

**SPLENDID COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES!**

The

# GEM 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

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LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

October 29th, 1921.



## D'ARCY IN TROUBLE!

*(An Amusing incident from the Magnificent Long Complete School Story inside.)*

# EDITORIAL

My Dear Chums,—

Among a crowd of congratulatory letters in my postbag about the "Gem" and the "St. Jim's News" there is a cheery line from a keen supporter in Ireland who is urging me to remember a bumper Christmas Number. As if I were likely to forget it! There is some little distance to cover yet before Christmas comes, but it is not too early to state, once for all, that the special issue of the "Gem," to be published December 21st, and bearing date for the 24th, will be a record.

This Christmas Number, with its splendid coloured cover, should come up to all expectations. I am working to that end. Its story of St. Jim's will be even more thoroughly representative of the school than usual, and Mr. Martin Clifford has been at pains to introduce a few of the

popular characters who, for some reason or another, have been on the shelf. But before going on to refer to St. Jim's and the supplement, and other subjects, I may as well, while this question of Special Numbers is on the carpet, just drop in a tactful reminder that next week's issue of the "Boys' Herald" will be a treat. Don't forget it, please! I am looking to all Gemites to remember the Fifth of November copy of the "Boys' Herald" with all its special features. There is the magnificent long complete story of the three jolly chums of H.M.S. Thunderbolt, the long complete football story of Stringer and the Northcote Boys, the opening chapters of the great sporting serial, "The Sportsman and the Slacker," and £200 in prizes, with the magnificent sum of £100 as first prize. You may win it!

The St. Jim's yarn this week is great! There is a surprise in it, just as there has been in others, including the rattling tale about Tom Merry & Co. at Madame Tussaud's, and the quaint trick of the indiarubber chap, Timbernolt, who impersonated the Swell of St. Jim's, and

got properly ragged for his base temerity. It isn't very often a party of St. Jim's fellows get to London, and Mr. Martin Clifford certainly did the sights well. To my mind each story serves not only to amuse, and raise a laugh, or stir a deeper interest, but it also helps to impress the characters more thoroughly on the mind. The more you know them, the better you like them. Fatty Wynn, big, jolly, generous, and gifted with a tremendous appetite, which, however, he keeps under better control than is the case of Baggie; Wildrace, splendid sportsman, but fairly modest and retiring, notwithstanding his almost uncanny powers; Cardew, mocking, yet sincere, and brave as a lion—he showed courage, too, in his way, when Mr. Sankey's lion was on the rampage; Gussy, but there is no need to say anything about the usually urbane and serene aristocrat, who fights for principle!

Well, keep a sharp look-out ahead for the Special Numbers, and don't forget that there will be a splendid Guy Fawkes story in next week's "Gem," entitled "Grundy's Gunpowder Plot."

YOUR EDITOR.

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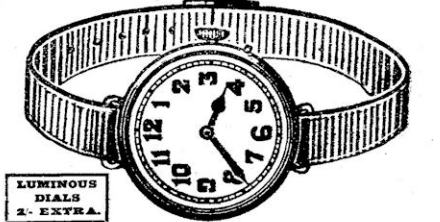
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# D'ARCY'S NEW HOBBY

A Grand Long, Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER 1.

### "Towsah!"

"GRRR-R-R-R-R!"

Jack Blake looked up in amazement as the weird noise reached his ears.

"GRRR-r-r-r-r!"

Digby and Herries followed their leader's gaze across the study to where the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat in an armchair, his face flushed and contorted as though he were choking.

Study No. 6 was—or should have been—filled with a studious silence. Digby and Herries sat at the table, busily engaged upon their prep, while Jack Blake, who had completed his, sat over by the open window, reading a copy of the "Boys' Herald." Arthur Augustus, however, apparently cared for none of these things. True, he had hastily glanced through a page of his English history textbook; but neither the subtleties of Henry VIII.'s foreign policy nor the thought of Mr. Lathom's possible catechism on the following day had appealed to the swell of St. Jim's as being worthy of much serious consideration. He seemed to have something on his mind, and had reclined himself in the depths of the most comfortable chair in the study, with his eyes closed, as though he were thinking out some weighty problem.

And thus had things continued—Digby and Herries sweating, Jack Blake deeply immersed in the adventures of Jim Leader, the boy who went to London, and Gussy reclining comfortably among the cushions when the silence of the study was, without warning, invaded by that mysterious, gurgling grunt.

"Grrr-grrr-r-r-r-r!"

The sound unmistakably emanated from the aristocratic throat of the Hon. Arthur Augustus, although he still sat in the armchair, with his eyes closed.

Blake viewed his noble chum with amazement, not unmixed with alarm.

"Gussy?" he exclaimed.

The strained features of the scion of the house of Eastwood relaxed, and he assumed an expression of elaborate innocence.

"Yass, deah boy?"

"What the merry thump is the matter with you?" demanded Blake.

"With me, deah boy? Nothin' at all," responded D'Arcy innocently.

"Then why are you making those horrible, groaning roars?" asked Herries.

"I was not awah that I was makin' any howwible gwoans at all," responded Gussy, with some degree of dignity.

"Then it's about time you saw a doctor!" granted Blake.

"Or a plumber!" suggested Digby.

"I refuse to twent such widdulous wemarks at all sowwoidly!"

"Well, what's the matter with you, anyway?" asked Blake.

"Tired?"

"Not in the least, deah boy!"

"Then what are you going to sleep for?"

"I was not goin' to sleep," protested Gussy. "I am merely thinkin'!"

"Oh, that explains it, then!" said Blake, with an air of relief.

"Explains what, pway?"

"The noise," replied Blake. "I though it sounded a bit like rusty machinery. Of course, if Gussy is trying to get his mind to work, there'd naturally be a lot of that kind of noise. We shall have to put up with it, that's all!"

"You sillay ass!" said Arthur Augustus, in disdain.

Herries pretended alarm.

"You don't think it's likely to be a serious matter, do you?" he inquired of Blake anxiously. "I should hate to see the poor old ass go off with a bang, or anything like that! Besides, look what a mess it would make of the study, having Gussy strowed round in fragments!"

"Hewwies, you are an utah idiot!" Gussy almost shrieked.

"Better ask him if it hurts at all!" counselled Digby cautiously.

"I've got a jolly good distemper cure that I used for Towsah. You're welcome to a dose if you'd like it, Gussy!" proffered Herries generously.

Gussy calmed himself with a visible effort.

"You pwobably mean well, Hewwies," he said patronisingly. "But you are a perfectly cwass numskull, all the same, you know, deah boy!"

Herries rose from his chair.

"Look here, Gussy!" he began wrathfully. "If you—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Blake impatiently. "Let the ass alone, Herries! Let him go to sleep again, for goodness' sake! Any old thing for a quiet life!"

Herries, still muttering threats, subsided into his chair and continued his prep. Gussy, sniffing disdainfully at Blake's remarks, closed his eyes again, and once more silence descended upon the study.

Not for long, however. In less than three minutes there came a further weird noise:

"Grrr-r-r-r-r-r!"

"My aunt!" said Herries wonderingly. "He's at it again!"

"Take no notice!" counselled Blake. "It'll pass over!"

"Grrr-r-r-r-r-r!"

Gussy opened his eyes, and gazed thoughtfully round the study.

"Hewwies, old man!" he said.

Herries exchanged a quick glance with Digby, and then looked around to Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, Gussy?" he said kindly.

"Have you been bwingin' Towsah into the studay, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"He was here yesterday," replied the mystified Herries.

"You saw him yourself, didn't you?"

"Yass, deah boy. But I was wondewin' if he'd been heah since then. To-day, for instance, I was—I was wondewin' if—"

"If—"

"Towsah in the studay?" repeated Herries. "Of course he isn't. What on earth makes you think that?"

Jack Blake looked across at Digby and tapped his head with a finger significantly.

"Poor old ass!" he murmured softly. "It's come at last!"

"Are you weally certain that Towsah isn't heah?" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Didn't you heah a noise watah like him growwin' jus' now?"

"My hat!" said Herries blankly.

"I should lie back in the cushions, if I were you, Gussy!" suggested the leader of Study No. 6. "You'll be better in a few minutes. It's the heat, you know."

Gussy, ignoring the advice of his chum, jerked himself upright in the chair.

"Stop wottin', you wottah! There was a noise in the studay jus' now, exactly like Towsah growwin'." I insist upon Hewwies lookin' to see if Towsah is heah. Towsah may be a vevy fine bulldog, but he has no wespsect watahveah for a fellah's twousers, and I do not feel at all easy in my mind watah heah is any possibility of his bein' anywheah awound!"

"Do you ever feel easy in your mind, Gussy?" inquired Jack Blake.

A realisation of the inner meaning of Blake's remark only elicited a disdainful sniff from Arthur Augustus.

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"Towser's in his kennel all right!" growled Herries. "I went down and fed him about an hour ago."

"But paws he's broken loose," suggested Gussy. "It strikes me it's you who's breaking loose, Gussy," said Digby. "Growling in your sleep, and then waking up to look for bulldogs! Go to sleep again, there's a good chap, and let Herries and I finish our prep!"

"I have not been to sleep at all, Digby!" avowed Gussy. "Then it's the best thing you can do!" snapped Blake.

"But Towser—"  
"Oh, blow Towser!"  
"Herries, I insist that you shall look for that beastly dog of yours!" said Arthur Augustus. "You must have heard him growl!"

"We heard you growling, if that's what you mean!" responded Herries.

Arthur Augustus looked crestfallen.  
"Me? Could you really tell that it was I who was growling?" he inquired anxiously.

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared at the swell of St. Jim's in dumbfounded amazement.

"My only aunt!" said Blake at length. "Did—did you really think we couldn't tell where the sound came from, you ass?"

"I was hopin' you couldn't," confessed Gussy, with an air of evident disappointment. "However, it is obvious that I am not quite such an expert as I had hoped. I must do some more practice, that is all."

"Practice!" echoed Digby. "Practice at what?"  
"Ventiloquism, dear boy!" replied Gussy calmly. "I'm a ventiloquist, you know!"

"A thumping ass, you mean?" growled Blake.

"I have been practising for a long time in secret," continued Gussy, ignoring Blake's interruption. "But it is evident that I shall have to do some more before I am perfect. At present I am content with upon two imitations—the growling of a dog and a man up a chimney."

"Why don't you try an imitation of a fatheaded idiot up the pole?" inquired Blake. "That would come more naturally to you!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Jack. "Now I sha'n't be able to read the instalment of 'The Lad From the Lower Deck' before bed-time. I wanted to particularly. And it's all through Gussy!"

"I vote we bump the idiot!" suggested Blake.

"I shall refuse to be bumped!" declared Arthur Augustus. "You always do," replied Blake. "But it makes no difference in the end! Give a hand here, chaps!"

The chums of Study No. 6 grasped the amateur ventiloquist and dragged him out of the armchair. Three seconds later the floor of the study resounded with the impact of the person of the Hon. Arthur Augustus. And then Blake, Herries, and Digby tramped off to the dormitory, leaving Augustus on the carpet, considerably ruffled, but firmly determined to continue concentrating on the growling of dogs and the voices of men up chimneys!

