's the luck of the world he did, for when the doctor came, he said he was desperate ill. And if any of us could find the scoundrel as shot him—"

Despite his great self-control Dashwood started. He had forgotten about the bullet-wound. That would arouse indignation and inquiry. Was he too late already?

"Oh, that's easily explained!" he cut in. "I've come to fetch him along, and I'll look after him well, I promise. He'll be best at home. So, if you don't mind, I'll take him away now."

Her kindly face became full of horror and reproach.

"Is it to take him out of the bed where he is comfortable, and the doctor saying he's not to be moved on any account?" she protested. "You'll do nothing of the sort! You'll leave him here!" A look of fear shot into her eyes. "Besides, I don't know you," she continued; "the lad is safe with us, anyhow, and how am I to tell who fired that bullet?"

There was an ominous glint in her eyes as she uttered this dark hint. She made to close the door. Dashwood was desperate on Bob's account.

"That was an accident," he urged.

"An accident!" she scoffed. "Mebbe it was! Decent folk go about the bush firing off revolvers, don't they? If you want to know any more, go and ask my husband. He's out yonder, in the small paddock, yoking up the bullocks. An accident! The lad ain't muttering and talking as if it was one! We'll know, though, when the police come."

"The police! You have sent for them?"

"They'll be here any minute. Ha! Isn't that them coming over the hill?"

Dashwood turned. Two troopers were on the crest of the hill. The situation was terrible. Bob, lying helpless in the bed, would be captured. Nothing but the most extreme measures could save him. If left thus, years, and perhaps a lifetime, of imprisonment lay before him.

"He must come with me!" Dashwood insisted. "I've the right to fetch him, and I'm going to take him! Now, don't stand in the way, but let me pass! I take all responsibility!"

But she did not budge. On the contrary, she gripped the door more firmly, and shouted loud:

"Harry! Harry!"

An answering voice came from the paddock.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"ALL THE WINNERS!"

"Hurry, hurry!" she cried. "Help, help!"

Dashwood heard a smothered shout, a clatter as a bullock-yoke was dropped, and he knew that the farmer and his men had started at a run for the house. To get Bob away was impossible.

For a moment he stood half-dazed. Then he took to his heels, the woman shouting all the louder, and the men running the faster. He raced across to the tree, unhitched Brave Bess, and vaulted on to her back.

"Now for it!" he muttered.

His resolution was taken. At all costs he would save Bob. Drawing his revolver, he rode straight for the troopers, who, hearing the shouts, had broken into a gallop.

"I don't count for much," he muttered, "and I haven't always run straight. My life don't matter. I'll save that lad or die!"

On he tore. He flashed on to the road and raised his arm.

"Hands up!" he thundered, as he tore down on the troopers, Brave Bess's hoofs scattering the stones. "Hands up, I say! I'm Dashwood, the outlaw, and I never miss my mark!"

A Stunning Blow!

Bob, lying in bed, heard Dashwood's voice. He heard his shout, and, half-delirious, he tumbled out of bed and staggered to the window.

Yes, there was Dashwood heading straight for the two troopers, and he had defied them to come on. Bob saw his revolver gleaming in the sunlight, he saw the troopers rein up and draw their carbines from their rests.

Bang!

Dashwood fired. They separated as he dashed in between them, lying low over the mare's neck. Wheeling round, they sent half a dozen bullets after him, and then started with a gallop in pursuit. Up the hill Brave Bess flashed, and, as she reached the top, Dashwood turned round, and his mocking laugh floated back to the valley. Ten seconds later the troopers were over the crest in hot pursuit.

The farmer and his assistants, hearing first the woman's cry and the shots so soon after, had run as fast as they could to the house. They were before the door, their voices raised. The woman was trying to explain what had happened. She mentioned Dashwood's name. Bob heard her mention his. He must not stay another minute.

He rushed back and dressed hurriedly. Faint, and his head throbbing madly, he groped his way to the back, and went unsteadily across the yard. Out into the first paddock he crawled and along a by-path, and so to a clump. There he lay down and tried hard to think.

