

D'ARCY MINOR'S BOLT!

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



IN THE BANTAM-WEIGHT CLASS!

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D'ARCY MINOR'S BOLT!

A Magnificent
New, Long, Complete Story of
Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's.

By
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CHAPTER 1.

A Shock for Gussy!

GUSSY!"

Thus Jack Blake of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, as he dashed pell-mell into Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was seated at the table, surrounded by numerous papers—fashion papers, showing the latest styles in silk-hats, fancy waistcoats, and other articles of clothing so dear to the heart of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gussy!" repeated Blake, in more insistent tones.

Arthur Augustus did not answer. He was deeply engrossed in what lay before him, and he seemed utterly ignorant of Jack Blake's presence.

"Owing to the war," he read aloud, "the makahs much wewget that they are compelled to increase their charges for silk hats. They twust—"

"Gussy!" roared Blake.

"That their wewget prices will—"

"Gussy, you fathead!"

"Meet with the approval—"

Jack Blake was raving at D'Arcy's ignoring of his presence in the study. In sheer desperation, he stalked over to the swell of the Fourth, bent down until his mouth was on a level with Gussy's ear and only about two inches away, and bawled, in stentorian tones:

"Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus leaped into the air, and fairly gasped. He gave Blake a withering glance.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Can't you answer a chap when he talks to you?" demanded Blake.

D'Arcy fixed his monocle firmly into his eye, and surveyed his chum critically.

"Weally, Blake, I'm surprised at you—bawlin' in a fellah's ear in that uncouth mannah!"

"Chump!"

"Why didn't you speak to me in a quiet and gentlemanly mannah? I've a vewy good mind to give you a fearful thwack!"

"Fathead!" exclaimed Jack Blake, thoroughly exasperated. "I called you about half a dozen times, and you took absolutely no notice. Think I'm going to talk to you nicely for half an hour while you devour the latest rubbish about neckties!"

Arthur Augustus gave his chum a killing look.

"Weally, Blake, I'm sowwy, but—"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Blake. "This is no time for rot! Have you heard the news?"

"Yaas, deah boy. It's wotten, isn't it?"

"Rotten! I should say it is. What are you going to do about it?"

"Gwin and bear it, I suppose."

"Gwin and bear it!" exclaimed Blake incredulously.

"Yaas, deah boy! Therek is vewy little else one can do. A fellah must have a new toppah every two months if he wishes to wemain in the fashion."

"Eh?"

"Ordnawise, his whole appeawagee will be disgowned. You may wemember that you and Digby used two that I bought last week for footballs. And then Hewwies' beastly bulldog destroyed one yestaday."

"What's that got to do with it?" thundered Blake.

"Ewewythin', deah boy. I've got to purchase a new toppah for Sundays, and the makahs say that they have been compwelled to advance their prices still another twenty-five per cent. owin' to the war. Of course, I know that they ought to expect to pay more for some things dawing the war, but I weally think they might leave toppahs alone, don't you?"

Jack Blake eyed his chum up and down.

"Do you know what you're talking about?" he asked.

"Yaas; the wise in the pwice of silk toppahs."

Blake dropped into the nearest chair, and glared—simply glared at Arthur Augustus.

"Silk toppahs!" he exclaimed. "What's that got to do with the news?"

"Weally, Blake, that is the news!"

"What!"

"Isn't that what you were wewewin' to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwreat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake roared with laughter until he was red in the face. There was evidently something in D'Arcy's remarks that touched his humorous spot, but exactly what it was Arthur Augustus was incapable of fathoming.

"Weally, Blake," he said, in astonishment, "I fail to compwehend the reason for this wibald laughin'!"

"You would fail, fathead!" cried Blake, composing himself.

"Eney talkin' about silk toppahs when there is something far more important which should be claimin' your august attention!"

"But you asked me whether I had heard the news!" protested D'Arcy.

"I know I did, but I didn't think you would be such a silly chump as to consider the rise in prices of silk toppahs as news!"

The news I was talking about is really more important; jolly serious, in fact. I wonder you haven't heard it before."

"What's it about, deah boy?"

"Well," explained Blake, "it concerns your minah."

"My minah—Wally?"

"Yes."

"What's he been doing? I know he's been vewy lax lately in putting on clean collars. I had to call him to account yestaday. I twust the fags have not been takin' him in hand."

"No," said Blake; "it's nothing to do with clean collars, or any article of clothing, for that matter. It's a jolly sight more serious than that."

"Is it weally? I hope he hasn't been getting on the wong side of Selby again. I warned him last week that if he con-

tinued to play foolish japes on his mastah I should give him a severe wewpwindin'."

Blake gasped.

"I said the matter was a serious one!" he said emphatically. "Don't you understand the meaning of the word serious?"

"Yaas, deah boy; I undahstand perfectly. What makes you think I don't?"

"Well, if you call it a serious matter for a fag not to put on a clean collar, or to have ink-stains on his face, you certainly can't understand."

"Weally, I should say they were most sewious mattahs!"

"Fathead!"

"Wally—"

"Chump!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, do shut up, Gussy!" growled Blake. "You're like the blessed brook, you go on for ever! Can't you talk sensibly for once? Here's your minah—"

"Well," said D'Arcy, "what about my minah?"

"It's jolly serious," said Blake.

"So you've said befoah, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I say it again. It is serious."

Arthur Augustus gave his chum a disdainful look.

"Can't you get any further than that, Blake? I'm weally gettin' most concerned about Wally, an' yet all you'll tell me is that it is a sewious mattah. What is the sewious mattah? Surely Wally isn't in danger of being expelled?"

"That's nearer the mark," said Blake. "But, mind you, Gussy, I don't believe a word of what they're sayin'."

"What who are saying?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"The Third Form."

"The Third Form?" queried the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yes, Piggott and Dudley and Watson and the rest of the fags. They're sayin' that Wally's a thief, and—"

"The wotahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly, staring at Blake as he spoke.

"The beastly boundahs! My minah a thief! What utah nonsense! You don't believe it, do you, deah boy?"

"Of course not," said Blake at once. "I know Wally's a mischievous—going bounder, and that he's got a lot of things—other fags wouldn't have the nerve to do, but I'm jolly sure he would not stoop to do anything like that."

"When did you hear all about it, deah boy?"

"Just now," explained Blake, "as I was passing the Third Form Common-room, I heard a frightful row going on inside. I looked in, and saw a crowd of fags surrounding Wally. Mellish and Crooke were there. Gore was standing outside. I asked him what the row was about, and he told me."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus sat back in his chair, and gazed vacantly before him. Wally had caused him a great deal of concern in the past, but although he had worried

about Wally's cringing ways, there had been very little necessity for him to do so.

If Wally had appeared before his major with a dirty collar on, or an ink-stained face, the swell of St. Jim's would have immediately become concerned.

But Wally's bluff! "This was a shock indeed! It couldn't be true! Wally would never stoop to any underhand action. There must be some mistake.

Arthur Augustus pondered deeply over the situation. If anyone but a special chum had told the yarn, he would certainly have doubted its truth.

Blake knew that the story was correct, and as he stood by Arthur Augustus's chair there was a grave look on his face. He, of course, believed implicitly in Wally's innocence, yet he could not forget how emphatic were the fags in their accusations.

Arthur Augustus rose from his chair. "I think I'll go along and see Wally," he said. "I feel that I ought to get to the bottom of this beastly business."

Jack Blake laid a restraining hand on his chum's shoulder.

"I shouldn't go now, Gussy, if I were you," he said. "Wait until the bother is over, and get Wally on his own."

The swell of St. Jim's thought for a moment.

"Perhaps that would be better," he remarked at length. "I'll—"

But D'Arcy was not to question Wally on his own, for at that moment there was a sound of rushing feet in the passage outside, and the next instant Wally D'Arcy dashed breathlessly into the study, eagerly pursued by a crowd of at least a dozen excited fags.

Wally dodged round the table to elude his pursuers. The fags, at sight of the two Fourth-Formers, stopped dead in the doorway.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, surveying the excited crowd.

CHAPTER 2.

Gully or Not Gully?

WALLY D'ARCY stood behind the table in Study No. 6, and stared defiantly at the crowd of fags in the doorway. The latter seemed to be debating in their minds the question whether they should rush the Fourth-Formers off their feet and collar D'Arcy minor, or whether they should turn away and leave Wally alone.

The fags required a leader, and that leader was soon forthcoming.

Piggott elbowed his way to the front of the crowd of fags.

"You kids ready?" he asked, gazing around.

There was a murmur of assent from the fags, and next moment Piggott's voice rang out:

"Charge!"

Piggott leaped forward, and three or four other fags charged at his heels.

Wally D'Arcy backed away from the table.

"Back-up, Gus!" he yelled to his major. "Don't stand there, looking like a mummy! Back a chap up, can't you? Leggo my neck, Piggott, you rotter!"

Piggott had got Wally's head in chancery, and was pummeling away for all he was worth. Piggott was not of the heroic breed, but he had a following now.

"Weally," gasped Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle more firmly into his eye, "I fail—"

"Don't jaw, ass!" exclaimed Blake.

"I believe you'd look on whilst Huns overrun the country!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, and give the little bounders socks!"

Jack Blake rushed at the excited Piggott, and, taking a firm hold of his collar,



Wally in trouble.

(See Chapter 3.)

compelled him to release his hold on D'Arcy minor.

"Kim up, Piggott, my son!" exclaimed Blake. "You want a lump of ice on your head to cool you down a bit!"

"Rescue, Third!" shouted Piggott, struggling unavailingly in Blake's grasp.

The fags hesitated.

"Don't be funky at these Fourth Form rotters!" cried Piggott. "There are only two of 'em!"

"Weally, Piggott," said Arthur Augustus, "I— Yawwoh! Welease me this instant! Ow!"

Watson and Kept of the Third had flung themselves on the swell of St. Jim's, and were endeavouring to bear him to the floor.

"Ow! Yow! Wescue!"

"Hallo! What's all this shindy about?" asked Tom Merry, looking in at the doorway with Talbot. "Somebody killing pigs? Oh, it's you, Gussy, is it?"

"Yaas, deah boy! Wescue!"

"Yes, pile in, you fellows!" said Jack Blake, who was now being assailed by three fags.

"Right-ho!" shouted Tom Merry, and he dashed into the fray.

Talbot followed suit, and in less than five minutes half a dozen of the recalcitrant juniors were held captive.

The rest of the fags hovered about the doorway in a state of hesitation.

"Now, what's all the row about?" demanded Blake.

"He's pinched my watch!" exclaimed Piggott, pointing an accusing finger at Wally D'Arcy.

"And he's boned my penknife!" put in Watson.

"And my fountain-pen!" said Kent.

"And my watch-chain!" added Harvey.

"Don't talk piffle!" snapped Blake indignantly. "What do you think Wally's pinched your things for? You must have mislaid them."

"Rot!" roared Piggott. "We know he's pinched 'em. We've got proof!"

"Eh?"

"We caught him in the act!" said Piggott, with conviction. "He's been fairly bowled out, the rotter!"

"Weally, Piggott," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway talk of my minah in a different mannah. Wally's not a wotah!"

"No; he's worse than that!" sneered Piggott. "He's a thief! A chap can be a rotter without being a thief!"

"Great Scott! Do you know what you're saying, Piggott?"

"Course I do!" snapped Piggott.

"And I'll say it again, if you like! Your blessed minor's a thief, and the sooner he's expelled from St. Jim's the better!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the fag dumfounded.

"Pewpaws you wouldn't mind explaining mattahs," he said. "At present you've made accusations without supplying any proof."

"Well, it's like this," explained Piggott. "I missed my watch, and—"

"And I missed my penknife," broke in Watson.

"Shut up, Watson," said Piggott.

"Who's doing the explaining, you or I?"

"You are, I suppose, but—"

"Well, be quiet, then!" snapped Piggott.

"Now, as I was saying, I missed my watch, Watson missed his penknife, and half a dozen other chaps missed something or other. We had no idea where the things had gone to until—"

"Don't go and repeat that rotten lie, Piggott!" yelled Wally D'Arcy, shaking his hat at Piggott. "If you do, I'll—"

"Pway be quiet, Wally," said Arthur Augustus. "You can have your say in a moment. Pway go on, Piggott."

"We couldn't make out where the things had gone to," continued Piggott, "until that thief over there—"

"Moderate your language, Piggott, please!"

"Well, until that rotter pulled out his handkerchief and dropped a tiepin he had pinched from Levison minor," said Piggett. "You can't want any more proof than that. If a chap would pinch a tiepin from his best pal, he'd pinch anything!"

"Bai Jove!"
"It's a lie—a rotten, beastly lie!" cried D'Arcy minor. "I've not stolen a single thing. I wouldn't dream of doing it! And as to pinching Levison's tiepin, why I'd be hung before I'd do such a thing!"

"Well, how do you account for the pin being in your pocket?" said Piggett.
"I—I—" stammered Wally.

"There you are!" said Piggett. "He's practically confessed his guilt. He's trying to think of some lie to get out of it, but he can't."

"Wally, I'm amazed!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I seem to be all in a flitch. Pewpaws you fags wouldn't mind leaving the room so that I can question my minah."

"Do you what you like!" said Piggett. "We don't care. We're going to have the rotter kicked out of St. Jim's, and nothing you can say or do will alter that. Come on, you kids, let's get away from this thieves' den! I expect they are all as bad as one another."

Piggett's parting shot was as a red flag to a bull to the older fellows. They took firm hold on the fags, and hurried them out into the passage, where they fell in a struggling heap.

Talbot shut the door.
"For a moment there was complete silence in Study No. 5. Tom Merry and Blake did not like to interfere, and Arthur Augustus hardly knew what to say. It was left to Wally to break the ice.

"Go on, Gus!" he said. "Say you believe what those rotters said! I should have thought you would have—"

"Wally, Wally, I hardly know what to think."

"It's a trumped-up charge," said Wally. "What do you think I want with their rotten watches and knifives?"
"Whew were the stolen articles found?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"They're not been found," said Wally. "Just because Levison's minor's tiepin was found in my pocket, those silly fags think that I stole their things."

"So do I," said Tom Merry.
"Wally broke off abruptly as the door of the study opened, and Levison minor looked in.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's the matter with you all? Is anything wrong?"

"Come in, kid," said Jack Blake. "Perhaps you can throw some light on the matter?"

"What matter?"
"Haven't you heard what Piggett and some of the other fags have been saying about Wally?" said Blake.

"I've heard some silly rot about Wally having pinched their things," said Levison minor, with a laugh. "It's jolly funny what news some of those kids get into their noddles at times. Why, I lost my gold tiepin a week ago, and—"

"It's been found," said Blake.
"Been found?"
"Yes."

"Where?"
"Jack Blake did not answer. Levison gazed at the Fourth-Formers in turn. He could not understand the meaning of the serious looks on their faces.

"It's been found in my pocket, Frank," said Wally D'Arcy carelessly. "I'm jolly glad of that," said Levison minor. "I really thought I had lost the thing for good."
"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur

Augustus. "Then you don't think Wally stole it, Levison?"

"Stole it?" cried Levison minor. "What do you think Wally wants to steal my things for?"

"I really don't know," said Arthur Augustus.
"You must have borrowed it, Wally," said Levison minor, "and forgot to return it to me."

"I didn't borrow it," said Wally. "I had no idea it was in my pocket, until I pulled it out with my handkerchief."

"Well, it doesn't matter much," said Levison minor cheerfully. "The thing's found, and that's the end of it."

"It isn't, Franky, old scout," said Wally. "Just because your tiepin was found in my pocket, Piggett and those rotters think I stole all their things. You know there have been a lot of things missing the last week or two."

"Yes, I know," said Levison minor earnestly, "but you don't catch me believing such a yarn, and no decent chap would think of doing so!"

"Bwavo, Fwanky, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm glad you think so highly of my minah. I was incited at first to think him guilty, but I'm sure now that he wouldn't have anything to do with stealin'. What's your opinion, Blake?"

"I—I—I— Oh, the same as yours!" said Blake rather hesitatingly.

"Surely you aren't in doubt, deah boy?"

"No, Gussy," said Blake. "B-b-but it's very strange now, isn't it?"

"Yass, deah boy, of course it's strange," said Arthur Augustus. "But I should have thought you would have had a higher opinion of Wally, than to doubt—"

"Yes, Gus, you're quite right," said Blake, flushing slightly. "I was a fool to doubt your minor. So low down," he wouldn't do anything so low down."

"So do I," said Tom Merry.
"And I," said Talbot.

"I'm vey glad to hear you say so, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"Come down to the nets, Wally," said Levison minor. "You're looking as though you'd lost a quid and found a farthing. You want bucking up a bit. What's it matter what those asses say? You know you haven't stolen their things, so what's the good of worrying?"

"But—"
"Come on!" said Levison minor; and taking Wally by the arm, he dragged him out of the study.

Levison minor, staunch as ever, firmly believed in D'Arcy minor's innocence, and so did Blake, and Tom Merry and Talbot, but Wally was yet to find that there were many who thought him guilty, and were ready and eager to denounce him as a thief.