## CHAPTER 2.

### "Mr. Rogers, of London."

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was very keen indeed upon his new hobby. For a long time the swell of St. Jim's had cherished a secret desire to shine as a ventiloquist, and he was determined that nothing should prevent him from acquiring the art. He had previously made his mark on the Fourth Form had been derided by some irreverent jokers of the Fourth Form had advertised for instruction in ventiloquism, and an alteration that had been made in the advertisement had resulted in the arrival at St. Jim's of a whole army of professors eager to impart to Arthur Augustus the rudiments of Greek, violin-playing, elocution, banjo-strumming, dancing, and conjuring—in fact, anything and everything but ventiloquism.

But the swell of St. Jim's was made of sterner stuff than could be put off a purpose by such means. He had lain low for a short time, and had risen phoenix-like from the ashes of his previous failure, with a grim determination to conquer in his fresh attempt. He had invested largely, but secretly, in books of instruction on the subject, and he had practised assiduously, also in secret, before he made his initial effort in Study No. 6. His non-success on that occasion had undoubtedly disappointed him, but it had most certainly not discouraged him in the least. One of his books of instruction had advised the youthful aspirant to devote his attention to one, or at most two, effects in ventiloquism, and confine his endeavours and practice to them until he was perfect. After that he could go on with others. Gussy had taken this advice, with the result that he had decided to devote his efforts to the acquirement of a dog's growl that could be made to appear as if coming from any

direction desired, and the ability to conduct a conversation with a voice that emanated from a chimney.

Up to now he had not been very successful with either, but he was none the less determined that he would be. Three days after his failure to reproduce the voice of Towser in Study No. 6, he tapped at the door of Tom Merry's study, and waited politely outside.

"Come in, ass!" said the voice of Tom Merry pleasantly. And Arthur Augustus opened the door and stepped into the study.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"  
Monty Lowther looked up, and then across at Tom.

"Jolly good guess of yours, Tom!" he said.  
"Weally!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "What was that?"

"Guessing that you were outside," replied Lowther.

"But Tom Mewwy did not know that it was I," said Gussy, in a puzzled fashion.

"He must have done?" affirmed Lowther humorously. "He said 'ass,' didn't he?"

Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass and surveyed Monty Lowther with a frigid glance.

"Lowthab, I feah that you have a remarkably evude sense of humah," he said cuttingly. "If I were not heah on vevy sevius bimay, I should feel compelled to administrah a stern wubuke to you. Howehav—"

"No, Gussy, not that! Anything but that!" And the humorously-inclined Lowther produced his pocket-handkerchief and relapsed into a pretended fit of bitter weeping.

"You—you uttah wotah!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed him for a moment in silence, and then turned away in high dudgeon as Tom Merry spoke.

"Well, Gussy," said Tom Merry laughingly, "what can we do for you?"

Arthur Augustus polished his monocle carefully, and replaced it in his eye before replying.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, Tom Mewwy, I am heah, as I told that ass Lowthab, on wathah a sevius mattah."

Tom Merry and Manners looked up quickly, and even the grief-stricken Lowther put away his handkerchief and regarded D'Arcy attentively. It struck Tom Merry & Co. that Gussy might be in some kind of difficulty, and in that case they would have been ready enough to do anything in their power to help him out.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, Gussy?" said Tom Merry rather gravely.

"Not at all, dear boy—I mean, yaas, wathah. You see—well, the fact is, dear hoye—"

"Take your time, old fruit!" murmured the irrepressible Lowther.

Arthur Augustus certainly seemed to be experiencing some degree of difficulty in explaining himself. Suddenly he walked across to the door of the study, opened it, looked up and down the corridor, and then, closing the door again, advanced towards the chums in a very mysterious manner.

"Tom Mewwy," he said, in a voice that was little above a whisper, "should you be vevy surprisid to heah that there is an unfortunat individual in your chimney?"

The swell of St. Jim's paused to note the effect of his words, and he had no need to be disappointed at the result, if he had been desirous of causing a sensation. The three occupants of the study regarded him open-mouthed. Manners mounted on to the table, as if his fingers were incapable of holding them. Tom Merry drew a deep breath, and stared at Gussy as though hypnotised. Lowther seemed the least moved, and deep down in his eyes a glimmer of amusement began to sparkle. He was not a humorist, he was fairly shrewd, was Monty—perhaps the two characteristics were to some extent dependent upon each other—and it may have been that he began to have some glimmering of the meaning of D'Arcy's remarkable query. And at any rate, his sense of humour was aroused by the discrepancy between the placid expression of Arthur Augustus and his sensational suggestion.

"My aunt!" gasped Tom Merry, at length.

Lowther regarded Tom solemnly.

"Then you know?" he said. "Oh, Tommy!"

"Knew w'at?" asked Tom Merry, in a mystified manner.

"That your aunt was up the chimney?" replied Monty Lowther, without the trace of a smile. "Poor old lady!"

"Lowthab, I weward you as a sillay ass!" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "You know perfectly well that it is not Tom Mewwy's aunt who is up the chimney. This is saahly no time for wotten jokin'. It is a vevy sevius mattah indeed!"

"What the thump are you driving at, you ass?" queried Manners, who was all at sea. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Manners. That junior's amazement was very obvious. There was a look of alarm in his face, too, which Arthur Augustus noted, and which afforded him a great deal of satisfaction. Evidently Manners was much disturbed in his mind, and that was the effect that Arthur Augustus wished to produce. It formed such a splendid foundation

for his ventriloquism: this "atmosphere," because it prepared the mind of his audience, and made them more susceptible to the illusion.

Arthur Augustus, however, might not have been so pleased if he had known that Manners' alarm was not in consequence of the plight of the supposed unfortunate wedged in the chimney, but was evoked by a suspicion that the mental state of the swell of St. Jim's was not all that might be desired.

Monty Lowther took advantage of the distraction of D'Arcy's attention to wink across at Tom Merry, whose face immediately lost a certain expression of tenseness, and relaxed into a half-smile. Arthur Augustus, however, was well satisfied with the effect that he imagined his suggestion had worked upon Manners.

"My suspicions are cowwect, Mannahs, theah is evvery likelihood of youh heavin' the poah, unfortunat' man speakin' for himself," said Arthur Augustus. "Would you fellahs have any objection to my expewimentin'—that is, to my speakin' to him?"

"Ha, ha!—I mean, no, not at all, old chap," said Tom Merry. "Go ahead by all means!"

Arthur Augustus walked across to the fireplace, followed by the curious glances of the Shell juniors, and knelt down in front of the open hearth. He looked up the chimney, and called out in a very anxious manner:

"Are you theah, deah boy?"

Almost at once he was answered by a very strained, gruff voice.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry.

The voice that had responded to the inquiry of Arthur Augustus might or might not have been supposed to have emanated from the chimney. At any rate, it would have required a very high degree of imagination to have conceived that it had. But of one thing there could be no doubt, no possible doubt whatever—the voice had responded in the well-known and unmistakable accents of the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Perhaps, as Monty Lowther suggested in a whisper to Tom Merry, the gentleman in the chimney was a relation of Gussy's. That would, of course, account for Gussy's anxiety with regard to his welfare. But Monty gave it as his opinion—still in a whisper—that it was very bad form on the part of Arthur Augustus to leave his relations lying about in other people's chimneys.

"Have you been theah for long?" inquired the swell of St. Jim's.

"For hours and hours, deah boy!" replied the voice.

"Bai Jove! How fwightfully wotten!"

"I want to be let out!"

Arthur Augustus turned a very red face on the chums of the Shell.

"You see, deah boys," he said, not without some trace of triumph.

The effect of his revelation on his audience was most gratifying. Monty Lowther had hidden his face in his hands. Manners had laid his head down on to his arms on the table, and his shoulders were shaking under the stress of some strong emotion. Arthur Augustus did not doubt that it was grief. Even Tom Merry was having recourse to his handkerchief—to check a flow of tears, as Gussy supposed. He was not, of course, aware that the captain of the Shell was biting on the corner of the handkerchief in order to prevent himself from bursting into uncontrolled laughter. Arthur Augustus had spent many hours concealing, treating on "the man in the chimney," and he felt far too certain of himself to have any suspicions of the genuineness of the emotion manifested by the chums of the Shell.

"What are we goin' to do for the unfortunate man, Tom Mewwy?" he inquired artlessly.

"Perhaps we could poke him down with a poker," suggested Lowther; "or grab him round the ankle with the fire-tongs, and then all pull."

"Weally, Lowthah, I cinsidah that is wathah a wotten ideah. We might hurt him most fwightfully, you know."

"But who is the giddy merchant, anyway?" inquired Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus looked rather confused.

"I'm awfraid I don't know," he said, in a somewhat distressed fashion.

"Now, isn't that like Gussy?" said Monty Lowther. "He goes

and pokes people into our chimney, and then forgets all about them, and doesn't even remember who they are Gussy, I'm surprised at you!"

"But I did not put the poah man into the chimney," said Arthur Augustus.

"Then how did you know that he was there?" inquired Lowther, shaking his head. "No, that tale won't wash, my son. You can't shake off the responsibility for your crimes in that off-hand fashion, Gussy. Leaving the bodies of your victims poked away in chimneys, and then repenting and trying to recover them."

"You uttah ass, Lowthah! You know perfectly well theah is no one theah—I mean—ahem!—that is, there isn't any body—I mean a dead body, of course—and—"

"My lord, I ask you to observe the confused state of the prisoner when an allusion is made to his crime," said Monty Lowther. "Surely that is sufficient indication of guilt. That concludes the case for the prosecution."

"Lowthah, do you realise that all the time that you are wotting theah is a poah man bein' choked up that chimney?"

"But we don't know who he is," said Lowther. "You can't expect us to be very concerned about a chap who won't even tell us his name. He might be a criminal flying from justice. No, Gussy, I'm afraid we shall have to leave him there. It's too big a risk. They'll be able to get the body out when the chimney is swept."

"You uttably callous wuffian, Lowthah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. The idea that Monty might possibly be pulling his leg did not suggest itself to the swell of St. Jim's. "Tom Mewwy, I trust that you have more sense of humanity than Lowthah, deah boy. I am sure that you would not agree to allowin' the poah unfortunat' man to choke in your chimney."

"Ha, ha! I mean, no, not at all, old chap," said Tom Merry, shaking his head decisively. "We can't have merchants chokin' our chimney up, you know."

"I said it was the poah man who was chokin', not the chimney, Tom Mewwy," said Gussy.

"Sorry! All the same thing, though, Gussy."

"I will speak to him again, deah boys," announced Arthur Augustus, drawing a deep breath, and coughing several times in order to clear his throat.

The Shell fellows watched him with great interest as he



Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet in dismay. Through the mask of soot his eyes shone startlingly white. The soot was in his hair, and was trickling down his back. It was also in his nose, and suddenly he commenced to sneeze violently. "A-tigh-oooo! A-tigh-oooo!" "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tom Merry & Co.

again knelt down carefully in front of the fireplace, and put his head just under the chimney opening.

"Are you still theah?" inquired Gussy hopefully.

"Yaas, deah boy!" came the reply.

"We will wesech you. Have no feah," promised Gussy.

"I wish you would hawwy up, deah boy!" spoke the voice again, somewhat pathetically. "Theah is a fighwful amount of soot heah!"

"I shouldn't wonder if that is so!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The remark had given him an idea. Lowther's ideas were generally of a humorous nature, and this one was no exception to the rule. Grasping the butt of a fishing-rod, he tiptoed to the side of the unsuspecting D'Arcy, who was still hurling inquiries into the open mouth of the chimney.