Everything he looked at seemed to be swaying about. His thoughts kept flashing on all subjects, beyond his power to hold them in check. Yet through all this he had a certainty that Dashwood had come there to save him from danger, and had then sought it himself to lure the police away.

And then, with the fresh air fanning his temples, the lad began to think more clearly. He remembered that, with Gell, he had been on the way to meet his father, and that he had collapsed from the wound in his shoulder. That wound! Ah, he remembered that Boardman had fired on him!

Yes, and he had sent Bogong to track down Boardman. And when he was lying, unconscious, after Gell had gone on alone, someone must have found him and carried him to this house. And then Dashwood had come, and so the good folk would know that he and the outlaw were friends. They would call in the police. Perhaps they had already summoned them, and that explained how the two troopers had been near the house. He staggered again to his feet. The farmer might be searching for him already. At all risks he must get farther away.

With limbs trembling and eyesight blurred, he went on and on, just managing to keep on his feet until again he felt he could go no further. He sank down on a tree-stump, and rested his head in his hands. There he sat, hearing the tinkling of the bells as the cows, after milking, were being turned out to pasture, and he came to the conclusion that those employed in the sheds had gone back to finish their work.

He heard the crack of whips, and guessed that the farmer and some others had started on the road with waggon-teams. Then he was not being hunted down. Perhaps they did not yet know that he had left his room.

He was getting stronger, the fresh air was helping him a lot, and after some minutes he moved on once more. He got to the top of the hill over which Dashwood had raced, and there, some yards from the road, he lay down in the scrub. He could see the long, white ribbon of road over which Dashwood had raced. He and the troopers had vanished long

since. And he looked back, past the house and down the valley, and after a while he saw a tiny, black speck in the distance.

In a few minutes it changed into a man on horseback, cantering at a steady pace. He passed the house, and came up the hill, and, as he drew near, Bob sat up and rubbed his eyes, for he could not yet see quite clearly. Then, with a gasp, he sank back his length, wishing that the scrub was even higher; hoping, with his heart beating fast, that he would not be detected.

For the man was Boardman. The wind was driving his black beard against his chest, his square face was pallid, his dark eyes showed both weariness and fear, and he was urging on a jaded steed. He came within twenty yards of the lad, and, fortunately, he kept his gaze fixed on the road ahead, as if the end of his journey was to bring him either safety or despair.

He had passed. Bob very cautiously looked after him. Down the hill he went, and away and away till he looked like a black speck on the road again. With a deep sigh of relief, the lad ventured to sit up.

And then he heard horse-hoofs, and, startled once more, he looked towards the house. Another horseman was passing it, riding at a steady canter, too. And now the lad's heart began to thump with excitement, and the nearer the rider came, the more his eagerness increased. At last he had made sure. He stood up and waved his arm.

"Bogong!" he cried, and he was surprised at the weakness of his voice.

But the black tracker heard. He turned the horse off the road, and came across the scrub towards him.

"Golly! But its Mister Hilder!" he replied, his white teeth glistening, and his eyes flashing with joy in his dark face.

"Bogong, that cur Boardman has gone on!"

"Me know," Bogong replied, jumping to the ground. "Me have a tale to tell. Me track him down and follow him, ever since you told me."

"And, Bogong, your master has been here, and has been chased by the police, and I'm certain he's taken the risk to shake them off me."

The black tracker began to tremble with an extraordinary agitation he had never shown before.

"Has massa's doom come?" he murmured.

"What do you know, that makes you say that?" Bob asked, feeling a sudden chill.

"We black fellows know when danger is nigh, though we can't tell why," Bogong replied, still shaking. "We know, us the wild things know. Was massa riding hard?"

"He was on Brave Bess."

Bogong drew a deep breath.

"Then his hour may not be yet," he said. "That is good news. But that evil one, with the black beard, may cause his destruction. We must go, and you must come, too, if massa is to be saved."

"I haven't got a horse! And how can I save him?"

"You take mine! Me run beside," Bogong replied. "It is fate that you save massa; you and massa linked up."

The suggestion was a wise one. Thus only could he get away; so he mounted and jogged along, Bogong, with one hand on the stirrup, keeping pace with the horse easily. And as they progressed they talked.