CHAPTER 3.

A Ragging for Wally!

WHEN Wally and Levison minor arrived at the nets, they found Hobbs and Jameson and Dudley and Gibson, and about half a dozen other fags already there. They treated Wally in rather a cool manner, quite different from their ordinary one, but they did not show such bitter antagonism as had Piggett and his cronies.

No one, however, excepting Manners minor and Joe Frayne, who remembered the way Wally had stood up for him in times of trial, exhibited any special desire to talk to the suspected captain of the Third.

This did not trouble Wally very much, and he went on with the cricket practice without worrying about the cold looks

which were occasionally bestowed upon him.

The fact that he had three staunch chums in Levison minor, Manners minor, and Joe Frayne, and that his major believed him innocent of the charge that had been made against him, comforted D'Arcy minor.

Wally returned from the playing fields with his loyal supporters, and after tea, entered the Third Form Common-room. Piggett and his chums were already there, and were holding a discussion.

Evidently D'Arcy minor was the subject of the discussion, for no sooner did the captain of the Third make his appearance than it was brought to an abrupt conclusion, and Piggett's little gathering broke up.

Wally settled down to a game of draughts with Joe Frayne. Soon all thoughts of Piggett and his followers were forgotten, and Wally was unconscious of the by no means friendly glances that were bestowed upon him from time to time.

"He oughtn't to be allowed to use those doughs," said Watson, in a whisper to Piggett. "He'll probably try and pinch them as well."

"Shouldn't be surprised," said Piggett. "But—"

"What's that?" exclaimed Levison minor, who had caught two or three words of the conversation.

"Jolly good game, isn't it?" said Watson, with a forced laugh.

"That wasn't what you said!"
"Well, as you know, what did you say for?"

"Look here, young Watson—"
"Bed time, you kids," said Darrel, putting his head round the door, and putting a stop to the argument.

"All right, Darrel, old son," said Manners minor. "We're just coming up!"

"Buck up, then," said Darrel. "No hanging about, mind!"

"Finished, Wally!" asked Levison minor.

"No," said Wally, "not— Yes, that's done you, Joe, old son! You can't move 'round without losing the lot. That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Joe Frayne. "You've done me. Jolly good game, though."

Piggett & Co. trooped off to the dormitory, and Wally followed arm-in-arm with his chums.

The fags were soon in bed, and Darrel saw lights out.

Wally settled down in his bed, not to sleep, but to think. Now he was alone, his thoughts went back to the scene of the afternoon, when the foul charge of being a thief had been levelled against him.

But Wally was soon interrupted in his thoughts. The voice of Kent beckoned.

"I say, you chums, I've got a note delivered from your parents. The other day has gone!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Piggett, jumping up in bed.

"I hid it underneath my pillow this afternoon," said Kent, "whilst I went down to cricket, for fear that blessed thief should pinch it."

"Piggett jumped out of bed, and lighted a candle.

"Look here," he said, "I'm not going to put up with this much longer! I'm game for ragging the blessed rotter! What do you chums say?"

"Hear, hear," exclaimed some half-a-dozen fags, jumping out of bed.
"Oh, I say," said Harvey, "this is a bit of a tick! My watch has gone now!"
"Really?"
"Yes," said Harvey. "I left it in

my other coat this morning, but it's not there now."

"Have him out!" exclaimed Piggett, making a rush for Wally's bed, and pulling the clothes off. "Collar the rascal!"

Half-a-dozen fags threw themselves upon Wally, and dragged him out of bed. Levison minor sprang out, too, and signed to Joe Frayne and Manners minor.

"Back up, Joe!" he said, a light of determination in his eyes. "Rescue young Wally from these cads!"

"What-ho!" said Joe Frayne. "I'm on!"

"So am I!" said Manners minor. Wally's loyal helpers dashed out into the fray, and dealt out blows right and left. They were greatly outnumbered, but they did their best to give as good as they received.

Wally was held down by four excited fags, and was unable to lift a hand in his own defence. Levison minor and Joe Frayne and Manners minor were hard pressed, and could not get near their chum. Gradually they were being forced towards the far end of the dormitory.

"Why don't you chuck it, Levison?" said Watson, as he and two other fags said Wally's chum firmly against the wall. "You know the chap's a thief, and yet you—"

"He's not a thief!" snapped Levison minor. "When I get free I'll give you the biggest hiding you've ever had!"

"But you're not going to get free, Levison, old son!" said Watson triumphantly. "We've got you fairly fixed. Just bring a sheet over here, young Gates, and we'll soon have the silly chump trussed up!"

The sheet was soon forthcoming, and in less than a minute Levison minor's hands were tied securely to his sides, and he could not move.

Joe Frayne and Manners minor, who had also been overpowered, were treated in a similar manner, and then the fags gave their attention to Wally minor. A piece of rope was found to bind Wally.

Piggett evidently thought that he would make sure there was no possibility of Wally's being able to wriggle free.

Piggett tied the rope so tightly that it fairly bit into D'Arcy minor's flesh. But Wally did not flinch. Let the cads do what they would, he had no intention of giving in!

"All secure?" said Piggett, surveying the three captured fags. "Very well, we will now get to business! A little soap, Watson, please, and some soap, and a small quantity of water. That'll do nicely, thank!"

Piggett's followers grinned hugely as their leader commenced to stir the soot and soap into a mixture.

"Now," said Piggett gloatingly, "if our young thief don't agree to listen to reason, there is only one thing to be done, and that is to make him!"

"Hear, hear!" echoed the fags. "I don't mind a chap rubbing—or er, I don't mean that—said Piggett correcting himself angrily. "What I mean is, if a chap gets a bit hard up, you can excuse him for boning, say, one small article. But when it comes to a chap jolly well robbing the whole Form, it's a bit too thick!"

"It is—it is!" said Levison minor, who said "I don't mind my loss so much," continued Piggett, warning to his task. "What I think of most is the honour of the Form! When the captain of a Form starts boning things, it's jolly well time he had the giddy sack!"

"Quite right!" said Levison minor. "Now, and Piggett. "I don't want to be hard on anybody. I'm always

willing to give a dog a chance. Of course, the right thing to do would be to report the matter to the Head, but I think the chap should be allowed to avoid the ignominy of—"

"The what?" queried several of the fags together. "The ignominy—the disgrace, fathead!—of being expelled before the whole school," said Piggett, "and thus letting the blessed Form down!"

"Quite so!" "Well, then, D'Arcy minor," continued Piggett, "what are you going to do? Are you going to do a bunk on your own, or will you jolly well be sacked?"

"Rot!" snapped Wally. "Very well!" said Piggett. "We shall have to make you listen to reason! The mixture, Watson, please!"

Watson handed the mixture of soot and soap to his leader. "I'll give you one more chance," said Piggett. "Will you do a quiet bunk away from the school, or won't you?"

"What have I got to go for?" exclaimed Wally. "Because you're a rotten thief!" said Piggett viciously, "and because we don't want chaps like you in the Form!"

"I'm not a thief!" declared Wally hoily. "How many more times have I got to tell you that I haven't touched your blessed things?"

"It's no giddy good acting the innocent!" said Piggett. "We've had proof that you're a thief, and that settles it. Now are you going, or—"

"No, I'm not!" said Wally, in a flash. "Sure?" asked Piggett. "Oh, rats to you!"

Piggett raised the bowl of horrible mixture over Wally's head, and tilted it downwards. "Are you going?"

"No, I'm— Ow! Grooooh! Gurrgrh!" Wally spluttered vociferously as Piggett shook a quantity of the stuff into his mouth.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the fags. "Now will you listen to reason?" demanded Piggett. "No, I won't," roared Wally defiantly. "Perhaps a little more of the persuading mixture will work the trick!" said Piggett. "You shall have an extra lot this time, you obstinate little thief!"

"You wait, Piggett, until— Grooooh! Yow! Gurrgrh!" granted Wally, as the stuff streamed all over his face.

"I'll teach you to defy me!" said Piggett, rubbing the mixture into Wally's mouth and eyes. "You're going to love Jim's to-morrow, or—"

"I'm not!" declared Wally. "You can tear me to little pieces before I'll make such a promise!"

"You—"

"Cave!" muttered Watson. "There's somebody coming!"

The fags listened to the sound of footsteps in the passage outside the dormitory, and next moment they were all, with the exception of Wally D'Arcy, Levison minor, and Joe Frayne, scuttling for their beds at express speed.

In another instant the door opened, and Darrel, the prefect looked in. He struck a match, and the door opened, and Darrel, and gasped with amazement at sight of the four helpless fags on the floor.

"A little bit of ragging—eh?" he said. "Who's responsible for this?"

The only reply that Darrel received was sundry snores from several beds in the dormitory.

Wally, on the other hand, was trying to impress upon Darrel that they were innocent, but Darrel was not to be taken in so easily.

He strode towards the helpless four, and released them.

"Get to bed at once, you kids!" he said. "The rest of the dormitory will take two hundred lines each for disorderly behaviour. And, mind, they're to be shown up before five o'clock to-morrow afternoon!"

Darrel left the dormitory with that. Apart from sundry mutterings from the punished fags, there was peace in the room that night.

Wally D'Arcy muddled his head beneath the sheets, and mind full of conflicting thoughts. What would the morrow bring forth? He was innocent of the terrible charge levelled against him, but would he be able to prove his innocence? It was doubtful, but Wally was determined to fight on to the last, even though it might be one against the whole crowd!

CHAPTER 4.

Hard for Wally!

WHEN Wally D'Arcy awoke the following morning, the rest of the fags were up and dressing. Piggett and some of his followers talked together at the end of the room.

Piggett broke away from the others, and picked up a coat belonging to D'Arcy minor.

"I wonder," he said, digging his hands into the pockets of the coat, "whether— Great Scott! Look here, Piggett held up a gold watchchain, which he had extracted from Wally's pocket.

"Whose is this?" he asked. "It's mine," said Jameson. "You'd better collar it, then," said Piggett, "before our young thief gets a chance to pop it! Jolly lucky thing I thought to find in his pocket! Anybody else lost anything?"

The fags made a thorough search of their belongings to see if anything was missing.

Quite half-a-dozen or so other fags had lost something during the night. A thorough search for the missing articles was made from end to end of the dormitory, but they were nowhere to be found.

Wally D'Arcy stared at the excited fags in amazement. He was too dumbfounded to commence dressing himself. He almost began to wonder whether he had had a lapse of memory, and whether he had really committed the thefts that he was accused of.

How had the watchchain got into his pocket? Had he walked in his sleep, and put it there himself, or— The suddenly a clue to the mystery dawned upon the captain of the Third.

Had one of the other fags committed the theft, and to avert discovery, put the blame on him? It seemed quite possible, and yet how was he to prove it? Practically every fag in the dormitory had lost something or other; only he had escaped loss.

Wally's meditations were brought to an abrupt conclusion by Piggett.

"Look here," said Piggett spitefully, "are you going to leave the school this very morning, or are you going to stay here, a beastly disgrace to the whole Form?"

"I'm going to stay here," said Wally resolutely. "I bet you're not!" declared Piggett. "I bet you're not here another day! I'm going straight to the Head, and I'm going to tell him everything."

"Don't be a beastly cad, Piggett!" urged Levison. "You shut up, Levison!" said Piggett. "You're not on in this act!"

"Boosh!" "All right, then!" said Piggett.

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"You just try interfering, and we'll treat you the same way as we treated the young thief last night!"

Levison minor did not interfere. He knew that his chances of getting the better of Piggott and his followers were very remote, and he wanted to think.

He had on something of what false evidence meant, and he realised that there was more in this mystery than met the ordinary eye: Wally was perfectly innocent, of that he was absolutely sure.

That there was a thief amongst the faces Levison was confident, and he was equally confident that the thief was not D'Arcy minor. Who was it then? Levison minor did not know, but he was determined to find out.

He went downstairs to breakfast with Wally and Joe Frayne and Manners minor. Very little was said among the four until after breakfast, when they strolled out into the quad.

"Cheer up, Wally, old son!" said Levison minor, patting D'Arcy minor on the back. "Don't look so jolly blue! Everything will come out right in the end."

"Will it?" queried Wally.
"Of course it will," said Levison minor. "The thief is bound to be run to earth before long."

"You still think I'm innocent, then?"
"Don't be such a silly fthead!" said Levison. "Course I do!"

"So do I," said Manners.
"Well," said Wally, "it was awfully rummy that that watchchain should have been found in my coat-pocket."

"Someone put it there," said Levison.
"How do you know?"
"Well, I don't exactly know," said Levison minor, "but I do know you didn't do it. So someone else must have. See?"

Wally hung his head.
"I wish I could arrange that I shouldn't have lost any thing," said Wally. "Everybody has lost something except me."

Levison minor laughed.
"You're a bit dense this morning," said Levison minor. "That's just part of the real thief's game. If you had lost something, it might have been a bit more difficult for him to shift the blame on to you."

"By Jove!"
"It's as plain as a pikestaff," said Levison, "and I'm going to make it my duty to run the real thief to earth. You wait and see. Hallo, Toby, my son, what do you want?"

Toby, the School House page, strode up to the three lads.
"Which as the 'Ead wants to see Master D'Arcy in his study in-jaciate," he announced.

Wally's face dropped.
"Crumbs!" he exclaimed. "The chopper's going to fall at last. I suppose I'd better go at once and get it over."

"Stick it out, Wally, old chap!" said Levison minor encouragingly. "Let the 'Ead say what he likes. Don't argue with him. I'll soon have you cleared!"

"Thanks, Franky!" D'Arcy minor said sincerely. "You're a real good sort!"

"Oh, rot!" said Levison minor. "If one chum can't stand up for another, he's no chum at all!"

"O'ear, o'ear," said Joe Frayne enthusiastically. "And I'm going to give him a hand, too, Wally."

"Same here," said Manners minor.
"Thanks," said D'Arcy minor.
"You're sports!"

And he walked slowly towards the Head's house.

On the way he passed several of the lads, who, at sight of him, drew away. He was shunned by practically the whole Form. He was branded as a thief, and

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not one of his accusers would come near him.

It made Wally's blood boil, and when Glyn and Dane and one or two other Fourth Formers passed by without greeting him, his cup of misery was filled to overflowing.

The rumour that he was a thief was evidently being spread throughout the school by Piggott and his followers. And in another hour or so the whole of St. Jim's would know of the accusation, and probably believe it, too.

It was hard to bear. Wally could stand the jeers and gibes of the lads, but when Fourth Formers, friends of his major, passed him by with disdainful looks, it was too much for him.

Supposing Figgins & Co., the chums of the New House, were to believe him guilty, and supposing his major and Tom Merry and Talbot were to lose faith in him, what could he do then? Life at St. Jim's would be unbearable, he simply could not stay there to be barred by the whole school!

Possibly the Head, too, would believe that he had really committed the thefts, possibly— Good heavens! Was he to be expelled? Was his career at St. Jim's to be brought to such an untimely end?

His hand was shaking with unrestrained nervousness. Wally tapped at the door of Dr. Holmes' study.

"Come in!" sang out the Head.

Wally entered the study, to find Arthur Augustus, his major, and Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, already there. On the Head's face there was a deep frown, and Wally felt a shudder of fear at the thought of what he was to go through during the next five minutes or so.

CHAPTER 5.

The Head's Decision.

THE Head rested his elbows on his desk, and, extending his fingers of both hands, fixed his sterner gaze upon Wally.

"D'Arcy minor," he said slowly, "an accusation has been made against you by many of your Form fellows, an accusation, the like of which has never been made against a boy in the Third Form during the whole of my experience at St. Jim's. You have been accused of theft, and from what I can gather from questioning several boys in your Form, your guilt has been positively proved. That is so, Mr. Selby, is it not?"

"Quite correct, Dr. Holmes," said the Third Form master, in hard tones. Mr. Selby had never liked D'Arcy minor, and the Third Form master heard that the Kaiser had received his just deserts, he could not have been better satisfied than he was when he learned that Wally was in disgrace.

"Now then, D'Arcy minor," continued the Head, in an austere manner. "I have sent for you because I want you to give an explanation of your conduct. What have you to say in defence?"

Wally did not answer. He hung his head miserably.

"Come, D'Arcy minor!" said the Head impatiently. "Silence will not tend to improve your case. For what reason did you make these paltry thefts?"

"What reason?" he asked now, and looked straight at Dr. Holmes.

"I did not steal anything, sir!" he said, in a ringing voice. "The last thing I would do would be to rob my school-fellows. It's a lie—a rotten lie!"

"Hush!" ordered the Head. "You must speak in such a way in my presence by raised yourself, and remember where you are. If you deny having committed the thefts of which you are accused, how do you explain the presence of a topin belonging to Levison minor

and a watchchain belonging to Japson in your pocket?"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, who had heard nothing about the watchchain.

"Silence, D'Arcy major!" roared Mr. Selby. "Don't interrupt!"

"But, weally, Mr. Selby, I—"

"Be quiet!"