"What is youah name, deah boy?"

"Hawld Wogers."

"Whesh do you come fwom?"

"Fwom London."

"What are you?"

"I am a costah by twade."

"My aunt!" murmured Manners. "What an accent for a giddy coster!"

Gussy's imagination was beginning to get in some good work by now. Unfortunately for him, so was Monty Lowther's. With a grin, he stepped forward, and pushed the end of the fishing-rod past Gussy's head and up into the chimney.

"Right you are, Gussy!" he said. "We'll soon have him out of it."

"But, Lowthah—"

"All right, Gussy," said Monty, wagging the rod about in the chimney. "Here he comes!"

Lowther, however, was mistaken. It was not Mr. Rogers who was coming down the chimney. It was simply a load of soot. Whatever had happened to Mr. Rogers, he had certainly been right about the soot. There was a lot of it. Out from the opening of the chimney it came, descending in an avalanche that poured over the swell of St. Jim's and smothered him. There must have been several pounds of it, and Gussy got most of what there was. The humorous Lowther stepped aside just in time to escape it, as he had intended to do. It was no part of Lowther's programme to share in the deluge.

"You—youtah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet in dismay. At that moment he certainly did not look like the Beau Brummel of the School House. He might, indeed, have passed muster as the corner-man of a Christy Minstrel show. Through the mask of soot his eyes shone startlingly white; the soot was in his hair, and was trickling down his back. It was also in his nose, and suddenly he commenced to sneeze violently.

"A-ah-ooooo! A-ah-ooooo!" sneezed Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tom Merry & Co. It was impossible to avoid laughing at Gussy. All the merriment that the chums had been repressing since he had commenced his ventriloquial performance now found vent. As Monty Lowther said, a rhinoceros would have a sense of humour awakened by the sight of Gussy, with his head in a chimney, conducting a conversation with himself.

"Lowthah, I wesech you as an—ah-ah-ooooo!"

"That's a rotten thing to be regarded as, Gussy!" said the irrepressible Monty.

"You uttah beast! You did that on purpose!" accused Arthur Augustus.

"Fancy Gussy guessing that!" said the humorist of the Shell admiringly. "The soot must be brightening his intellect."

"I don't believe you thought theah was a man in the chimney at all!"

"Smarter and smarter!" encouraged Monty Lowther.

"Keep it up, Gussy. You'll be a second Ferrers Locke soon!"

Arthur Augustus made a sudden dash at Lowther, who eluded him, and slipped behind the study table. Realising the difficulty, in his present state, of coming to grips with the Shell fellow, Gussy put up his monocle, withered Lowther with a look, and stalked out of the study with what dignity he could muster.

"Give my kindest regards to Mr. Rogers," implored Lowther.

Arthur Augustus sniffed, but did not deign to reply, and, with his head in the air, made the best of his way to the bath-room. When he had succeeded in removing all traces of the soot, he produced a small volume, bearing the title "Ventriloquism in Ten Easy Lessons," and proceeded to make a variety of peculiar noises in his throat, while carefully following the instructions printed therein. The swell of St. Jim's was as determined as ever.

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### CHAPTER 3.

#### Gussy Seeks Advice!

THERE was a marked trait in the character of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with regard to which he and the rest of the occupants of Study No. 6 did not see eye to eye.

It manifested itself in a tenacity of purpose, and a tendency towards pursuing a fixed line of conduct, or the holding on to an opinion in spite of everything that might be brought to bear against it.

Arthur Augustus himself said that it indicated "a strength of character" and "a perseverant spirit," but Blake called it "stubbornness" and, while Digby favoured the word "obstinacy" the more downright Herries contented himself with alluding to Gussy as a "blessed mule," and leaving the rest to inference.

But in spite of any difference of opinion that might exist upon the subject, it was one that required to be taken into serious consideration when dealing with the swell of St. Jim's, and it was, indeed, this characteristic of his that led him to persevere in his determination to acquire ventriloquial ability.

Yet, notwithstanding his optimism, Gussy had an uneasy feeling that he was not progressing as satisfactorily as might be desired. He had books of instruction in plenty, it is true, but he would gladly have welcomed an opportunity for obtaining by a little personal tuition. That, however, was just what Gussy did not see his way clear to obtaining. As far as he was aware, St. Jim's did not possess an expert in the art of ventriloquism. Such a course of instruction was certainly not provided in the curriculum of the college.

Gussy felt that this was a matter for regret. He would infinitely have preferred instruction in that subject than in, say, Latin, which he regarded rather a waste of valuable time.

Suddenly Arthur Augustus thought of Skimpole. He knew that brainy youth had a wealth of information on diverse subjects, and it was possible that ventriloquism might be included among them. At any rate, he would see.

Fortunately, Skimpole was alone in his study when Arthur Augustus knocked. The genius of the Shell sat at a table, surrounded by ponderous tomes, writing busily. He looked up, and blinked through his huge spectacles as his visitor entered.

"My dear D'Arcy," he said, "I am pleased to see you. I presume, however, that it is Gore whom you desire to—"

"Not at all, deah boy!" replied Gussy. "As a matter of fact, I am desivous of obtainin' some information—"

"Ah, I understand," interrupted the gratified Skimpole.

"Pray, sit down, D'Arcy."

"Thanks, deah boy! I—"

"I will not say that this visit is anything of a surprise to me, D'Arcy," went on Skimpole. "The matter for astonishment is that you have not been along ere this, and that I have not been consulted by most of my conferees in this scholastic establishment. I should like to impress upon you, at the outset, the great importance of the subject you have taken up."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy. "I am vevy glad that you agree with me, deah boy. I cannot get Blake and Hewries and Digby to see it, howevah."

Skimpole smiled in a pitying manner.

"That is very feasible, my dear D'Arcy," he said. "I fear that their intelligence is not of the highest order. In my opinion, they devote far too much time to pursuits depending upon mere athletic prowess, like cricket and football—"

"Bai Jove!" broke in Arthur Augustus. "Cwicket and football are jollay good games, Skimmay!"

"Everything is well in its place, D'Arcy," said Skimpole gently. "But these games should not be allowed to interfere with the progress of intellectual development. I, myself, do not take any active part in them, although I have often considered that by devoting a little of my intellectual ability in their direction, I should succeed remarkably well. I am certain that, with the aid of my superior brain-power, and a thorough knowledge of the theory of gravitation, I should be enabled to score many more goals at a cricket match than a player who depended upon his strength and skill at athletics."

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus politely. "But I—"

"I quite understand," said Skimpole indulgently. "You are naturally anxious for me to expound to you the rudiments of your subject. Well, to begin with, I want you to liberate your mind from all notions you may have conceived. You have been entirely upon an incorrect, even pernicious thesis."

"Weally!" gasped Arthur Augustus dismayed. "But my book says—"

Skimpole shook his head decisively.

"Wrong—all wrong!" he declared. "There is only one book worthy of serious consideration, and that is Professor Balmcrumpet's monumental work. You have not, I presume, obtained a copy of that volume?"

"No, I'm afraid not," replied Gussy doubtfully.

"Then you must do so without delay," said Skimpole. "It gives the gist of the matter in the clearest and most lucid manner possible, so that it may be readily grasped by even the meanest intellect—and that is exactly what you want, my dear D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"

"To begin with," continued Skimpole, "you must understand that the law of relativity, as expounded by Einstein—"

"Greatest Scott!" said Arthur Augustus. "But I don't want to know anything about the law of relativity!"

"But, my dear D'Arcy," said the astonished Skimpole, "I thought that is what you came to consult me about."

"Bai Jove! No fear! I came to see if you could tell me anything about ventriloquism. I'm goin' in for it, you see, Skimmay, and I thought that paws you could give me some advice, as I am not quite certain how the voice should be produced."

There was this about Herbert Skimpole—he was always ready to oblige where he could. He certainly preferred expounding the philosophy of Professor Balmycrumpet, but he was at all times ready to deliver a dissertation upon most other subjects. Consequently, although he was disappointed at discovering that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not, as he had supposed, interested in his own favourite study, he set himself out to be illuminating on another.

"Ventriloquism," he commenced pedantically, "is a vocal mimicry of sounds, by which an illusion is produced on the hearer, who supposes that the sound comes, not from the mimic, but from some other source."

"Yaas, but—"

"The word itself is derived from 'venter,' meaning, 'the belly,' and 'liquor,' that is, 'I speak.' By dilation or contraction of the pharynx the form and size of the vocal tube may be varied—"

"But—"

"And each modification of the vocal tube confers a peculiarity of quality to the voice."

"Yaas, I know, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "But I want to—"

"These are known as vocal or laryngeal sounds," continued the relentless Skimpole. "The essence of ventriloquism whences a sound has travelled, and—"

"Praw stop, Skimmay!" gasped Arthur Augustus, rising from his chair.

Skimpole looked at him in a surprised manner.

"My dear D'Arcy," he said, "surely you are not going yet."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy. I'm afraid—"

"But I had only just commenced, you know!"

The swell of St. Jim's shuddered slightly.

"Thank you vewy much, Skimmay, but I think I will leave the west until anoother time."

Skimpole regarded him thoughtfully.

"I am aware that it is the height of unwisdom to cram the immature brain with too much erudition at a time," he said, "but I should have thought, my dear D'Arcy, that even your very limited mental capacity would have been enabled to—"

"Bai Jove!" said the Hon. Augustus D'Arcy.

He polished his monocle carefully, and turned it upon Skimpole. But that youth's expression was quite placid. The genius of the Shell had a mind that dwelt among the stars, and rarely, if ever, came down to the traffic of everyday existence. He could out-talk an encyclopedia from A to Z, but of fact he knew nothing. It was impossible to be angry with him, and in consequence he often put into words quite seriously, and without any suspicion of "leg-pulling," thoughts which would have been both bad form and bad policy for others to have uttered.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "You know, Skimmay, if you were not such a twightful swimp—and I trust that you will pardon my alludin' to the fact, but weally you are, you know—I should feel compelled to administrah a most seaveh thrashin' for that wermak of yours!"

Skimpole blinked at him.

"I had no intention of hurting your feelings, my dear D'Arcy," he said. "When I made a reference to your low state of mentality it was merely with the intention of stating an actual and indisputable fact, and not for the purpose of arousing unseemly merriment."

"Yaas, I know that, Skimmay," replied Arthur Augustus. "I am quite aware that you cannot help being a sillay ass!"

"It is a great pity, D'Arcy, that you are somewhat pressed for time," said Skimpole regretfully. "I would willingly have given you some insight into the truly remarkable philosophy of Professor Balmycrumpet. After a short course of preliminary study—say about four hours a day every day for six months—you would be in a position to have some slight idea of what I was talking about, and then that would enable me to commence—"

### Next Week's "Gem" will contain a splendid Guy Fawkes story, entitled, "GRUNDY'S GUNPOWDER PLOT."

"But, you know, Skimmay, I don't want to heah anything about Pwofessor Balmycrumpet. I'm too busy at present learnin' ventriloquism."

"A very childish method of toying with the great laws of acoustics, my dear D'Arcy," said Skimpole sorrowfully. "Perhaps well adapted to your type of mind, but—"

"Weally, Skimmay, theah is a limit—"

"But if I could have helped you, even to that unworthy purpose, I should have been pleased to have done so," went on Skimpole unheeding. "I am certain that if I devoted my outstanding intellectual gifts to the task I should speedily become an expert. If ever I do so I will gladly undertako your tuition, D'Arcy."

