

**FIGHTING THE FLAMES!** Great School Story Inside.

The

**GEM** 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>  
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**THE GREAT FIRE AT ST. JIM'S!**

*A Dramatic Incident from the Gripping Long Complete School Story Inside.*



Half-a-crown is paid for all contributions printed on this page.

#### MODERN PROVERBS.

A leavist is the chief of time.  
It's a wise son who knows when to ask  
his father for money.  
The best policy is paid-up life insurance.

Where there's a will there's a feast for  
layners.

It's never too late to lose or go home.  
Nothing will be done well that you do  
yourself if you don't know how.

When the cat's away the night is  
quiet.

A friend in need is a friend to steer  
by.

Don't look before leaping when a  
motor-car comes scorching your way.—  
Norman Craven, 96, Blackwell Road,  
Carlisle.

#### WONDERFUL IRELAND.

An American was boasting of the tur-  
pitude speed at which trains travelled in  
his rushing country. After telling an  
impossible story, an Irishman said:  
"An' sure, do you call that rapid? Why,  
only last week I booked third-class for  
Dublin at Belfast, an' got there in a  
second!"—Henry Casley, 41, Yeoman's  
Row, Brompton, S.W. 3.

#### HOT AND COLD.

I was coming back from a holiday to  
Sydney when the following thing hap-  
pened: At a station not far from  
Sydney an old lady asked the conductor  
to shut the window, or else she would  
freeze. A second lady said: "Open that  
window, or I shall smother!" At this  
an old man put in: "Close one window,  
and another one of those women, and  
open it again and freeze the other!"—  
Harold H. Tolhurst, Kilmorie, Little  
Hartley, via Mount Victoria, Sydney,  
New South Wales, Australia.

#### HIS PROFESSION.

Two workday Wilkes were arguing  
about their jobs. Says one: "I don't  
work as hard as you. I've got a job as  
a hot cross-bun maker!" Says  
the other: "H'm! That's nothing. I've  
got a job as a Coronation programme  
seller!"—J. B. Irving, 3A, Kyaukse  
Road, Theodosia Heath, Surrey.

#### AN EARLY SPRING.

We talk of the signs of the weather,  
We talk of the birds that sing.  
If you happen to sit on a spring's nest,  
'Tis the sign of an "early spring."  
—J. B. Devine, The Square, Nether  
Wallop, Hants.

#### ON THE TELEPHONE.

"Are you there?" "Yes." "What's  
your name?" "Wart's my name."  
"Yes, what's your name?" "I say my  
name is Wart; you're Jones?" "No;  
I'm Knott." "Will you tell me your  
name?" "Will Knott." "Why won't  
you?" "I say my name is William  
Keatt." "Oh, I beg your pardon?"  
"Then you will be in this afternoon if  
I come round, Wart?" "Certainly,  
Keatt!" And they rang off.—Miss H.  
Reid, Dorchester Cottage, Merpoth.

#### PROFITTEERING.

The grocer who has made his pile,  
Does he grow stiffer? No, sir!  
He does not change his heart or style,  
But grows a grayer grocer.  
—J. Jones, 27a, King Street, Carnar-  
then.

#### A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

A certain professor by the name of  
Walter Raleigh was coming to lecture  
at St. Jim's. Someone had to meet him,  
and Mr. Selby was chosen. When the  
train came in, Mr. Selby—who did not  
know the professor—said to a rather  
staid-looking man: "Pardon me, sir,  
but are you Walter Raleigh?" The  
person to whom this was addressed, not  
being the professor, said good-  
temperately: "No, indeed, I have not  
that pleasure. I am Christopher  
Columben. Walter Raleigh is in the  
smoking-car with Queen Elizabeth!"—  
Cyril Bell, 56, Mount Park Avenue,  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

#### AITUTAKI.

Aitutaki is one of the most beautiful  
islands in the Pacific Ocean. It is some  
distance from the Cook Islands, its  
length being five miles. No words can  
paint the scenery as seen from a canoe.  
It is best really described to say that the

dark green lagoon, in the centre of a  
reef-bordered lagoon, lies like a cushion  
of rich moss, set upon a plateau of vivid  
green jade, bordered with a rim of pearl,  
and surrounded again by a pair of  
modern buildings.

Over extraordinary depths the cause  
glides, and nearing the reef the water  
begins to lighten into flooring emerald,  
shades with orange, rose, pink, purple,  
and red. Among the coral the tiny  
blue coral fish flit like tiny bangles,  
and now and then one catches a  
scarlet gleam as a goldfish skims into  
some gloomy cave. The six edges in of  
bristly blue, and the clouds have a  
collection of green. The beach is coral  
sand white as snow, and in the sea  
distance a magic circle of pearls  
marks off the green lake from the blue  
ocean, sending a faint murmur of ham-  
ming surf through the still, perfumed  
air.—C. Pein, 20, King Street, Rockdale,  
N.S.W., Australia.

#### THEY CAME BACK!

"When I was a little child," the ser-  
geant said sweetly to the squad at the  
end of an exhausting hour of drill. "I  
and a set of wooden soldiers. There was  
a poor little boy in the neighbourhood;  
and after I had listened to a stirring talk  
about charity, I was advised enough to  
give them to him. Then I washed them  
back; but my mother said: 'Don't cry,  
Boots. Some day you will get your  
wooden soldiers back. And believe me,  
you landed, nation-headed, hair-  
less set of rollings-up, that day has  
come!'"—R. Devine, P.O. Box 29, Port  
Elizabeth, South Africa.

#### HIS COUNTRY.

A crowd was watching a proposition of  
the unemployed, when an American  
said: "I guess you wouldn't be that in  
my country." An old Scotsman,  
standing by, said: "And what country  
is that, now?" "Why, God's own  
country," replied the American.  
"Now," said the old dame, "an' ye  
speak of us as an' aye pair Scotch accent!"  
—Robert Scott, 40, West Street, Ber-  
wick.

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# Fighting the Flames

A Grand Long Complete School Story of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the Chums of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER I.

### The Only Way!

"I SHALL have to get some overalls!"

"Some what?"

"Overalls, dear boy!"

"And what the heck?" demanded Tom Merry. "Are overalls?"

"Something you get over a wall with, I should think," remarked Mooty Leather thoughtfully.

"Woolly, Lowthab—"

"Well, what are they, anyhow?" asked Manners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth turned his eyesless severely upon the Terrible Three. He seemed to be under the impression that the Shell fellows were deliberately misunderstanding him.

"When I say overalls," he said, "I mean overalls, naturally!"

Tom Merry burst into a shriek.

"Oh, the aw mean overalls!" he said.

"Yes, wathab! I said overalls," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Utah the cirs, I wogard them as vevy necessary. I wathab approve of old Walker's ideah with wogard to wogash fire-drill, you know. But a chap must think of his closhab!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke with great seriousness, evidently having given the matter considerable thought. But Tom Merry & Co. did not look at all serious.

"I see," said Lowthab thoughtfully. "If there's an alarm of fire in the middle of the night, you're going to stop to get your overalls over your clothes, in case they get a bit smoky. If you're barred to sleep while you're doing it, that doesn't seem as good, I suppose?"

"Wats! I am alidin' to the fire-drill in the daytime," said Arthur Augustus.

"It's a soddab ideah, as far as it goes! Forinstance, suppose somebody cause along nottin' fire to St. Jim's! Nothin' like bats' weedy. But burnin' up and down fire-escapes, and jumpin' into harkots, and squirts' with a hose wook, play darin' and drakes with a fellow's clabbab! We're got to go straight forw' lessons in fire-drill. No time to wash up and change clothes!"

Arthur Augustus polished his eyeless thoughtfully.

"It's wathab a providin'," he concluded. "I have been givin' it some deep thinkin'. I can tell you. Of course, a fellow could go in to his lessons in his old clothes—"

"He could?" assented Tom Merry.

"That's all vevy well for you chaps," said D'Arcy, with a nod. "You chaps are wathab slowvay, anyway, if you don't mind my mentionin' it. But I've always made it a point to be wathab well-

dressed, and set an example to the Lewah School, you know. Goin' into class in old clothes would be wathab infwa dig. On the other hand—"

"On the other hand—" grizzled Lowthab.

"Yes, on the othab hand, a fellow can't wash off to fire-drill in doocot clabbab, and get his sleeves wabbed and his knees baggy, and all that. So I have thought of havin' a set of overalls in the lobby always weedy. I shall nip into them in a twinklin', you know, and there you are!"

"He, ha, ha!"

"I did to see any reason for mackin', you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, raising his eyebeams. "I have been thinkin' it out, and it flaked into my brain, you know."

"There is exactly the brain it would flash into!" assented Manners.

"Yes, wathab! I think of things, you know," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I can get them at Mr. Wigg's, in Wylcombe. He has a lot of Government stock to sell of cheap-overalls among othab things. I think I will base off on my bike now, as droll began ahab lesson in this afternoon. If you fellows see Blake, tell him I'm sorry. I can't turn up to cricket—"

"Can't you?" demanded a voice behind the Hooseable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake and Herries and Digby of the Fourth had come out of the School House while Arthur Augustus was making his sage remark. Blake gave the veed of St. Jim's a playful tap on the back of the head, titing his topper over his nose, just to amuse his arrival.

"Bat Jove!"

Arthur Augustus retraced his topper, and turned his wathabful eye upon the chums of the Fourth.

"You uttab us, Blake—"

"Come on!" said Blake. "Half an hour at cricket—lots of time! We've got to beat the Shell on Saturday, you know."

"Not in your lifetime!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Rate! Come on, Gang!"

"I was just wromakin', Blake—"

"Your remarks can be continued in our next old chap. Come along to the cricket!"

"I'm goin' down to Wylcombe—"

"Not, to-day! Come on!"

"I wogash some overalls—"

"Cricket! Come on!"

"Cricket can come later, Blake—"

"Aw! It's fire-drill after tomorrow—Mr. Bladon's new wathab!" said Blake.

"Bladon? If I can see why we should have it, when the New House don't!

But, it's no good arguin' with a Hoose-master!"

"It's because we have fire-drill ahab lessons that I wogash my overalls, Blake—"

"Fethab! This way!"

"I am sorry—"

"Keep your sorrys for another occasion, old top," said Blake. "Take his right arm, Herries—"

"Let go, Herries, you see!"

"Take his leg, Dig—"

"Woolly, Digby—"

"I'll prod him behind!" said Blake, taking a horse-like grip on his bat.

"Now then—"

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus frantically, as Blake pushed.

It was rather a forceful prod, and, as Gony's arms were held by Herries and Digby, he could not raise any objections, except vevally.

"He, ha, ha!" yelled the Terrible Three.

"Welcome me, you uttab ones—"

"March!" said Blake.

Herries and Digby marched, and Arthur Augustus had to march between them. It was, as Mooty Leather remarked, like a wild elephant being led between two trees.

The Terrible Three followed, chortling.

Arthur Augustus turned round a crimson face towards Blake.

"You shirkles' on—" he gasped.

"Pood!"

"You-wroop! You uttab chump, I—"

"Cricket old chap!" said Blake. "If you're not up to the mark I shall have to turn you out of the Fourth Form Eleven you know!"

"I should wathab to be turned out of the Fourth Form Eleven, Blake! And I insist— Yawwooh!"

"Pood!"

"He, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to Wylcombe to get my overalls!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"You're going to Little Bide, to do cricket practice!" scowled Blake.

"I wogash them immediately ahab lessons—"

"Pood!"

"You fethab wathab—"

"Hold on, old chap!" said Mooty Leather, as if struck by a bright thought.

"I'll cut down to Wylcombe and get your overalls, if you like, Gang. Leave it to me!"

"Bat Jove, that's very decent of you, Lowthab!"

"Not at all, old chap! Happy to oblige!" said Lowthab affably. "Rely on me to get a first-class fit!"

"Tel Mr. Wages to put it on my bill, The Gem Librari.—No. 565.

dash her. Keep that bat away, Blake, you wretch! It will come down to the cricket, since Lowthick is so obliging. You'll be back to get back before lessons, Lowthick?"

"Yes, rather, as Mr. Linton will help me if I don't," grinned Lowther. "If I don't see you, I'll hang 'em on your peg in the lobby."

"Thank you very much, dear boy! Yawwooh! Keep that bat away, Blake, you wretch!"

Arthur Augustine disappeared with his crans in the direction of Little Side.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Monty Lowther's College!

"A—Duffer!"

Those polite remarks were made by Tom Merry and Manners, as the Fourth-Formers departed. The remarks were addressed, of course, to Monty Lowther, who smiled benignantly at his chums.

"What's the row now?" he inquired.

"Fished!" said Tom Merry. "What the merry thump are you peeling Gussy's leg for? He can't show up at fire-drill in overalls!"

"Mr. Bailton will drop on him like a ton of oak, if he does!" remarked Manners.

"My dear infants, isn't it a fellow's duty to oblige a loved schoolmate?" asked Monty Lowther. "Am I not always doing these kind things?"

"Am!"

"Fished!"

Monty Lowther looked pained.

"Instead of upbraiding your chum for performing a kind action, come along and help me select the overalls," he said.

"Catch em," said Tom. "I'm going to do some batting before lessons. We're going to beat the Fourth on Saturday."

"I've got some film to develop," said Manners.

"Then I shall have to go alone," said Lowther. "Well, I dare say I can manage. I've seen that lot of goods at Mr. Wiggs', and I think I can pick out something suitable for Gussy. Ta, ta, old toper."

Monty Lowther walked away to the bicycle shed, leaving his chums rather perplexed.