Arthur Augustus subsided, and, jamming his monocle into his eye, fixed his attention on his minor.

Wally's head had dropped once again, and he was silent.

"Come, come!" said the Head irritably. "Why don't you answer me, D'Arcy minor? I repeat, how did two of the stolen articles come to be found in your pocket?"

"No reply."

"D'Arcy minor!" thundered the Head, in commanding tones. "I order you to give me an explanation this instant!"

"I cannot!" murmured Wally.

"You admit your guilt, then?"

"No, sir!" replied Wally at once. "I don't! I'm innocent! I swear I am!"

"Then it is for you to prove your innocence," said the Head.

Wally did not answer. How could he? He knew he was innocent, yet what proof had he?

"Very well, then," continued the Head, in measured tones, "as you cannot submit proof of your innocence, I am forced to conclude that you are guilty. I am sorry, extremely sorry, for I had great hopes that you would grow up to be a credit to your school. But now

"Weally, Doctah Holmes," interrupted Arthur Augustus, "I—"

"Silence, D'Arcy major!"

"I wefuse."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Head.

"What do you mean, D'Arcy major?"

"I wefuse to stand heath," cried Arthur Augustus, indignantly, "and listen to your defaming my minor in such a manner! Wally is innocent! He would not do—"

"D'Arcy major!" thundered the Head.

"Wally would not commit such a low-down act as to steal!" continued the Head, "and St. Jim's heathy. It is all a mistake, and I am greatly surprised that you should think him guilty!"

"Leave the room this instant, D'Arcy major!" roared the Head.

"I wefuse until—"

"Do as I tell you at once!" thundered the Head. "I will not be disobeyed thus!"

"Weally, I—"

"Go!" roared the Head, pointing to the door.

"I—I—I—"

"I command you, D'Arcy!"

"But—"

"Come on, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Selby, taking the wof of St. Jim's wof from the shoulder, and pushing him to the door.

Arthur Augustus struggled manfully, but it was all in vain. In less than half a minute he was in the passage, and the door of the Head's study was shut in his face.

Dr. Holmes turned to D'Arcy minor once again.

"I wish I could believe in your innocence," he said, more kindly; "but I simply cannot. The proofs of your guilt are of such an overwhelming nature that were I to allow you to remain at St. Jim's I should be guilty, myself, of a great injustice to the whole school."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Wally.

"Naturally, you are now very sorry for what you have done," continued the Head; "but it is too late. You should have thought of the seriousness of your actions earlier. If you were in need of

money, why didn't you apply to your Form-master, or come to me? I should have been only too willing to assist you in any way possible, and I am sure Mr. Selby would have done the same."

"Most certainly!" said Mr. Selby. "As it is, your base thefts have brought disgrace upon you, and upon your family name, went on the Head. You have probably lost your whole school career. Probably your father will send you to another school. In any case, I trust your present punishment will be a lesson to you, and that in the future you will strive your very utmost to lead a manly and straightforward life. Remember, the path of honesty leads to success, whilst the path of dishonesty leads to misery and shame."

Wally smarted under the Head's sternness, though he knew he did not deserve it.

"I shall communicate with your father immediately," Dr. Holmes continued, "and request him to come down to St. Jim's this afternoon, for the purpose of talking you away. In the meantime, you will wait in the punishment-room, and will not be allowed to see any of your schoolfellows. Mr. Selby, do you mind seeing the boy to the punishment-room?"

"With pleasure!" said Mr. Selby, and there was no doubt that it was with great pleasure that he led Dr. Arcey minor out of the Head's study and to the punishment-room.

There was a sneering smile upon the Third Form master's face, and Wally noticed it. He would dearly have liked to punch Mr. Selby on the nose for being so self-satisfied, but he managed to control his feelings.

Once inside the punishment-room Wally flung himself down upon a chair, and as soon as Mr. Selby had closed and locked the door he burst into tears.

He tried his very utmost to control his feelings, but it was impossible. The strain and suspense of the last few hours had proved far too much for him, and he broke down.

He was to be expelled—to be taken away from the school he loved! All his plans for the future had been nipped in the bud, and all because he could not prove his innocence of a crime which he had not committed, and which he would never have thought of committing! Who could blame him for crying as he did? Who could blame him for breaking down under such a tremendous strain? Wally could bravely face dangers from which many an older fellow would shrink, but he felt that he could not face his father!

But what was he to do?

CHAPTER 6.

Piggott's Plans.

GENTLEMEN, I—

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Piggott!"

Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and a great meeting of the Third-Formers was taking place in the quadrangle, presided over by Piggott, who was mounted on a box.

Piggott had chosen a spot for the meeting just under the window of the punishment-room. He meant Wally go have

something by which to remember his last day at St. Jim's!

"Gentlemen," repeated Piggott, "we are assembled here this morning for a special purpose."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"As you know," went on Piggott, "our late captain is to be expelled. He's got the order of the boot, and a jolly good job, too. We have now to elect a new captain!"

"That's the game!"

"No good letting the grass grow under our feet!"

"No fear!"

"We've got to have a new captain at once," exclaimed Piggott, greatly encouraged at the support he was getting.

"Hurrah!"

"We want a straightforward, honest fellow," said Piggott, "one who will always put his Form first, and one who is not capable of stooping to such low-down tricks as our late captain! Now I—"

"Shut up, Piggott!" shouted Levison minor.

"Who's talking to you, Levison?" snapped Piggott. "You're not on in this act. You're an outsider, and we don't—"

"You beastly cad!" cried Levison.

"Order there!" called several of Piggott's supporters.

"Shut up, can't you?"

"Get on with the washing, Piggott!" shouted Harvey. "Don't take any notice of Levison."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, as I was saying," continued Piggott warmly, "we want a new captain, a real decent fellow. Now I reckon I could fill the job admirably."

"I don't think!" exclaimed Joe Frayne. "You can't play cricket, and—"

"Can't I?" ejaculated Piggott. "How do you know?"

"Why, I bowled you middle stump three times running yesterday," said Joe Frayne, with a grin.

"Got you there, Piggott!" said Watson.

"Rot!" sneered Piggott. "I let him bowl me to encourage him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Piggott!"

"Stick to him, Frayne!"

The majority of the fags were quite keen on electing a new captain, but they were not so keen on electing Piggott to the post. So a number of them sided with Joe Frayne.

"Gentlemen, shouted Piggott, "once again I appeal to you to rally round me! Elect me captain, and—"

"Hurrah!"

"Rot!"

"Bravo!"

"Once I am captain," went on Piggott, at the top of his voice, "I will see that things are run on proper lines. We will make the Third Form a giddy credit to St. Jim's. We'll jolly well rout out all thieves, and—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Jolly good idea!"

Manners minor strode over to Frank Levison, a look of deep concern on his face.

"I can't stand this," he said. "The chap's a blessed hangbug! Can't we muck up the meeting?"

"I wish we—"

Levison minor, broke off abruptly as he caught sight of half a dozen fellows coming towards them.

"Hi! Tom Merry, Lowther, Talbot, Blake!" he shouted.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry, coming up with his chums.

"Give us a hand to smash up this meeting!" said Levison minor. "That beastly little cad up there is slandering young Wally for all he's worth!"

"Back up, you chaps!" yelled Tom Merry.

And he immediately dashed into the crowd of Third-Formers, followed quickly by Blake, Talbot, Lowther, and others.

At sight of the Fourth-Formers, the majority of the fags fled.

Piggott was not so fortunate, however. He was hemmed in, and there was no avenue of escape left to him.

Levison minor and Joe Frayne collared him, and dragged him down from his improvised platform.

"Come on, Pigg, my boy!" said Levison. "We're going to cool you down a bit. You're just a bit too hot in the upper story."

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Piggott. "Let me go!"

"No fear," said Levison minor. "not until you have had a ducking to cool your head!"

"You're not going to duck me!" said Piggott alarmed.

"Yes, we are," said Levison minor. "Lead the way to the fountain, Manners. You Fourth-Formers had better come and act as a bodyguard!"

"All right," said Tom Merry and Talbot, laughing.

Struggling furiously, Piggott was dragged slowly towards the old fountain.

"Now!" said Levison, as soon as the fountain was reached. "Catch hold of his legs! Mind, he's kicking!"

Joe Frayne and Manners minor took a firm grip on Piggott's legs, and raised them up from the ground.

"Swing him!" said Levison minor.

The helpless Piggott was swung slowly backwards and forwards.

"Ready?" said Levison. "Now, one, two, three, go!"

Splash!

Piggott landed right in the centre of the fountain.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the fags.

"Ow! Yow! Grough!" yelled Piggott.

"Feel cooler?"

"You beasts! Yow! Gurrigh!"

"I'm sure he'll be much calmer in future," said Levison. "Ha, ha, ha! Don't he look a sight?"

"You rotters!" moaned Piggott, struggling out of the water. "Just you wait!"

"I'm not sure that you ought not to be expelled for pinching some of the fountain-water," said Levison minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Piggott glared at the hilarious Levison. "I'll make you pay for this, you chortling rotter!" he howled. "I'll get you ragged by the whole Form! I'll—"

"Come on, you fellows," said Levison, linking his arms in those of his chums. "That cad makes me feel sick. Let's come and have a ginger-bee at the tuck-shop."

"Right ho!"

"Thanks for your help, you fellows," said Levison minor to the Fourth-Formers.

"Don't munch," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

And Levison minor went off with Manners minor and Joe Frayne, leaving Piggott now feeling very uncomfortable and miserable, to go and change.

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CHAPTER 7.
Wally Cuts!

WALLY D'ARCY witnessed the meeting in the quadrangle from beginning to end, and saw Piggott carried to the fountain and ducked in the water, and he was full of gratitude to his chums for their loyal support.

But what was the good if it now? He was to leave St. Jim's for ever that afternoon, and nothing Levison minor and Joe Frayne could do would be of any real assistance to him.

It was now one o'clock, and his father might arrive at any minute. Lord Eastwood was the best of fathers, but Wally knew, only too well, that he would be very stern when he heard that the family name had been disgraced.

Life at home would be a misery to him. In time he would probably be sent to another school, among strangers, perhaps with a stigma on his name to live down, and—

Wally could not bear the thought of what was to happen to him in the near future.

But need it happen? A sudden thought had come to the fug. Need he wait to be taken away from St. Jim's in disgrace by his father? No, he need not—and he would not! He would get away from St. Jim's somehow, and lie low for a time in the hope that the mystery would be cleared up, and the real thief bowled out.

He could earn his own living, he felt sure. Owing to the shortage of labour boys were greatly in disgrace in works and offices, and he should have little difficulty in securing a situation.

To think was to act with Wally. There was no escape from the door; Mr. Selby had locked that securely on the outside. But there was the window.

Levison minor had once got down by the ivy. Why should he not? There was risk, of course, but Wally had no fear. He waited until afternoon lessons had been in progress for about a quarter of an hour, and then set about to make his escape.

There was a chance of his being spotted as he ran across the quad, but that couldn't be helped.

He opened the window of the punishment-room, and jumping on to the sill, let himself down until his body was hanging suspended by his hands from the sill.

Then he grasped the thick stems of the ancient ivy, and worked his way down.

There was danger enough and spare, but he thought little about it. He landed safely on the ground, and across the quadrangle.

His heart beating wildly with the fear of pursuit, Wally raced through the gates, and down the road leading to Relecombe.

About a quarter of a mile from the school he stopped. It would be unwise to try to thread his way through the fields to Relecombe. Somebody might recognise him, and make a report to the Head.

That would never do. He must cut across country, and get as far away from the school in the least possible time.

Wally made tracks across a field on the right of the road.

Across other fields he went, and very soon he had lost all notion of his whereabouts. But he did not give in. Hours after hour he ran, and then about six o'clock he sat down on the edge of a big cornfield.

The perspiration was streaming down his face, and he wiped it with a handkerchief. Suddenly he looked up, and saw

a shabbily-dressed youngster of about his own age eyeing him up and down.

"Hallo, young shaver!" he said.

"What do you want?"

"Jolly 'ot you're lookin'," said the boy. "Just be runnin'!"

"'Been a bit," replied Wally.

"Goin' to the fair?" asked the boy, with a smile.

"What fair?"

"I thought that was vot you've been runnin' for," said the boy. "Bonner's fair, over at Wingfield, I mean. My father runs the boxing-booth, and one or two other shows. It's jolly good! You oughter go."

"Perhaps I shall," said Wally indifferently. "But, I say, kid, they're oldish clothes you've got on."

The boy flushed.

"All right," he said; "don't rub it in! We can't all afford to ave similar clothes to the likes o' you!"

"Scorry, old chap," said Wally, realising that he had hurt the other's feelings; "but I didn't mean it like that. I say—"

"What?"

"Would you care for some clothes like mine?" inquired Wally.

"Not 'arf!" replied the boy.

"What do you say to changing with me?" said Wally. "You have mine, and I've yours!"

"Garn! You're kidding me!" said the boy, in surprise. "I'm dead sure you don't mean it."

"I do," said Wally. "Honest Injun! Look here, you seem to be a kid with some common-sense. I'll tell you why we must make the change. The long and short of it is that I want to get a job somewhere. I've given up school for a time. D'you understand?"

"Yes," replied the boy, although he was somewhat mystified.

"Well," went on Wally, "it wouldn't do for me to apply for a job in this clobber, would it?"

"No, it don't know," said the boy. "O' course, it all depends upon where you go. Now, if you was to go to old Sammy Smith, the butcher, and ask him for a job as butcher's boy, he'd more than likely kick you out o' his shop."

"That's just what I was pointing out," said Wally, with a flourish of the hand.

"But suppose I went to Sammy Smith, and asked you what d'you think would be best?"

"Sammy Smith don't want a boy," said the youngster.

Wally scratched his head at this setback.

"Well, suppose he did?" he said.

"You 'ot think I should stand a better chance if I wore clothes like yours?"

"Father!" replied the boy.

Wally smiled.

"What do you say to making the change, then?" he asked.

"I don't mind if yer really wants to," said the boy. "But somehow it don't seem a fair bargain."

"O' rat!" exclaimed Wally. "I don't care whether it's a fair bargain or not. I want to get a suit like yours, and if you make the change, I shall reckon you're the best sport going."

"Supposin' I give you a couple o' bob as well?" suggested the boy good-naturedly.

"Rats," said Wally. "I shouldn't think of taking it. All I want is to change clothes. Now, are you game?"

"Yes, I'm game," said the boy. "But where can we change?"

Wally gazed around him. That was a difficulty which had not occurred to him. They couldn't change in the road, but

"I've got it!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Let's come behind this hedge. There's

nobody about, and should somebody happen to come along the road, there's not much chance of their seeing us."

"Quite right," said the boy.

"Well, buck up, then!" said Wally.

The two boys darted behind the hedge and commenced to make the change.

Wally felt very strange in the boy's ragged trousers, but he didn't care. He knew that he would have difficulty in obtaining a job if he retained his Eton suit, and realised that the change was to his own advantage.

One after another the boy handed articles of clothing to Wally, and the latter donned them. He jammed the corduroy cap on his head, and then turned round to see how his companion was getting on.

"What's the matter?" asked Wally, with a smile. "Can't you manage it?"

"It's a bit of a job," replied the boy. "I'm not used to these tight-fitting togs."

"Let me give you a hand," said Wally, and he proceeded to help the youngster to get into his Eton clothes.

In less than five minutes the change was complete, and Wally looked his companion up and down.

"Well, I'm bowed!" he exclaimed, slapping the boy on the shoulders, "You look first-rate in them!"

"My father'll think I pinched 'em," said the boy.

Wally laughed.

"If he does," he said, "you refer him to me. I'll explain things all serene."

"How can you?" asked the boy.

"You won't see him."

"Yes, I shall," said Wally. "I'm coming along to the fair with you. By the way, kid, what's your name?"

"Bob Britton."

"Good! Mine's Wally. Now, let's get on to the fair. I suppose I can get something to eat there, Bob?"

"Yes, Wally. My dad runs a refreshment-bar."

"That's ripping, old scout!" said Wally, slipping his arm through Bob's.

"What are his jam-tarts like?"

"Jolly fine!"

"That's all right, then," said Wally. "Half a dozen or so jam-tarts, and I shall be all right. Beat foot forward!"

The two boys crawled through the hedge on to the road, and then tramped in the direction of the fair.

CHAPTER 8.

Missing!

"MY son a thief!" exclaimed Lord Eastwood, as he sat down in a chair in the Head's study.

"It is unbelievable! I cannot credit it!"

"I cannot understand," Lord Eastwood said Dr. Holmes. "I assure you I was as amazed as you are. I had come to look upon my son as one of my brightest and most promising juniors."

Needless to say, the events of the last few hours have been a great shock to me."

"Naturally," said Lord Eastwood, raising his eyebrows. "But—but is it not possible that a mistake has been made?"

Dr. Holmes shook his head. "I am sure I can think so," he said.

"But his guilt is, to my mind, indisputable. You see, he was the only boy in the Third Form who did not lose any thing, and as two of the missing articles were found in his pockets, we were forced to one conclusion."