"Thank you vewy much," said Gussy politely. D'Arcy was not, however, particularly attracted by the prospect of waiting for Skimpole to acquire ventriloquial ability in order that he might impart instruction to him.

"But if you should care at any time to be grounded in the philosophy of Professor Balmycrumpet, or to take up the study of Socialism, Determinism, or Eugenics, I should be very pleased to give you the benefit of my knowledge on the subject," Skimpole added generously.

"Thank you vewy much," said Gussy again, and closed the door of the study before Skimpole could commence another harangue.

Evidently Gussy was not destined to gain much assistance from that quarter.



Towser tried to get nearer to Arthur Augustus, stretching his chain taut. Unfortunately Herries had been careless in snapping on his chain. At any rate, as Towser put the weight of his body on to it, the fastening gave way, and he was free. The approach of Towser galvanised the swell of St. Jim's into action.

### CHAPTER 4. Studying from Nature.

"TOWSAH, deah boy! Towisah!"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus. "Towisah, deah boy! Good doggay! Weally, I hope that Hewwies has not neglected to chain the wotten bwute up, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was approaching the kennel inhabited by George Herries' pet. His sudden desire to make the closer acquaintance of the bulldog was not prompted by an affection for the animal. As a matter of fact, the swell of St. Jim's had no great love for Towser, who had upon more than one occasion wrought sad havoc in Gussy's immaculate wardrobe.

The truth is, it was Gussy's ventriloquial aspirations that had caused him to put his head into the lion's mouth—and, indeed, he would almost rather have put both head and shoulders into the mouth of the fiercest of lions than have permitted Towser to come within reach of his nether garments.

But Gussy was so anxious to acquire the highest degree of perfection in his imitation of the growl of a dog that other considerations paled beside it. And so he had come back to Nature, as it were, to learn what he could from Towser. But he was taking no chances, and as he cautiously approached the kennel he was hoping most fervently that the chain which secured Towser to it was as strong as it ought to be.

Really, the bulldog was the most amiable of animals unless directly annoyed, or in his master's defence; but the voice of an oracle would not have succeeded in convincing the swell of St. Jim's of that.

"G-r-r-r-r!" said Towser sleepily, from the depths of his kennel.

Arthur Augustus jumped, and retreated several steps in a hasty manner.

"Bai Jove! What a savage bwute!"

There was the rattling of a chain, and Towser came out into the open, blinking his eyes. He stretched himself lazily.

Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass and surveyed the animal, with a slight shudder, and came towards him as far as his chain permitted.

"G-r-r-r-r!" he said, wagging his tail.

"I wondah if I could imitate the growl he made then?" murmured Gussy, in a thoughtful tone. "Ahem! G-r-r-r-r!"

Towser regarded him in a puzzled manner.

"G-r-r-r— No, that's not quite wright! G-r-r-r-r!"

Weally, I wish he would growl again."

Arthur Augustus had his wish.

"G-r-r-r-r!" said Towser.

Gussy moved back another couple of feet.

"Good doggay—good Towisah!" he said placatingly.

"Gwowl again—good doggay!"

"G-r-r-r-r!" rumbled Towser obligingly.

"Bai Jove! I think I've got it! G-r-r-r-r! Yaas, that's distinctly bettah!"

Perhaps Towser thought so, too. Perhaps he thought that the amateur mimic deserved a little encouragement. At any rate:

"G-r-r-r-r!" he said. "G-r-r-r-r!"

"Gweat Scott! I believe the feahful bwute is getting vicious!"

But Towser was not vicious; he was only playful. Possibly he considered, from his visitor's behaviour, that this two-legged creature had come to play with him. Towser was not by any means an old dog, and he was always ready to play.

But it was impossible to play with anyone who persisted in keeping so far away. Towser tried to get nearer to Arthur Augustus, stretching his chain taut.

And then it happened!

It is possible that when Herries, a short while before, had fed his pet and allowed him a few minutes' liberty he had been careless in snapping on his chain. At any rate, as Towser put the weight of his body on to the chain the fastener gave way, and he was free!

He shook his body to assure himself of the fact, growled twice for joy, and advanced upon Arthur Augustus.

The approach of Towser galvanised the swell of St. Jim's into action. As Towser came nearer he backed away.

"Keep off, you ugly bwute!" he shrieked. "Gweat Scott! This is frightful!"

"G-r-r-r-r!" said Towser playfully.

Arthur Augustus abandoned his dignity, turned on his heel, and ran, as he thought, for his life, in the direction of the See School House.

The bulldog followed, barking joyously, and headed him off, so that the horrified Fourth-Former spun round in his stride, and made for the woodshed.

Towser was at once hard on his heels, but Gussy reached

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the structure with a second to spare, and sheer desperation enabled him to scramble on to the roof, where he took refuge. "Bai Jove!" he panted, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. "G-r-r-r-r!"

Arthur Augustus looked down, and shuddered.

Towser was standing on his hind-legs, supporting himself by the door of the woodshed, and to the frenzied imagination of the junior it seemed that the bulldog was actually climbing up to him.

"Go down, you bwute!" he shrieked. "Good doggay—nice old boy! You wotten cweature! My hat! Hewwies ought to be shot for havin' such a feahful bwute!"

Towser was beginning to be a trifle bored. The game that Arthur Augustus was playing did not appeal to him. He walked round the outside of something more exciting, and then ambled off in search of the dog had really gone.

Arthur Augustus came down from the woodshed, and made his way to Study No. 6. The rest of the Co. were there, and they stared at their noble chum as he came in and sank down into a chair and mopped his brow.

"Weally, I am quite in a futtah," he said faintly. "I—Bai Jove!"

Gussy sprang to life again, and sat up in his chair. It had suddenly struck him that with Towser at large the study was not the best of places to be in. Towser would probably seek his master. Perhaps even now—

The swell of St. Jim's stared fearfully round him. If Towser had already come to Study No. 6, it would be quite like George Herries to hide his pet, rather than take him back to the kennel at once.

The thought gave Arthur Augustus a queer feeling in the pit of his stomach. He peered apprehensively round the study.

"What's the matter, dummy?" inquired Jack Blake pleasantly. "Lost something?"

"N-no, deah boy. I—er—I was just wonderin' whether Towisah was in the study?"

The Fourth-Formers stared at Arthur Augustus in amazement.

Blake jumped to his feet, with a grim look in his eyes; there was also a cushion in his hand, which he grasped as if he had every intention of using.

"Of the nerve!" he said slowly. "Trying that moth-eaten old wheeze on us again. Towser in the study, eh? We'll teach you to be a funny merchant!"

"Look at the ass!" said Herries indignantly. "Getting ready to growl, I suppose. Then he'll want me to start looking for Towser under the table. That's right, Blake, bump the idiot!"

"You feahful wottahs! You sillay dummies!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I am not wottin'! Towisah weally is loose!"

"Rot!" said Herries briefly.

"I tell you—"

Blake flourished the cushion warningly.

"Careful, Gussy!" he said. "One little growl, and—well, you know what'll happen!"

"I have no intention of growlin', Blake!" declared the swell of St. Jim's, with dignity. "I assuah you that Towisah weally is at large. He has just chased me through the quad."

"Great Scott!" gasped Herries in alarm. "It's that beastly fastening again. The spring's weak, and Towser must have pulled at his chain, and it's given way!"

In another moment Herries was out of the study, full of concern for the safety of his pet. It never occurred to him that other people might suffer more in consequence of Towser's liberation than Towser himself would.

Arthur Augustus rose from the floor of Study No. 6, and regarded Blake and Digby through his monocle in a scornful manner.

"Now, you asses," he observed crushingly, "pewwape you will apologise for jumpin' to conclusions."

"Sorry, Gussy!" said Blake, with a grin. "I'm afraid we can't take back the bumping. Still, one more or less doesn't matter, does it; and, anyway, you earn far more than you get."

Arthur Augustus sniffed disdainfully, and sat down to his neglected prep.

In the meantime, Towser was enjoying his unwanted liberty.

He prowled about among the elms, looking for bones and someone else to play with. Suddenly he stiffened his body and stood very still. Somebody was approaching.

Mr. Ratcliff, the sour, unpleasant Housemaster of the New House, was taking an evening stroll in the quad.

The dinner of which he had partaken an hour or so ago had disagreed with him. Mr. Ratcliff's meals often did disagree with him. In fact, it would be difficult to conceive that anyone or anything could help disagreeing with the Housemaster. He had that kind of nature.

"G-r-r-r-r!"



Mr. Ratcliff stopped in his stride, and peered round him.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Great heavens! A dog—a savage dog!"

Towser lumbered forward in a playful manner. It was not Towser's fault if it did not resemble a frolicsome movement. He did the best he could.

Mr. Ratcliff did not know much about bulldogs, except that once they get a grip it is very difficult to make them let go. He was quite willing to believe in the accuracy of that contention without putting it to a personal test.

He gathered his gown around him, and ran as hard as he could in the direction of the doctor's garden. He arrived there about four yards in advance of the dog; but, to his horror, the gate was locked.

Quickly he climbed the wall.

It was only a low wall—five feet at the most—it is true, but Mr. Ratcliff was not used to climbing walls.

He would have dropped over into Dr. Holmes' garden, but immediately below him on that side of the wall was a long line of glass forcing-frames; and he did not possess sufficient confidence in the power of his attenuated legs to clear the obstacle with a leap from the top of the wall.

Towser placed his forepaws on the wall and stretched up very near to the foot of the Housemaster.

Mr. Ratcliff, in his dread of the animal, kicked at Towser's head.

Towser's eyes gleamed, and his teeth showed in a snarl. "Gr-r-r-rrr!" he growled, jumping at the foot that was just above him.

"Help!" cried Mr. Ratcliff. "Help!"

"Hallo!" came an answering shout.

To his great relief the master perceived Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House hastening towards him.

"Figgins, remove this—this ferocious animal at once!" commanded Mr. Ratcliff.

Towser recognised Figgins and wagged his tail as the New House junior approached. But come from the wall he would not, and no amount of cajoling had the slightest effect upon him.

"It's no use, I'm afraid, sir," said Figgins at last. "He won't budge. I'd better go and tell Herries that he's loose."

"Well, be as quick as you can, then," said Mr. Ratcliff ungraciously.

Figgins sped off and came among Herries sooner than he had expected to do. The School House junior was in the quad searching for his missing pet.

"I say, Herries!" said Figgins. "I was just coming to look for you. Towser—"

"What about Towser?" asked his owner.

"He's on the Ratty—on the top of a wall," explained Figgys. "You'd better come and see to him. I can't get him away."

"What's Ratty been doing to him?" burst out Herries wrathfully. "If he's been upsetting Towser, I sha'n't call him off. Ratty can stop there all night."

"Don't be an ass, Herries," said Figgins. "You know what Ratty is."

"Blow Ratty!" snapped Herries. "Towser wouldn't hang on to him unless the blighter had interfered with him."

"Herries!" called out Mr. Ratcliff, as he saw the two approaching. "Call off this savage brute of yours."

"Towser isn't a savage brute, sir," put in Herries indignantly. "He's as gentle as a kitten."

"Ahem!" coughed Kerr, and winked at Fatty Wynn.