"I suppose it's a stink," said Tom Merry, after some thought. "He can't be any enough to bring in a suit of overalls for that howling ass. Let's get along to the cricket. Manners."

"Come and help me in the dark-rooms," suggested Manners.

"Rain!"

"Bos-ness, then!"

And the chums parted, each to follow his own inclination. Tom Merry was betting to Talbot's bowling, and Manners was enjoying himself in the wet light of the dark-rooms, when Monty Lowther went cheerfully to Ryker's. On the Fourth Form pick, Arthur Augustine had nobly consented to throw himself into the cricket, and now on the important subject of the overalls. It was not till the bell rang for lessons that the cricketers came off.

Monty Lowther had not reappeared when the juniors crowded into the School House for afternoon lessons. Tom Merry looked out of the big doorway, with a hunted brow. Mr. Linton, the master of the Sixth, was very keen on punctuality, and the class did not want to be late. They generally received lines enough, without adding for more.

"Lowthick's gone in, you fellows!" asked Arthur Augustine, coming along with Blake & Co. on his way to the Form-room.

THE GAZETTE.—No. 695.

"Not yet."

"Bai Jee! I trust he will not be late, as he went down to Wycombe to change one," said Arthur Augustine, with feebly concern.

"Come on, Gussy!" howled Blake.

"Comin', dear boy!"

The Fourth-Formers went into their Form-rooms. Most of the Sixth had gone into their room, too, where Mr. Linton was ready for them; but Tom Merry and Manners still lingered. They did not want to go in without their chum.

"The ass!" grunted Manners. "We shall get lines for this."

"Hallo, there he is!"

Monty Lowther came speeding up to the School House, with a big bundle under his arm. He came in rather breathlessly.

"Fourth's gone in!" he asked.

"Yes; and we're late—"

"Never mind that," said Lowther cheerfully. "I've got the goods, but I didn't want Gussy to see them before lessons."

"You howling ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Do you mean that you're late on purpose?"

"You see, I wanted to size Gussy—"

"Fished! Come on, now!"

"We're already late!" howled Manners.

"May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," said Lowther philosophically. "I told Gussy I'd put his peep on the peg in—"

"Ass! I tell you—"

Monty Lowther cut into the lobby. There he jerked the string off the parcel, and unveiled the brown paper. A blue bundle rolled out. Tom Merry and Manners stared at it.

"What on earth—" began Tom.

Monty Lowther shook out the overalls. He held them up for inspection before his astonished chums.

"I fancy that lot was worn by a fellow about six-foot-six," he remarked. "A bit long for Gussy, perhaps—"

"Ha, ha! You funny ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "So that's why—"

"The trousers are about four feet long—the jacket about the same," said Lowther, thoughtfully. "None of Gussy's doddle will show when he's got this lot on. I'm sure. Think so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd have got them a bit bigger, but this was the largest size going." Lowther hung his precious purchase on the peg sacred to Arthur Augustine D'Arcy of the Fourth. "Now, let's cut, or Linton will be getting his hair off."

"He's got it off already, most likely, you wretch!"

The Three cut off hurriedly to the Sixth-rooms.

Lessons had started there, and Mr. Linton raised a howling eye upon the three juniors as they came in, several minutes late.

"Fifty lines!" he snapped.

Tom Merry and Manners each bestowed a ferocious look on their toothsome chum. But Monty Lowther only smiled as he went to his place. He considered that his little joke on Gussy was worth fifty lines.

The thought of Gussy turning up to fire-drill in those overalls was joyful to Lowther, and it enabled him to bear the frowns of his Form-master with great equanimity.

Most of the School House fellows were looking forward to fire-drill after lessons. It was to be taken under the personal supervision of Mr. Bailton, who had instituted it in his House. Mr. Hatchell, the Housemaster of the New House, had pooh-poohed the suggestion. He did not approve of any suggestion that came from the School House master. So the

New House fellows were not taking part in the drill.

Figgs & Co. of the New House were consequently disposed to make fun of it—while the School House took it with ardent seriousness. Already news had been passed on the subject.

But it was not in Monty Lowther's nature to take anything with very much seriousness. And certainly the five-parade of the St. Jim's Gimmies was not likely to be very serious if Arthur Augustine turned up in the exercise overalls Monty had provided for him.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Arthur Augustine Causse a Semblon.

"C—RICKETY for me!" remarked George Figgs of the New House, when the Fourth Form, dismissed by Mr. Linton, came out into the corridor.

Figgs made that observation loud enough for Blake & Co. to hear. He wanted it to be fully understood that any snoot in which the New House did not share wasn't worth a stout, gayway.

Jack Blake looked round.

"Well, you fellows need some practice," he said. "The way you play cricket is enough to make the angels weep."

"Yes, wretch!"

Figgs waved his hand airily.

"Run away, little boy, and play at football," he sneered.

The School House was such fire some day, if Blake or Cooke or Mellich drops a cigarette about—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr and Fatty Wray.

"That's not likely to happen in the New House, you know!" grunted Rieffers.

Blake gave a start.

"What about Clump and Chewie?" he demanded. "They're snaky beasts, if you like. They'll set fire to a bedroom some day with their smokes, and then you fellows will be jolly glad for us to come along and save your lives."

"Yes."

"And we will walk up like archbishops," Figgs, and save your life, dear boy, although you are a wretch cheeky as!"

"I'll reward you out of my old-age pension," said Figgs. "I shall be getting it by the time you fellows learn how to handle a fire!"

"You stink ass—"

"Oh, come on!" said Blake. "Bailton's out in the good already; no time to waste on New House asses!"

The Sixth were coming out now, and they joined the crowd of the Fourth. All the School House fellows were for the quadrangle, under a fan of shipping from the New House crowd. Most of the juniors stopped only to snatch their caps; but Arthur Augustine had more to do than that. Arthur Augustine was clad in his usual noble elegance, and he had his doddle to think of. Fortunately, his elegant doddle was in no danger, owing to the wonderful idea that had flashed into his noble brain. With anxious hands handling a fire-rose, there really was no telling what might happen to a chap's doddle, and Arthur Augustine was pressing no risks. The overalls settled the question for him.

But a rather thoughtful shade came over his noble brow as he took down the big blue overalls from the peg.

In such garments as overalls even Arthur Augustine did not expect a fashionable cut of fit. But there was a limit. Monty Lowther had been kind and obliging—Gussy admitted that—but—He held up the overalls, and looked at them through his eyelids.

"Blake, my dear boy—"

But Blake was gone.  
 "Howlows!"  
 "Come on!" answered Horrie, jamming his cap on his head, and belling.  
 "I say, Dig."  
 "Get a move on, Gussy!" said Dig, as he disappeared.  
 "Wildrake."  
 "I guess I can't step, old scout!" answered Kit Wildrake. "You'd better leave. Raillon won't like anybody late." And the Canadian justice vanished.  
 "But Jove! I say, Tom Mowry."  
 "Good bye!"  
 "Mazzan."  
 "Fare thee well!" grizzled Mazzan.  
 "Lowthab—pway remain a moment, Lowthab."  
 Everybody seemed in a prancing hurry with the exception of Monty Lowther. That kind and obliging youth lingered with Arthur Augustus.  
 "Don't you know how to get into them?" he asked cheerfully. "I'll help you, old top!"  
 "Aren't they rather big, old fellow?" asked D'Arcy slyly.  
 "Well, you're such an athletic chap for your age, you know," said Monty Lowther.  
 "Yes, but—"  
 "Overalls always fit a bit loosely," said Lowther. "You take in a tuck here and there, you know. I've got some pins."  
 "Yes, but—"  
 "Jump into them," said Lowther. "There's Kildare waiting for us already. No time to waste, Gussy!"  
 "I—I suppose it would not do to wish my clothes."  
 "Suppose some one sees the hole right on you?" said Lowther.  
 "But Jove!"  
 "How you are! Get in—"  
 Monty Lowther held the vast trousers ready, and Arthur Augustus stepped into them, and nearly vanished.  
 "Great Scott! I—"  
 "They fasten like this, and the jacket part comes down over them—"  
 "But they are flouting! all wound my feet—"  
 "I'll pin 'em up—"  
 "But—"  
 "There you are—"  
 "Yoooooh!" yelled Arthur Augustus suddenly.  
 "What on earth's the matter?"  
 "You-ow! You was that pin into my calf, you foolish old!" spluttered Arthur Augustus in anguish.  
 "Nonsense!"  
 "That's all very well for you, you wish me, but it was my calf!" shrieked the wail of the Fourth.  
 "My dear chap, there's no time to waste, and you shouldn't have such a fatiged calf. There—"  
 "Yoooop!"  
 "What's the matter now?"  
 "Yes've was it into my other leg!"  
 "My hat! You've always grinning at something, Gussy!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "The legs are fixed now, anyhow. Now for the rest."  
 "The rest" of the overalls enveloped Arthur Augustus like a tidal wave. They descended to the floor around him, and mingled graciously with the bagginess of the trousers.  
 "But Jove! I really think—"  
 "Now you've fixed. Come on!"  
 "But, really—"  
 Monty Lowther grasped the scroll of St. Jim's by the arm, and ran him out of the lobby.  
 "Your clothes can't get touched now, Gussy."  
 "Yes, but—"  
 "Come on!"  
 Lowther cut out of the House, Arthur

Augustus belated. Undoubtedly, his elegant clothes were remarkably well protected, but—  
 "Cuts of the Fifth came hurrying along. He had been sent by the Housemaster to round up stray jurors.  
 He almost fell down at the sight of Gussy in his overalls.  
 "What the—what—what— Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Catts.  
 "Wee!y, Catts—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fifth-Former. "What a game! Get along with you, D'Arcy, Mr. Raillon's writing."  
 And Catts of the Fifth pushed Arthur Augustus out of the House, and followed him, still shouting. There was doubt and dismay in Gussy's noble mind now; but it was too late—the die was cast.  
 He hurried towards the crowd of School House jurors gathered round Mr. Raillon in the quadrangle. Kildare of the Sixth already had the floor in position. Darrel and Langton and Kildare were in charge of the fire-scapes, and a number of other Sixth-Formers had the life-saving sheets in hand. At a respectful distance stood a crowd of New House fellows, venturing on the exact amount of chipping that could possibly be ventured upon in the presence of a Housemaster and a bunch of prefects.  
 Mr. Raillon had his back to the House just then, and did not see Arthur Augustus hurrying up. But the others saw him; and soon the New House crowd there were up a wild yell.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Gussy—" shrieked Blake loudly.  
 "Gussy—" bubbled Horrie and Dig.  
 "Oh, you boogied joy!" gasped Wildrake.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "I'm weedy, dear beer," panted Arthur Augustus, "quite weedy. Sorry I'm a minute or two late—"  
 He hurried to join his chums. And

then the pias in the extensive trousers—perhaps not put in very securely—jerked out, and the enormous trousers slipped down around Gussy's ankles, and tripped him up.  
 The roar of laughter caused Mr. Raillon to turn round, with a frowning brow, to ascertain the cause.  
 He was treated to a startling sight.  
 Arthur Augustus, tripping and stumbling in his footing trousers, took a "header," and landed on his hands and knees fairly at the Housemaster's feet!  
 CHAPTER 4.  
 Very Wet.  
 MR. RAILLON stared at the extraordinary figure sprawling at his feet. He did not seem to know what it was for the moment.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Silence!" thundered the Housemaster.  
 "But it was useless for even the Housemaster to command silence at that moment. The sight of Arthur Augustus sprawling, enveloped in overalls, was too much for the jokers, and the actors, too. The quadrangle of St. Jim's rang with shouts of laughter.  
 "Oh dear!" gasped Tom Mowry. "Gussy will be the death of the academy!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Boy!" thundered Mr. Raillon.  
 "Goooooh! Help a chap up, somebody!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Get up at once!"  
 "I—I'm trying!" gasped Arthur Augustus.  
 He scrambled up, caught his foot again, and reeled on the ground, with a splutter. Mr. Raillon stooped, took a grip on the back of his neck, and lifted him bodily to his feet.  
 "Goooooh!"



Catts of the Fifth came along the corridor. He almost fell down at the sight of Gussy in overalls. "What the—what—what— Ha, ha, ha!" he yelled. Gussy's overalls enveloped him like a tidal wave. (See this page.)

"You stiffer aboard boy?" enquired Mr. Railton. "What do you mean by coming into the quadrangle in this extraordinary garb?"

"They—they're my overalls, sir!"

"Your waist?"

"Overalls—to save my clabbah, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! D'Arcy, go back into the house at once, and remove those ridiculous things. And take a hundred lines!"

"Oh dear! Well, sir—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Railton.

Arthur Augustus started. He gathered up his vast trousers in both hands, and stumbled away.

A yell of laughter followed him.

The sight of Arthur Augustus tripping away, basking up his skirts, was tremendous.

"Oh dear!" gasped Blake. "Of all the asses—"

"I guess he does assess the price here!" grinned Wildrake.

"Silence!"

Mr. Railton's frowning brow restored silence at last. The Housemaster apparently failed to see the joke.

But though the School House fellows were reduced to something like gravity, the New House crew, at a little distance, persisted in grinning. They were determined that, for their part, the fire-drill was not going to be taken seriously.

Mr. Ratcliff came along from his House, and lifted his scanty eyebrows at the sight of the School House crew.

The amateur firemen were at work by this time, and the old signs were receiving a shower-bath, which probably did them good.

Mr. Ratcliff curbed his thin lips in a sour smile.

It did not please him to approve of the proceedings; and in those circumstances it would have been in better taste for Mr. Ratcliff to keep off the scene. But he preferred to appear. The New House master never neglected an opportunity of making a remark that might cause discomfort.