"That he was guilty?"

"Yes."

"Well," remarked Lord Eastwood, "I suppose it was the only conclusion you could come to under the circumstances."

"That he was guilty."

"Yes."

"Well," remarked Lord Eastwood, "I suppose it was the only conclusion you could come to under the circumstances."

Nevertheless, I am astounded. To think

that our family name should be disgraced in such a manner!"

"I am indeed very unfortunate," sympathized the Head.
"Most unfortunate!" repeated Lord Eastwood. "I would have given anything to have prevented, this happening! Why, if he was in need of money, didn't he write to me? I would willingly have sent him any amount really necessary."
"Quite so," said Dr. Holmes. "He could even have come to me if he was in any difficulty, and I should have been delighted to assist him in any way within my power."

Lord Eastwood rose to his feet, and commenced to pace the room.
"And now you say he must leave St. Jim's!" said Lord Eastwood.
"I am afraid so," Lord Eastwood, replied the Head. "I would like to allow him to remain here, but I have to think of the other boys. Already there have been several demonstrations against your son, and were he to stay at the school, I am afraid there would be frequent disturbances."

"Yes, one could not blame the boys," said Lord Eastwood. "I can hardly believe, even now, that my son is a common thief; but as his guilt has been proved beyond any reasonable doubt, I should certainly not think of permitting him to remain here, possibly to lead others in the path of dishonesty. Perhaps, Dr. Holmes, you will send somebody to fetch Walter!"
"Certainly," replied Dr. Holmes, pressing a button on his desk.

A moment later, Toby, the page, entered.

"Ask Kildare if he will kindly step this way, Toby, please," said the Head.
"Ah, here he is," came in Kildare!
Kildare stepped into the Head's study, and Toby withdrew.

"Ah, did you want to see me about anything important, Kildare?" asked the Head.

"Quite a small matter, sir," replied Kildare. "It can wait, however, until later on."

"Very well, Kildare," said Dr. Holmes. "Come to me after tea. By the way, I was just going to send for you when you passed my door. Will you, please, go to the punishment-room, and bring D'Arcy minor to me? Here is the key of the room."

"Very well, sir," said Kildare, taking the key, and departing from the study.
It was less than five minutes the captain of St. Jim's returned, a look of blank amazement on his face.

"D'Arcy minor is not in the punishment-room, sir!" announced the captain of St. Jim's.

"Not there?"
"No."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "Then, where is he? Was the door locked, Kildare?"

"Yes, sir."
"This is very strange," said Dr. Holmes. "I wonder where he can have gone! Did you make any inquiries, Kildare?"

"No, sir, I did not," replied the captain. "But I will do so at once, if you wish."

"Do, please!"
Kildare left the room. He met several

Third Form fags in the quadrangle, and questioned them. They had not seen D'Arcy minor, they said, and added that they did not want to see him.

Several Fourth Formers were clustered round Taggles' lodge. Kildare strode up to them.

"Have any of you fellows seen D'Arcy minor?" he asked.

"Saw him yesterday," replied Gore, with a grin. "Why, have you missed your watch, Kildare?"

"Don't be humorous, Gore!" said the captain of St. Jim's. "Have you seen D'Arcy minor, Mellish, and, what's more, I don't want to! I believe in keeping as far away from thieves as possible. You—"

"Shut up!" said Kildare indignantly.

"I did not ask you for your opinions!" Kildare marbled off, and questioned many of the other fellows.

But he met with no success. D'Arcy minor had not been seen in public since early morning.

The majority of his Form-fellows suspected that Wally had run away from school, and they expressed considerable delight at the fact.

Kildare returned to the Head's study. Kildare had always liked Wally D'Arcy, and it had been a great shock to him to learn that Wally had been proved a thief.

The captain of St. Jim's tapped on the door of the Head's study, and entered.

"I have made exhaustive inquiries, sir," he said, "but nobody has seen D'Arcy minor since early this morning."

"Thank you, Kildare!" said the Head.

"You may go."

Kildare departed.

With a very worried expression on his face, Dr. Holmes turned to Lord Eastwood.

"This is very strange, Lord Eastwood!" he said. "I cannot understand how your son escaped from the room. The door was securely locked, and—"

"What about the window?" broke in Lord Eastwood.

"I had not thought of that," said Dr. Holmes. "And yet I do not think he could have escaped by that means. You see, there is a very considerable drop from the window of the punishment-room to the ground, and any boy who attempted it would be bound to meet with serious injury."

"Perhaps you will take me to the room, doctor?" asked the earl.

"Certainly," said the Head.

Dr. Holmes led the way from his study and on to the punishment-room. The Head entered first, and walked over to the window.

"You see, Lord Eastwood," he said, "a fall from this window would mean that I'll give you a fat, and—"

"Allow me to open the window," said the earl.

The Head stepped aside. Lord Eastwood flung the window wide open, and looked out.

"As I thought," he said. "The ivy is thick, doctor. My son made his escape by it."

"I do, most decidedly!" said Lord Eastwood. "Such an escape would appeal to his adventurous spirit."

"But what could have prompted him to run away?"

"I do not know," said Lord Eastwood, "unless it was that he feared to face me. It is quite possible that he has gone straight home. The thought of being confronted with me here may have proved too much for him."

"That is quite likely," said the Head. "And I trust your theory is a correct one."

Lord Eastwood turned towards the door.

"I will take my departure now, doctor," he said quietly. "It would be as well for me to get home as soon as possible."

"You won't wait for tea, then?"
"No, thank you!"

"Will you wire me as soon as you arrive home, and let me know whether your son is safe?" asked the Head.

"I will most certainly do so," said Lord Eastwood. "Good-bye, Dr. Holmes!"

"Good-bye, Lord Eastwood!"

The two shook hands, and the earl made for his car, which was waiting in the drive outside the Head's house: As the car swung round towards the gates, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered with Blake and Herries and Digby.

Arthur Augustus strode forward.

"Weally, patah," he said, "sunshy you weren't departing without seeing me?"

"I am very sorry, Arthur," said the earl, "but I had quite forgotten."

"Have you seen Wally?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"No; I have not."

"Weally—"

"Wally has run away from school!"

said Lord Eastwood.

"Win away?"

"Yes."

"Great Scott!"

"You have, of course, heard about his recent behaviour?" asked the earl.

The swell of St. Jim's looked surprised.

"Are you wewefewing to the thefts that he is supposed to have committed?" Arthur Augustus asked.

"Yes."

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle firmly into his eye, and stared hard at his father.

"I pwesume, patah," he said, "that you do not consider Wally guilty?"

"What else am I to think?" asked the earl.

"Weally, I am surprised!"
"Surprised at what?" asked Lord Eastwood.

"I am surprised that you, of all people, should think Wally capable of committing such low acts!" said Arthur Augustus, in icy tones.

"But—"
"Wally is twue blue, patah," said D'Arcy. "He is as straight as a die, and would not dream of descending to theft. He is far too honourable, and—"

"I am glad you hold such a high opinion of your brother, Arthur," said Lord Eastwood; "but if he is innocent, as you say, why has he run away from school?"

"Bai Jove!"
"It is a difficult question to answer, I know," said Lord Eastwood. "The only conclusion I can come to is that Walter, through fear of being exposed before me, has gone home alone."

"If he has, patah," said Arthur Augustus. "I trust you will send him straight back. He had no right to wun away."

"You must remember, Arthur, that he has been found guilty of theft—"

"Wubbish!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "I have told you befoah that Wally is perfectly innocent!"

"Arthur!" said Lord Eastwood sharply.

"Weally, patah, he is innocent, and—"

"Ah, well, Arthur!" said Lord Eastwood. "I admire you for your loyalty to your brother. I wish I could share your opinion, but it is impossible. The

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proofs against Walter are far too convincing."

"Good-bye, Arthur! Time is getting short, and I must get home before dinner."

In another moment the car was buzzing down the lane, and Arthur Augustus stared at it in disgust.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "I am surprised at the patch! The idea of his thinking Wally a beastly thief! I shall have to wemonstwater with him when I see him again."

Blake and Herries and Digby smiled faintly at the idea of Arthur Augustus wemonstrating with the earl; but, all the same, they, too, admired the swell of St. Jim's for his staunchness to his minor.

They were doing their utmost to convince themselves that Wally was entirely free from guilt, yet they could not help thinking that the proofs were undeniable. Only their strong belief in Wally's honorable nature prevented them from siding with the great majority who had branded Arthur Augustus' minor as a common thief!

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Gets a Job.

"HERE we are, Wally! What do you think of it?"

Wally D'Arcy and Bob, his new-found chum, approached the great fair-ground on which the boxing tent, the roundabouts, the swings, and hop-las owned by the famous Charles Bonner were stationed.

"Well," replied Wally, "there's a frightful row going on, if that's anything."

"That's the music for the roundabouts," explained Bob.

"I've never heard such a row in my life," said Wally, with a laugh.

"Where's the refreshment show? I'm getting jolly hungry!"

"Over here, Wally," said Bob, dragging Wally forward; "just by the swings."

The two marched over to the refreshment-bar, and Wally purchased half a dozen jam-tarts, and passed three over to Bob.

"No, thanks, Wally!" said Bob.

"I've had my tea!"

"Rats!" cried Wally. "You don't think I'm going to stuff myself while you look on! Wire in, kid, and see your jaw."

"You're very kind—" began Bob, as he helped himself to one of the tarts.

"Rats!" snorted Wally.

The two nunched away for ten minutes or so and then Wally gazed around him.

"Where's your governor's show?" he asked.

"Can't you see?" said Bob, pointing ahead. "Just at the back of the roundabouts."

"I see," said Wally. "Now, what about coming to see the boxing show? I'm awfully keen on boxing, you know. D'you ever do any boxing?"

"I do a bit," said Bob. "But dad won't let me box in the ring. He says I'm too young."

"Well, I suppose you are," said Wally.

"By gum, there's a pretty good crowd here!"

"Yes; things have bucked up a bit the last few nights," remarked Bob. "I say, Wally, have you got much money in your pocket?"

"About five bob," replied Wally.

"Well, you'd better be careful," advised Bob. "You don't know who's about. It don't do to trust everybody."

"Suppose not," said Wally. "I—Hallo, what's the game?"

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Wally turned round suddenly, and saw a boy of about sixteen lurch against Bob, causing him to reel to one side.

"Sorry!" said the boy. "Couldn't help it!"

He would have passed on, but Wally gripped him by the shoulder and dragged him back.

"What do you always fall about like that?" asked Wally.

"Course I don't!" replied the stranger, glaring hard at Wally. "What d'yer want ter know for?"

"Only for a bit of fun," said Wally, winking at Bob. "Here, come back! I want to have a little talk with you."

"What for?" asked the stranger, struggling to get free.

"Have you got the time on you?" asked Wally.

"Ain't got a watch," replied the stranger.

"Sure?"

"Course I am!"

Wally turned to Bob.

"You got a watch, Bob?" he asked.

"No; never had one in my life," answered Bob.

Wally shook his captive.

"Very well," he said. "As I had a watch, and haven't got it now, and as Bob hasn't got it, you must have it!"

"I ain't!" replied the stranger, trying his utmost to get away from Wally's determined grasp.

"Well, what's this?" exclaimed Wally, as he darted his hand into the boy's outside pocket, and drew forth his own watch.

"Hang you!" exclaimed the boy, dashing his fist full into Wally's face.

Wally evaded the full force of the blow by darting his head backwards. He quickly recovered himself, and next moment he rushed forward and dealt the thief a smart blow on the chin, which staggered him.

"Want some more?" asked Wally.

"You little beast, you—Ow! Yow! Grooooooh!"

Wally's left smote the boy full on the nose, and his hand rushed up to his nose instantly.

"Good for you, Wally!" said Bob, clapping the St. Jim's junior on the shoulder; "Look out, he's coming for you again."

The thief lumbered forward, and with a bull-like rush threw himself at Wally, who was surrounded by a crowd of people, many of whom were shouting and cheering.

D'Arcy minor was much smaller than his antagonist, but he probably knew more about boxing than the other could learn in a lifetime.

With a scientific dodge, Wally evaded his opponent's powerful thrust, and lunging forward with his left, sent the ruffian reeling to the ground.

"Had enough?" asked Wally, bending over his opponent.

"Ow! Yow! Yaroooooh!" moaned the thief. "You wait—"

"Hallo! What's all this rumpus here?" asked a burly man, striding into the midst of the crowd of people which was surrounding the antagonists.

"Strike me dead! What are you doing in them togs, Bob?"

"Come over to the tent, dad," said Bob. "and I'll explain."

"But—"

"Come on, do!" urged Bob. "We can't talk with a crowd of people round us."

"Come on, Wally!"

The three walked over to the boxing showman's own tent, and Bob offered Wally a chair.

"Tell dad all about it, Wally," said Bob.

Wally kept nothing back. He took an instant liking to the rough, burly showman, and he told him all about the mysterious theft at St. Jim's, and why he had changed clothes with Bob.

The showman listened intently to every word Wally uttered. When he had finished, the man stared D'Arcy minor full in the face.

"You agree you didn't take them articles?" he asked.

"I swear I didn't," answered Wally emphatically. "Honest Injun!"

"Good!" said the man. "I take your word. I can always tell a decent kid from a bad one. Now, what were you fighting about?"

Wally grinned.

"Well, it was like this," he said. "I saw that chap lurch against Bob, and remembered at once that when we changed clothes I forgot to take my watch out of my pocket. I guessed at once what he was after."

"And you downed him?"

"Rather!"

"Good for you!" said the man. "I like to see a kid handy with his fists. By gum! D'ye say you want a job?"

"I could do with something until the mystery is cleared up at the school," explained Wally. "But I don't know that I'm capable of doing very much."

"Oh, yes you can," said the man; "you can box, and a kid that can box can always earn good money."

"Box for my living?" asked Wally incredulously.

"Yes; why not?" said Bob's father. "You can take on anybody under fifteen years of age, couldn't you?"

"I could box most chaps," said Wally; "but I couldn't manage chaps like Tom Merry and Talbot at St. Jim's."

"Don't matter," said the man. "You won't come up against very tough propositions in those parts. It's settled, then, that you'll box any boy under fifteen years of age?"

"Right-ho!" said Wally. "Any old thing suits me."

"Very well," said the man. "We're going over to Abbotstord to-morrow, and I'll get the posters out at once."

Wally turned pale.

"Going to Abbotstord, did you say?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Wally. "I'm sure to be spotted, as our chaps are playing a cricket match there in the afternoon."

"You don't want to be seen?"

"Well, not until the mystery is cleared up."

"That's rotten," said Britton; "but, by gum, why not box in a mask?"

"A mask?"

"Yes," answered the man. "A mask would cover most of your face, and no one would be likely to recognise you by your feet."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Wally. "What a breeze! All right, I'll do it. It'll be a bit of fun at any rate!"

"Good!"

The life of the fair seemed strange to D'Arcy minor, and was certainly rather rough; but, after all, it was new, and there was a certain amount of excitement about it.

Besides, he did not expect to be in it very long. He quite thought that in time Levison minor would succeed in clearing his name and bowling out the real thief. Then he would return to St. Jim's, and have the pleasure of relating his experiences of wandering to all his chums.

Ere he went to sleep that night in the boxing showman's tent, Wally resolved to send a telegram to his brother in the morning.

It was quite likely that Arthur Augustus would be anxious about him, and he thought it only right that he should allay his major's fears.

CHAPTER 10.
Very Suspicious.

"I WANT my monish!"
"You can't have it!"
"But you promised to pay me
vun week ago!"
"Oh, rats!"

Isaac Solomon rubbed his hands to-
gether and fixed his evil eyes on the
face of Piggott of the Third.

"It will not do, Mashter Piggott," he
said. "You borrowed der ten pounds
from me, and you have not repaid it!"
"You confounded swindler!" roared
Piggott. "I've more than repaid you!
Look at the stuff I brought you the other
day."

"Ah!" said the Jew. "You brought me
some stuff, I know; but vat was it? A
few vatches and penknives and old
fountain-pens. Vat are dey?"

"They were jolly good ones," said
Piggott. "You ought to have been able
to raise ten pounds on the lot."

"More like ten sheelings, Mashter
Piggott," sneered the Jew.

"You beastly rogue!" exclaimed
Piggott.

"Dey are fine vords, minie boy,"
sneered the moneylender. "But dey will
do you no good vatever. You still owe
me five pounds, and unless you pay me
thet amount in gold—no more vatches
and penknives, mind—I shall—"

"You dare not!"

"You vait and see," said the man.
"You pay me der five pounds before to-
morrow, oderwise I go straight to your
Headmaster, and den you be, vat you
call it, expelled, eh?"

Piggott looked at the rascally Jew
pleadingly.

"Please don't do that, Mr. Solomon,"
he urged. "Think of the disgrace it will
bring me! Think—"

"But vat about my monish?" whined
the Jew. "I am an honest man, and I
cannot afford to lose so much."