"What tale have you to tell about Boardman?" asked the lad.

"Me go to his house last night," Bogong explained. "Other man there, one of Sutherland's gang. That bad man tell that Sutherland with your father. Then Boardman knew all. He hurry away to catch your father."

Bob needed no further explanation. Boardman had realised the dire peril in which he stood. Sutherland was willing to give evidence against him, and Gell only lied for the chance. With these two as witnesses, his guilt could be conclusively proved. All for which he had schemed would fall away, his many crimes would be proved. Instead of owning old Tom Hilder's farm, it would be taken from him and restored to its rightful owner; he would be flung into gaol, both on the charge of attempting to destroy Bob, and of robbing.

And that accounted for the fixed look of fear in his eyes as he had ridden past the lad, less than an hour before. So the villain was playing his last card. He was hurrying to have old Tom caught. And when he heard, as assuredly he would, that the troopers were chasing Dashwood, he would strive desperately hard to have him arrested, too.

Running light as a deer by the horse, Bogong kept up a string of remarks, but Bob did not answer them. Weak though he was yet, much, if not all, depended upon him. To maintain the strength he had, and push on to the spot where his father had arranged to meet him, was the first essential.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

CORNSTALK BOB!

(Continued from page 20.)

If only he could get there before Boardman, all would come right. If he failed! His mouth grew rigid, as he fought to keep back his weakness. He vowed he would not give in.

Through the great heat of the day he sat the horse, though drooping in the saddle, and they came towards a shanty pitched on the side of the road. Around it hundreds of tents were pitched, and he could hear the clatter of machinery, and a sharp report occasionally. Here, for the nonce, a town of tents had sprung up, and thousands of men were working on the extension of a railway.

The shanty, the only wooden structure, was the hotel, and a horse was hooked by the bridle to a post outside. The poor animal's head was bent low, and its ribs were heaving. Bob recognised it.

"Boardman's horse!" he gasped. "The scoundrel is in there, Bogong!"

"Ride to the left," the black tracker whispered.

Bob turned into the scrub behind the shanty. In and out amongst the tents he trotted, and took the road again half a mile higher up. Bogong laughed.

"We are first!" he cried. "We only three miles to go!"

"Can you come along faster?" Bob asked.

The black tracker nodded.

Bob shook up the reins, and the willing steed, though tired, broke into a quicker canter. On they sped, and, looking back, saw that the villain was still in the hotel.

"Monomoo quite close now! Old man there!" Bogong remarked.

They rode on. They saw the town. They began to look out for old Tom, for they knew well he would have pitched his camp somewhere outside it. Presently Bogong gave a cry of joy. He pointed to a man who, fifty yards from the road, was waving his sombrero.

"It's Gell!" Bob cried. "He came on here to tell father when I couldn't travel any more. Bogong, we have beaten Boardman! We're safe at last!"

With eyes shining with happiness, he cantered over the scrub.

"Glad to see you, Gell!" he cried. "You've acted like a brick! Where's father? I've most urgent news!"

But Gell did not return the cheery greeting. He did not come forward to meet Bob. He kept looking to right and left.

"Thank goodness you've got through safe, anyhow!" he said, as Bob reined up.

"Why? What's the matter?" the lad asked, a sudden tremor seizing him.

Gell half turned away.

"I couldn't get here in time," he said. "The police have caught the old man. They lodged him in gaol four hours ago!"

(Another grand instalment next week.)

D'ARCY IN DISGRACE!

(Continued from page 18.)

to this school, though not the boy they supposed. That being the case, I refuse to inflict any punishment for their action. If you are not satisfied, you can take legal measures. I have no more to say to you."

Mr. Banks opened his fat lips for a torrent of abuse. But Mr. Railton's grip closed on his arm like a vice, and he was led out of the study—silent. Mr. Railton's grip did not relax till the bookmaker was outside the school gates. There the fat rascal was left to tramp away cursing, and to take legal measures if he liked. A very improbable proceeding on the part of Mr. Banks, who was on the very worst of terms with the law.