"Ah! Boy, my dear Railton, I see!" he remarked, with a manner that indicated that he regarded the whole affair as child's play.

Mr. Railton, determined not to observe his colleague's unpleasant smile, nodded cheerfully.

"As you see, Hatcliff!" he replied.

"What are—er—these—these objects?" asked Mr. Ratcliff, gazing at the ill-used sheets.

"They are for jumping into from a window, in case of fire," explained Railton.

"You really seem to anticipate a fire, my dear fellow!"

"Surely it is not impossible, Ratcliff! Why not be prepared?"

"Oh, quite so, quite so!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with the same disagreeable smile.

"I dare say you are quite right."

His tone indicated that he was perfectly convinced that Mr. Railton was quite wrong.

"Why not let your boys join in the drill?" suggested Mr. Railton good-humouredly. "It would at least do them no harm."

"Waste of time, Mr. Railton—waste of time, in my opinion."

"Hee!"

After that remark, even Mr. Railton's politeness was not equal to any further conversation with Mr. Ratcliff. But the New House master was not finished yet. Everybody present would have been obliged by Mr. Ratcliff's walking off; but he had no intention of walking off so long as anything disagreeable remained to be said.

"And this is the hose," he remarked. THE GUN LAMAR.—No. 225.

"What are you going to do with the hose, Lovelth?"

"Monty Lovelth had just taken charge of the hose. Every fellow was going to do his drill in turn."

Lovelth looked up innocently.

"I'm learning, sir," he answered meekly.

"I should suppose that any boy, however stupid, knew how to handle a fire-hose!" said Mr. Ratcliff, his lip curling.

"Well, sir, you have to learn to keep a good aim, and all that," said Monty Lovelth. "It's not so jolly easy—Oh dear!"

"Swick! Swoooooosh!"

Whether it was because Monty Lovelth had not yet learned to take a good aim, or because he had, the nozzle suddenly swung round right on the New House master.

The jet of water smote Mr. Ratcliff fairly on the chest.

The tall, thin gentleman gave a mighty jump and a mighty roar.

"Oh! Ah! What— Help! Stoppin! Yooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the amateur firemen.

"Lovelth!" thundered Mr. Railton. Lovelth seemed petrified by what he had done—so petrified that he stood motionless, with the hose still playing on Mr. Ratcliff.

That astounded and enraged gentleman danced in the whirling flood of water, like an insect in a beam of sunlight.

"Yooooooop! Stoppin! Yooooooop!"

"Lovelth——" shrieked Mr. Railton. Knop of the Sixth was nearest, and he rushed at Lovelth. He seized him by the ear—with astronomical force.

"You swang fool, that it off!" yelled Knop. "Oh! Ah! Yooooop—goooooch!"

The nozzle swung round on Knop, and caught him fairly under the chin.

Knop spun backwards.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lovelth, stop——"

"Put it down——"

"Yooooooop!"—from Knop.

"Goooooooch!"—from Mr. Ratcliff. Kibber jumped at the third fellow. The hose did not turn on him. Monty Lovelth was wise in his generation; he did not venture upon such "accidents" with the upper end of the school.

The water was shut off at last; the hose dropped from Kibber's hand. Knop dashed and dripping, and crimson with fury, straight for the School House, for a much-needed change. Mr. Ratcliff stood, streaming with water and shaking with fury.

"Mr. Ratcliff," gasped the School House master. "I—I regret exceedingly! That clumsy boy shall be severely punished! I cannot sufficiently apologise for——"

"This is a plot, sir!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff furiously.

"Ah, Railton!"

"I am well aware, sir, that this outrage was planned!" cried the New House master. "The boy, sir, was meeting your wishes, as I am very well aware. I despise such artifice, sir!"

And Mr. Ratcliff, in a towering rage, stepped away, splashing out water with every stamp.

Mr. Railton drew a deep breath. "There was a dead silence."

"Dimiss!" said Mr. Railton quietly. "The drill is ended for to-day! Lovelth, I shall see you in my study!"

"Yes, sir," said Lovelth meekly.

Mr. Railton strode away, and the amateur firemen proceeded to stack up their paraphernalia. Among the junior set, indeed, there was (nearly) checking, and most of the seniors were grinning. Mr. Ratcliff's remarks had not won him

favor among the School House fellows, and there was nobody present who regretted Lovelth's accident with the hose.

Only Lovelth—who generally had the keenest possible appreciation of his own little jokes—looked a little grave.

"You funny son!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Why don't you laugh! It was the funniest thing going!"

"Yes, rather!" gurgled Marston. "I'd never seen Ratcliff doing the first-let before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovelth grinned.

"It was funny," he said.

"It was—— Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'm rather afraid that it wasn't so funny in Mr. Railton's study!" said Lovelth. And he started for the School House rather dimly.

And the bravest of the Shell was right—'t wasn't!

As Tom Merry & Co. came back to the house, a shabby-looking figure emerged. Only by the eyelash glancing in the eye could it be recognized as that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The janitor stared at him.

"What on earth are you doing in these trousers?" demanded Finlay.

Arthur Augustus glanced down at his trousers.

"They're washed weekly, ain't they?" he remarked.

"Rather isn't the word—they're the kind, I guess," said Wildrake. "Where on earth did you dig these up?"

"An' that old socker——" said Tom Merry.

"And that waistcoat——"

"You see, dear boy," explained Arthur Augustus, "as Wallop was down on my overalls, I have changed my clabbah. I got these from Toby, the page, you know. I asked him to lend me his oldest clabbah. Now I'm ready for the fire-drill."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anything to chuckle at," said Blake. "I am quite wandy now, and ought for the fray!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Only it's all over, 'ere see!"

"Be jove!"

"So jove can go and change your clabbah again!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Well, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus, realising that he had changed his clothes a little too late, dashed desperately into the School House to change them once more.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Tribulations of a Hummer!

"Tribulation" had been pulling my leg."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been very silent at tea in Study No. 5 after the fire-drill. Blake and Horrie and Digby were chatting away cheerily, carefree to the degree, it not a word more. But there was a deep shade of thoughtfulness on the aristocratic brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as if he were dealing with a mental problem of some severity. He came out of a lesson study with a sad, sad remark, and his charms looked at him.

"Hallo! 'Woke up!" asked Blake.

"I have not been asleep, Blake. I have been thinking——"

"Draw it out, old chap!" remonstrated Digby.

"I have been serious, Dig. I have been thinking it over, and I have come to the conclusion that Monty Lovelth was pulling my leg in landing me with that foolish set of overalls."

"You really think so?" gasped Blake.

"Yes, without."

"You're thought that out, on your own!"

"Yes."  
"Without the aid of a net!"

"What born idiot was it that said the age of miracles was past?" asked Blake. "It isn't. It can't be! Here's Gussy thought it out in less than an hour, thought out something that was clear from the start—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Won't he make 'em all up in the House of Lords when he gets there?" said Blake astirringly. "It's the very place for an intellect like Gussy's, if he can get a job in the War Office. Now, tell us over again, Gussy. You really think that Lovethair was pulling your leg—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Harries and Dig.

The swell of St. Jim's adjusted his monocle in his eye with great care, and surveyed his dilapidated chasm with severity.

"You uttiah ass! Did you veslain from the beggin' that Lovethair was pullin' my leg?"

"I had just a faint suspicion!" gurgled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard it as anything but a laugh-in' matter. I treated Lovethair to get up those overalls, and in bascin' me with those wondrous things, big enough for some beautiful giant, he was really gully of a bunch of touts!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I cannot let this pass without the very acutest reprehension."

"Fas aw, somebody!" murmured Blake.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Will you be my second, Blake?" he asked, with dignity.

"No!"

"I am goin' to give Lovethair a feakful thrashin'!"

"Oh, spare his life!" said Blake. "Remember his life's young. These are the faults of giddy and unthinking youth, Gussy."

"Pray don't be an ass, Blake! He has made me ridiculous—"

"Only helped," said Blake. "Nature started it."

"You uttiah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I regard you as a villainous pest, Blake. Herries, will you be my second?"

"Catch me!" said Harries. "Don't say the goat, old chap!"

"It's really, Herries—"

"Besides, it was funny," said Blake. "If you could have seen yourself in those trousers, Gussy—"

"Will you be my second, Dig?"

"I don't think!" said Dig.

"If you fellows refuse to back me up I shall be obliged to look for backers outside this study," said Arthur Augustus.

It was a crushing remark. But neither Blake & Co. did not look crushed. They smiled.

Arthur Augustus eyed them for a moment, and then he turned and stalked out of Study No. 3, very much on his dignity. He closed the door after him with an emphasis that was not really required.

"Hallo! Wherever the frozen spoon that noble brow?" asked a cool, cheery voice in the passage. Cardew of the Fourth stopped to ask the question.

"Cardew, dash hog, will you be my second?"

"That depends," answered Cardew thoughtfully. "Are you going to fight my pal Lorrison?"

"No."

"My other pal Clive?"

"No."

"Or my marry cousin, Deccraize?"

"No; that's all right."

"Harry I can't be your second, then," said Cardew politely. "If you were goin' to fight a friend of mine, I'd oblige you with pleasure. Ta-ra!"

"I regard you as an uttiah ass, Cardew. Hallo, Julian! Stop a minute, dash hog!" Blake, Julian stopped, as Ralph Beckens Cardew stroked away.

"Julian, old ass, will you be my second? I am goin' to thrash Lovethair!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Julian. "I'll tell you what, Gussy, I'll bring the doctor you'll need afterwards."

"Wait!"

Arthur Augustus walked off to the Shell passage. He did not trouble about any further quest for a second.

He reached Study No. 39 in the Shell, tapped at the door, and opened it. The Terribles Three were all there—Tom Merry and Mamma seated, and Monty Lovethair standing up. For once, there was absolutely no trace of bassinet in the features of Montague Lovethair.

"Paw excuse my beatin' in, dash hog—" began Arthur Augustus.

"All right, so long as you built out again!" grunted Lovethair.

Arthur Augustus fixed an accusing eye upon him.

"I have come back to thrash you, Lovethair!"

"Ass!"

"You played that wrotter, wickedness out of yourself upon me, for the express purpose of makin' me look an ass!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Fairhead!"

"Do you deny it, Lovethair?"

"Come over here, and let me smash you!" was Lovethair's reply. "I want to smash somebody, and you'll do."

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"Can't you see Lovethair's been through it. He's been walloped for dressing old Ratty."

"Oh, let him come on!" said Lovethair. "It will do me good to knock the stuffing out of him!"

"Weasly, Lovethair—"

"A chap can't knock the stuffing out of a Housemaster!" sneezed Lovethair. "I like old Hatton, but I'd have loved to get him one right in the eye when he was handling the cane! Oo!"

"It's wear off!" said Mamma.

"Oo! I know that, ass! The trouble is that it hasn't worn off yet!" munched the whippersnapper humorist.

"Bai Jove! Undah the cove, Lovethair, I will let you off the thrashin'! I was goin' to give you," said Arthur Augustus, with great consideration.

"But you will pray undahstand, Lovethair, that you are to regard yourself as having been thrashed."

"Why don't they put him in the Zoo?" said Mummy Lovethair. "Extraordinary that they should let him wander about like this."

"Bai Jove! You shuckay aw—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "Run away, Gussy, there's a good little boy."

"If you shude to me as a good little boy, Tom Merry—"

"Run away and play, old top!" Tom Merry gently pushed Arthur Augustus out of the study, and closed the door on him. Lovethair was wriggling from his secret indignation in Sir Rendon's study. The Housemaster had not spared the rod. He had laid it on, as Lovethair considered, not wisely but too well.

The door re-opened the next moment, and Arthur Augustus's eyeglass gleamed in Lovethair's peeped up the peep.

"I am sorry you have been licked, dash hog," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "I forgive you for your wondrous practical joke, Lovethair."



Three dark figures rushed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from the shadow of the shed. Before he could see his gall-stub it was jerked away, and three rashed faces were round him, three pairs of eyes glancing through the holes in the masks. (See page 20.)

"Ass!"

"I overlook the match entirely, and will continue to regard you as a friend," said the wren of the Fourth generously. "I trust that makes you feel better, Loveth." "There's only one thing you can do to make me feel better!" booted Loveth. "What is that, dear boy?" "Take your features away."

"Hi Jove!"

Arthur Augustus retired from the study, and closed the door; and once more the passage echoed to a loud slam. And in Study No. 30 Misty Loveth continued to rumble and grumble and groan, and his chams continued to sympathize with him—and neither their sympathy nor Gussy's generous forgiveness seemed to make Loveth feel much better. It was not till the pain had worn off that the misguided heroism of the Shell realized that life was well worth living.

#### CHAPTER 6.

##### Figgins & Co. Aint!

GEORGE FIGGINS drummed on the table, in his study in the New House, with his knuckles. Figgis was looking very thoughtful and a little moose. Kerr and Wynn here the drumming on the table with exemplary patience, though Kerr was deep in a mathematical problem, and Fatty Wynn was copying a recipe from a cookery book, borrowed from the house-keeper.

"You fellows are awfully busy, I suppose," Figgins remarked, with a touch of sarcasm, still drumming. "Not specially," said Kerr, looking up with a smile. "What's the game, Figgis? Are you going in for table-rapping, and are you trying to call spirits from the very deep?"

"What I don't catch on to," said Fatty Wynn, "is this! It says here that you take four new-laid eggs—"

"Give us a rest!" said Figgins.

"And two fresh tomatoes—"

"Either your tomatoes!" roared Figgins.