"You won't lose it," said Piggott. "I
will pay you the whole amount in a few
days, I will really!"

"You will pay me to-morrow," in-
sisted the moneylender. "Oderwise I
will do as I said."

"You beast! You low-down scound-
rel!" exclaimed Piggott passionately.

"Dey are harsh vords, Mashter
Piggott," said the Jew whiningly. "But
you will regret dem, you mark my
vords."

"Oh, get away, do!" cried Piggott.

"I will go with pleasure," said the
Jew, "but I come again to-morrow, at
de same time, and at de same place, and
unless—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Piggott. "I
shall be there."

"Vid der five pounds?"

"Oh, yes, hang you!"

With a cunning leer, the man turned
back, and Piggott of the Third went
reverberably off in the direction of St.
Jim's.

At the gates of St. Jim's he came face
to face with Levison minor.

"Hallo, Piggott!" said Levison minor.

"How's your friend?"

"My friend?"

"Yes, the man you were talking to
down the lane," replied Levison minor.
"I suppose he's a friend of yours, as
you were jawing to him for quite a long
time."

"You've been spying on me, you cad!"
roared Piggott.

"Not at all," said Levison. "I
couldn't help seeing you as I came along
the lane from the opposite direction."

"Well, what about it?"

"Nothing," said Levison coolly. "Only
— Well, I don't think I should care
to have such a chap amongst my
friends."

"Nobody asked you to!"
"Quite so," said Levison minor. "But,
you know, Piggott, I could just imagine
that chap pinching things, like you said
Wally D'Arcy did."

"Blow D'Arcy!" cried Piggott. "I'm
going—"

Piggott attempted to pass on towards
the school, but Levison minor dragged
him back.

"Half a mo', Piggott!" he said. "I
rather wanted to see you about some-
thing else."

"Well, what is it?"

"It's like this," explained Levison
minor. "I've decided to back you up,
and get you elected captain of the
Third."

"What trouble?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"I don't know what you're talking
about, you idiot!" said Piggott.

"Of course, I forgot," said Levison
minor. "You left the dormitory too
early to hear anything about it. I say,
Piggott, have you missed anything, you
know, a watch or anything like that?"

"No, I haven't."

"That's jolly funny," said Levison
minor, "because, directly after you left
the dormitory, several fellows discovered
that some of their things had been stolen.
I thought you'd be bound to have lost
something."

"Well, I m-m-may have d-d-d-one so,"



Churns of the road.

(See Chapter 7.)

"I don't want to be captain," said
Piggott.

"What? Altered your mind?"

"Oh, rats!"

Levison minor smiled.

"But I reckon you'd make a really
ripping captain," said Levison. "As
you said yesterday we want an honour-
able, straightforward chap, and—
Great Scott, Piggott, you're awfully
white. D'you feel bad?"

Piggott's face had turned ghostly
white with fear.

"Let me pass!" he said.

"Sure you don't feel bad?"

"Yes."

"Well, we might just as well talk here
as in the House," said Levison minor.

"Now, about you being captain, I—"

"I tell you, I don't want to be cap-
tain!" snapped Piggott.

"You don't?"

"No!"

Levison's face wore an expression of
feigned surprise.

"But you're just the fellow to deal
with the trouble that's cropped up," he
said.

stuttered Piggott. "I really haven't
looked."

"Well, I should advise you to do so
at once," said Levison minor, "because
it's a matter that wants looking into. Do
you think young D'Arcy's still in the
school, or do you think there's another
thief at work?"

"I don't know, and I don't care!" said
Piggott.

"But what about the honour of the
Form?" said Levison minor. "I reckon
you ought to take an interest in the
matter."

"Oh, later on!" said Piggott.

"Why not now?"

"I—I—I—!" stammered Piggott.

"Hallo! There's the bell for lessons!"

"Well, we'll go into the matter after
wards," said Levison minor.

"Oh, all serene!" murmured Piggott;
and, shaking like a leaf, he tore towards
the House.

The last five minutes had been very
anxious ones for Piggott. Levison minor
had become suspicious, he felt sure of
that, but how much did he know?
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Piggott would have forfeited a whole term's pocket-money to have had the answer to that question.

Levison minor walked slowly on towards the House. There was a smile of satisfaction on his face, for he had succeeded in clearing up the mystery which had been troubling him for more than a day.

Wally D'Arcy was absolutely innocent of the charge which had been levelled against him. The real thief was Piggott, Levison felt confident of that.

Should he inform the Head of his suspicions, or should he wait until news of Wally's whereabouts were received? Levison minor decided to wait, and in the meantime he resolved to keep a keener watch than ever on the suspected fag.

Directly after morning lessons, Levison minor wended his way to Study No. 6, and found Arthur Augustus, Blake, and Terrie standing moodily by the open window.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Levison minor cheerily. "Lost anything?"

"Weally, Levison," said Arthur Augustus, "I'm not awaah that I've lost anything."

"Oh, I thought you had!" said Levison minor. "You look blue enough to have lost a fortune."

"You cheekey fag!" roared Blake. "Get out or—"

"Pax, Blake!" said Levison minor. "I'm not keen on being chucked out."

"Well, you will be," said Blake determinedly, "unless you show a little more respect to your elders."

"Rats!" snorted Levison minor. "Now, have you heard anything from young Wally?"

"No, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm sorry to say we haven't. I am feeling vewy depressed, as the general wired the Head to the effect that Wally has now availed home. I vreally think now that he did steal those things!"

"Rot!" exclaimed Levison minor. "I know he didn't, and, what's more, I know who did."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Pway tell me his name, Levison, dear boy!"

"Not just now," said Levison minor. "That can come as soon as we've found Wally. Now, what do you fellows say to organising a search, and—"

"Tap!" Levison minor stopped speaking as a knock sounded on the door of Study No. 6.

"Come in!" sang out Blake. The door opened, and in walked Toby, the School House page.

"Telegram for Master D'Arcy," he announced.

"Thank you, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway hand it ovah!"

The buff-coloured envelope was handed to D'Arcy, and the swell of St. Jim's tore it open, and took out the paper containing the message.

"Bai Jose!" he exclaimed. "What splendid news!"

"Who's it from, Gussy?"

"Wally, dear boy."

"Wally!"

"Hurrah!"

Blake cast his eye over the telegram. "I'm pleased in it, Melton," he announced.

"I wonder what he's doing there?"

"I wondah, dear boy?"

"It's quite possible he's not there," said Levison minor. "He may have sent it there as a blind, you know."

"You are quite wight, Levison," said Arthur Augustus. "But I should say he's somewhere in the vicinity."

"That's quite likely."

"Well, it's jolly good news to know that he's all right," said Levison. "Does he send any message to me?"

"Yaas, dear boy," said D'Arcy. "He says, 'Tell Franky that I am writing to him.'"

"That's ripping!" said Levison. "As soon as I hear from him, I'll write and tell him that I've cleared up the mystery, and as soon as he returns I'll denounce the chap who pinched the things!"

"That's a good idea!"

"Wippin'!"

"Let's go along and tell Tom Merry," said Blake. "He'll be jolly glad to know."

"Vewy well."

Jack Blake & Co. made tracks for Tom Merry's study, and told the Terrible Three the news.

"That's topping!" said Tom Merry, with a grin. "Now, I suppose we can go over to Abbotsford for the match in a cheerful frame of mind?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Weally, dear boys, I had not thought of that!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I suppose you feel more like playing now, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I feel quite keen, and I'm sure I shall make a weally good show."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, buck up and get ready!" said Tom Merry. "We start in half an hour."

"Wight-ho!"

The news had started up the St. Jim's juniors considerably, and it was a most cheerful elvon that took the train for Abbotsford to meet the juniors of Burndene that afternoon.

CHAPTER 11. The Masked Boxer.

"WELL caught, Gussy!"

" Bravo, St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a splendid catch in the long field, and had brought the match between St. Jim's and Burndene to a conclusion. St. Jim's had won close on time by five runs.

"Give us your fist, Gussy, old scout!" said Jack Blake, striding over to the swell St. Jim's.

"Weally, Blake, I wish you wouldn't get so excited!" said D'Arcy.

"Rats!" shouted Blake. "It was a ripping catch, Gussy, old son, and you deserve a bit of praise."

"Weally, Blake— Ow! Yow! Yawwooh!"

Half a dozen or so pairs of hands were clapping D'Arcy on the shoulders, and as some of the excited juniors were not particular as to the amount of force they expended in the blows, Arthur Augustus was suffering.

Roaring with laughter, the juniors dosided at length, and D'Arcy surveyed them through his monocle.

"Weally, dear boys, I—"

"Come on, you fellows, and pack up your things!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwry, I considah—"

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"Rats!" snorted Tom Merry.

"But——"

"Get a move on, Gussy!"

"Weally——"

Arthur Augustus's remarks were lost on Tom Merry & Co., for they suddenly turned tail, and made for the pavilion.

Not wishing to talk to the air, D'Arcy followed in the wake of the rest, and arrived at the pavilion to find them packing their bags hurriedly.

"Weally, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "I fail to see the weason for hurwyin'!"

"Aren't you coming to the fair before we go back?" asked Blake. "Don't you remember that we decided to go and see the masked boy boxer?"

"Yes, Blake, I do wemembah now, but——"

"Well, hurry up," snapped Blake, "if you don't want to be left behind!"

All right!"

In less than five minutes the juniors were all ready, and after bidding the Burned Eleven good-bye, they set out for Bonner's world-famous fair.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Blake, as he heard the music belonging to the roundabouts. "What a row!"

"Reminds you of Herries and his cornet!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rots!" snapped Herries. "Why——"

"Peace, children!" said Tom Merry, stepping behind the arguing juniors.

"Here we are! Let's make for the boxing-show at once."

"Look!" said Blake. "There it is! And, look, the masked boxer is standing outside!"

"So he is."

"Great Scott! Doesn't he look a kid!"

"Rather!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "The old showman's going to say a few words."

Bert Britton, the boxing showman, was standing on the platform, and pointing to the boxers who were lined up at the side of him.

"Ladice and gentlemen!" he said, "with a flourish of the hand. "Today I have a very special attraction to place before you. My masked boxer, although still under thirteen years of age, is open to box any boy who has not yet reached the age of fifteen!"

The contest will be for six rounds of two minutes each, and to any boy who succeeds in beating my little masked wonder, I will award the sum of one pound!"

"Hurrah!"

"Now," continued the showman, "who is going to accept the challenge? We are only here for a night, and you Abbotford boys will not have another chance of putting your skill against the wonder boxer of the age! Now, then, don't all rush at once!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"What a wippin' youngstah! He's got some plack to box fellahs under fifteen!"

"There's a chance for you, Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "I suppose you can do with a new topper?"

"What's a toppah got to do with that, Lowthah, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Can you do with a new one?"

"Yes, I believe I could."

"Good! Here's your chance," said Lowther. "You take on the masked boxer, knock him out of time, and you get a quid. A quid will buy you a new tie, won't it?"

"Weally, Lowthah, suahly you do not think I should entah a beastly prize wing for the purpose of earnin' money?" asked Arthur Augustus, with great dignity.

"Well, you said you wanted a new topper, didn't you?"

"Wate!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The loud voice of the boxing showman broke out again at that moment, and D'Arcy's protests were ignored.

"Now, gentlemen, is this astounding offer to go unchallenged?" he shouted. "Surely there is one amongst you who will pit his skill against my masked boxing wonder! We are——"

"I will!" came a voice from the front of the crowd.

"Step this way, then!" said the showman. And as the boy mounted the steps leading to the platform, the St. Jim's juniors uttered cries of amazement.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Blake. "Do you see who that is?"

"Piggott of the Third!"

"By Jove! Wonder what he's doing over here?"

"Weally, you fellahs," said D'Arcy, "I do not think it is wight and pwopah for a St. Jim's chap to entah a wotten prize-ring! We ought to put a stop to it!"

"Rate!" snorted Blake. "Let's come in and watch the fight! Coming, you fellows?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry and Figgins.

"Weally——" protested Arthur Augustus.

"Come in, and enjoy the fun, Gussy!" said Blake.

"But——"

"Come on!"

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, "I'll come, but nevahtheless, it is undah pwotest!"

The St. Jim's juniors entered the boxing-ring, and took up their seats in the front row. In less than ten minutes Piggott, stripped to the waist, and attired in a pair of boxing shorts and slippers, entered the ring.

The boxing showman entered a moment later with his masked boxer, and, facing the audience, gave out particulars of the fight.

Wally was just behind the showman, and he began to cast his eyes round the crowded arena. Suddenly he caught sight of the St. Jim's juniors. He gave a slight start, and his face went white.

Had he been recognised?

When Piggott had accepted the challenge, he had not thought that there was much likelihood of the Third-Former recognising him, and he had resolved to run that risk.

With the Fourth-Formers, however, it was different. They were far cuter, and would probably know him by his form. Tom Merry had coached him often. What was he to do? Could he——

"Time!"

Wally's conjecture were suddenly cut short by the showman. The boxing match was about to begin.

Wally had got to see it through, and trust that he would come out of the affair all right.

At any rate, he was determined to give Piggott a thorough good hiding, and he set about the matter in a determined manner.

Thud!

Wally's left shot out and landed full on Piggott's nose, causing him to stagger backwards.

"Well hit, young 'un!" sang out Jack Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

More, but he stood very little chance against D'Arcy minor. Wally seemed to be here, there, and everywhere, and Piggott could not land an effective blow.

Smack! Thud! Smack!

Wally's fists shot out like piston-rods, and each time Piggott failed to guard.

His right fist almost to get at Wally's face, but it was no good.

Smack!

Right on the point Wally's left landed, and Piggott was down.

"One, two, three, four. Time!" counted the man with the watch.

The call of time saved the helpless Piggott, and he staggered to his corner.

"Bai, Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I weally think Piggott's done for!"

"I should say so."

"You know, deah boys, I think I should have all my work cut out to beat that masked youngstah," said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good job you didn't take my advice," said Lowther, "and challenge him."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Time!"

The two boxers advanced to the centre of the ring again, and the second round commenced.

As Arthur Augustus had expressed it, Piggott was done for.

Wally's enemy tried all he knew, but his best efforts availed him nothing. Wally was too good for him, and he pounded him again and again without receiving a single blow himself.

Piggott staggered about the ring, vainly attempting to ward off Wally's telling punches.

"Go it, young 'un!" yelled somebody among the spectators. "Knock 'im out!"

"He's down!"

"Hurrah!"

Piggott went reeling to the floor from a straight left, and next moment Tom Merry & Co. received the surprise of their lives.

Wally's mask fell from his face!

He was recognised immediately.

"Wally!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Great Scott!"

The St. Jim's juniors rose to their feet, and were about to climb into the ring, when the showman and some of his men dragged them back.

The St. Jim's juniors had just opened their mouths to protest, when a voice at the back of the booth rang out:

"Fire!"

At the word the audience jumped to their feet, and commenced to rush towards the showman.

Flames and smoke could be seen belching forth at the end of the booth, and struck terror to the hearts of the majority of the people who had been watching the show.

"Be calm, there!" urged the showman. "Don't crush!"

The warning was of no avail. The people were not in a mood to listen to reason, and in a moment pandemonium reigned inside the boxing-tent.

The fire had got a complete hold on the canvas tent, and in less than a minute the whole place was filled with acrid smoke.

CHAPTER 12.

His Honour Restored.

TOM MERRY & CO. lost sight of Wally in the smoke-ridden air.

They rushed up to the ring; but he was not there. He had vanished completely!

"Keep together, you fellows!" urged Tom Merry. "Try and avoid the rush as much as possible!"

The three went off their way towards one of the exits, where the terror-stricken audience were striving to get outside.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Blake, "There'll be awful damage done, if those people lose their heads completely. They seem half mad already!"

"Hahn! we better form a sort of barrier and try to stop the crush a bit," suggested Figgins.

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"Good idea," said Tom Merry. "But fasten your handkerchiefs round your mouths." The smoke's absolutely stifling!

The juniors did as Tom Merry advised, and pushing forward, they wedged their way into the excited crowd.

There they stood shoulder to shoulder, and by using all their strength, they did their very utmost to lessen the crush.

Many a man attempted to brush past the St. Jim's juniors; but the latter stood their ground well, and helped to prevent accidents.

Sparks flew about in all directions, and the smoke was stifling; but Tom Merry & Co. did not give way. As soon as the crowd behind them got less, so they opened the barrier and allowed more of the terrified men and women to pass out. Flames began to rush above the juniors' heads, and they realised that they were in danger of being burned alive.

Not one of them flinched from the task which they had taken in hand.

They knew that if they thought only of their own lives, others would probably suffer, and by sheer grit, they held on.

At length the press in front of them lessened considerably, and the last member of the panic-stricken audience dashed out of the burning arena.

Tom Merry & Co. followed suit, and next moment a portion of the burning framework came tottering to the ground, sending thousands of sparks flying in all directions.

Had they remained in the burning booth for another minute they would scarcely have emerged alive!