Herries himself seemed to be having some difficulty in controlling his pet, but eventually, with a hand in Towser's collar, Mr. Ratcliff was enabled to descend.

He was in a mood to be savage with everyone, even the juniors who had come to his assistance.

"How did that animal come to be loose?" he demanded of Herries.

"I don't know, sir," replied the School House fellow, examining Towser's collar. "He was chained up half an hour ago. His fastening must have slipped."

Mr. Ratcliff would greatly have enjoyed permitting himself the luxury of dealing with the School House junior, but Herries was beyond his jurisdiction, and he did not want to report him to Mr. Railton, and make the affair too public. He contented himself with the New House juniors who were standing by.

"Figgins, Kerr, Wynn!" he snapped. "What are you doing in the quadrangle at this time?"

"Just taking a walk, sir," replied Figgins quietly.

"Then you ought to have been in the House," said the infuriated Mr. Ratcliff. "You will each take fifty lines for being out."

Figgins & Co, gaped.

But, sir—

"Not another word," snapped Mr. Ratcliff, and he strode on towards the New House, his gown fluttering.

"M-my hat!"

Herries was staring after him.

"And he called us to rescue him," murmured Figgins.

"Shall I set Towser after him?" suggested Herries.

It was obvious Towser was only too anxious to go.

Figgins & Co. laughed.

"No, thanks; there'd be more of a dust-up than ever. We'll grin and bear it. It's not the first time Ratty's dropped in us for nothing."

## CHAPTER 5.

Gussy is Unlucky.

"COME along, Gussy! Time to get some practice in."

"Yaas, deah boy!" Jack Blake was tying the laces of his football boots in Study No. 6 as he spoke. Digby and Herries were upstairs in the dormitory changing into their footer rig. Arthur Augustus, still in his elegant clobber, with fancy waistcoat and tie of many colours, was sitting by the window, deeply immersed in the contents of a small paper-bound volume. He did not look up when Blake addressed him, but absolvedly absent, his eyes still on the printed page.

"Well, come on, then, ass! We haven't got all night, you know!" said Blake.

"I am perfectly well awah of that, deah boy!" replied the swell of St. Jim's languidly. "I am goin' to start pawtacin' in a vew few minutes."

"Good!" grunted Blake.

Herries and Digby came into the study.

"Ready?" said Digby. "Great pip! Look at that ass, Gussy. He isn't even dressed yet. Aren't you going to do any practice to-night, Nathaniel?"

"I have already told Blake that I am goin' to commence in a few minutes," replied Arthur Augustus.

"When the light's all gone, I suppose. You're not even changed yet. For goodness sake, hurry up and do so. I expect that'll take you the best part of an hour!"

"I fail to agree with you, Hewwies. It will not take any time at all, as I have no intention of changin'."

"You fatheaded chump!" howled Blake. "How do you suppose that you're going to play footer in those togs?"

"I haven't the faintest ideah of playin' footer at all," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"You—you're not going to play?" gasped Blake. "But you just said you were going to practice."

Arthur Augustus sniffed disdainfully.

"When I said that, Blake, I alluded not to football practice, but to practice at ventriloquism," he explained.

"Ventriloquism!" The chums of Study No. 6 stared at Gussy, with feelings too deep for words.

"You blighted ass!" said Blake, at length, in disgust. "Haven't you got that fool notion out of your head yet?"

"Oh, come along, Blake," said Herries impatiently. "We can't wait any longer. Tom Merry went down to the ground half an hour ago."

Blake stood still, with an expression of grim determination.

"We'll bump Gussy, anyhow, before we go," he vowed. "We've got time for that, at least."

Arthur Augustus started to his feet in alarm as his chums advanced upon him. He struggled, but vainly, and the next instant he was raised in the willing hands of Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"Digby—Blake—you wottahs!" he yelled. "Weclease me at once. I shall wufuse to—ow! Ouch!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Ow! You beastly boundahs!"

Bump!

"You fighwifful wottahs!"

Arthur Augustus, sitting dismally on the floor of Study No. 6 groped for his eyeglasses, with which he fixed on the rest of the company as they filed through the door on their way to the football ground. Gussy's wrathful glance, however, appeared to have no effect upon the broad backs of the footballers. After they had gone Gussy scrambled to his feet, and retrieved the little book on the subject of ventriloquism. He placed the book in his pocket, and then arranged his crumpled attire.

"I will go and practice out in Wylcombe Woods," he muttered, adjusting his tie.

Putting on his hat, D'Arcy left the study.

A few minutes later, the squirrels and wood-pigeons of Rylcombe Woods were being treated to an exposition of the barking dog and the man in the chimney. Gussy worked hard at his self-imposed task. He was determined to succeed, even at the risk of the apoplexy, which he seemed likely to sustain as a result of the production of the strained, throaty voice in which Gussy imagined that a man in the depths of a chimney would speak. But, although Gussy did not know it, there was more abroad in Rylcombe Woods that evening than furry beast and feathered bird. Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Carboy of the Grammar School were

taking a stroll among the trees, when Monk paused and held up his hand.

"Listen!" he said.

Gay and Carboy stopped dead in their stride and cocked attentive ears.

"Grr-rr-rr!"

"What the dickens is it?" said Carboy in a whisper.

"Grr-rr-rr!" Weally, I don't think it sounds quite wight! I shall have to twy the man up the chimney."

Smiles spread over the faces of the Grammarians as they stood there. It was impossible to mistake those well-known accents.

"Gussy?" grinned Gordon Gay.

"For a cert," agreed Frank Monk. "I wonder if the ass is alone! He's somewhere across there, the other side of those bushes. Listen again."

The voice of Arthur Augustus came floating out of the distance, faint, but quite audible.

"Are you heah, deah boy?"

"He's calling someone," murmured Carboy.

"Sh!" hissed Monk.

There was the sound of a gruff voice from the direction of Gussy. It was impossible to distinguish any words. The Grammar School trio looked at each other in perplexity.

"Sounds like a man!" pronounced Gay, with a puzzled frown.

D'Arcy's voice again became audible.

"Have you been theah long, deah boy?"

The reply was an unintelligible growl.

"Queer!" said Gay.

"Do you want me to wescue you?"

Frank Monk turned a startled gaze upon his companions.

"Do you hear that?" he asked. "Gussy's talking about rescuing somebody. We must look into this."

"Rather!" agreed his chums.

"Go slow," counselled Monk. "We don't know what we're up against."

The Grammarians advanced slowly and cautiously. As they approached, the voice of Arthur Augustus grew clearer and clearer. Each time it was a question that he asked, and each time he was answered in a growling tone of voice. Frank Monk reached the clump of bushes behind which the swell of St. Jim's was hidden, and peered cautiously round.

"Who is it?" whispered Gordon Gay impatiently.

Monk turned a startled glance upon him.

"It's Gussy; and he's talking to a tree."

"To a what?" gasped Gay.

"To a tree. I mean it! There's no one else there."

"But the tree isn't answering him, is it, fathead? Who's the other Johnny who's talking?"

"There's nobody else there, I tell you. Gussy's doing all the talking. First he says something, and then he growls at himself in another voice."

"My lat!"

"Is it vewy stuffy up theah?" said Gussy, on the other side of the bushes.

"Most frightfully, deah boy! I wish you would huvwuy up and wescue me!"

"Great Scott!" said Carboy.

Suddenly, on the other side of the bushes, Arthur Augustus commenced to cough. He took out his handkerchief, and wiped his face with it. The Grammarians lay low, wondering greatly. They were frankly puzzled, and although they racked their brains for some explanation of the mystery, it was not forthcoming. The voice of Arthur Augustus again became audible; but this time he was speaking in a quite natural voice.

"Weally, this ventriloquism is dreadfully twyin' to one's throat!"

"Ventriloquism!" said Gordon Gay, as Gussy's words revealed the mystery to him, and fell into a paroxysm of silent laughter. Monk and West followed suit. It was really a very simple explanation to a baffling problem. Gussy and his ventriloquism. The Grammarians thought it was humorous, and in that they shared the opinion of the School House of St. Jim's. Everybody, in fact, regarded it as funny, with the exception of Arthur Augustus himself, and he was particularly serious about it. He was so now as he dabbed his handkerchief across his brow.

"I think I shall twy the dog again," he said. "Ahem! Ahem! Grr-rr-rr! Grr-rr-rr! Grr-rr-ouch!"

The exclamation was forced from Gussy's lips. It was not part of the imitation. In point of fact, it was due to a hand gripping his collar with disconcerting suddenness. The hand belonged to Gordon Gay, and the helpless Gussy, who had been too intent upon his ventriloquism to notice the approach of enemies, turned his head to find himself in the grip of a trio of Grammarians.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Gordon Gay smilingly. "And how do you find you this pleasant evening?"

"Bai Jove! Grammah wotahs!"

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"Gussy, Gussy! What awful manners!" said Frank Monk reprovingly.

"Ewasy wescue me at once!" demanded Arthur Augustus.

He commenced to struggle for his freedom; but the odds against him were far too great, and the unequal combat finished with the swell of St. Jim's spreadeagled on the ground, Gordon Gay sitting on his chest, and Frank Monk and Carboy each on a leg.

"The question is, what are we going to do with him?" asked Monk.

"Why, make an example of him," retorted Gordon Gay, with a grin.

"How?" queried Carboy laconically.

Gordon Gay looked thoughtfully at Gussy for a few moments before replying.

"I was just wondering," he said, "what Gussy's clobber looks like on the other side. He's an elegant sort of blighter, and he patronises a good tailor obviously. After all," he continued, "there are two sides to a suit—the outside and the inside. Gussy appears to pay about twice as much as other chaps for his clobber, and it seems a pity he doesn't get double wear out of it."

Frank Monk chuckled.

"I get you!" he said.

Arthur Augustus had not, however, freed the gist of Gordon Gay's remarks. He anticipated, in the light of former experiences, that something unpleasant was likely to happen to him at the hands of the Grammarians. What it was to be he could not surmise, but he feared that it would be of a nature that should cause him to appear before the world in an undignified manner. Gussy had an almost exaggerated respect for his "dig," and he feared the fertile brains and profane hands of the Philistines into whose clutches he had fallen.

"Look heah, you wotahs—"

"Sit still, Gussy. You're dead in this act," said Frank Monk. "We're not going to hurt you, you know—only to show you, as Gordon Gay says, that there are two sides to a suit."

In spite of his struggles, the raiders succeeded in divesting their victim of his outer garments. His trousers and jacket, turned inside-out, were put on him again. His legs were thrust through the armholes of his fancy waistcoat, which was then buttoned round his waist. Over his left foot was drawn his elegant topper, which had been divested of its brim in order, as Gay explained, to enable him to walk more easily, and for which thoughtful action he ought to be properly grateful. The topper, with Gussy's legs through the crown, was pulled up to his knee. The brim was forced down over his forehead. His collar was put on upside-down and backwards, so that Gussy was only just enabled to peer over the edge of it. After they had tied his hands together with his necktie, they led him out of Rylcombe Woods on to the road, within half a mile of St. Jim's, and bade him "Good-night!" When the chucking Grammarians had gone, Gussy spent several minutes in unavailing efforts to release his hands, but finding the task beyond him, he turned, with a sigh of resignation, and tramped off in the direction of St. Jim's.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Bernard Glyn Has an Idea.

"I WONDER where Gussy is?" said Jack Blake.