"Hi! What's the row, Figgis?" asked Fatty, looking up in surprise. "Ain't you getting ready for supper?" "Bliss supper!"

Figgins drummed on the table more energetically than ever.

"It's not a bad idea in itself!" he said.

"Just what I was thinking," said Fatty Wynn brightly.

"Oh, you've been thinking about it, have you?"

"Yes, rather—and I think that tomato omelette will go down a treat. But it says here—"

"Who's talking about tomato omelette?" shrieked Figgins.

"Wooen't you?"

"I was talking about the School House stuff," growled Figgins—"their dished-in-drill!"

"Oh, that not!" said Fatty Wynn. "I was talking about tomato omelette. It says take four new-laid eggs—"

"I'll take a Welsh rabbit, and knock your silly head on the table, if you don't dry up!" said Figgins ferociously.

"Order!" said Kerr. "Get it off your chest, Figgis! What's worrying your sweet highest?"

"About that School House stuff," said Figgins. "As I said, when Fatty barked in with his rat, it's not a bad idea in itself. To be quite candid, old Hatty made a mistake in keeping the New House out of it."

"Old Hatty's always making mistakes,"

"Fatter's truth, it is a jolly good one, to be perfectly truthful," continued Figgins, for the Librarian.—No. 685.

"And if old Hatty had joined in, we'd have House Drill, and beat the School House hollow. We could do it on our heads."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now we're really left out in the cold," said Figgins, "that's what it amounts to. All we can do is to pooh-pooch the whole scheme, and chip those School House chuffers."

"Well, we'll do that."

"We've got to do that to save our face," remarked Fatty Wynn. "I'd rather go in for fire-drill. But we can't afford that to the enemy."

"That's it," asserted Figgins. "I'm glad to see you can think of something besides tomato omelette, Fatty."

"Look here, Figgis—"

"We can't let those cheeky chaps get ahead of us with their blessed stanz," said George Figgins. "Kerpo—we've got to dash them somehow, and make their look down, and the question arises, how are we going to do it? That's what I've been trying to think out, instead of looking into cookery-books for tomato omelette!" and Figgins chattered.

"Well, tomato omelette are jolly good!" said Fatty Wynn deliberately.

"If we take four new-laid eggs—"

"Shush, Fatty!" said Kerr, laughing.

"You're asking for a big order, Figgis. All the School House is in the stanz. Housemaster and prefects and all, and we can't pull the leg of a Housemaster or the Sixth."

"Rooster the Housemaster and the Sixth," said Figgins. "They can rap for all I care. But we've got to dab Tom Merry and Blake and that crowd somehow, or else hide our diminished heads. That one Gussy was saying the other day that his House is going to save the school, if anyone should ever come along and set fire to it!" Figgins sneered. "As if any beastly anarchists would be ass enough to come along here playing the giddy goat! Too jolly busy providing work for the under-takers in their own country, I should think! But—"

"Gussy is an ass!" said Kerr. "But—a glimmer came into the keen eyes of the Scotch justice—" but if Gussy is on the look-out for anarchists they might happen along—"

Scot from Figgins.

"They might!" perked Kerr. "Three of them, Christianae, might turn up at St. Jim's, on purpose to pull Gussy's leg."

"How could they?" roared Figgins. "Have you got their telephone number? And can you call 'em up for a jape?"

"Ha, ha! No! But there's little Gussy!"

"Us!" said Figgins dazedly.

"Us!" said Kerr.

"I say, you ain't anarchists!" said Fatty Wynn, with a stare. "I don't know what anarchism is exactly. I've asked Reilly and Mulvaney mair, and they don't seem to agree. They were fighting about it yesterday."

Kerr sighed.

"I'll try to put it into words of one syllable, so that it will penetrate into your feeble intellects," he said. "Gussy's never seen any anarchists, and is never likely to see the genuine article. That's all the more reason why he should be spoiled."

"Oh, it's a jape!" said Figgins.

"Dear man," said Kerr affectionately, "has that just dived upon your powerful brain?"

"Oh, don't!" said Figgins. "If you've got an idea for pulling the leg of those cheeky School House chuffers—"

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold," said Kerr. "I've been thinking it out already. What price a plot to beat St.

Jim's to the ground, and Gussy getting on the track of it, and the School House Five Brigade turning out to the rescue—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Let's talk it over, then," said Kerr.

"After supper," said Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Rather supper!"

"There's nothing like laying a solid foundation whatever you're going to do," said Fatty, shaking his head. "I'll beat off and get four new-laid eggs and three tomatoes—"

"If you do," said Figgins, in concentrated tones, "I'll spruce 'em off'n your back, Fatty!"

"Look here, Figgis—"

"Shut up! Go ahead, Kerr!"

Kerr went ahead, and Figgins listened with great attention. Fatty Wynn gave all the attention he could spare from the unwholesome thought of tomato omelette. The discussion is Figgins' study was penetrated by noisy chaps. When it ended, George Francis Kerr was busy for some minutes with pen and paper. Then he quitted the study with Figgins, and David Llewellyn Wynn was free at last to devote his enthusiastic attention to tomato omelette for supper.

Figgins and Kerr strolled towards the School House, chatting carelessly. Fire-drill had been going on that afternoon; it was a regular institution in the School House now, and Tom Merry & Co. were growing exceedingly pleased with the knowledge and skill they were acquiring. Jumping and stunts were looked upon as a very entertaining game by the Wps, and was taken up with enthusiasm by the Third Form especially. Figgins and Kerr came on several groups of School House-juniors, discussing the afternoon's performance as they strolled around. They were looking for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and they wanted to come on him by chance. They found the noble youth at last, and hailed him.

"Now's the five brigade blasey going on, Gussy!" asked Kerr affably.

"Very well, comenderr, dash boys," answered D'Arcy.

"Only considering!" said Figgins.

"Considering that the New House are set barking it up, do you mean?"

"Neither of the sort, Figgins! But Mr. Walton is wathah an obstinate and unscientific gentleman in some respects. He does not seem to want to receive suggestions."

The New House juniors retired.

"There was a kaywick barned on Giles' farm the other day," continued Arthur Augustus. "There was no evidence that it was done by any anarchists, but that looks very suspicious to me—they crash up their backs so awfully, you know."

"Nothing could be more suspicious than a total absence of evidence," said Kerr gravely.

"Exactly, dash boy!" said Arthur Augustus unobtrusively. "But when I ventured to suggest to Mr. Walton that a watch should be kept for these fellows, he said 'Peek! Nonsense!' He did, waddy."

"He doesn't realize the fearful peril!" remarked Figgins.

"Wathah not! But I'm going to keep my eyes open," said Arthur Augustus, with a sage shake of the head. "If they beat St. Jim's, I am not going to be taken by surprise, I can tell you!"

"Hallo, what's this!" exclaimed Kerr, stooping and picking up a fragment of paper at his feet.

"Only a scrap of papah," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass on it.

"There's something written on it—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins, staring at the scrap of paper.

"Bl Jove! What is it, dash boy?"

"Look!"



Arthur Augustus glanced at the scrap of paper. Then his startled eye almost leaped through his eyelids.

There was writing on the paper, in a rough, crabbed hand. It ran—apparently a fragment of a letter of instructions:

"Lenovitch will take the petrol School House first, and see how dynamite Szorovich and Messereich

can destroy the woodshed St. Jim's at nine o'clock Tuesday.

That was all. The fragment of paper was torn irregularly, and the rest of the scrawling letter was only to be guessed at.

"Great Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Some awful incendiary mischief has been hatched, dear boys, and he has dropped this."

"Somebody must have dropped it in the quad!" remarked Figgins.

"Yess, wait! Some mischief afoot!" out the place last night, you know," said Arthur Augustus excitedly. "You see that the letter has been torn across—the mischief meant to destroy it, you see."

"Clear enough, the way you put it!" said Figgins. "But, I say, this letter belongs to us, Gussy. Kerr found it."

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr. "Wats!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warily. "It's up to the School House to huddle their knavish tricks. There can't any fire brigades in the New House. Leave it to us."

"But—"

"Well, Figgins, I insist upon taking charge of this affair!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus firmly. "I insist upon your leaving it in my hands."

"But—"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus; and he walked away, with the tattered scrap of paper in his hand.

"I say, give me my paper!" bawled Kerr.

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Figgins and Kerr exchanged a glance, and then walked away towards the New House, smiling. And Arthur Augustus, burning with suppressed excitement, rushed into the School House with the precious paper. There was no time to be lost. For it was Tuesday, and it was eight o'clock, and the fire was to be started by the plotters at nine—according to the mysterious document.

And in such a thrilling hour of danger Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not the fellow to let the grass grow under his feet.

## CHAPTER 7.

### No Bathers.

"NONSENSE!"

"But, sir—"

"It is some absurd practical joke, D'Arcy—"

"Well, sir—"

"Then it away, my boy!"

"But—"

"You may go, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the Housemaster's study, in the School House, with feelings too deep for words. Generally, he had a great respect for Mr. Hallton. But his respect for that gentleman very nearly failed him now.

Being in possession of information relating to a terrible incendiary plot, Arthur Augustus had gone to his Housemaster, as a matter of course. He expected instant measures to be taken, and the School House fire brigade to be called out as a precaution for emergency.

Instead of which, Mr. Hallton, with incredible rudeness and recklessness, looked on the thing as a practical joke. It was amusing, to Arthur Augustus. Evidently, if St. Jim's was not to be burned to the ground that summer's night, it depended on Arthur Augustus to save the old school. He hurried away to Study No. 6 in the Fourth Floor passage.

"You fellows—"

"You're late for prep!" said Blake.

"Do you want a row with Lathorn in the morning, Gussy?"

"Wats! There is no time for prep this evening!"

"Eh?"

"Do you fellows want to save St. Jim's from being burned to the ground?" demanded Arthur Augustus. Blake jumped.

"Hullo! Is there a fire?" he asked.

"Good!" said Herries. "Chance for us to swagger in with the fire brigade. If I get hold of the hose, I'm going to try to catch Knock at the back—"

"This is a serious matter, Herries. Look at that!"

Arthur Augustus threw a scrap of paper on the study table. Blake and Herries and Digby looked at it.

"Hullo! Who's pulling your leg this time?" asked Digby.

"That is an anarchist document, Dig—"

"Anarchist rats!" said Dig.

"You catch me! You're as big an one as Mr. Wallton!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Cannot you realize the fearful danger?"

Blake chuckled.

"I'll get on with my prep, and chase the danger," he said. "I'd rather chance these jokes than chance Lathorn in the morning."

"But Jerry!"

"You shouldn't play these tricks, Gussy!" said Herries, shaking his head.

"What are you trying to pull one leg for?"

"Well, Herries, if you think I manufactured that paper—"

"Didn't you?" asked Herries.

"You stink out! It was dropped in the quad yesterday—or last night—by an anarchist spy—"

"Es, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to back me up in stopping this fearful outrage?" demanded Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Try real slow!" said Blake.

"I am surprised at you, I am—"

"Where's that dashed dictionary?" said Blake, looking round. "Gussy, old boy, you're interrupting the prep."

"But Jerry!"

Arthur Augustus would have peered



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"WHAT HAVE YOU AGAINST ME?"

forth the wile of his wrath upon his incredulous chosen, but there was no time to waste. It was already turned half-past eight, and the danger was passing close. He rushed out of the study, and sped away to No. 10 in the Shell. He burst into Tom Merry's study like a cyclone.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What the thump—"

"Wally woad, Josh boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Dangal! Flak!"

"What?" yelled the Terrible Three.

"The anarchists are here—"

"Bess!" howled Lovther.

"Yes, walloh! They are goin' to start the flak in the woodshed at nine o'clock, and burn St. Jim's to the ground—"

"Oh, let 'em!" said Messers. "Call me when they begin, and I'll bring out my camera."

"Look at that papah—dropped by a spy in the quad last night—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Canst you read, you duffalo?"

Look at it—"

"Gassy's getting quite bright," said Mesty Lovther. "But he can't expect to pull the leg of this study. It isn't the first of April, either. Go and look for greenhorns in the Fourth, Gassy; none in the Shell!"

"But Joss!"

"There was no help to be had in No. 10. Minutes were precious now, and Arthur Augustus quitted the study again, with a yesh, leaving the Terrible Three chucking.

Three-quarters chimed out from the clock-tower.

"But Joss! A quashah to mine, and notin' done!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Talbott—I say, Talbott—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Talbott.

"The woodmen are just goin' to set flak to the school—"

"Ha, say hat!"

"Pway come along and help me—"

"But what about peep!" asked Talbott.

"Ass!"

Arthur Augustus rushed on, leaving Talbott staring. He almost ran into Cardew of the Fourth. He caught Cardew by the arm.

"Cardew, I want you have more sense than these asses—"

"Your trust is well rewarded, old bean!" answered Cardew. "What's the merry excitement! Somebody sat on your tupper!"

"The anarchists—"

"Eh!"

"They are just goin' to burn down the school—"

"What a hark!" roared Cardew. "I regard this as really decent of them, Gassy!"

"Will you come and help me stop them!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Not for words! Let 'em go on!" answered Cardew. "I'm not betwixt 'em—especially as they don't exist!"

"You awful me!"

Arthur Augustus sprinted down the stairs. There were no lockers for him in the School House, and either he had no balls the slotted on his own, or else allowed St. Jim's to be burned to the ground. He stayed only to arrest a golf-club, and started for the woodshed. He prepared to face the foe on his "lousy one."

#### CHAPTER 8.

##### Only a Fake Alarm!

THERE was a sound of rattled voices.