Several of the juniors were in a bad way when they got outside; but the fresh air assisted them to recover.

They looked round immediately for Wally and Piggott, but the fags were nowhere to be seen.

"I wonder where he's got to?" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I trust he has got safely out of the place."

"Here's the showman," said Blake. "I'll ask him."

The showman came staggering towards the juniors.

Blake caught him by the shoulder.

"Have you seen young D'Arcy?" he asked anxiously.

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed the man. "I'm afraid I don't know him."

"Yes you do," said Blake, rather impatiently. "The kid who boxed in the mask!"

The man passed his hand across his perspiring brow.

"He's gone in there," he said, pointing towards the flaming tent.

"Gone in there?" repeated Blake.

"Yes," said the man, "he's gone in to save the other boy!"

"Good heavens!" cried Blake. "It's death in there. I'm going in to—"

"No no no!" said Tom Merry, holding Blake by the shoulder. "You cannot. You would never come out again!"

"But—"

"Wally may have come out by another door," said Tom Merry. "Great Scott! What's this?"

The juniors gazed intently in front of them. Great clouds of smoke were being swept along by the breeze, but again and again they thought they saw somebody moving about in the thick of it.

Was it Wally, or was—
"Thank Heaven!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered a fervent cry of thankfulness as Wally, with the unconscious form of Piggott on his back, staggered blindly forward, and fell to the ground.

A crowd of eager sightseers pressed round; but the St. Jim's juniors formed a circle round the unconscious fags.

"Don't crowd!" urged Tom Merry. "Give them air! Somebody fetch some water!"

The two fags were lying helpless on the ground, and the St. Jim's juniors were waiting anxiously.

Piggott was badly burned on the arms and legs, and his hair was singed. Wally was in little better case.

A man rushed up with some water, and Tom Merry dashed it into the unconscious fags' faces. Wally stirred slightly, and Arthur Augustus and Blake helped him to his feet.

At that moment the old showman came up.

"Fetch them along to my tent," he said.

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Come on, you fellows; lend a hand here!"

In less than a couple of minutes the unconscious Piggott was lying on a couch in the showman's tent.

Wally had recovered sufficiently to sit down; but, for all that, he was pretty bad.

A doctor was sent for, and he examined Piggott. During the examination Piggott opened his eyes, and muttered incoherently.

"He must be got to bed at once," announced the doctor. "He has been badly burned, and needs attention."

"Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus. "I will get a caah immediately, and have him taken to St. Jim's."

"Do," said the doctor.

The swell of St. Jim's raced off to a motor garage, and returned in less than five minutes with a speedy car.

Piggott was placed carefully inside, and then Arthur Augustus turned to his minor.

"Get in, Wally," he said.

"No fear!" said Wally pluckily. "I'm all right!"

"He must be ridiculous, Wally," said Arthur Augustus. "You're not fit enough to walk back!"

"Oh, all right, Gus!" said Wally, and he got into the car, to be followed by Arthur Augustus and Blake.

The rest of the juniors waited until the flames had been got well under by the fire brigade, and then, bidding the showman good-bye, they set off for St. Jim's.

Very few words passed between the juniors. The peril they had been through had been great, and every one of them was anxious to learn the fate of young Piggott.

They arrived at St. Jim's after call-over, and learned that Piggott was out of danger, but that he would have to stay in bed for some days.

"Thank Heaven for that!" breathed Tom Merry. "I was afraid he was a goner."

"Well, I'm glad we've got Wally back," said Manners.

"Hear, hear!"

"I suppose Levison minor will tell us now who committed the thefts?" said Tom Merry.

"Let's hope so," said Manners, "and I hope the chap gets the order of the boot at once. If those thefts had never occurred we should never have had the exciting times we've been through this afternoon."

Tom Merry forced a laugh.

"All's well that ends well!" he said cheerfully.

"That's something to be thankful for," said Manners, with a snort. And the chums of the Shell got on with their prep.

The fire at the boxing-tent had spread very quickly, but it did not spread so fast as did the news that Piggott was the real thief throughout the length and breadth of St. Jim's the next morning.

Levison minor told Jack Blake & Co.,

as he had promised to do when Wally returned to St. Jim's. The juniors were amazed, but perhaps not one of them was more astounded than D'Arcy minor.

"Well, said Wally, when, during the morning he entered Study No. 6, 'the chap's had a silly good lesson'."

"I sincerely trust he will be expelled!" said Arthur Augustus.

"He's not going to be!" declared Wally.

"Not going to be?"

"No!" said Wally. "The poor chap, asked to see me a little while ago, and the Head allowed me to go in. Piggott confessed everything. It appears he got into the hands of a rascally moneylender, and as he couldn't repay the money he owed, he pitched things from different fellows in the 'Third.'"

"Bai Jove!"

"I can't bear to see the chap lying in pain, and to think that he was about to be expelled," continued Wally. "I asked the Head if he'd let him off. The old-boy turned out a real sport, and gave his consent."

"Well," said Blake, "let's hope he believes in 'one good turn deserves another.'"

"That reminds me," said Wally. "I wonder whether you chaps would care to do old Bert Britton, the showman, a good turn? He was jolly decent to me, and now that he's lost his tent, he must be pretty hard pushed. What do you say to getting up a subscription for him?"

"I should be only too willing to subscribe a fiver," said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, it's settled then," said Wally. "You'll do it?"

"Yaas, watah!"

The swell of St. Jim's kept his promise, and got up the subscription list, and next day the old showman, much to his surprise, received a purse of money from the St. Jim's seniors, which gladdened his heart, and helped him to bear the severe loss which he had sustained.

In less than a week Piggott was out and about again. He was looking deeply repentant, but it was hard to say whether his repentance would be lasting, and whether he really regretted the part he had played in conspiring to bring about Wally D'Arcy's bolt.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—

"LACY OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"LACY OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Mr. Martin Clifford has written hundreds of fine stories; but I doubt whether he has ever written any better than the short series which I am beginning next week. They turn upon the antecedents of that very puzzling fellow, Ralph Rockless Cardew. He has never told anyone at St. Jim's what his former school was. Now it leaks out that there were circumstances connected with his leaving it which accounted for this absence. A new boy at the Grammar School, formerly a schoolfellow of Cardew's at Wodehouse, gives away the secret; and the enemies of Cardew do not omit to take advantage of it. But the chief interest of the series is what I might call a character interest. One is wondering all the time how Cardew will take the next turn of Fortune's wheel.

EXTRACTS FROM

"Tom Merry's Weekly" & "The Greyfriars Herald."

ARTFUL DODGERS!

By JOHNNY BULL.

"IS that hamper for me?" asked Bunter enviously.

The man lifted the hamper from his cart, and deposited it just inside the gates.

"Your name Harold Skinner?" he asked, drawing a paper from his pocket. "Yes, my name is Skinner," promptly responded Bunter, with his usual truthfulness.

"Skinner, but by no means Skinny—eh?" chuckled the carrier, who was evidently humorous. "Sign here for it, please."

Bunter wrote something which may have been "H. Skinner," or may have been "W. G. Bunter"; also, it may have been "John Smith," or "Theophilus Robinson." Even Bunter drew the line at downright forgery.

The carrier went his way. Next moment Bunter was slashing away at the ropes like an old-time swordsman.

We knew from experience that Billy Bunter was not exactly the top-note in truth and honour, but his going as far as this compassed us for the moment.

"Bunter!" roared Wharton, catching him by the shoulder.

The startled owl spun round like a massive teetotum. He had already opened the hamper.

"That's Skinner's hamper!"

"I—I know that. I'm opening it for Skinner, of course!"

"You fat Ananias!"

"Oh, really, you know! He asked me to open it for him, and—"

"And to eat the contents for him?"

"Not at all," said Bunter, diving into the hamper. "He told me— Phew! Look here, you fellows!"

"Bump the disgusting rotter!" exclaimed Bob.

"Look here, you fellows!" roared Bunter. "This hamper's full of smokes"

"Rot!"

"And champagne—a quart bottle!" yelled Bunter.

"Great Scott!"

We released Bunter, and looked for ourselves.

The hamper, though not very big, was positively stocked with cigar-boxes, bottles of sherry, and a bottle of champagne!

Bunter had told the truth for once! It struck me as being a case of "in vino veritas." Wine is said to make people tell the truth, and it had had that effect upon Bunter—even without his imbibing any.

Wharton looked grimly at the guilty hamper.

"The silly idiot! If the Head caught sight of this— But we'll see Skinner instanter. Bow! that fat rotter over, and we'll take the hamper to Skinner's study!"

Leaving Bunter sprawling inelastically in the gateway, we carried the rather heavy hamper up to Skinner's study.

There were sounds of revelry there, and we pushed the hamper in before us.

"Here come the goods!" cried Skinner jubilantly.

"And here come we!" added Bob, in deep tones.

The gay blades went pea-green at the sight of us.

"Wait, you can leave it here," said Skinner, with a sickly grin.

"Not just yet," said Wharton quietly.

"This hamper, Skinner, is full of smokes and—well, I needn't go on; you know the contents, as you ordered them!"

"I hope you didn't experience" much difficulty in opening it?" sneered Skinner.

"We didn't. Bunter opened it."

"Of course, you didn't put him up to it, did you?"

"This is what you're to do," went on Wharton calmly ignoring the sneers.

"You'll tie up this hamper, re-label it, address the label to the Commissariat of the Lonsdale Regiment, and we will take it to the post-office. You'll get undeserved credit for being a patriot. But that's no odds, and the stuff will do the Tommies a lot more good than it would you."

A howl of indignant dissent from the cad brigade greeted this proposal.

"Lucky thing there's a boat-hook behind the door!" observed Bob. "It will save us from putting our jackets on the dusty floor."

"At this hint, and at the display of five pairs of fists, the cads gave in.

They did not look particularly pleasant, however, as Skinner received the hamper, and Snop inscribed a military address on another label.

"But, remember, you thieves," said Skinner savagely, thrusting the hamper towards us with his foot, "you've done us out of a jolly old razzle, with your beastly meddling; but there's just a possibility that you haven't heard the last of this! Get out, hang you!"

It was a cheerful Co. that strode along towards the village post-office. We felt that we had done our country a good turn.

II.

SKINNER & CO. received a good deal of chipping that day, and were temporarily christened the Remove Patriots.

Though that was probably the first parcel they had ever sent to the Tommies, we were not slow to appreciate the belated beginning, and a large Union Jack was nailed outside Skinner's door.

Fisher T. Fish, who was one of the razzlers, was very much annoyed to find himself walking across the quad with a British flag fastened to the back of his jacket, and sweeping the ground behind him. He said things about "Old Glory," which seems to be a pet name his people give their flag.

We expected them to be sulky at bed-tizens; but, to our surprise, they weren't. They were not specially cheery, but still they bore up with such philosophy as Socrates might have shown. We suspected that they had something up their sleeves.

We were seated in the Form-room next day, awaiting the commencement of afternoon classes, when Mr. Quelch gave us some truly astonishing information.

"My boys," he said, "I have been agreeably surprised this morning to learn that one of your number, Fisher T. Fish, is interested in at least one branch of philosophy. By his agency the services of quite a well-known professor have been engaged, gratis, to give a brief lecture on Theosophy at this school to-day."

We fixed our eyes upon Fish in astonishment. The Yankee sat with folded arms, and a very learned expression upon his hatchet face.

"I myself am not a student of Theosophy," went on Mr. Quelch. "But I recognise the value of knowledge outside my own range. There is no charge for admission. All boys desirous of attending this theosophical lecture may put up their hands."

Apparently nobody was desirous. Not a hand went up. We didn't know anything about Theosophy, and we didn't want to. Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"I had intended to excuse you from the latter part of afternoon lessons," he went on, and at once every hand shot up. Mr. Quelch smiled again. "This lecture is for the Lower Fourth only," resumed Mr. Quelch. "I shall not be present, as I have important work in hand, but Wingate will be in charge. Fish, you may now give out the hand-bills, and we will begin lessons."

The printed handbills declared that the great Professor Toophace, of the Rotshire Theosophical Society, proposed to edify the Greyfriars Remove with a glimpse of Theosophy. Admission was free. But there would be a collection at the close devoted entirely to the defraying of expenses.

Lessons ended, we trooped into the Rag.

Professor Toophace proved to be a small man, whose face was a mass of benevolent-looking wrinkles. His assistant, Mr. Ropin, was standing by his side, with a collection-box—a good-sized one, too, in his hand.

When we entered, the professor cleared his throat.

"Friends," he began, in deep tones, "I should first like to instruct you in the rudiments of Theosophy."

Then, for the next ten minutes he bored us stiff with mysterious references to planes, astral bodies, physical bodies, reincarnation, and such stuff, until we could only stare stupidly at his mouth as it moved.

Though we were unable to follow him half a yard, he seemed deeply absorbed in his subject, and we naturally thought him no end brainy.

"We will now pause a moment," said the professor, nodding to Mr. Ropin, "for the collection."

Wingate put in a modest bob. He was sitting near the platform. Then Mr. Ropin went the rounds in smiling and sprightly fashion. You could have knocked us down with brickbats when he

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the most public manner, Fish put in two shillings, Snoop one shilling, Skinner half-a-crown, and Stott a like sum! The rest of the Form, not to be outdone by the Cad Brigade, rolled up with their fitting and happy comments. Together the professor scooped in quite a decent little bit.

"The essence of Theosophy," he went on, looking pleased, "is to banish from our minds all unpleasant thoughts towards our fellow-creatures. All selfish aims must be discarded. A man who thinks up any profession or study or the mere sake of making money for himself is—'Bah!' He waved his hand disdainfully, and nodded to Mr. Ropin. "There will be another collection, friends, to defray the expenses arising out of this meeting."

He never explained how these mysterious expenses were incurred, but they must have been terrific to come up to the collections. Skinner & Co. were again in the foreground of extravagance, and looked round loftily when relieved of their donations.

Whispering dropped a sixpence in the box, and with an unanimous guffaw from the Cad Brigade, and various audible sneers were interchanged.

"All a fellow can expect of that set!" said Skinner.

"Of course, we can excuse them, you know," said Snoop considerably. "An individual like this is a man who goes beyond them, and they get no enjoyment out of it, poor beggars! We can't expect them to contribute much."

"Maybe they've nothing to contribute," grinned Stott.

Harry turned beetroot-red, and Frank Nugent, who sat next to him, weakly dropped a shilling into the box. "I wasn't having anything to do myself," Skinner's opinion is of no consequence to me. Squiff was not on, either, or Delarey. But Tom Brown proved weaker, and I saw that as Mauly, who had been snoozing, drop a currency-note in. He wouldn't have been allowed to snooze in

class, of course, and that fact may have prompted him to generosity. More fellows dropped in a bob or two.

In the meantime, Professor Tooplace had been drawing a series of strange sketches in coloured chalks upon the blackboard.

"These," he said, looking round benevolently, "have been seen-by clairvoyants in various parts of the world."

He indicated a dagger-shaped diagram in red.

These were seen by a trained clairvoyant shooting out of a man consumed with anger. These angry thoughts, like, of course, all other thoughts, travel through the ether which surrounds the universe, and find root in the minds of others. Therefore, it is best to let all your thoughts be charitable and generous towards your fellow-creatures, and they will be reciprocated."

Many were the yawns which greeted this statement. On the whole, the theosophical lecture was as dull as class-work. And we didn't have to pay for clairvoyance!

"These"—indicating something rather like a flash of lightning—"are the emanations from a mind occupied with thoughts of hatred. And this"—indicating something blue and almost shapeless—"is the form selfishness takes. Ah, friends, I fear there are many of these wandering in this very room, seeking the opportunity of taking root!"

He shook his head sadly, and nodded to Mr. Ropin.

"Another collection!" murmured Bob. But Mr. Ropin had caught a few remarks made by the audience, which gave him no encouragement, and he wisely refrained from visiting us again with his collection-box.

"Do you know, you chaps," said Bob, under his breath, "I believe that giddy professor is Fishy's poppa!"

And Bob was thoughtfully silent after that. But Fishy's poppa was at least six inches taller than the lecturer—we

had seen him—so it didn't appear very likely.

The professor went on with his lecture, and at the end of it we felt worse than the Huns after a bayonet-charge. It was about the rottenest and most expensive jaw I have ever attended.

"Thank goodness, that's over!" said Bob, as we rose in our seats.

But it wasn't quite over. Mr. Ropin was waiting at the door with a bland smile upon his face and the collection-box. He handed it over, and evidently received a wink from Professor Tooplace. All he received from us, though, was an abundance of glare.

When we reached the Remove passage Bob's eyes began to glitter.

"Didn't you notice, you fellows?" he exclaimed, and opened his eyes.

"Notice what?"

"Tooplace and Robin went off with the bold, bad brigade to Fish's study! Kim on!"

"My hat!" I said. "My study ain't going to be made a den of thieves!"

We charged upon No. 14, and the burly Bob, who had unlocked the door, we tumbled in after him.