"In the study, I expect, trying to make a noise like a goldfish in a strawberry-basket!" said Digby.

Blake grinned.

"The silly ass! It's just like Gussy to get some fool notion like that. There's no holding him when he starts out on a stunt of that kind!"

"I should have thought he'd had enough of it by this time!" said Herries. "It's got him into plenty of trouble already!"

The juniors were making their way across the quadrangle, en route for Study No. 5, after footer practice. It was a fine, light evening, and Blake & Co. were pleasantly tired after their exercise. They strolled along in a leisurely fashion, chatting among themselves.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore those furrowed brows?" inquired a voice behind them, and they turned to encounter the cheery features of Bernard Glyn.

"Oh, it's Gussy again!" explained Blake. "His latest delusion is that he's a ventriloquist, and we have to put up with his growling and talking to himself with his head in a chimney. If he'd only stuck to his natural talents, and keep on braying like a donkey, it wouldn't matter so much. We've got used to that by now."

Bernard Glyn laughed, but a thoughtful look had come into his eyes at Blake's words.

"Half a mo'!" he said. "Did you say that Gussy had been trying to give an imitation of a man in a chimney?"

"Yes," replied Blake, looking queerly at him. "He goes

into other people's studies, and tries to put the breeze up them by yelling into their fireplaces."

"Do you know," said the St. Jim's inventor, "I think I could help him a little."

Blake & Co. stared at Glyn in amazement.

"What!" roared Blake. "Help him? My hat, you must be mad, Glyn. Gussy's quite capable of going off his rocker without any help from anyone. We don't want him helped; we want him stopped!"

Bernard Glyn chuckled.

"It's all right, my infants," he said. "I know! But I think I've got an idea that'll do both. Take my word for it, the next time Gussy tries his ventrioloquist stunts, he'll succeed better than he expects to do. You leave it to me!"

"What the—?" Herries was beginning, when he was interrupted by a quick exclamation from Jack Blake.

"Look!"

The juniors followed the direction of Blake's gaze. Entering the school gates was a forlorn, dishevelled figure, its clothes on, apparently, inside out. One of its legs was thrust through the crown of a rimless silk hat, and the trousers were turned up, revealing bare legs which terminated in patent-leather shoes. Its hands were tied behind its back, and it was limping painfully across the quadrangle in the direction of the School House. Only part of the features were visible over the edge of the inverted Eton collar, but there was enough to enable Blake & Co. to identify the newcomer.

"Gussy!" they chorused.

Gussy it was, indeed. Fresh from the hands of the Grammarians he came, hoping against hope that he might be fortunate enough to gain the security of Study No. 6 without being observed. But it was not to be. Some fifty or so juniors were in the quadrangle when he entered, and almost as soon as Blake had spoken, general notice began to be directed towards the swell of St. Jim's, and a shout of merriment went up on the evening air.

"Good old Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"D'Arcy's been interviewing his tailor!"

Question and comment were hurled at the luckless Fourth-former, and the laughing crowd began to move in his direction. Several seniors who were in the quad smiled broadly as they passed on. They probably guessed the reason of D'Arcy's plight, and there were many in the Upper School at St. Jim's who could remember somewhat similar scenes of their own junior days, for the feud with Rylcombe Grammar School was an ancient one, and it was not to be supposed that Gordon Gay & Co. had hit upon an entirely new wheeze. History—especially of this kind—has a habit of repeating itself, although it is doubtful whether it had ever had a better subject than the super-inmaculate Arthur Augustus.

Gussy came to a dismayed halt as the laughing crowd bore down upon him.

"Bai Jove!"

They were thronging around him, and there was no escaping the shafts of their raillery. Suddenly the broad shoulders of Jack Blake became visible, elbowing his way through the throng, closely followed by Herries and Digby. He marched straight up to his study-mate.

"Gussy, you howling ass!" he growled. "Come out of it!"

He untied the hands of Arthur Augustus, and taking him by the shoulder, urged him towards the steps of the School House. Digby and Herries made a way for them through the encircling mob of juniors. Gussy might be a champion idiot, but, after all, he belonged to Study No. 6, and the dignity and prestige of the study were at stake.

So Gussy was escorted to that retreat, and the loyal Co. escorted their oak in the face of some dozen of the more unruly spirits who had followed them to the very gate of their stronghold. These thumped upon the closed door with vain entreaties for one more glimpse of Arthur Augustus, but the stout wood defied their efforts at entrance, and the garrison within maintained a dignified and even disdainful silence.

"Of course it was Grammar cads!" snapped Blake, when Arthur Augustus

had poured forth the tale of his woes into his leader's ears. "I didn't expect it was a little idea of P.-c. Crump's. Naturally, it was the Grammarians. But what the howling thunder were you doing to let yourself get collared? What did you want in Rylcombe Woods at all?"

"P'ray do not speak so loudly, Blake, and release my shouldah!" said the swell of St. Jim's faintly. "You put me into quite a fluttah. As I was sayin', deah boy, I just went into the woods in ordah to pwactice my ventrioloquism a little—"

"Ventrioloquism!" almost howled Blake. "Oh, you frabjous jabberwock. You lob-sided jay! You—you—"

Words failed the leader of Study No. 6. Gussy had brought disgrace upon the Co., had made them a by-word and a laughing-stock, had run his head into a noose, and all for the sake of making a noise like a dog and talking in a strangled gurgle. It was more than exasperating—it was—Blake couldn't express his thoughts. Digby and Herries looked as if they shared the feelings of their leader. Arthur Augustus, looking round at them, gained the idea that the general atmosphere of the study would not suffer if it were relieved of his presence for a while.

"Blake, deah boy," he said, rather apprehensively, "I should wathah like to go and make myself a little more presentable, if you have no veal objection."

"Oh, cut off!" said Blake crossly.

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Less than a minute after Gussy had left the study there was a tap at the door, and the handle commenced to turn. Blake picked up a cushion with a grim look.

"If that's some ass come to talk about Gussy," he said, "there's going to be trouble."

It was the face of Bernard Glyn that appeared in the opening a second later, however, and Blake relaxed his hold on the cushion.

"Grammarians?" queried Glyn. "I thought so," as Blake nodded gloomily. "How did it happen?"

"Oh, Gussy went down into Rylcombe Woods to practise ventrioloquism, and Gordon Gay and Monk collared him."

"Whew!" whistled Glyn. "Then Gussy hasn't given it up!" He's still a giddy what-you-may-call-it—ventrioloquist—eh?"



The Grammarians advanced slowly and cautiously. As they approached, the voice of Arthur Augustus grew clearer and clearer. Frank Monk reached the clump of bushes behind which the swell of St. Jim's was hidden, and peered cautiously round. "Who is it?" whispered Gordon Gay. Monk turned a startled glance upon him. "Gussy," he said, "and he's talking to a tree!"

"He's soon going to give it up," said Blake, in a determined tone.

"Does he say so?" asked Glyn curiously.  
 "No; but I do!" replied Blake significantly.  
 "Didn't you say that you'd got a scheme?" asked Digby.  
 Glyn advanced farther into the study.  
 "Yes!" he said. "Where's Gussy?"  
 "Upstairs in the dormitory changing," replied Blake briefly.

"Well, look here, you chaps," went on Glyn. "I've just completed a new idea of mine. It's a loud-speaking telephone, with a microphone attachment. I can't stop to explain it now, but it practically amounts to this. It's an arrangement whereby I can fix a small instrument in a room, quite inconspicuously, and by its means, hear everything that goes on in that room—who is speaking and what they say and so on, no matter in what part of the room they are. Then when I speak into my own instrument at the other end of the wire, my voice is magnified at this end, and carries all over the room just as loudly as if it were myself speaking. You see the idea?"

"I believe so!" said Blake enthusiastically. "You mean to—"  
 "Exactly! I fix the instrument in your chimney, and the next time D'Arcy tries to ventriloquise—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll cut along now and get the gear," said Glyn. "And then I can rig it up to-night before Gussy comes back. It won't take five minutes."

Bernard Glyn was quite right in his estimate. In less than that he had returned with a small piece of apparatus, which he wedged into the chimney of Study No. 6. The wires which led to his study he concealed by bringing them down under the fireplace and beneath the carpet. He gave a glance round, and then turned to Jack Blake.

"I'm going to test it now," he said.

Blake & Co. waited curiously as Glyn returned to his study. Three minutes after he had gone, they were startled by hearing his voice in the study again.

"Is that you, Blake?"

Jack Blake turned his head quickly in the direction of the door, but it was closed. In spite of Glyn's explanation, he had not realised that the device was capable of reproducing the voice of the speaker so clearly and loudly, and at most he had expected a rather indistinct murmuring. So, in spite of the fact that they were awaiting something of the kind, the Co. received a distinct shock when Glyn spoke at first, and could hardly appreciate that the St. Jim's inventor had not returned and was actually in the study.

"Yes!" said Jack Blake. "Can you hear me?"

There was the sound of a soft chuckle from the direction of the chimney, followed by Glyn's voice.

"Of course I can hear you! Is my voice plain?"

"Rather!" replied Blake. "It's absolutely uncanny!"  
 "My hat!" whispered Digby to Herries. "It's a great idea of Glyn's!"

"Thanks, Digby!" came Glyn's voice. "I'm glad you think so."

Digby turned startled eyes to the fireplace. His remark had been passed in a very low voice, hardly audible to Blake, who was standing within a few feet of him, and it seemed incredible that Glyn, at the other end of the corridor, had actually overheard him.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "Did you really hear me?"  
 "Why not?" said Glyn. "I told you this instrument magnified sound, didn't I? If anything, Blake's voice is a trifle too loud."

"Well, Gussy's booked for a surprise, anyway!" chuckled Blake. "Ring off!"

"Right!"  
 And Glyn "rang off."

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Man in the Chimney!

"I FEEL assured that I am within reasonable distance of becoming a proficient ventriloquist, Blake, and I distinctly refuse to give up practice!"

"All right, you blasted ass! Have it your own way, then!" grunted Blake.

It was the result of a final attempt to persuade Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to abandon his ventriloquist efforts; and it had been an unsuccessful attempt. His chums had talked to Gussy like a Dutch uncle, as Blake said, and all without effect. It was a triumph of his "persewewin spiwit," or else of his obstinacy. At any rate, he was as firmly set on his project as ever. He had, moreover, announced his intention of cutting footer in order to do some more "practice" that very evening—the one immediately following his humiliation at the hands of the Grammarians, and the installation of Glyn's invention in Study No. 6.

Blake & Co. realised that they would have to fall back upon that device of Bernard Glyn's for Gussy's conversion. They would have preferred a moral victory rather than that, the more especially as it involved bringing an outsider—and a Shell fellow at that—into the affairs of their study.

But even a careful explanation of how ventriloquism was responsible for the jape of the Grammarians on the previous evening had failed to influence the determination of Arthur Augustus. He either could not, or would not, see that his hobby had caused him to be delivered into the hands of the rival school. He argued that if he had been in the wood for any other purpose it would have been just the same; and he met Blake's inquiries as to what other purpose would be likely to take him into the wood with a disdainful sniff.

And so Blake & Co. left Gussy to his own devices in Study No. 6, and went down to Little Side, stopping, however, on their way, at Glyn's study in order to inform that scientifically-minded youth that the fun was likely to commence at any time.

"Right you are!" said Glyn, who was sitting in an armchair, reading; and, crossing over to the study table, he picked up a length of insulated electric wire.