Arthur Augustus thrilled. It was dark by the woodshed, and the rattling voices came to Gassy's ears from the deep shadows.

THE GEN LITERARY.—No. 425.

Evidently he had come upon the ransals mentioned in the note letter!

"But Joss!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Four out the petrol, Leopold!"

"Get the matches, Hanswicht!"

Probably only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have taken those speculations for the ransals of the plotters.

His heart beat fast as he gripped his golf-club.

"Ah! The foe!" exclaimed a deep voice. "The automatic pistol—quick! Sky him—sked his gun—sked—"

Three dark figures rushed on Arthur Augustus from the shadow of the shed. Before he could see his golf-club it was jerked away, and three matched faces were

read him, three pairs of eyes glistening through the holes in the masks.

"Skay him!"

"Shoot him!"

"You howwid wufflers!" gasped Arthur Augustus, straggling, as the masked figure seized upon him. "I—"

"Gooch—Leggo! Help! Fire! Help!"

He tore himself away from the gang with surprising ease, and dashed away towards the School House for help.

"Thunder! He's escaped!"

"Set fire to the woodshed!"

"Four out the petrol!"

Arthur Augustus ran for his life.

Crack, crack, crack! rang out behind him. To Gassy's startled ears it was a succession of pistol-shots. He was far too excited to recognize the Fifth-of-November crackles.

Crack, crack!

"Help! Fire!" roared Arthur Augustus, as he peered into the School House.

"But—"

"Whoo—"

"Fire, fire, fire!"

Arthur Augustus raised out the alarm with all the power of his lungs.

"Fire, fire!"

The alarm was taken up on all sides.

Excited fellows shouted inquiries from the studies, the stairs, and the passages. Wildly-curved fags came streaming out of the Third Form room, shouting and yelling.

"Fire, fire!"

Clery, clang, clang!

The alarm-bell crashed out into the night.

Footsteps rang on the staircase, voices and juncos poured out into the quadrangle.

The alarm was general now.

Mr. Railton's deep voice was heard giving commands. Kidlare and Darrel had rushed for the base. In the distance across the quadrangle, three youths stood at the excited scene outside the School House. They crammed their masks into their pockets, and gaped.

"My only hat!" stammered Figgins. "There'll be a row! They're really turning out their own fire brigade!"

"Oh, great pig!" gasped Kerr.

"Get indoors!" howled Paddy Wynn.

"What shall I have to prove a jolly strong alibi for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three young rascals disappeared into the New House. A minute more, and they were deep in prep in their study.

Meanwhile, the alarm was spreading fast. Windows in the School House were thrown wide open, lights blazed into the quad. Tom Merry & Co. were all out of doors, shouting questions. Everybody knew there was a fire, but nobody seemed to know where it was. Mr. Railton's deep voice dominated the uproar and confusion.

"Where is the fire! I can see nothing! Who gave the alarm!"

"D'Arcy!" said a deep voice.

"Where is D'Arcy!"

"He's ringing the alarm-bell, I think," said Blake.

"Calm yourselves, my boys! It appears to be a false alarm," said Mr. Railton. "Bring D'Arcy here at once, Darrel!"

Darrel rushed into the House, now almost empty. He reappeared, with his hand on Arthur Augustus' collar.

Arthur Augustus was loudly protesting.

"Welcome me, Darrel! I assist—"

"D'Arcy!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"But Joss! Yaaa, sir!"

"You gave the alarm of fire!"

"Yaaa, wufflers!"

"Where is there any fire, you stupid boy!"

"In the woodshed, sir! The anarchists—"

"What?" gasped Mr. Railton.

"They washed on me, sir—"

"What, how, who, who washed on you!" exclaimed the astonished Housemaster.

"The spies, sir!"

"Is the boy out of his senses!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in his indignation.

"I—I showed you the scrap of papah, sir—"

"You incredibly foolish boy, I told you that that was only a foolish practical joke of some person—"

"But they are dead, sir!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "They've got automatic pistols and petrol, sir, in the woodshed! They washed on me—three washed wufflers, sir—"

"Three!" murmured Tom Merry. "I think I could guess the names of these giddy rascals, and I fancy they're back in the New House by this time!"

"The boy seems to be suffering from some delusion," said Mr. Railton, greatly perplexed. "Boys, you may return into the House; there is no fire. Kidlare, come with me to the woodshed, and we will see if there is anything amiss there."

"Look out for their automatic pistols, Mr. Railton—"

"Nonsense!"

"They were fired at me, sir—"

"Absurd!"

"I repeat, sir, they were fired!"

"Nonsense, D'Arcy!"

A crowd of fellows followed the Housemaster to the woodshed. Five or six kiln-lamps shone light on the scene. There were no anarchists to be found, no trace of fire, and not a drop of petrol, not the ghost of an automatic pistol.

Kidlare picked up something from the ground. It was the exploded shell of a repeating-macker.

D'Arcy's eyelids fell from his eyes as he looked at it. His eye almost fell after it!

"But Joss!" he stammered.

"This is what you mistook for firing, I suppose, D'Arcy!" snapped Mr. Railton.

"Oh, dear! Then—"

"Nonsense! That prank has been played on this boy," said the Housemaster.

"You have given an alarm of fire for no reason, D'Arcy!"

"But—but—but these three washed wufflers, sir—"

"Nonsense! You are the victim of a practical joke!" said Mr. Railton crossly.

"You have caused great trouble and confusion by your folly, D'Arcy, and I shall consider your punishment—"

"But Joss! I—I was tryin' to save the school from bein' burned to the ground, sir—"

"Fish!"

Mr. Railton strode away with a frowning brow. Some of the juniors were laughing, but some of the seniors, who had brought out boxes and fire-caps, and life-saving sheets from their places,

looked exceedingly sheepish and exceedingly weakly. Knees of the Sixth bestowed a cuff on Cassy's solid ear, which made him stagger, and Rucko righted him again with a cuff on the other ear.

"You young an!"  
 "You sily idiot!"  
 "Kick him!"  
 "Oh crooked!"  
 "Won't the New House chortle over this?" gurgled Blake. "Of course, it's a New House joke."  
 "Figgins & Co., of course!" said Tom Merry.  
 "But Jove! I never thought of that!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I remember those boardwalk verse with me when I found the swapp of papp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "But Jove! Leggo my yah, Kibbare!" Arthur Augustus jerked away his suffering ear, and fell. Even Arthur Augustus did not believe in amarrching any longer. The School House crowd returned to their houses, most of them chuckling. But they ceased to chuckle over the incident the next day, when they found the New House checking over it. The laugh was on the side of Figgins & Co.—and the School House Fire Brigade ceased to see anything funny in the matter, and wasted excoing wrath.

And that day Arthur Augustus D'Arcy led a life in the School House which could only be described as a dog's life!

Everybody seemed to have something to represent to say—and said it!  
 The next time the School House Fire Brigade turned out to drill, Figgins & Co. turned up in great force to watch, and they yelled to the firemen to look out for bumps. And they did not cease from troubling (ill the hose was turned upon them accidentally, and then they departed in a great hurry, and the firemen of the School House were left to drill in peace.

CHAPTER 9.

A Little Smoking-Party, and What It Led To!

"SAFE here!" said Rucko of the Shell.  
 "Safe as houses!" said Clampe.

"No dashed perfect likely to come casing up here in the box-room, I suppose," remarked Crooko.

"No fear!"  
 It was quite a party in the box-room in the New House. Leslie Clampe and Chowie, of the New House, were there, and Rucko, Crooko, Scroops, and Mellich of the School House. It was a little smoking-party, and smoking-parties at St. Jim's had to be kept very secret. If Mr. Ratcliff had known the use the box-room in his House was being put to, Mr. Ratcliff would have denounced upon the merry little party with a cane, and the sportsmen of St. Jim's would have felt anything but sporting by the time he had finished with them.

But there was, as Clampe had said, no risk. The box-room was rather secluded, and was not likely to be visited by interfering prefects. Clampe had locked the door and put the key in his pocket, and lighted a tin-backed lamp that hung on the wall.

Rucko produced cigarettes galore—the wealthy Aubrey had cigarettes to hand round with great liberality. He also had a pack of cards—the meeting was not only for the joys of smoking.

An overturned box served as a card-table. On other boxes and chairs the merry party sat round it, and six cigarettes were soon going strong.

Rucko lighted his "smoke" and threw the match carelessly over his shoulder.  
 "I say, be a bit careful," said Mellich.  
 "There's a lot of straw about here. Somebody's been unpacking a packing-case."

"Oh, rot!" said Rucko carelessly.  
 "We don't want to give the School House Fire Brigade a job here," grinned Crooko. "And rot, that fire brigade, ain't it!"

"Both!" said Scroops.  
 "Took!" agreed Clampe. "Jolly glad the New House is out of it. How do you fellows like turning up to fire-dolls?"  
 "Rotter!" gurgled Rucko. "I cut it all I can!"

"Who's going to deal?"  
 "Cut!"  
 "Then you are."

Rucko & Co. were soon busy at poker. Prep was likely to suffer that evening, but prep sites did suffer with the black sheep of St. Jim's. Rucko had the best of the game, and he ended up the stakes with an unpleasant grin of triumph.

"Your deal, Crooko."  
 Crooko shuffled the cards.  
 Aubrey Rucko selected a fourth cigarette from his case, and struck a match.

"Careful with that match!" said Mellich, as Rucko lighted his cigarette.  
 The loose straw was behind Rucko, and Mellich was nervous.

With a contemptuous laugh, Rucko tossed the match over his shoulder. It circled in the air, and dropped on the straw. Rucko had expected it to become extinguished as it fell.  
 But it did not.

It was still slight when it dropped into the straw, and the next moment there was a flare.

"You sily ass!" howled Mellich.  
 "What did I tell you!"  
 "Oh, gad!"

The jesters jumped up in haste.  
 The flare of flame ran through the

straw, and there was a leaping blaze and a rush of smoke, and they crowded back from it in affright.

"Stamp it out!" exclaimed Crooko. But he did not offer to begin the stamping-out.

"Great Scott!"  
 "Any water here?" gasped Rucko.  
 "Of course there isn't!"  
 "Oh, gad!"

"It—it'll die out!" panted Clampe.  
 "Good heavens, if it's seen from the window there'll be a crowd here—"

"Let's get out!" muttered Rucko.  
 "Open the door—quick!"  
 "But the fire—"

"Hang the fire! Let's get out before we're spotted!"  
 "It's spreading!" cried Mellich.  
 "Some sily ass has been spilling oil here!"

"Some was spilt when I food up the lamp," said Chowie. "But, dash it all, let's buzz. There'll be a fearful row over this."

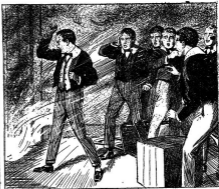
Rucko was already at the door, dragging it.

"Where's the key?" he cried shrilly.  
 "What sily fool's taken the key out? Do you want us all to be burned to death? The key—quick!"

"I—I've got it somewhere!" gasped Clampe, fumbling in his pockets. "Oh dear! I—I— Here it is!"

Rucko snatched savagely at the key, and dropped it. He plunged after it, and a rush of flame along the door threw him back. There was a huge blaze by this time, and the cracking of wood could be heard. The packing-case was blazing up as well as the straw, and loose seats catching, and the flames were leaping up the walls, licking the ceiling, and creeping over the floor. The six terrified jesters cowered at the door.

"The key!" muttered Crooko hoarsely.  
 "The key—quick! Unlock the door!"



The jesters jumped up in haste. The flare of flame ran through the straw, and there was a leaping blaze and a rush of smoke, and they crowded back from it in affright. "Let's get out!" muttered Rucko. "Open the door—quick!" (See this page.)

"It-it's there! The fire's over it! That fool pulling the oil!"

"Oh, you idiot!"

"Help!" yelled Mellich, quite losing his nerve. "Help!"

"Quiet, you fool!" bawled Backe.

"Do you want to all to be caught here?"

"You dummy! Better to caught than suffocated!" howled Mellich. "Help! Help! Help!"

Mellich hammered frantically on the locked door. There were shouts and footpats outside, and shouts from the quadrangle. The flames had been seen flaring at the window of the box-room.

"Help!"

Backe tore at the door. But it was stout and strong, and it was locked fast. Nothing short of an axe would have forced a way through. He hardly shook under Aubrey Backe's frantic efforts.

Backe himself was yelling now. He shrieked and caved for help. A fogging from the Head was a trifle to think of in that extremity, for all the occupants of the box-room were in fearful danger now. The flames were roaring in the room, and the heat was terrible. The perspiration streamed down their smoke-blackened faces. They beat and hammered and kicked on the door, screaming for help.

"What's the row?" It was Figgies' voice outside.

"Fire! Help!"

"Open the door, you ass!"

"It's locked; the key lost!" bawled Backe.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Help!"

"Fire! Fire!"

A rush of flame drove the hapless juniors from the door. They crowded to the box-room window, and Backe helplessly smashed out the glass with a chair. The fresh rush of air was receding to the parched and suffocating juniors, but it led the flames, and the fire roared now with a deep and sullen boom.

"Fire! Fire!" The alarm rang over the New House from end to end, starting the juniors from the Common-room, and Mr. Ratcliff from his study.

Composed at the window of the box-room, six haggard, grimed faces gazed out into the open air, and six terrified voices shrieked for help. Fevers within the house there was no help now for Claxpe & Co. The locked door was licked by devouring flames; cutting them off from the house. Only from the quad could help come; and in the quadrangle crowds were gathered, and screaming round the angle of the building to stare up at the box-room window, from which smoke was billowing.