Tom Merry & Co. left the Head's study with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. In the passage they collared him, and yanked him away to Study No. 6. The true story of D'Arcy's dealings with "Mr. Banks" was soon known; it spread over the School House like wildfire. The juniors howled over it. Nobody but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have been the victim of such a ridiculous misunderstanding.

"Ye howlin' idiot!" roared Reilly, thumping D'Arcy on the back. "What did ye take us all in for, pretendin' to be a backguard intirely?"

"You silly ass!" shouted Julian.

"You burbling jabberwock!" howled Kerruish.

"Didn't I say so all along!" exclaimed Hammond.

"Didn't I tell you D'Arcy was all right?"

"The thumping idiot!" shouted Kangaroo. "He ought to be scragged for takin' us in!"

"Gwooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus in the midst of the crowd. "Welcase me, Tom Mewwy! Gewwaway, Lowthah! I wefuse to wecognise you! I do not know you! I have droppod your acquaintance! Gwooh! I wefuse to entah that studey! I do not know anybody there! Gwooh! Yawwooooh!"

Arthur Augustus did enter No. 6—in a heap. He sat on the hearthrug and roared. Blake and Herries and Digby jumped up from their preparation in amazement.

"What the merry thunder—" exclaimed Blake.

"It's all serene," said Tom Merry. "The silly ass was only pulling our leg all the time, pretending to be blagging!"

"What!"

"You uttah ass, I was not pretendin' anythin' of the sort!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"He doesn't know Banks!" shorted Kangaroo. "Doesn't know him from Adam! Forgotten that there was such a person, by Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he said he knew him!" howled Blake. "He said he was his friend—he was sending him a pound—going to see him about a horse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was another Banks!"

"The idiot has dug up another chap named Banks,"

explained Tom Merry, gasping. "He couldn't say a word about it. Gussy is the kind of chap who does good by stealth, you know. There's an old soldier named Banks who has three sons at the Front. That's Gussy's Banks!"

"And a jolly good Banks, too!" grinned Lowther. "As good as the Bank of England!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Why didn't you tell us so, Gussy, you silly idiot!" roared Herries.

"Gwooooh!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "How could I know you were labahin' undah such a wiciduous misapprehension, you uttah asses? I had uttaly forgotten the existence of that waseally bookmaker Banks. I did not know he had come back to Wylcombe at all. I am not in the habit of thinkin' about such wottahs in the slightest degwee. There are lots of people named Banks, you uttah asses! And I certainly should not have expected a friend of mine to suppose that I knew that wottah Banks—"

"But you said you knew Banks!" yelled Dig.

"That was the othah Banks, you ass!"

"We didn't know there was any other Banks, you crass idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called a cwass idiot! I wefuse to speak to you fellows at all! I undahstand the cause now of your remarkably idiotic conduct, but I cannot ovahlook the fact that you have supposed that I was acquainted with Banks. I therefore wefuse to wenev your acquaintance unless you apologise all wound!"

"We'll bump you instead," said Blake.

And they did!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did renew the acquaintance of his old chums, and he took up his old quarters in Study No. 6. He persisted that they were to blame for the absurd misunderstanding, and they persisted that he was to blame. But one point they agreed upon—that Levison of the Fourth was to blame for having purloined the letter in the first place, and started the story that it was from the wrong Banks. So Levison was bumped till he roared, full justice being done in his case. More than justice had been done in Mr. Banks' case. But Tom Merry & Co. agreed that he deserved the ducking, on general principles.

And on Saturday afternoon Arthur Augustus kept his appointment with his friend Banks, and Tom Merry & Co. went with him, and made the acquaintance of the old soldier—now in possession of the horse provided by Lord Eastwood, and cart provided by the vicar, and in business as a village carrier. And the chums of St. Jim's were so chummy with Gussy's friend Banks that Arthur Augustus felt that he could fully forgive them for the strange misunderstanding which had brought him, for a time, into deep disgrace.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—**ALL THE WINNERS!** by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



A BRIGHT YOUTH.

The commercial-traveller was in a desperate hurry. He had only two or three minutes to spare in which to catch his train. In the hall of the hotel in which he had stayed, he suddenly remembered that he had left a parcel in his room.