When he fastened this over his head with a steel band a small object rather like a black watch was pressed against his ear, and a small, trumpet-shaped projection was near to his mouth.

"He's not started yet," he announced, with a grin. "You cut down to Little Side. Gussy's certain to start, I suppose?" he added.

"Sure!" replied Blake positively. "He may kick off with the dog first, and then he'll—"

"Half a mo'!" Glyn said, holding up his hand for silence. "Yes, he's commencing now. I can hear him. You cut off now, so that he'll be able to find you, if necessary."

"Right-ho!" said Blake, and closed the door of Glyn's study.

In the meantime, Gussy was rehearsing the doggie growl, but after a few minutes of that he turned his attention to the fireplace.

He knelt down, and, peering into the emptiness of the grate, commenced work.

"Are you theah, deah boy?" he inquired, and was drawing a breath in order to produce the answering voice, when he unexpectedly received a reply from the open mouth of the chimney.

"Yes!"

Gussy jumped nearly a foot into the air. To say that he was startled is but a mild way of expressing the fact. He thought he must be on the verge of insanity. He tried to speak again, but the words would not come. Instead, he staggered back into the armchair and mopped his brow.

"Hallo!" came the voice again.  
 Arthur Augustus was incapable of making any reply.

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"Hallo! I'm choking in this blessed chimney! Help! Help!"

"G'wreat heavens!" gasped the Fourth-Former.

"Help!"

Arthur Augustus pulled himself together with a great effort, and attempted to peer into the chimney. He could, however, see nothing of the owner of the voice.

"Godness gwacious!" he said. "This is twuly awful!"

There was the sound of a slight chuckle, instantly suppressed.

Arthur Augustus was far too agitated to notice it.

"I say, deah boy, is theah weally anyone up theah?"

"Doesn't it sound like it?" said the voice.

"But weally, you know—how did you come theah?"

"Oh—er—I was bird-nesting, and fell in!" explained the voice.

"Bird-nestin! G'wreat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Can't you weally get out again?"

"Do you expect I am staying here for fun?" followed up the voice.

"Bai Jove! No, I suppose not!" conceded the swell of St. Jim's.

"Aren't you going to help me out?" the voice inquired.

"Weally, I haven't the faintest idea—" said Gussy, looking around helplessly. "I suppose I had better get Blake and Howwies!"

"Who are Blake and Herries?"

"My chums, you know. They belong to this studay!"

"Then fetch them—and let's hope they've got more sense than you, leaving a bloke stuck half-way up a chimney!"

"Bai Jove!" said Gussy, somewhat indignantly. "I considah it is wathah ungwateful of you—"

"Oh, stop talking and get help, or I shall choke here, as sure as my name's Harold Rogers!"

Arthur Augustus nearly dropped prone on to the floor.

"W-what did you say your name is?" he managed to gasp.

"Harold Rogers," said the voice in the chimney. "But what does that—"

"And what is your trade?" said Gussy, speaking as if he were in a dream.

"I'm a coster," said the voice.

The dream became a nightmare. Arthur Augustus felt as if his head was swimming. Was there really a Harold Rogers who was a coster by trade? Arthur Augustus was under the impression that he had invented that gentleman himself.

He passed a hand across his brow.

"One moment, deah boy!" he said faintly. "I will go and fetch Blake!"

He took the stairs three at a time, and established a record for the journey between Study No. 6 and Little Side.

Curiously enough, neither Blake, Herries, nor Digby were chasing the leather, and Arthur Augustus reached them in almost speechless condition.

"Blake! Howwies!" he babbled. "Theah is a man in our chimney!"

"I know," said Blake, in an unconcerned voice. "Oh, well played, Figgins!" he added, with his glance on the long-legged New House leader.

Arthur Augustus clutched him excitedly by the arm.

"Blake! I insist upon your listenin' to me! Theah is weally a man in our chimney!"

"Good!" said Jack Blake. "I don't care, so long as he doesn't push soot down on to the carpet."

"But—but—w'eatly, Blake! I tell you theah—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Monty Lowther, strolling up.

"What ails the noble Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus turned to him as a drowning man is said to clutch at a straw.

"Lowthah, theah is a man in our chimney, and I cannot get Blake to assist me to wescue him!"

Monty Lowther caught a wink from Jack Blake.

"Horrible, Gussy!" he said solemnly. "His name's Harold Rogers, isn't it?"

"Yaas, but—"

"And he's a coster by trade, isn't he?" continued Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, but—"

"I know the merchant," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head wisely. "He was in our chimney the other day. Don't worry about him, Gussy. He lives in chimneys. He's doing it for a bet!"

"Ass!" shrieked Gussy. "I tell you theah is weally a man in the chimney of our studay. You think it's my ventrioloquism, but it isn't. If you don't come with me, I shall have to—"

"Hold on, Wailton!" said Blake quickly. "We'll come!"

The Terrible Three accompanied Blake & Co. to Study No. 6, and on the way Digby gave the Shell fellows an idea of Glyn's device.

As soon as they entered the study a voice floated out from the fireplace.

"Have you brought Blake and Herries?"

D'Arcy glanced triumphantly at his companions,

"Yaas, Mr. Wogers!" he said. "Have no feah, we will wescue you!"

"Then for goodness' sake hurry up! I'm nearly choking!" said Mr. Rogers.

"Do you believe me now, Blake?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Jolly good, Gussy!" said Digby heartily.

The swell of St. Jim's stared at him.

"What do you mean by that, Digby?" he said.

"Your ventrioloquism," replied Digby. "You've improved wonderfully. I didn't think you'd got it in you. Blessed if it doesn't sound as if there is really somebody in the chimney."

"But theah is!" shrieked Gussy.

"Aren't some of you chumps going to help me down?" inquired Mr. Rogers from the chimney.

"Theah! Now powpawp—"

"Better and better!" said Monty Lowther enthusiastically.

"You can't even see his lips move! I say, Gussy, can you do it while you're drinking ginger-beer, like the men on the halls do?"

"Won't Gussy be able to live up the House of Lords!" said Blake.

"You uttah asses! You wfabjous dummys! You—"

"When you kids have done arguing, perhaps I shall stand a chance of being helped!" suggested the voice, cutting across Gussy's frenzied shrieks.

"He can even interrupt himself!" commented Monty Lowther admiringly.

"Lowthah—Blake—Tom Mewwy!" howled Gussy. "I am not wottin'! Theah weally is a man theah. I will prove it!"

The swell of St. Jim's knelt down, and thrust his head into the fireplace. His shoulder followed. The six juniors watched him, almost helpless with laughter.

Gussy wriggled his way into the chimney, and then stuck fast, with his shoulders wedged in the chimney opening.

"Help, Blake, deah boy!" he gasped. "I cannot extwicate myself! Wescue!"

"So there really is a man in the chimney at last!" said the irrepresable Lowther.

"A silly ass, you mean!" corrected Herries.

Blake sipped to the side of Gussy.

"Will you promise to stop acting the goat-if we pull you out, Gussy?" he inquired.

"But Mr. Wogers—" began the hapless swell of St. Jim's, as well as he could speak.

"We'll rescue Mr. Rogers—if he's there—and you, too, if you promise to give up ventrioloquism," replied Blake.

"Is that a pwomise, Blake?" inquired Gussy.

"Yes."

"Vewy well, then, undah pwotest—"

Blake disregarded the rest of the sentence.

"Right!" he said. "Catch hold of his other leg, Dig!"

Together they dragged Arthur Augustus free and on to the hearthrug.

"Thanks, deah boys!" he said, rising and dusting himself down. "And now Mr. Wogers—"

But Blake had already put his hand into the chimney and fetched forth "Mr. Rogers."

The swell of St. Jim's started in a puzzled fashion at the handful of vulcanite and polished metal, with a long wire attached, which Blake was holding.

"Weally—" he was beginning, when suddenly, from the little device came the voice of Bernard Glyn no longer disguised.

"Hallo, Gussy!" it said.

Arthur Augustus received the second shock of that evening.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study rang with peals of laughter.

The face of Arthur Augustus was a study.

"Then—then that beastly thing—"

Monty Lowther drew forth his handkerchief and passed it across his eyes.

"That," he sobbed, "is all that is left of Mr. Rogers!"

"You spoonf' wotthas!"

Arthur Augustus marched in a dignified fashion out of the study.

Later they explained to him the details of Bernard Glyn's invention, and reminded him of his promise.

There was too much good-nature in Arthur Augustus to allow him to resent the jokes at his expense. The next evening he was down at football practice, instead of learning to growl and talk out of chimneys.

And the end of Gussy's ventrioloquism was the commencement of another period of peace and quietness in Study No. 6.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's grand long story of Tom Merry & Co., the chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

"GRUNDY'S GUNPOWDER PLOT!" By Martin Clifford. It will be a real good one.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 716.

# The ST. JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

## This Week's Football at a Glance.

### RAIN PREVENTS MANY MATCHES.

By HARRY NOBLE. (Special Football Correspondent.)

Exclusive to the "St. Jim's News."

Grundy's Growlers Meet Bolsover's Bashers for the first time—Bolsover and the tags quite unpaid of the rain—High jinks at St. Jim's.

#### SENIOR.

St. Jim's v. Abbotsford . . . . . 3 3  
(At Abbotsford.)

#### JUNIOR.

Courtfield v. Redcliff . . . . . 4 2  
The rain prevented the playing of the junior and senior eleven from the other eight colleges.)

#### INTER-HOUSE MATCHES.

Bolsover's Bashers v. Grundy's Growlers 8 9  
(At Greyfriars.)

#### OTHER MATCHES (Unofficial).

Bunter Minor's XI. v. St. Jim's End. . . 3 5  
(This match was played on Big Side at St. Jim's—the first eleven ground.)

#### NOTES.

Bolsover was heard to reply when asked whether he didn't consider it too wet for play: "If it hailed, rained, blew, and froze, we wouldn't be afraid to meet the foe!" The first eleven at St. Jim's went to Abbotsford to play, as the rain was not so bad there. It was indoors, and could get no report of the Bolsover-Grundy scrap. I think, of the two, Grundy's menagerie were the stronger, and, anyway, they slammed the ball into the net on nine occasions, and their rivals only managed eight.

## Spending a Thousand Pounds.

### AN UNFORTUNATE ENDING.

By AUBREY RACKE.

(Continued from a previous issue.)

"WHAT do you suggest we shall do while away the hours before the theatre opens?" I asked Doreen.

"I don't suggest anything," she replied. "My plans are all cut and dried. I'm going to buy some new hats and dresses and things. You can't come, of course. Go to some cinema show, and see what that's like for a couple of hours. I'll meet you here again at five o'clock."

Before I could make a statement either way Doreen hailed a passing taxi, and was rushed away in the direction of shop-land. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 716.

As for myself, I, of course, didn't go to any jolly cinema, and pandered awhile, and then steered for a manicure establishment.

I still had half an hour to spare when I left, so I took a saunter down New Bond Street to have a look at some pipes and fancy socks and the latest neckwear and suchlike.

At last I lounged into a stylish tobacconist's, and, after disarranging a few dozen pipes and cigarette-holders, purchased a three-guinea affair which looked a positive dream.

Glancing at my watch, I discovered it was about time to get back to my appointed spot. I arrived three minutes late, and had just thought out an elaborate apology, when I discovered Doreen wasn't there.