"Help! Help! Fire!"

#### CHAPTER 10.

#### Good Old Gussy.

**F**IRE!" The alarm rang over St. Jim's from end to end, and from the School House Tom Merry & Co. came swarming. It was nearly bedtime for the juniors. Fortunately not yet. As Tom Merry came speeding out to be caught the face of flame against the sky, and the thick column of smoke that dimmed the stars.

"Fire! Fire!"

"It's in the 'New House!' shouted Tom Merry.

"But Jove! Wasn't, dash boys?"

"Boys!" It was the deep voice of Mr. Ratcliff. "Order! To your places!"

The Head-ill of the School House fellows, at which Mr. Ratcliff had smiled so anxiously, stood Mr. Ratcliff's House in good stead now.

With perfect order, though with excited faces, the School House crowd obeyed the orders of their Headmaster.

In a wonderfully short space of time the School House Fire Brigade was at work. The exact location of the fire was quickly ascertained, and the fire-hose, in Mr. Ratcliff's hand, sent a stream of water into the box-room window in the New House.

Flames as well as smoke licked from the window, over the terrified heads of Backe & Co.

"Help! Help!"

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Ratcliff hurried up, wildly excited and twittering. "My dear Ratcliff! Bless my soul,

the—the flame is on fire, actually on fire! Good heavens!"

Mr. Ratcliff did not heed his twittering colleague. Mr. Ratcliff wrung his hands and babbled, as useless in that emergency as the smallest bug in the Third Form. Fortunately, the School House master was made of sterner stuff. Flung the hose with a steady hand, he rapped out orders. A group of stalwart Sixth-Formers gathered under the window, the life-saving sheet extended and firmly gripped in their hands.

"Jump!"

Backe clambered out desperately and dropped into the sheet. He was taken aside, and Claxpe followed him, and three Crooks. They were helped away, babbling and gasping. Scrape was the next, and he landed safely. Mellich hung on the window sill, palpitating from sheer funk, and dropped, half by accident, in the sheet.

Only Chorle remained, and as he stared in terror from the window, equally terrified by the fire behind him and the leap before him, there came a rush of heat and smoke from within, and Chorle disappeared.

There was a gasp from the crowd below.

Mr. Ratcliff gave a shriek.

"He is lost! He will be killed, burned to death! Oh, heavens—"

"Silence! sit!" said Mr. Ratcliff gruffly. "The ladder, boys—the ladder! For the love of Heaven, quick!"

Kiddane and Durrel were rishing the ladder to the window. It cracked on the sill. A hundred pairs of eyes watched for Chorle to reappear. But the window remained blank. It was poetry clear that the wretched junior had been overcome by the smoke, and that he lay within the room, a helpless prey to the devouring flame.

Mr. Ratcliff handed the hose to Kiddane, and rushed up the ladder. A cheer followed him. His head went in at the smashed window, but a heavy volume of smoke drove him back, and he reeled on the ladder. Durrel rushed up and grasped him. Smoke poured out above them in a black volume. The House-



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master, almost insensible, was helped down the ladder by the Sixth-Foamers.

The next moment there was a yell.  
"D'Arcy!"  
"Gussy!"  
"Stand back!" roared Kildare.  
The captain of St. Jim's made a spring forward. But he was too late!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, was skimming up the ladder with lightning speed.

"Gussy" groined Blaks.  
"Come back—"

"Bravo!"  
Headless of the clamour below, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused a moment at the top of the ladder to tie his handkerchief over his mouth and nose. Then he shoved headlong into the sea of smoke, and vanished. Mr. Raitiff struggled to his feet, panting for breath.

"D'Arcy" he shouted.  
But D'Arcy was lost to sight.

Three or four of the Sixth struggled up the ladder. Tom Merry & Co. made a rush, but Mr. Raitiff waved them back. Kildare was the first at the window.

A snake-grinned figure rose to view within. From the blackened face an eye-glass gleamed.

There was a yell from the crowd below.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered to the window with Chowie's insensible form grasped in his arms.

"Gussy! Good old Gussy!" shrieked Blaks.  
"Bravo!"

"Good old Gussy!" roared Mooty Lovther.

"Give him to me!" panted Kildare, and he took the insensible junior from D'Arcy's hands, and passed him down to the Sixth-Foamers lower on the ladder. And Chowie was carried into safety.

"D'Arcy—" Kildare turned back to the window. "Quick!"

Arthur Augustus peated.  
"Yess, wathah, deah boy! I'm comin'."

The swell of St. Jim's clambered out of the window. He was black as a sweep, his hair was striding, there were fierce burns on his face and hands. But he was still cool and calm. Smoke and flame rushed out of the window above him, hardly held in check by the steady stream from the hose.

Arthur Augustus lowered himself on the ladder steadily, and then he reeled. Kildare's strong arm caught him.

"It's all right!" reassured Arthur Augustus faintly. "I can manage all right."

"Hold on to me!"

"Very well. Noway to trouble you, deah boy." Even at that moment Arthur Augustus' exquisite politeness did not fail him.

Kildare bore him down the ladder.

Arthur Augustus landed on the ground, and stood unsteadily, supported by the St. Jim's captain's strong arm.

He blinked dazedly at the jammers as they crowded round.

"Gussy—"

"Oh, Gussy—"

"Hoi Jove! Be careful, you fellows. Stand back, for goodness' sake!"

"What the—"

"I've dropped my eyeglass. Mind you don't tread on it." And then Arthur Augustus fainted.

The School House Fire Brigade were still fighting the flames when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was laid in bed in the sanatorium, the next bed to Chowie's, and the school doctor, hastily summoned by telephone, was hurrying to attend the two sufferers.

The fire had obtained a good grip on the New House, and inside and outside the Houses the schoolboy firemen were fighting long and hard before it was set under.

It was at a late hour that night that the last of the flames was conquered, the last spark drowined out.

Mr. Raitiff wring his hands when he surveyed the scene of devastation at those quarters—when the danger was over.

The bedroom was burnt right out, two or three adjoining rooms were gutted, passages and walls and ceilings had suffered. It was only too evident, even to Mr. Raitiff, that the whole House would have been burned but for the prompt aid rendered by the School House Fire Brigade.

But that had been averted, and no lives had been lost. But George Figgins remarked to his chums, when the New House Fourth went to bed that night at a very late hour:

"It's Hatty's fault! If it wad his fire-drill along with the School House chaps—"

"We'd have got it under sooner, before wraah damage was done," said Kerr.

"Yes, rather," agreed Fatty Wynna.

"It's all Hatty's fault, and I hope the old toot is satisfied now!"

"And Gussy," said Figgins, with a cough in his voice—"Gussy, whose jolly old leg we pulled! He's a merry old one, but wath a splendid chap!"

"Hear, hear!"  
In which opinion both Houses at St. Jim's heartily concurred.

The next day there was an inquiry into the cause of the outbreak, and it was very fortunate for Hacks & Co. that the facts did not come to light.

Chowie was out of the sanatorium that day; his damages were not serious. He had been overcome by the smoke, and his clothing had been scorched, that was all.

But Arthur Augustus had suffered more seriously.

He had had to search and grope for Chowie in smoke and darkness, and he had received a good many severe burns, and it was many days before his school-fellows saw him again.

But his chums were admitted to the sanatorium at last, to see the hero of the hour, and they found him sitting up in bed, looking as if he consisted chiefly of bandages, but with his famous eye-glass gleaming in a cheerful eye.

"Glad to see you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "Wathah wotten to be stark bosh, though Miss

Martin is very good. Did they find out what caused the fah?"

"The Head did," said Tom Merry.  
"But we've got an idee—"

"I guess we can name the culprit, if we wanted to," said Wildrake.

"Was it—was it—"

D'Arcy hesitated.  
"Was it what, old chap?"

"Was it this—was it anarchists, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Really, you fellows—"

"It was Chowie and Hacks and that gang smoking cigarettes, I believe," said Tom Merry, laughing. "They were all there, anyhow, and the fire must have started while they were there—"

"Hoi Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was a little disappointed.

"Sorry we couldn't find any anarchists, Gussy!" grinned Figgins. "Only some amaly fags—nearly that and nothing more. No anarchists have been seen at St. Jim's since the lot you ran down at the woodshed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Woolly, Figgins—"

"And these three were named Figgins, Kerr, and Wynna," said Figgypop tentatively, "and we've sorry we pulled your leg, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus smiled gently.

"All awway, deah boy! The laugh is on our side now, I wathah coosid! The New House would have been in Queen Street last, for the School House Fish Boatage—what!"

And Figgins cheerfully admitted that it would have been.

And there was another triumph in store for the School House; for, after the fire, the Head made it a point to speak very decidedly to Mr. Raitiff on the subject, and Ratty was constrained to abandon his opposition, and the New House hurried for fire-drill with the School House. So that, as Figgins said, the next time there was a fire at St. Jim's, the two Houses would be shoulder to shoulder in fighting the flames.

THE END.

(There will be another Grand Long Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's next week. Entitled:

"BOUND BY A PROMISE!"

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JOHN SHARPE.

## New Readers Start Here.

John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service, to track down the band of organized and dangerous criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand, a fearless, clever man of dominating personality. Maria Blake, one of the band of crooks, is captured, and Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Maria's identity and get into the confidence of Iron Hand.

She is instructed to keep her real identity a secret even to Sharpe; but she often assists him and sends him information concerning the movements of the gang, and he is puzzled to know just where it comes from.

Iron Hand has a number of hiding-places in different parts of the country, which are referred to as "Nests," the most important of which is Eagle's Nest, situated on a deserted cliff. The leader's chief assistants are Potsdam and Black Flag. John Sharpe has had many big tangles with the gang, and has solved many of their deepest schemes. Iron Hand has robbed Colonel Bledson, the Cattle King, of a cabinet of valuable jewels, and he takes them to his assistant in Chinatown, Wong Lo, to take care of.

After a great struggle Sharpe succeeds in getting these back, and he deposits them in a safe in Colonel Bledson's room. But Iron Hand determines to secure them again, and he sends some of his assistants to spy and pick up information concerning them. Sharpe obtains two boxes similar in appearance, and in one he places the jewels, and these are taken in safety to Bledson's room.

(See next page.)

## A Tight Corner.

COLONEL BLEDSON was thunder-struck when he found Anne's words.

"Iron Hand has the box of jewels!" he gasped. And the others who were standing round were too subjugated to speak.

Mrs. Bledson and her daughters, however, withheld their judgment; but deep in their hearts they had a feeling that there was something wrong somewhere—and they will believe in their visitor.

Detective John Sharpe looked at Anne piercingly, and it was a matter of extreme regret to him that she was associated with these crooks.

"There is something about you which puzzles me," he said, retreating for a moment. "You don't seem to belong to that gang really."

Then, with a touch of kindness in his voice, and his face breaking into a pleasing smile, he said:

"Now, tell me just where are the jewels."

Anne within herself felt gratified at The Gem Lament.—No. 938.

## The INVISIBLE HAND



IRON HAND.

the detective's refusal to believe in her guilt. In reply to his demand she shook her head.

"Thanks!" she muttered. "No; the jewels are not really with Iron Hand!"

All those standing around looked at the girl with great surprise. Turning to the ranch owner, Anne said:

"Mr. Bledson, you and your family have been very good to me. If I tell you where the jewels are, will you let me go?"

Colonel Bledson hated to think that this attractive-looking girl standing before them was really a criminal, or that she could belong in any way to that desperate gang; and the three women were more fully convinced than ever that there was some mystery which they could not understand.

"As far as I am concerned," remarked Bledson, breaking the dramatic silence, "I don't believe you meant to steal them. If you return the jewels, you can go without any further at all."

Anne looked at Sharpe somewhat boldly, to see whether he would accept these conditions. The detective considered for a moment.

"It seems to me like rendering assistance to a felon," he said. "But—well, you are Colonel Bledson's prisoner, and not mine."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Sharpe!" the girl replied gratefully. "Yes, too, are good to me, and, believe me, I shall never forget it. Come with me!"

Anne left the room, followed by the others, and Colonel Bledson ordered Cactus Bill and Honeydew to get a horse ready to take Anne when she desired to go.

Anne led them upstairs, and produced the jewels from the drawer in which she had placed them, and handed them over to the Cattle King.

Bledson was overjoyed, for at first he really thought he had lost his largest treasure again, and that there would be another big struggle to get the gems back. In order to show his gratitude, he offered Anne a bracelet as a gift, but this she smilingly refused.

Then, asking the detective if she was now free to go, she bade the party goodbye, and departed.

There was a puzzled look on Sharpe's face.

"Colonel Bledson," he said, after the girl was gone, "several times in this battle with Iron Hand I have had mysterious help which has apparently come from a woman. I wonder—"

Colonel Bledson interrupted at this point, insisting that the girl could not possibly be a criminal; and the detective was inclined to agree with him.

"I'll take the first train to San Francisco after breakfast," he told him, "and I'll do my very best to rouse up the gang to-night."

Sharpe and Colonel Bledson then left the room, leaving Mrs. Bledson and the girls talking excitedly over the strange event, and admiring the jewels. They could not get rid of their remarking upon the magnificence of the gems.

When Anne got downstairs, she found that a horse had been saddled for her, and Cactus Bill and Honeydew gallantly escorted her into the saddle.

The two cowboys assured her that they fully believed in her innocence, and stated that they were only too pleased to

place themselves at her service at all times. With a pleasant smile, Anne drove off. She admired those rugged, handsome men of the West.