"Here, boy!" he shouted to a page. "Run to Room 43, and see whether I have left a parcel on one of the chairs."

In a few minutes the page came rushing back.

"Yes, sir," he said. "It's on the chair nearest the door!"

—Sent in by E. Hughes, Liverpool.

DUTY DONE!

The car was crowded to the doors;
They hung on by the straps;
And children, sandwiched in the throng,
Sat on the women's laps.

Still the wild conductor took them on,
Till, crushed down in the brunt,
E'en as he died his last words were:
"Please move up there in front!"

—Sent in by W. E. Humberstone, Dalston, N.E.

UNCOMPLIMENTARY!

Varmer Giles: "Where be you going with the lantern, Gargo?"

Gargo: "I be courtin', measter."

Varmer Giles: "Bah! Ye don't need a lantern. I didn't when I was courtin'."

Gargo: "I know'd that, measter, when I seed the missis!"

—Sent in by Private A. G. Scurrah, Rochdale.

ANOTHER WAY OUT!

"I want to sue Dr. Blank for heavy damage!" said the angry citizen, entering the lawyer's office.

"What has he done?" asked the attorney.

"When he operated on me, he left a pair of surgical scissors in me," was the reply. "How much can I sue him for?"

"Oh, don't sue him at all!" counselled the lawyer. "Just send him a bill for storage!"

—Sent in by T. Stephens, Australia.

SOME BILL.

Augustus and Angelina were climbing the highest peak of the Alps, and she stood above him some twenty feet.

"What," he gasped—"what do you see?"

"Far, far below," she cried, "I see a long white streak, stretching like a paper ribbon back almost to our hotel."

"Ha!" he ejaculated. "It's that hotel bill overtaking us!"—Sent in by J. H. Culpeck, Folkestone.

THE GREENGROCER'S WOOLING.

Dear Barbara,—I love you much. Oh, say you will be mine! A very happy PAIR we'll make; my heart for you doth PINE. Oh, LETTUCE make a match, my dear; most MELANCHoly I! If you TURN UP your nose at me; you'll RUE BARB if I die. Some say my hair is CARROT red; 'tis really RUSSET brown. But what's outside my NUT, my dear, need never earn your frown. For sorrow I'll care not a FIG, if you'll BE TRUE-To me. So fix the DATE, my little PEACH, and let us happy be. The CURRENTS of our married life shall always smoothly flow, if you will wear the ORANGE flowers, and to the altar go. You are so rosy, fat, and PLUMP—the APPLE of my eye! I'm longing to caress you, dear; be sure you soon reply. Don't scorn my offer at this THYME, and say it is a funny 'un; but grant the prayer of one whose heart still LEAKS with love.—BILL ON'YON.—Sent in by Miss D. Small, Birmingham.

FIRE!

A troop of Irish rookies were drilling one day, when the order "Fire!" was given along the line. One of the men was seen to leave the ranks.

"Come back!" thundered the colonel, his visage growing dark. "Where are you going?"

"To see the fire!" replied the innocent Pat.—Sent in by A. R. Ankers, U.S.A.

KNOWN TO THE POLICE!

The old lady was putting in an application for an old-age pension, and in the course of the examination was asked if she had ever had anything to do with the police.

"Well," replied the old lady, "I don't know that it is any concern of yours, but I had once, and I am not ashamed of it neither. He was a sergeant."—Sent in by C. Abell, Western Australia.

THE LESSER EVIL.

The little boy was evidently a firm believer in the old adage: "Of two evils, choose the least."

Turning the corner at full speed, he collided with the minister.

"Where are you running to, my little man?" asked the minister, when he had regained his breath.

"Home!" panted the boy. "Ma's going to spank me!"

"What!" gasped the astonished cleric. "Are you eager to have your mother spank you that you run home so fast?"

"No," shouted the boy over his shoulder, as he resumed his homeward flight; "but if I don't get there before pa, he'll do it!"—Sent in by W. Jennings, Bradford.

VERY RUDE!

Grandpa: "I like your wavy hair, my little man."

Willie: "Well, there's no waves on your head, grandpa. It's all beach!"—Sent in by H. Ellerton, Manchester.

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