On the table were ever so many silver coins, two notes—which, of course, were Mauly's—and some few coppers. And the bold, bad brigade, with Professor Tooplace and Mr. Ropin, were dividing up the spoils!

We looked Tooplace and Robin out of the school. Skinner & Co. were scragged baldheaded, and everybody received his money back.

Professor Tooplace and Mr. Ropin were taken into custody soon afterwards for the embezzlement of the funds of the Rotschir Theosophical Society.

Tooplace was not Fishy's poppa—he couldn't have been without appointment. But he was the confederate of Skinner & Co., in a plot to make the Form pay for their lost randan. Skinner had met the two rotteners at the Cross Keys, of course.

THE END.

THE CASE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes. :: By PETER TODD.

THE great part played by my amazing friend, Herlock Sholmes, in the glorious Russian Revolution is not generally known.

Few, if any, of the newspapers have mentioned the fact that he was in Petrograd the whole time, disguised as an officer of the Prjklmnopqrstuxyz Regiment.

It is time that the facts were given to the public, and that all should know that, but for Sholmes' masterly conduct of the Revolution a weak and tyrannic Tsar might yet be reigning over our noble Aily.

It was some days before the startling outbreak of the revolution the Sholmes came into our rooms at Shaker Street with some slight trace of excitement in his face—usually as calm and impassive as a Guy Fawkes mask, which, indeed, it resembled in other respects.

"Are you ready to undertake a journey, Jotson?" he asked.

"Certainly, my dear Sholmes!"

"You can leave your patients for a week or so, my dear doctor?"

"For one moment I hesitated.

"But I never cared to mention the circumstances to Sholmes' enthu-

astic interest in his cases had caused a somewhat severe strain upon my finances.

During my frequent absences with him on the track of crime, my patients were deprived of my professional care, and but too often I had found on my return that they were so far advanced in recovery as to have no further occasion for my services.

But my hesitation was brief. I would not have refused to follow my amazing friend if it had cost me the whole of my practice.

"I am ready, Sholmes!" I said firmly. "Good dog, Jotty!" said Sholmes, patting me on the ear in the old-fashioned way I knew so well, and absently abstracting my tobacco-pouch. "Then you shall come with me. We are going abroad, Jotson. Where, do you think?"

"I should prefer not to go to Germany at the present moment, Sholmes," I remarked. "But I will follow you, even if you go to Jericho."

"What do you think of Petrograd, Jotson?" smiled Sholmes.

"I started.

"The submarines, Sholmes—"

"I hope, Jotson, that you do not think that Hun submarines would stop me?" said Sholmes severely.

"Moreover, as we shall go by airship,

there will be relatively small danger from German submarines," Sholmes added.

I said no more, and we proceeded to pack. Sholmes took little besides his trusty revolver, a Russian dictionary, and a cask of cocaine.

Ten minutes later there was a tap at the window.

The airship was ready.

A few minutes more, and we were speeding through the clouds.

II.

PETROGRAD was in a state of fervid excitement when we reached the city.

We alighted in Xyztrkljghadz Street, and walked to the Jubjigighug Hotel, where we were to stay.

The streets were crowded with mujiks, droshkys, ukases, vodka, and samovars. Among them jostled soldiers in the uniforms of the Pbhvmzghkz, Xzzardz, and Jakhghdz Regiments.

From the hotel windows we looked out on the surging crowds.

They were shouting:

"Xzdfight! Hightyuiolk! Rightdy!"

Sholmes referred to his dictionary.

"There is trouble brewing, Jotson," he remarked. "I deduce that fighting is going on."

"Your reasons, Sholmes?" I asked.

Sholmes smiled.

"You can hear the machine-guns, Jotson?"

"Yes."

"You can see the police charging with bayonets?"

"True."

"You have already observed the fact that there are a large number of dead bodies?"

"Most true."

"To the trained mind, Jotson, the inference is obvious. There is fighting going on."

"Now that you point it out, Sholmes, I see that you are perfectly correct, as, indeed, you always are," I admitted. "I should not have observed it, but undoubtedly you are right."

"I must leave you for the time, Jotson. If you want anything, call out to the samovar. There is also a vodka in abundance."

With a few magic touches of his hands Sholmes disguised himself as a droshky, and disappeared.

I waited anxiously for his return.

The firing was continuous, and from Sholmes' masterly deduction I knew that fighting was proceeding.

Sholmes, as usual, had not acquainted me with his intentions. I did not know what master-stroke required our presence in the city of revolution.

I could only wait and hope for the success of the popular army and for the triumph of my arms.

It was twenty minutes before Sholmes returned to the Subjibighug Hotel.

His return was dramatic. Loud and enthusiastic shouts drew me to the window. I distinguished the words:

"Beast! Hizzedevb jkhhg, Iolkjg lojhdg!"

Sholmes exclaimed.

Being upon the shoulders of the enthusiastic revolutionists, Herlock Sholmes approached.

Among them I recognised many prominent names of the popular party, such as Pabjirghfaki, Fgrtdhsoff, and Jkhhgrdki.

Sholmes smiled genially as the enthusiastic Russians seized him down.

He made a short speech, which I did not follow, owing to my ignorance of the language, but which I give for the benefit of my readers who are acquainted with Russian.

"Xrghty! Yuioprew hjkgy! Teybno kjghf! Ij jkhhgtd! Uh lkjh ghfdn. B! I jkghd ty kj gh azbnx!"

The crowd roared applause.

"Xkjhl! Xkjghfd! Xzbrtj!"

Then Sholmes rejoined me.

"Sholmes," I cried, "you have—"

He smiled in a somewhat bored way.

"The revolution is over, Jotson."

"And you—"

"You are right. It was my work! But let us go. The airship is at the window."

And we went. And from the street below a cheer followed us:

"Xzghf! Xzsdgh! Jkgh!"

III.

IT was not till we were ensconced once more in the old rooms at Shaker Street that Sholmes furnished his usual explanation. He seated himself with his accustomed elegance, his feet resting upon the mantelpiece, and helped himself to a liberal draught from the cocaine-cask.

"Sholmes," I exclaimed, "I am on tenterhooks. We arrived in Petrograd to find the city in the throes of revolution, and in twenty-four hours all was calm and bright. How did you effect this, Sholmes?"

Sholmes yawned slightly.

"It was perfectly simple, Jotson. The abdication of the Tsar settled the matter. Disguised as an officer of the Prjklmnopgruxzy Regiment, I penetrated to his presence in the palace of Trarsko Selo. The despot was at first obdurate. I whispered one sentence in his ear, Jotson, and he turned deadly pale, and his imperial knees knocked together. Then, in an expiring voice, he cried for a pen, and signed the deed of abdication. It was done, Jotson!"

"But the words you whispered in his ear, Sholmes, which produced this remarkable effect?"

"It was but a sentence, Jotson."

"And it was—"

Sholmes shook his head gravely.

"That, Jotson, must remain a secret until the end of the war! Pass the cocaine!"

And Sholmes said no more.

THE END.

FAGGING FOR WORDSWORTH.

By PETER TODD.

THIS is not exactly a yarn—more in the way of an anecdote, you know. But I think it's worth telling, because it's rather funny.

When I was a mere kid at another school, before I came to Greyfriars, I fagged for a chap named Wordsworth. With such a name, you might have fancied he would get called the "Post." But he didn't. He was called the "Beast."

And, my word, he was a beast, too! I remember his giving me one of the worst hidings I ever had for just spilling some tea on his tablecloth—which, considering the state of the tablecloth before the tea, was spilt, was distinctly off.

I fagged for him two terms—had to; no choice about it. Then one day he told me, with his usual politeness, that my time of slavery had ended.

"Had enough of you, Todd, you little scoundrel!" he said. "You can go and shove that ugly long nose of yours into somebody else's butter. There's a new specimen blowing in to-day, and I've bagged it. It can't be any worse than you are, anyhow!"

Which was just where Wordsworth was wrong!

The new kid was named Mortimer. I felt no end sorry for him when I saw what a dreary bouncer he was. But it's no use letting your sympathies run away with you, and I didn't go to the Beast and ask to be kept on for Mortimer's sake—not much!

Of all the absent-minded beggars I ever set eyes on, Mortimer was the limit. He came in to supper the first night with his top hat on, and seemed quite surprised when we chipped him. At home, he said, no one ever took any notice of his doing little things of that sort. Smythe asked him whether he lived at a lunatic asylum; but he didn't seem to catch on.

He and the Beast did not hit it, of course. But I can't honestly say that I think the blame was all on the Beast's side. Other fellows I have known would have kicked at their fags' hammering in nails with hair-brushes, and using flannel bags as dusters.

Mortimer seemed never to have tumbled to the quite useful idea of separate tables for separate things. A toothbrush appeared to him a fitting instrument for opening a sardine tin with. Now, it is not. It does not do the job nicely, and as a toothbrush it is none the

better for the experience. As for using the tablecloth for wiping up the crockery—well, I put it to you, can you use the disbelsh as a table-cover?

I asked Mortimer one day how he was getting on. He said he wasn't. But he had written a Hymn of Hate to Wordsworth, and had got lots of satisfaction out of that, anyway. I can't remember the whole thing, and the lines I do remember are a bit rocky in the metre, but not so bad, considering. Mortimer had more taste for poetry than for fagging:

"Thou prefect of great Wordsworth's name,

By thine own actions known to fame!

Why not sell the front of your head,

And buy a decent face instead?"

Perhaps it was Mortimer's Hymn of Hate that did it; but I should think not, for there would not have been any Mortimer left if the Beast had seen that! Anyway, I got a message from Wordsworth one day to say he wanted me immediately, if not sooner; and when I waited upon him—because I knew there would be trouble if I didn't—be graciously informed me that he was going to take me into his illustrious service again, being completely fed-up with Mortimer.

Then he turned and snarled.

"What a beastly stink!" he said, in his usual elegant way. "I say, Todd, you'd better go and hunt up that young idiot. He's been out borrowing matches for me this last half-hour!"

There was a gasping chase by, and I twigged at once that the smell came from that. The thing was turned off full on, but snuff.

"I was just going to switch it off when Mortimer blew in, with a box of matches in his hand. Before you could say 'knife' he had struck me, and—

My hat! That was some explosion! A blinding flash—an awful roar! I thought the giddy place would subside!

But it wasn't quite so bad as that. When I knew where I was, I was on the floor, with bits of the ceiling dotted over me. The Beast's study would have done for a photo of "After the Cyclone." And the Beast had lost his moustache! It wasn't much—rather like a cricket-match, as the old wheeze says, eleven on each side, but it was his pride and joy. The explosion must have been thorough-going in its methods to notice a little thing like that. But it had taken it clean off. We never found a hair!

And that explosion, which could take so much trouble over a trifle, missed Mortimer altogether! There he stood, looking as dreamy as ever, quite untouched.

Wordsworth grabbed him by the collar, yelling battle, murder, and sudden death. And what do you think that clump Mortimer said?

"Does it always do like that if you leave it on while you go to look for matches?"

"Oh, you—for— What did you leave on you?" howled the Beast.

"I didn't. It was you!"

"But you saw me. Why didn't you speak?"

"You told me not to, Wordsworth. You said you'd scrag me if you had any more of my giddy chat. Besides, I didn't know that anything would happen. How should I?"

Wordsworth made a rush for him. The kid didn't even try to bolt.

"I think you ought to be just, you know, Wordsworth," he said. "It was really your fault!"

And the queerest thing of all was that the Beast never forgave me. When I left Mortimer was still fagging for the Beast. He said that it wasn't so bad as it used to be, either.

THE END.

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A SUGAR CRISIS.

By MONTY LOWTHER.

THREE-QUARTERS of a pound of sugar is not much. That is the general opinion of St. Jim's. Baggy Trimble goes farther. He says that three-quarters is practically nothing at all, and that when it gets down to half a pound—well, Baggy is no great mathematician, and he really can't express himself clearly on the subject.

Not that he particularly wanted to talk about it. Baggy is a horribly unlucky fellow. Someone or other is always rubbing him by more or less conventional about things as to which he would prefer "to preserve a decent reticence," as the high-class writers say—in other words, things he has done and would a jolly sight sooner keep dark.

It was like that with the sugar. Baggy does not care to talk about it.

The Head must have been thinking pretty hard about the food ration bizney. He talked to us several times. Then came the sugar orders. Half a pound each per week was served out to us. The other quarter was held back for puddings and such things.

We were to make that half-pound do. The Head said, not only for tea in our studies, but for breakfast as well. It was just a bit comic at first to see fellows carrying in their sugar in all sorts of different ways—the Hon. A. A. D'Arcy his in a silver basin, his brother the Hon. W. D'Arcy his in a bit of newspaper; Tom, and Talbot theirs in decent china basins, like good little boys; Crooke his in what looked suspiciously like a cigarette tin with the paper rolled off; Levison major his in a matchbox; and Clive his in a wheat sample bag. But we soon got used to that.

Baggy Trimble did not bring his along in a portmanteau, but there came a time when it occurred to some of us that he might very well have done. Whoever ran short of sugar towards the end of the week, Baggy never did, yet he certainly wasn't more sparing of it than the rest of us.

We might have been suspicious of anyone else in such a case. But with Baggy we were not suspicious. We jolly well knew that he was robbing us. The difficulty was to bring home the crime to him.

For the first fortnight it was lump sugar. Then the supply of that ran short, and we had gratulated for a week. After that it was what they call caster, which is not a common sort for sweetening tea or coffee, but was the only kind available just then.

Fellows said that Baggy stole from study to study, taking a lump here and two lumps there, and adding them to his little lot; but he was never caught at it.

In the second week Manners carefully counted his lumps. There were sixteen after one breakfast, and only fourteen when he reckoned up again at tea. But that may have been because he came in late, and Tom and I had had one lump each out of his lot. There was no sufficient reason why we shouldn't, for surely Study No. 10 counted as one household? But he was so wrothy that we did not tell him that.

The granulated in the third week and the caster in the fourth went just as far

as the lump had gone. And Baggy, who liked three lumps to a cup, when he had lump, never went short!

It was getting too thick for anything. Something had to be done.

Something was done. We three reversed our policy. Instead of hiding our supplies to the best of our knowledge, we left our basins where anyone could see them. No, that is not quite a true statement of the case. We hid our sugar all right, but we left our basins in full view. And they were not empty, either.

It was on a Monday, the day on which the rations were served out, and the likeliest day for a Baggy raid. Manners volunteered to hide under the table and watch for Baggy.

When, ruddy and hot from footer, Tom and I came in to tea, we found Manners quite excited.

"That thieving rotter has just been in!" he said.

"Wouldn't you have been disappointed if he hadn't?" I asked.

"Ass! Of course I should, in a way, but this is too beastly thick for anything!"

"Keep your wool on, old scout," said Tom. "I haven't heard that we are on salt rations yet."

"Let's go along and talk to the rotter! Here, don't take your footer boots off yet, you two! They're just the things to talk to Baggy with."

"I feel chatty," said Tom, with a grin. "So do I—in my toes," I said.

We went along to the Fourth Form passage. The door of No. 3 Study, which Trimble shares with Mellish, was not quite closed, and even before we came abreast of it I heard Baggy's fat chuckle. Then Mellish said:

"You'll get dropped on to one of these days, you know."

"Not likely!" replied Baggy. "Who's going to miss a spoonful or two? But when you get forty or fifty extra spoonfuls it makes quite a nice little chuck. He, he, he! Have some, Mellish, old chap."

"I don't mind if I do," said Mellish.

"But, mind you, I'm not in this if you're dropped on."

"No better put this little lot away," said Baggy. "It would look rather a big ration for one chap if anyone happened in and saw it. He, he, he!"

"That's besides your own, I s'pose?" said Mellish.

"No; mine's there. I shoot it all in together. But mine don't make much difference in that little lot. He, he, he!" I said. Tom grin in a grin sort of way, and Manners was stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth.

We heard the clicking of spoons on cups. Then from within the study came a yell of anguished fear.

"I'm poisoned! Yaroooh! Ow-yow!"

"You—oh, you idiot! What—Ow-yow!"

We had been rather afraid that Mellish might take warning in time.

But he had not. His cup must have been up to his lips when Baggy let out that yell.

Tom pushed open the door.

"Hallo!" he said. "Anything gone wrong here?"

Others had heard Baggy's yell that he

was poisoned. Levison and Clive came running from No. 9, and Cardew came strolling behind them. Jack Blake, and Herries, and Digby, the one and only Gussy, jamming his monocle in his eye as he ran, Julian and Reilly and Hammond, and Kerruish, Lorno and Jones, minor and Tompkins, and Mulvaney minor—in about half a minute a crowd had collected.

It was a shocking sight for the crowd. Baggy and Mellish were retching and groaning and howling. Baggy may have believed that he had been poisoned. Mellish didn't, I am sure. But Mellish knew that he had swallowed something nasty which did not agree with his interior.

"I say, you fellows, look at that pile of sugar!" cried Levison. "Now we know who—"

"Is it sugar?" asked Manners.

"Tastes more like salt—or a mixture of the two," I said.