## The Flooded Chamber.

IRON HAND, Potsdam, and Black Flag were back again at Eagle's Nest. They all looked very exhausted and dirty, thus giving evidence of their last enterprising trip through the night, in order to escape from Bledson's grasp.

Iron Hand gripped the duplicate jewels, and with a great deal of anticipation, proceeded to force it open. The journey was worth all the inconvenience, thought Iron Hand, for he still had increased possession. But when he succeeded in opening the lid, there was a different tale to tell.

The expressions of the gang changed suddenly when they stared into the box and saw the worthless objects which it contained. With rage and disgust written large on his countenance, Iron Hand dumped the contents on to the table.

"Tricked again!" roared Potsdam vehemently. "I told you all from the first that I suspected that girl from the very start. She has taken the jewels herself, and presented us with this rubbish!"

Iron Hand was about to make an angry retort, for he was still inclined to love with the girl he believed to be Maria Black, but at that moment an attendant entered and handed the leader a telegram.

Iron Hand hurriedly tore open the envelope.

"Will arrive 2.30 p.m.—Maria Black," was the brief message he read. He handed the piece of paper over to Potsdam.

"You can repeat your charges when the lady gets here," he said, with an attempt at gallantry. Potsdam was feeling very vindictive, and he declared that he would be only too glad to do this. The argument was cut short by Iron Hand, who ordered the attendant to bring them some food. And when this was brought, they all settled down eagerly to eat their meal, for they were famished after their long ride.

When he arrived at the railway-station, John Sharpe went straight to the telegraph-office, and wrote a message to Chief Burnett, head of the Secret Service.

"Mysterious young woman with gang has done me good service. Who is she? Any instructions?—Sharpe." This was what his telegram said.

The detective decided to clear up the perplexing point for good, and after handing it over to the operator, he made his

way to the train which was to take him to the scene of action some more.

Chief Barnett smiled when he received Sharpe's telegram. Then extracting a form from a drawer in his desk, he wrote a reply.

"Know nothing about mysterious woman," he put down, laughing to himself at the time. "Round her up with the rest of the gang.—Barnett."

He went for an attendant and handed him the message. Things were moving as well as he expected, and the chief considered it best that Anne's identity should still be a secret.

Anne was determined to again brave the dangers of the gang. As soon as she entered the room in which the three were waiting to consult with her she realized the strained attitude of the men towards her. But, leaving herself for the ordeal, she advanced fearlessly towards Iron Hand.

But before she had time to speak a word Potsdam, the second-in-command, rose from his seat and confiscated the girl.

"Where are the jewels?" he threatened. Anne pretended that she did not understand this.

"Why, I sent the box down to you. Didn't you get it?" she asked innocently.

Iron Hand grabbed Potsdam aside, and stopped to the front.

"Yes, we've got the box," he replied, "but the jewels were not in it."

Anne was astonished and dismayed.

"Somebody must have taken them out, then," she said, playing her part with great skill.

The suspicious Potsdam leered at her, and asked cunningly if she did it. Iron Hand saved her the trouble of denying this direct question.

"We'll go back there to-night and get them," he said, full of excitement.

"How did you get away?"

Anne gave a lengthy explanation of the affair, while the men listened eagerly.

"And while they were chasing you, she concluded, "I slipped out of the window, and here I am."

Iron Hand accepted this, and reproved Potsdam for his disbelief, and then the leader went on to explain their next venture.

Arriving at his destination, Sharpe made his way to the chief of Police, who was busy at a desk in his office with two uniformed men standing beside him.

The detective introduced himself to the chief, and presented his credentials. The officer shook hands with him, and then handed up a telegram which was lying on the desk. It was the one from Barnett, denying any knowledge of the mysterious young woman about whom Sharpe was inquired.

Sharpe was very disappointed at the failure of the message to clear up the matter. Then he turned to the chief, and outlined his plan for a big round-up of the gang. He asked for a number of uniformed men, and also for several plain-clothes officials. The officer granted his request without a demur.

"We should have raided the den ourselves if it hadn't been for orders from headquarters," he said. "Before we start I would like you to come and see a crook we have just run in. Perhaps you may know something of him." The chief sent an attendant out, who returned later leading the man in.

Sharpe at once gave him a look of recognition. The man was very sulky, and Sharpe asked the officer what he was being held for.

"We have got him for an attempted burglary," he replied.

"Charge it to an attempt to kill, then," returned Sharpe, "and we'll send him to prison for the rest of his life. He tried to kill me—"

The prisoner weakened at this prospect of a long sentence, and he promised to divulge some of the secrets of Iron Hand's underground headquarters.

The detective shook his head.

"I already know them all," he said. "Maybe so," the man groveled, "but there's one secret you don't know—the flooded chamber!"

Sharpe admitted that this was the case, and he promised to let the stock of lightly be revealed. Needless to say, the man jumped at this offer, and at once commenced to tell his story.

That night detective Sharpe and two other men made their way to the roof of the building in which the underground headquarters of the gang was located. The three men climbed along to an attic-window, by way of a gutter, so that they could peer in through the window.

An extraordinary sight met their gaze. For this apartment was filled with water. It was, in fact, the mysterious flooded chamber.

On the opposite side to the window there were a number of lockers, and under each one was a tablet. There were seven in all. No. 1 was marked second floor; 2, office; 3, stairs; 4, lift shaft; 5, hall; 6, cellar; 7, well.

Sharpe looked carefully at these, and noted that the idea was apparently that if a lever were moved to any particular number, the place indicated by it would be immediately flooded. Sharpe spoke to the Chief of Police, who was with him.

"I understand the working of this one," he said. "Whichever room that indicator points to will be instantly flooded."

The chief looked interested. Just then another man, who was situated on a high point on the roof, called out:

"Everything is ready, and the whole building is completely surrounded."

"Are you ready, Sharpe?" asked the Chief of Police.

"Yes," returned the detective.

The chief gave his men the word to flash the arranged signal. A moment later he produced a rocket, lit it, and threw it up into the air.

Sharpe immediately rushed through the attic-window to the flooded chamber. Meanwhile, a large number of policemen, who were concentrated in the vicinity, rushed from their places of concealment. Some of them made an onslaught on the attached headquarters belonging to Wong Li. Soon they succeeded in smashing in the door and entering, and they were speedily engaged in a hot struggle with a number of Chinamen who were present.

Iron Hand, Anne, Potsdam, and Black Flag, together with other outlaws who were on the scene, started up in an alarmed manner when they heard the rocket explode.

Instantly there was confusion, and Iron Hand snatched on a few quick movements which restored order.

"Quick—the camera!" he cried.

Potsdam whipped off the cover of the camera obscura, which had proved of great use to them before in locating where danger was. At that moment Wang Li scudded through a panel, and in a state of great agitation, he announced that the police were raiding his place.

Iron Hand ignored him, and he and Potsdam looked into the camera. The leader was occupying the bottom that controlled this device. They saw the police battling, and watching the Chinamen at Wong Li's office.

Then it was switched on to the wharf, and here again two or three policemen were overpowering the Chinamen who were standing on guard. Next the camera was directed towards the sewer

beneath the building which had played such a prominent part in the history of the gang. Here also Iron Hand saw a number of policemen pushing a shaft through towards the well.

In time Iron Hand pointed the camera at all the places surrounding the headquarters which were used from time to time. It was the same story everywhere. There were large numbers of police on the scene, who were overpowering numbers of the gang whom they had surprised.

Next Iron Hand switched it to the outside of the house. Again the representatives of law and order were battling their way against the opposition from various members of the gang and protecting them from breaking through the lines. As Iron Hand and Potsdam saw all these scenes in the camera obscura, they realized that a large and determined attack was being made by the police upon their stronghold.

The leader took command.

"To the stairs!" he ordered, and they made their way through one of the secret panels. Anne did her best to lag behind, while the gang rushed feverishly up the stairs.

Meanwhile, John Sharpe had succeeded in swimming across the flooded chamber, and he put the indicator at the place marked "stairs." As the gang ascended half-way up, a terrific flood of water appeared from above and flowed down towards them like an avalanche, sweeping the whole of them back into the pass room. With great difficulty they closed the panel through which they had recently entered.

"Try the lift-shaft!" called out Potsdam.

Another secret panel was opened, disclosing the passage-way for the lift, but before they could enter it the water poured down through the shaft like a miniature Niagara Falls. Sharpe had once more missed the indicator.

The outlaws saw that this way of escape was barred to them, and very reluctantly they were compelled to shut the door again.

The gang realized that they were trapped! Suddenly an idea came to Iron Hand, and he opened another secret trap-door. He had almost forgotten this thing in his place of sunny surprises.

"This shaft leads to an abandoned mine," he said. "There's a horse at the end of the tunnel—wait for me there."

The gang and Wong Li were only too glad of the means of escape, and they at once feverishly descended through the trap, leaving Iron Hand, Potsdam, and Anne until the last.

Then the second-in-command said:

"You go next, master. I will follow with the camera."

Iron Hand climbed down, and Anne then made for the trap, but Potsdam lured her away and said, with an ugly look in his eyes:

"A word with you before we go!"

He seized Anne by the wrist, and dragged her over to the camera obscura. He pressed the button, and pointing to it, said:

"Look there!"

The girl and the gangster looked into the camera obscura.

The roof of the house gradually came into view, and Sharpe, who had now come out of the flood-chamber, was descending into the street in company with the Chief of Police. Potsdam looked at Anne accusingly.

"You knew this all the time!" he scolded. "You betrayed us! No one else knows the secret of the flood-chamber. I'm going to fix you before I go."

There was an ugly look in his face, and the detective before him. Potsdam rushed over to the girl, and forced her back against the wall. Then he reached over and pressed a button.

Instantly two doors slid back and a small cupboard was disclosed. Three five-barrel shotguns sprang out and aimed their snouts at the throat and two of her waist—pinning her arms to her sides.

Potsdam glared over her as he pressed another button, and the girl was drawn back into the cupboard, and the doors closed again. Going to the wall, he yelled out:

"You won't make any more fun now. I'll let you breathe a few whiffs of our new poison gas."

The second-in-command went over to another point in the wall, and opened a little panel which disclosed a lever. He pulled this, muttering:

"I'll give it to her by degrees. In a half-hour she'll be a dead one."

Then he hurried over to the trapdoor, and followed the footsteps of the other members of the gang. At last revenge had come to him.

Poor Anne began to choke, as the vapour poured down upon her in her little prison.

By this time Sharpe, accompanied by the chief and four policemen, had arrived at the stairs, which were still flooded with water. He looked around and he saw a small lever marked "water escape." He pulled this and the water rapidly receded, and the detective led the man to the secret passage leading to Nest 1, which they all entered.

"They can't get away. We've got every outlet guarded," muttered the detective, as he glanced around. Then—still, sniff—something caught the nostrils of the alert detective, who was over on the look-out for anything wrong. He sniffed again, and told the chief and the police to pause a moment. They were startled to hear him suddenly announce that there was poison gas about.

Sharpe traced the smell toward the room, and stopped at last in front of the hidden cabinet. The officer and policemen looked on interestedly.

A faint trace of the vapour was issuing from a crack, thus disclosing the doors of the cabinet. Sharpe was glad that he had discovered the location of the gas. Then, fearful of the result if he inhaled too much, he darted away from it, joining the chief again at the other end of the room. He looked about for some means of avoiding the gas, until his eyes were attracted by an open cupboard, in which was a bottle of brandy.

He grasped it, and shouted out excitedly:

"This is the antidote for this particular form of gas."

The detective pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, and he instructed the policemen to do likewise. Then he poured some brandy over them all, and they bowed their heads over their noses and mouths.

Poor Anne, with her head dropped on her chest, was almost suffocated in the vaporous atmosphere. She made a few convulsive movements, and then collapsed. Sharpe heard the movement within the cabinet, and he and the policemen started over towards it. With the butts of their revolvers they made an attempt to force open the doors. Very soon they were successful.

Sharpe was astonished when the figure of the girl was revealed. Finding aside the beds that held Anne, the man lifted her into the room. One of the policemen

man quickly closed the cabinet door, in order to shut out the gas.

The detective then turned his attention to the girl, and she soon started to revive. As she opened her eyes she looked around, greatly alarmed, at first. Then, recognizing Sharpe, with great relief, she gasped excitedly:

"Trapdoor in floor!"

Sharpe decided to follow at once. But the Chief of Police, pointing to Anne, said:

"We'd better arrest her first."

Two of the policemen started to pick up Anne, who was still very feeble. Sharpe stayed them, saying:

"She seems to be pretty bad. We'd better send her to a hospital."

Anne understood the detective's words, and looked towards him gratefully. The officer instructed some men to assist her from the room, and the rest he ordered to search the building. Sharpe and the chief then descended into the trap and disappeared.

Iron Hand, Black Flag, and the others had approached a considerable way along the rough tunnel hewn out of the earth. At last they came to a door at one end, and the leader turned the handle. Inside was a perfectly bare room in a deserted house. It had wooden walls, and there was no furniture at all. The room was altogether in a dilapidated condition, and it was evidently the only one in an old abandoned shack.

Iron Hand stood carefully on the doorstep for a moment, then he reached up and pulled a rope that led from a ring-bolt in the top to one of the wall-planks opposite the door.

As Iron Hand pulled the rope the plank, which was hinged at the bottom, and counter-weighted, was slowly drawn down until the upper end rested on the sill of the door across the room to a point near the outside door of the house, thus forming a bridge.

The leader motioned the others to follow him across, and to take care lest they step on the floor itself. Everyone walked carefully across the fragile bridge.

When Iron Hand reached the other side of the room, where the door to the outside was, he took a key, unlocked the door, and went outside, followed immediately by the others. Potsdam, who was the last to go, closed the doors before following.

This abandoned shack was situated in a lonely location, and concealed by a thick growth of trees.

Before moving away, Iron Hand ordered Black Flag to stand at a sheltered window, through which he could see what transpired in the room. Then the leader suddenly became conscious that there was someone missing.

"Where's Marra Black?" he questioned.

Potsdam shrugged his shoulders, and replied indifferently:

"She said she'd rather stay behind than try the tunnel."

Iron Hand was a little suspicious, and was about to investigate further, when Black Flag called them all over to the window. Iron Hand and Potsdam went first, and peered into the room.

They were surprised to see the door to the tunnel thrown violently open by Detective Sharpe, who stood framed in the doorway, with the Chief of Police behind, and a number of policemen, all with revolvers drawn and ready to fight.

Sharpe looked carefully around the room, as though half-expecting an ambush. Potsdam and Black Flag were greatly alarmed and wanted to get out, but there was a look of evil satisfaction on the leader's face.

"There is no reason to fear," he said.

"Just watch inside and see what happens."

They all looked through the sheltered again. Sharpe, who was convinced that there were now no men in the room, started to walk across the floor. They reached the middle, when suddenly the floor opened, and the detective and the chief dropped out of sight.

Beneath the floor was a large tank, with perfectly smooth sides, and there was no opportunity whatever of climbing out of the water, while the floor above was too high to reach, and it had now closed up to its correct position.

One of the policemen who were a short distance from Sharpe and the chief now appeared in the doorway, and the next moment he, too, proceeded to cross the floor.

Once more it opened, and he also dropped through. Sharpe and the officer were now surprised, and they were somewhat annoyed to see a third man join them in their strange predicament. A moment later the performance was repeated, and another officer dropped through.

Unfortunately, the last man was unable to swim, and his chief and another man went to his assistance, holding his head above water. Sharpe swam round and round in order to see if there were any possible means of getting out, but without success.

When Potsdam and Black Flag saw what had happened, they laughed with evil glee.

Iron Hand went over to a small window close to the ground, and, unbarred it, he peered through. He saw the detective swimming around, looking for a way of escape, and the officer and a policeman holding up the man who was unable to swim.

"Have a pleasant swim, gentlemen!" said the leader of the gang, roaring with laughter at his feeble joke. Then he closed the window with a bang.

It was really an awful predicament for them, and Sharpe and the others were disgusted, for they realized that they would soon become tired, and were certain to drown.

Sharpe, however, was not going to despair yet awhile. He continued to swim about in an endeavor to find the slightest possible chance of escaping from the danger. Presently he looked up, and he recalled that there were certain ropes fastened to the rear wall of the room above.

He told the chief what he intended to do. Then, grasping on his back in the water, Sharpe drew out a small automatic pistol, and floated over to a position close to the rear of the cellar, underneath where the ropes were in the floor above. He took careful aim, pressed the trigger, and fired. Where the bullet went through there was a hole in the splintered wood.

Sharpe was firing into the solid flooring which surrounded the trapdoor through which they had fallen. He fired several more shots, still lying on his back in the water, and each bullet ploughed its way through the floor, the holes appearing in a small circle just a few inches in diameter. He continued to fire the rest of the shots in his revolver. Then he put his revolver away, swam over to the chief, and borrowed his, which was a very large one.

The detective swam back to his former position, took aim, and fired again. The first big bullet from the chief's revolver hit the circle of wood made by Sharpe, and it flew through the air, leaving a hole in the floor a few inches in diameter.

(Continued on page 15.)



## EDITORIAL.

My Dear Glean,—

Next week I shall be able to give you the exact date when our wonderful drama of schoolboy life will commence in the "Gem." This magnificent serial is entitled: "What Have You Against Me?" and it will interest you all to an extraordinary degree, I am sure. Every reader of the "Gem" should make sure of placing a regular order for the paper during the next few weeks, because there will be an even larger demand than usual, and you must not be left without your copy. In our next issue there will be another extra special long story of St. Jim's, entitled: "Bound by a

Friend!" and you will be glad to know that the old friend of St. Jim's, namely Towser, plays a prominent part in the year. It is quite one of the best stories of Tom Merry & Co. that Martin Clifford has ever written, and you must not miss the next number of the "Gem" on any account. Still as news of Ernest Leeson! This popular character has been missing from school for quite a time now, and everyone is deeply concerned about the affair. There seems to be no explanation at all of his curious disappearance. Can any reader of the "Gem" throw any light upon this subject? It is to be sincerely hoped that some day will

be found shortly. That great serial story, "The Lad from the Lower Deck!" which starts in this week's "Boys' Herald," should be followed by every reader of the "Gem." It is a great story in every way, and you will be delighted with the feats of Frank Sturdy, the Lad from the Lower Deck, Bryce Fiddgen, the bully of the game-room, David Linsky, commonly known as the Shrimp, and the Hon. Reginald Fadder, the duke among the middle-boys, who is a regular "Gony D'Arcy." Get this week's "Boys' Herald" without delay. It is on sale every Tuesday. Price 1d. THE EDITOR.

## ANSWERS TO READERS.

AGREY GENSER (Blond Street, Beams, Johannesburg).—Peggy Trindle is not quite so fat as that other hero, the worst letter at St. Jim's are Harry, Selby, Knox, Catts, Rocks, Crooks, Scropo, Clampe, Mellish, Piggott, and Trindle. St. Jim's commences at the Second Form. The best footballers in the Shell are Tom, Merry, Noble, Talbot, Glyn, and Loother. Glyn is the best goalkeeper. Tom, Merry and Jack Hako emphatically declare that the School House is top dog in sports. Piggott and Bonham saw that the New House could lick them to a frazzle. Kidaro has been at St. Jim's since 1906. He is nearly eighteen. St. Jim's has many Boy Scout troops. Talbot lived in Angel Alley before he came to St. Jim's. Wildrake is in the Fourth Form. St. Jim's is far the larger. The Record is by no means the same as the Shell. Wally Hunter was to have gone to St. Jim's, but his cousin changed places with him, and went instead.

Neither of them are there now. Wally has long since gone away to Paris. Tom Merry is considerably older than Wharrie. For the rest of your inquiries you really must see the stories.

MIDSHIPMAN (Keele).—"The Lad from the Lower Deck!" is just the story you want. It is the most human story of boys' life in the Navy ever written, and is appearing each week in the "Boys' Herald," on sale everywhere, price 1d.

A correspondent in Maiden Vale writes: "Several of my friends have decided to camp out this summer. We are prepared to go within a distance of fifty miles from London, and for a period of one week. We are, however, faced with the difficult problem as to which is the best place to go to, and the things necessary for the trip."

The question of equipment depends on

the taste of the travellers. They do not want to be burdened with a lot of baggage. At the same time, comfort must be considered. The best way is to make a selection from the catalogue of some big firm which caters for holiday folk. My claim and his friends will try the south coast of Devon, travelling due south of Guildford. The country with its beauty will well repay them. There are many districts of Surrey—the Dorking and Holmwood region, for instance—where the country is a strange wilderness, and where no obstacles will be put in the way of tourists. This correspondent will be, if anything, encouraged by the number of lovely spots. He can reach Essex—the wonderful Weald, and the bog-giving lands, and push on to the marshes north of Winchester and Bice, where the bird life is fascinating, and the sky is alone worth a visit. Or, let him try good old Bucks, trekking north-west from Uxbridge, on the Middlesex border.

## CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

Well, did you enjoy reading this week's grand story, "Fighting the Flames"? Fire-drill is undoubtedly a practice that should have been considered long ago at the school. I should certainly think that Cyril Chevalie and his roostly pals will light off of any further smoking in the school precincts. Without exaggeration, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy played a most prominent part in his heroic rescue of the smoky boarder.

If you remember, in the last fire at the famous school, the Swell of St. Jim's played an even more prominent part. Had it not been for the timely aid of his trusty bucket, the school would have assuredly been burnt to the ground.

I am told that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is shortly to take up the noble art of golfing. Suppose we shall hear next that he is to be measured for a "nick."

Whatever trouble is ahead, we can rest assured, as Tom Merry, the captain of the St. Jim's junior eleven, is making good gun at the cricket at present.

"Oh dear! What can the matter be?" Such is the old, old song which has now returned, and is on the lips of us all. Ernest Leeson, once a roofer, but now a decent fellow at heart, has not care aside and goes as though with the wind. Where and for why he has gone, remains a complete mystery. I have appealed to my many readers who, I am sure, have given me every assistance, but without avail. Will no gladdening news ever reach us? Will the clouds ever roll by and enlighten Ernest Leeson's many admirers? Time will tell!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seems to be the favourite of many of my readers. Probably this is because he stamps the note of Vere de Vere. You can't "lick" it, after all said and done.

I hear that Ashby Rocks, a dacker of the first water at sports, has been forcibly made to turn out and practice at the nets. It cannot be said that the senior eleven have "netted" much, but there you are, there's no net for the "wicket."

A general remark has been passed that David Liverpool Wynn has a face like a bladder of sand. If the Falstaff of St. Jim's only knew who the culprit were, I'm sure he would "fare" up and deliver his just deserts.

George Hurries claims to be the finest musician at St. Jim's. We know well enough he even is content playing, but he needsn't "blow" it about.

Don't forget to send the opening instalment of the powerful naval story entitled: "The Lad from the Lower Deck," which appears in this week's issue of the "Boys' Herald." It is sure to please you!

I know most of my ardent readers must be waiting anxiously to read our grand new serial, which starts in the next future, and is entitled: "What Have You Against Me?" I could tell you lots about this most appealing of serials, but then I would only spoil its interest. I will say this, though, that it is the type of story you have not been waiting for.

(Continued from page 15.)

The detective was glad to see that his shot had the proper effect, and he now got directly under the hole in the ceiling and looked searching through it. His eye fastened on a rope severed to the foot.

It was high up on the wall, and one end was knotted to a ring bolt in the floor, and then passed up along the wall and over a pulley wheel. The other end of the rope held a weight, which was responsible for pulling the floor back in position.

Again Sharpe raised his gun, took careful aim, and fired up through the hole. The others looked on with great interest, hoping that he would be successful.

Fortunately, his first bullet severed a section of the rope. The weighted end dropped, and the part connected with the floor also dropped. Then one half of the floor fell down, and hung in a vertical position.

Sharpe at once swam over towards it, and undaunted to climb up to it, so that he could reach the room above. The smooth flooring, however, afforded him no chance. He looked again towards the hole he had made with the bullets, and drew his knife, and cut off a section of the rope which fell with the floor. The other end of this was knotted to the ring bolt. He tied the rope around his knife where the handle joined the blade, and then he swam under the hole in the floor.

Taking careful aim, the detective tossed the knife well up towards the hole. To his great joy, it weighed there, with the rope still tied to it, and then afforded a brace by which he could climb the rope. The knife was a very strong one, and it was not a very great distance from the water to the section of floor.

Sharpe tied his weight upon it. Then he climbed up head over hand, reaching the edge of the floor, and succeeded in climbing up to the room above. He picked up his knife and rope, and made

his way carefully round the first edge of the floor to the front of the room, when he lowered the plank bridge, and walked on it. Then, tying the end of his rope around him, he dropped the other end down.

The man who could not swim was pushed up towards the rope, and he hastily climbed up head over hand, and the second man grabbed the rope ready to follow next. As soon as the first reached the top, Sharpe assisted him to the plank.

The performance was repeated until they had all gained the floor again, then they made their way to the front door of the shack, which they burst open, and went outside.

Dripping wet from their unpleasant though exciting experience, they hastily made their way back towards the City. Sharpe was disappointed to feel that the leaders of the gang had again outwitted them.

A New Scheme.

THE Crime Trust was again reaching out its evil tentacles, and the scene this time was the big store of the International Fur Company. Business people were continually stressing in and out of the huge and prosperous shop.

Presently along the street passed a motor-lorry with ten large-sized barrels on it. The barrels, which had lids upon them, bore the label, "Laffin Electric Company." On the truck was a chauffeur member of the gang, and seated beside him was Potodan in disguise.

The truck proceeded until it came to the Southam Storage and Warehouse Company, which occupied the building belonging to the International Fur Company.

(Get next week's "GEM" for the continuation of this splendid story.)

The Jester's Column

Slow About It.

"Do fishy-words come out of the ground?" asked Johnny, who had been waiting for an hour with a can outside the woodshed.

"To be sure!" said his mother.  
"Well, then, why don't they come out!" demanded Johnny impatiently.

It Seemed.

John: "Have you ever heard the story about the man who stole the art?"

Tom: "No."  
John: "Well, he stole it, that's evil."  
Tom: "Pooh! That's nothing to the one about the big and little ginket."

John: "Let's hear it."  
Tom: "Couldn't possibly tell you; the boring-what!"

Smart.

Jack: "What language are people likely to speak at the North Pole, if ever it becomes inhabited?"

George: "How about Icelandic—or Finnish, perhaps, the North Pole being at the end of the world!"

Jack: "Not a bad suggestion. But, really, they could hardly help speaking North Polish, could they?"

Sure Thing.

Tommy: "I want to look at your Royal Highlander."  
Jeweller's Assistant: "Our what? We have no Royal Highlander."

Tommy: "You've got a case of black watches in your window, haven't you?"

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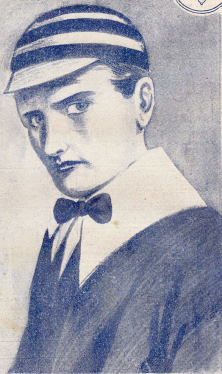
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