"Salt!" bleated Baggy. "Oh, you rotters!"

"Salt!" yelled Mellish. "Oh, you silly idiot, Trimble!"

"We had some salt in our sugar-basins," remarked Tom. "But it's a licker how it could have got here!"

We left them. Even now they knew it was only salt; they were feeling too ill to be pleasant.

The following interchange of courtesies between thief and receiver was reported later by a fellow of their own Form whose name I need not mention, as it is not material to the evidence:

Trimble: "I say, Mellish, old chap

Mellish: "Salt, go and eat coke, you cunning, fat fool!"

Trimble: "But, I say, you'll thank you our ration of sugar with me this week, of course?"

Mellish: "No—giddy—"

THE END.

My Comic Column.

By MONTY LOWTHER.

Owing to the scarcity of grave-diggers, a new order has been issued by the Coffin Controller, that no more deaths are to take place until further notice.

Germans retreating in the West called out "Goot-pye" to the British troops. We understand that the British reply was "Tanks!"

SQUASHED!

Tompkins rushed to enlist, determined that he would return to his suburb as Tompkins, C.B.

But, alas and alack! When Tompkins came back, it was only as Tompkins, C.B.

During the Russian Revolution, the Tsar is stated to have remained perfectly calm. This was judicious. In a similar affair in our island King Charles lost his head, with fatal results.

The wisdom of our governing geniuses has sometimes been called into question. But now that the Geo-Whizz Government is in office, we can at least depend upon being governed with geo-wisdom. (Hoarse cough—see?) Oh, - you - thick-headed chumps!

A HUNTER OF BIG GAME.

By ROBERT BOULTON (of St. Jim's).

I.

UNCLE JOE threw himself back in his chair as he sat at dinner, and looked at me and Jack Walkley hard. Uncle Joe always asked Jack and me for the holidays. Uncle is rich—tea and pickles and things, you know—and his place in Shropshire, the Grange, is no end a jolly show.

"I am going abroad," said Uncle Joe. "Going to shoot big game!"

We stared. There was good sport at the Grange—carp fishing in the lake and rabbits on the hills; but Uncle Joe never went out fishing or shooting. He had a way of talking as if he knew all about sport, though.

"Do you know, boys," he said, "that when I was in town I made a bet with my friend, Barker? The man calls himself my friend. Some people tell lies. Barker is one of them. He had the impudence to tell me to my face that he did not believe I had ever shot lions and tigers! I am going to show him that he is wrong. I am not going to be made the laughing-stock of the club."

"No, uncle; I should jolly well think not," I said.

"So I mean to go on a sporting tour," said Uncle Joe, "and I don't mind taking you two boys with me, if you will promise to behave."

"Oh, we will behave," I said.

"Like little angels," added Jack.

"Can we manage it these holidays?" I asked.

"Of course!" said Uncle Joe. "I shall just run out, make a fair bag, and be back in time for my next committee meeting."

The old man warmed to the subject, and talked till we had a hazy kind of notion that he really had roamed the wild lands where the hungry chimpanzee stalks the forest glades and the sinuous lion searches for its supper among the missionaries.

"I have told Ben Brooks," said Uncle Joe.

Jack and I knew Ben Brooks well enough. He was the mahogany-visaged individual who captained the little yacht Uncle Joe owned. Uncle wasn't any great shakes as a yachtsman—too prone to mal de mer for that. Brooks always seemed to be here everything he was told, and that suited my uncle; but I fancied Brooks wasn't quite so simple as he seemed.

"We start to-morrow," Uncle Joe continued. "I talked it over with Brooks in town, and he says it will be all right. The Esmeralda is at Sheerness, and we will motor down there. Brooks is making all the arrangements."

II.

WE were up early next morning. Mrs. Trant, the housekeeper, came hurrying up to us as we went down.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Bob, sir," cried the old woman, "and you, Mr. Jack, you will try to prevent dear Mr. Rivers doing this dangerous thing, will you not? He ought not to be allowed to go to those wild parts—he catches cold so easily!"

"I can't hold him," I said.

"But the first tiger will be sure to swallow him," said the old woman.

"It would take a hefty tiger," said

Jack. "Why, Mr. Rivers weighs seven-ton stone!"

"I don't care what Mr. Rivers weighs," said the housekeeper hotly. "But he must not go. It's wicked, Mr. Bob!"

"Bob, you hear?" said Jack. "It's up to you to stop it."

"I am not going to try," I said. "If Uncle Joe told me he was going for a week-end in the moon by aeroplane, I should know better than to argue the case. I can't stop him when he takes the bit in his teeth."

We embarked all serene next day. I was above a bit uneasy in my mind now; but that night, as Jack and I took a turn on deck after Uncle Joe had retired to his berth, Brooks came up and had a yarn with us.

"Look here, Mr. Bob," said the skipper; "we know your uncle well enough! Bless him for a true-hearted gentleman! But it's all a silly delusion of his that he's a sportsman, for, between you and me and t'other young gentlemen, he ain't; and, what is more, he never won't be! Why, he's never killed so much as a mouse."

"No," I said. Brooks was quite correct.

"It's like this, sir," said the skipper. "Brooks, my man," says your uncle, 'I want you to get a little shooting, and I shall bring along my nephew and young Walkley. I can't spare more'n a month. Well, he can afford his amusement; but I ain't going to have him run into danger, so I decides what was best to be done. It will be all the same to him. I have got the animal below!'"

"Got what below?" I asked, in relieved amazement.

"Why, the tiger he's going to shoot, sir."

"What?"

"It's like this, Mr. Bob. Mr. Rivers is too good a master to lose. He knows his way about all right in the City, but he would be nowhere at all in a jungle. He couldn't run. He's far too heavy. And he can't shoot—not to hit a hopping tiger that means business."

"Great snakes! You've got a tiger, about," said Jack.

"Would you like to have a squint at him, young gentlemen?" asked the skipper confidentially.

"Oh, ratler!"

"Then come along, both of you! I'll guarantee one thing. He won't bite."

In a comfortable box-like cage lounged the noble beast whose fate it was to give the reputation of sportsmanship to an ambitious pickle merchant!

"I bought him myself, sir," said Brooks, as he gazed fondly at the animal. "I took to Jampoor—is that his name?—and said as how I wanted a beast. You see, the master gives me a good screw for looking after this 'ere craft, an' he don't work me too hard, and I thought as how I could blow in a bit on my own. Mr. Rivers can have his shot—blank, of course—and nobody will be a bit the wiser, and the dear old governor won't come to any harm."

We gazed at the tiger. It really looked nothing more than a good-natured, big cat.

"Nice level bit of goods, that, sir!" said the skipper, as the noble quadruped had been one of the prize oxen at the show, whose chief merit

seems to consist of sitting down and standing up at the same time—if you get me.

Jack picked up a stick that was lying by the cage, and tickled the creature's nose.

"Is he a good mouse?" he asked.

"Uncle Joe was asleep above us, dreaming of the tropic jungle and the tawny monsters he was to slay!"

"A good what, sir?" said the skipper, as he stooped down and spoke to the animal.

"Well," said Jack, "he is a bit quiet, don't you think?"

"Lor', no, sir!" said Brooks. "You stick something into him, and he will get up and growl right enough. What more would you expect from a properly-behaved tiger?"

III.

AS for Uncle Joe, who was horribly seasick, two or three days seemed to him like weeks, and he was quite ready to believe we were getting close to India when he was told so.

The skipper wangled matters all right. Uncle Joe found the "sic transit" very much so, and came up on deck on the fourth day out, without the least idea of how long the voyage had lasted.

"Where are we now, Brooks?" he asked feebly.

"A foolish way on the voyage, sir," said Brooks unblushingly.

"Hear that, boys?" said Uncle Joe, as he waddled over to us and laid his fat hand on my arm. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"Almost incredible!" I said.

The next morning, as we chatted with the skipper, he pointed to a long line of coast.

"There's Indy," he said, and winked.

"Ah, good-morning, sir!" he went on, as Uncle Joe came slowly up on deck. "It is a good day for a bit of sport."

He nodded his head towards the blue coast.

"Already!" cried Uncle Joe, with a start. "But we are surely not there yet?"

The skipper shook his head sadly.

"Ah, sir, you have been terrible ill! You missed a lot of the trip. But I can guarantee you a tiger about this part, if you care to start this afternoon."

"What do you say, boys?" said Uncle Joe. "You and Brooks can come, too, and try the guns."

So it was arranged. Brooks left the boat while we were at lunch, to spy out the land, as he said. But Jack and I knew better. He took George, the boy who washed up. And they took the tiger. This was to be a real sporting trip—even if we had only reached Wales!

The skipper returned. George was left behind, but Uncle Joe did not notice his absence, for he was all agog with excitement about the afternoon's shooting.

We landed all right, and tramped inland.

"Bob, my dear boy," panted Uncle Joe, as he mopped his forehead, "this is a great experience for you and your friend! It isn't every boy who can say he has been to India!"

"No, uncle," I said. "I couldn't say it, anyway—not truthfully."

There was a big notice up right in our way, at the foot of a mountain. The first word was "Rhybudd."

Uncle Joe stopped and stared.

"Hindustani, I suppose," he said.

"Lor', no, sir," Rivers, "sir," Brooks bluffed, "that's Hindu—what you call it, and it means this 'ere neighbourhood is very dangerous."

What it really means is "Notice," I believe.

"Wonderful man, Brooks!" said Uncle Joe.

L. nodded. I was sure about that, anyhow.

"Suppose the beast strikes for more pay?" whispered Jack.

"Shush!" I said.

Uncle Joe, as the leader, tramped on a few paces ahead, and at a convenient moment George joined the Brooks. "I've got him tucked up in that little corner," he whispered.

"Then you had better untuck him," said Brooks.

George slipped away to do his duty. "The skipper ran forward, and touched his master on the arm.

"There's a tiger about, sir!" he said. "I can always tell. There's a kind of a sort of—

There, sir—quick!"

Uncle Joe turned, and saw, on the pathway, quite close at hand, the terror of the jungle, looking like a big, fat, easy-going, yellow cat. Jack and I were behind him; but we never thought of firing, though we carried guns.

It is the easiest thing in the world to catch a tiger's eye, far easier than for a Member of Parliament to catch the Speaker's.

The tiger met the look of Uncle Joe unflinchingly, but it did not glare. Uncle Joe did that. The animal advanced a couple of paces, and the intrepid hunter drew back.

"Mind, sir!" cried Brooks.

Uncle Joe fired. There was a loud report, a cloud of smoke, and I saw him roll over down the hill with the kick of his rifle.

Brooks is a man of resource. He helped his employer to his feet at once, and hurried him down to the boat.

"Capital shot, sir," he said. "But we had better get aboard sharp! There will be crowds more of the fierce beasts coming along now!"

"Then I hit it!" gasped Uncle Joe.

"Hit it! What do you think, sir?"

Uncle Joe must have thought he had, for he seemed so pleased, and when later on in the evening, Brooks showed him a skin, he grinned wildly with delight.

"It's a beauty!" he said.

That night, when the sportsman had gone to bed, Brooks took us aside.

"George brought the beast back all safe," he said. "It's down below, feed-ink like a prize hog! I bought the skin in London—got to be ready for things, you know, sir!"

THE END.

"T. M. W."

CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

A. A. D'A.—Yes, certainly there are such things as bad jokes. Have you never looked in a mirror?

B. M.—Thinking of going in for the literary line, are you? It is kind of you to say that you would like me to offer you suggestions for subjects. How would an "Owed to Racker" do, for one? Then you might try your hand on a touching poem entitled, "To My Study-mate," though I am prepared to lay odds that you will not touch B. T. for anything in the shape of hard cash.

B. T.—Your query should have been addressed to our Financial Editor, who has not yet been appointed, by the way. When the war is over, and the appointment indicated has been made, you might do well to borrow a wheelbarrow and come along to fetch what you want—or you might not.

G. W.—No, I have not heard about Grundy's latest bloomer. Send it along, in the strictest confidence, of course. Wild horses would not drag out of me the identity of the sender!

A SWIMMING LESSON. By S. Q. I. FIELD.

LEGGO my ear, Cherry, you beast! Yow-ow-stoppit!"

Thus William George Bunter, who was vainly struggling in the grasp of Bob Cherry.

It was a glorious afternoon, and the Famous Five, having decided to devote the half-holiday to giving Bunter a swimming lesson, were putting their plans into execution.

Bunter objected. In his own opinion, he was already a first-class swimmer. Certainly he could float; fat always does. But with that his aquatic abilities ended. The little party was nearing the bathing place when Bunter made another desperate attempt to bluff the chums of the Remove.

"Really, you fellows, you know what a dab I am at swimming?"

"We do!"

"We do!"

"Well, y'vo a rather important engagement, I've this afternoon, and—Yow-ow-arrroogh! Lemme go!"

Bob Cherry had tightened his grip upon Bunter's ear; he had no intention of letting that fat youth go.

Harry Wharton assisted with an occasional foot-lift from behind, which spurred Bunter on in the way he should go.

They arrived at the bathing-place, and Billy Bunter cast an anxious look round. There was no way of escape; and with a despairing sigh, he slowly commenced to undress.

The Famous Five were soon clad in their swimming costumes, and they looked round for Bunter.

They were arrayed in a startling coloured swimming costume, rather like a zebra, which threatened to burst at any minute.

Harry Wharton rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"Hold me up, someone!" he gasped faintly.

"Behold the walking grate polish advertisement!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you ready, Tubby?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bunter's fat knees were knocking together; but he said he was ready, and gingerly stepped towards the edge of the bath.

He was not fond of water, and he hesitated, but a push from Johnny Bull decided for him. Waving his arms wildly in the air, in a vain endeavour to keep his balance, he toppled over with a terrific splash into the water, where he bobbed up and down like a huge porpoise.

"Oooh! Gerrooch!" he gurgled, as a few quarts of water went inside.

"Help! Help!"

The chums dived in to his rescue, and fished him out. Once out of the water, Billy Bunter made off at a pace that surprised his rescuers. But he did not go far. Somehow his legs got entangled, and with another terrific splash, he flopped sideways into the water. He was more fortunate this time, as he landed fair and square upon Alonzo Todd, who let out a wild yell, and disappeared, gurgling like a bottle of ginger-beer half opened.

Both were hauled out none the worse for their lucking, and after some hesitation, Billy Bunter agreed to be towed round the bath by means of a belt attached to a pole. But when the belt was brought, it was found to be much too small to fasten around his middle, so that idea was abandoned.

Then he feigned cramp, so the Co. commenced to pinch, slap, and massage

him, with the result that the cramp disappeared suddenly.

His next remark fairly staggered the Removees.

"But you fellows that I'll beat you in a hundred yards race!"

"Why, you fat ass, you can't swim for toffee!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"Never mind, let him try," said Frank Nugent. "He may be a dark horse. Ahem!"

"Line up!" yelled Bob.

The juniors lined up. Alonzo Todd agreed to be starter.

"Are you ready?"

"Go!"

The Famous Five plunged in and swam off at a terrific pace. Bunter was nowhere to be seen. At least, not in the water! He had not dived in, but had made a grab at his clothes and a towel, and was soon bolting as fast as his little fat legs would carry him.

Harry Wharton and his chums did not notice his absence at first, but Johnny Bull, looking back, just caught sight of a fleeing figure in the distance, which he easily recognised as that of Bunter.

"Why, the fat sproofer didn't come in at all!" he exclaimed.

"My hat, after him!"

And the chums swam back. But Billy Bunter had made himself scarce. He was nowhere to be found, so the Five went back, and soon forgot all about Bunter in a bracing game of water-polo.

They were soon to remember him later, for hardly had half an hour elapsed when a fat figure crept stealthily into the swimming-bath. It was Bunter.

With many chuckles, he collected the clothes of the Famous Five, and made off with them, unnoticed by anyone.

The swimmers came out of the water. They looked round for their clothes.

"Their clothes were gone!"

"Where's my clobber?" asked Bob Cherry.

"And mine!"

The Five looked at each other in blank amazement.

"That fat beast has been and boned them!"

"My hat, I'll scalp him!" roared Bob Cherry. "What are we going to do—stand here all day 'mit notings on!"

"We shall have to leg it back to the school," said Frank Nugent. "It's getting jolly late."

"What—like this?"

"We'll be either that or stay here." And the chums decided to leg it.

A crowd of fellows awaited them. Billy Bunter had lost no time in acquainting the Remove of the joke, and quite a goodly number had turned out to see the fun. A howl of laughter went up on all sides as the scantily-clad Co. dashed in at the gates, their faces red and furious.

They reached their dormitory without encountering a master or prefect, and found their clothes in a bundle on one of the beds.

Then they proceeded to hunt for William George Bunter. It was not easy to find him. But he was run down at last, and sent quite a lively time at the hands of the furious juniors.

He was bumped, frog-marched, ducked in the fountain, and then bumped again, and when he eventually did escape he crawled away to caress and rub his injured person.

As for the Famous Five, they have given up the idea of teaching Bunter to swim.