"Trust her to be late!" I growled.

Altogether, I had to idle away twenty-five minutes before she turned up. The astonishing manner in which she arrived took the giddy Huntley & Palmer. I was just looking in the front window of a jeweller's shop, when a spanking Rolls-Royce drew up against the pavement, and from the tonneau alighted my cousin, Doreen Margaret Roselle.

"Hallo, Aubrey, old dear!" was her greeting. "I'm awfully sorry to have kept you waiting a few moments! The shops were terribly crowded, you know!"

The jeweller's into which I had been looking happened to be one of the places at which Doreen wanted to make a purchase. Asking me to just wait another few moments, she disappeared inside. As I stood there cooling my heels, my eyes wandered towards the car, and, with a little start, I recognised it as being mine.

But the next second I had even a bigger shock. I gazed at the tonneau, and rubbed my eyes. For some minutes I thought I was suffering from delusions.

"Sloane!" I gasped. "What ever does this mean?"

As I spoke I indicated the tonneau of the car, which bore the appearance of the most untidy box-room in the whole of London.

Sloane removed his pipe from his mouth, and grinned before replying.

"It's like this, sir," he said. "I met her ladyship at the bottom of Regent Street. She pulled me up, and asked me to proceed slowly to Madame This and along to Madame That—about two dozen madames in all—and from each dressmaking salon some young person brings out half a dozen card board boxes, and dumps 'em in behind. Then she scrambled in among it all, and I brought her along here."

"How much have you spent?" I asked Doreen, when we were both seated in a sumptuous cafe at a table for two.

There were great palms all round us, and an orchestra giving one the impression that a dozen cats and dogs were having a miniature edition of the Great War with Germany all on their own.

"It rang off for a while Doreen answered.

"Only what was absolutely essential," she assured me. "I went and booked a box at the Hippodrome, and arranged for a supper at the Troc. You won't have to do anything."

After I had settled the bill for tea—a trivial tender—I asked Doreen whether she would care to accompany me on a stroll through the gardens and-oh, yes, for my club at St. Jim's. My cousin promptly agreed.

We took half an hour to stroll down the first fifty yards of Regent Street; Doreen had a peculiar desire to look at every item displayed in the shop windows. Then we

came to a shop which sold roulette-bowls, and in I marched.

I got quite a decent little affair for a fiver, and also a few packs of cards, some marking-books, and a few other nice games which make dull evenings in the study of a person like myself quite enjoyable. I also bought several boxes of choice cigars and fags. All this truxle I stacked away under the seat of my motor.

That night, when we entered our box at the "show," and Doreen rustled her purchased-this-afternoon gown, news to the effect that Lord and Lady Fiftybillions had arrived reached our ears. So, of course, we both scraped our chairs about, and coughed and sneezed and yawned, and soon had everybody looking our way. And I've no doubt many of the glances were of envy and many of admiration. (Don't laugh, please, reader—don't laugh!—T. M.)

Then, if you please, an attendant entered our box from the rear, and asked us to switch off the light, as the curtains had been up some time, and all the audience were gazing at us instead of at the show.

When I had set a whacking big cigar going, I turned my eyes towards the show. On the whole, it was quite good, and I was fairly well interested for those who watched it all. When the show was over the stars had already begun to peep. My thoughts had just started returning to beastly St. Jim's, and all the horrors, when I suddenly remembered for those who were super before us at the Troc.

We both enjoyed ourselves immensely there.

When I got to St. Jim's I caught sight of Crooke lounging near the gateway. After listening to my story, he informed me that the Head wanted to see me about something. As you can well guess, it was with rather mixed feelings that I entered that apartment.

The sight which first met my eyes made my heart fairly leap into my mouth. In the headmaster's chair sat the Head; in the chair the Head reserved for visitors sat my pater! By the table, with a business expression upon his well-known features, stood Taggles.

I must now confess to you that the letter which had shown the Head, begging him give me leave to view some historical buildings which would prove highly interesting to schoolboys, had not been written by my father at all. It was the work of my pater, who had dropped in an hour or so previously and asked for me; and, to Dr. Holmes' surprise, my pater knew nothing about such a letter, and my little trick for scrounging a nice week-end was fairly laid at the seat.

To make matters worse, the Head, in the beastly way he usually has, asked my pater how often he had written letters before asking for a week-end off for your humble boy. My pater had twice. Yet I had shown the Head about two dozen letters, and always met with instant success!

Taggles, at a gesture from the Head, stepped forward, and grabbed hold of my wrist, and I felt a swish from the Head's carpet-beater!

I can't think of anything more to say about spending a thousand pounds, except that if Tom Merry comes to me with any more requests or suggestions, there will be trouble!

AUBREY RACKE.

(I am not likely to ask Racke to write anything more yet awhile; he's taken up quite enough space already, and has been terribly slack in sending in the conclusion of his article.—T. M.)

# The Queer Case of Dr. Brutell

Written By Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.



## An Unsolved Mystery.

(Continued from last week.)

There were many things which puzzled Dr. Brutell of late. Still, this was no time for moody reflection. There was important work to be done.

The doctor resolved to go out at once and bring the police, so that the scoundrels who had committed this dastardly crime should be captured.

When he returned about an hour later in company with a couple of police-officers, he found Mr. Stanton's daughter Madeleine sitting beside her unconscious father. The poor girl's eyes were tear-stained, and she was delighted to see her father's friend again. Except for the servants, the two lived alone in the house.

One of the manservants was sent for a doctor, and when he arrived the millionaire was removed to his room. Dr. Brutell, who had now done all that was possible for his friend, took his departure. He learnt with satisfaction that though Mr. Stanton's injuries were serious enough, they were not likely to prove fatal.

Meanwhile, the police had already begun their inquiry into the circumstances of the attack, and there were several points which perplexed them. Although they did not state the articles openly, it was quite obvious to the distracted Madeleine that the police believed Dr. Brutell knew something about the crime!

This was plain to the girl by the questions which they put to her. At length she was quite annoyed at what seemed to her to be an unjust and ridiculous suggestion.

"I would as soon suspect myself of the crime as Dr. Brutell!" she declared angrily. "Why, it was only this morning that he saved the life of my father and his friend!"

So far as the police were concerned, there seemed no more to be said at the present. But they were by no means convinced that the renowned scientist was as innocent of the affair as Mr. Stanton's daughter would have them believe.

The next morning Madeleine took charge of her father's affairs, and it was in the course of her duties that she discovered what she considered to be an important clue connected with the attack upon her father. It was the hammer with which the desperadoes had struck him down.

## A Narrow Escape.

THE morning after the cruel assault on her father, Madeleine set out on her journey to see Dr. Brutell. When she arrived at the house the doctor was taking a stroll over the grounds of his estate.

His secretary, however, learning of the girl's identity, admitted her to the laboratory. He knew that she was interested in the doctor's scientific experiments, and he rightly came to the conclusion that she would find a great deal there that would interest her until the return of her father's friend.

At the same time, he imparted the advice that there were many dangerous things in the room, and, consequently, it would be safer for her not to interfere with anything the nature of which she did not perfectly understand.

Madeleine had brought with her the hammer which had been used by the assailant of her father, and she sincerely hoped that it would provide a useful clue for the police.

Adapted from incidents in the Vitagraph serial, "Hidden Dangers."

She handed it with the greatest of care so that she should not interfere with the finger-prints which would almost certainly be left upon the handle.

Placing it in a cabinet on the wall, her attention was attracted by an extraordinary apparatus in front of her.

"This must have something to do with the mysterious and powerful double X-ray which Dr. Brutell told father about," she mused, at the same time going nearer to the apparatus in order to examine it the better. Then, with natural curiosity, Madeleine picked the strange instrument up, quite forgetting the advice given to her by the doctor's secretary.

Unwittingly, the unfortunate girl touched a switch that controlled the double X-ray projector. Immediately the fierce green rays flashed forth from the cabinet. The terrified girl dropped the apparatus, and she but the consuming rays burnt and destroyed everything with which they came into contact.

With every second that passed the rays increased in intensity, and they continued to spread with great speed around the room.

Madeleine, horror-stricken, drew as far away as possible from the table, but too late she realised that her means of escape from the room had already been cut off by the rays. Hideous death had the unfortunate girl in its grasp.

She was held powerless with fear as the deadly tongues of mysterious force stretched out towards her. The rays were stronger and more destructive than the hottest flames, and as they spread around the room they ate up the furniture, carpets, and melted all the glass and metal which stood in their path.

Madeleine crouched in the far corner of the room, frozen with horror at the dreadful predicament she was in. There seemed to be no way out for her, and she felt that she was doomed to die a horrible death. What could it do?

It could not be many seconds now before the consuming rays reached her and set fire to her clothing. Then the end would be swift indeed! But the terrified girl's train of thought was suddenly cut short. Something seemed to snap within her brain, and with a cry of anguish, she fell to the floor in a dead faint.

Dr. Brutell, who was returning to the house after his walk, was amazed to see a cloud of smoke issuing from the open window of his laboratory. His immediate thoughts were connected with the valuable instruments which were in the room, and the possibility of their being smothered within in imminent danger of their lives did not occur at that moment to the learned scientist.

Dr. Brutell rushed to the spot where he had left a specially-prepared and effective shield in preparation of an emergency of this nature. This was the only thing which would effectually resist the double X-rays.

Armed with his shield, Dr. Brutell opened the door of his laboratory and entered the room. The scientist was astonished to see the figure of Madeleine, the daughter of his friend, Robert Stanton, lying unconscious upon the floor. Already the deadly flames had caught hold of her clothing and were effectually resist the double X-rays.

Dr. Brutell picked the girl up and carried her out of the room, where it was a fairly easy matter for him to extinguish the flames. But he was only just in time. A few seconds later, and the unfortunate Madeleine would have been past all human aid. Dr. Brutell then returned to the burning laboratory, and set about extinguishing the flames.

It was a difficult job, and a dangerous one, but he was able to employ various aids which helped him considerably in his task. Although Dr. Brutell did not welcome any catastrophe of this nature, he was fully aware of its possibility, and he had accordingly been provided with a means of escape. It would have been folly indeed for a man who "played with fire" as he did not to have the means ready at hand to put it out when necessary.

Of course, there were a good many things

destroyed and damaged, but Dr. Brutell would be able to replace them all in good time. The thing which concerned him most of all now was the safety and comfort of Madeleine, and he felt thankful that he had arrived in time to save her life.

When his task in the laboratory was completed he returned to her, and carried her down to the summer-house in the garden. It was not long before consciousness returned. Madeleine smiled as she opened her eyes and saw the kindly doctor who had attended to her. Then thoughts of what had happened came back to her, and she said how sorry she was that she had caused so much trouble and damage.

Dr. Brutell was not in the least angry with her, and he listened attentively as the girl explained her mission.

Madeleine showed him the hammer which had been left behind by the person who had attempted to murder her father in his study last night.

"I found this," explained the girl, "and brought it along to you, hoping that the finger-marks upon the handle will enable you to track down the criminal."

Dr. Brutell took the hammer in his hands and examined it. Little did he realise that the finger-prints on it were his own, and that he himself had used this unusual weapon in an attack upon his friend and neighbour, Robert Stanton.

"It is more than likely that this will prove valuable in our investigations," replied the doctor, "and I am very glad you brought it along for me to see. I will hand it over to the police at once. Now I will take you home again in my car, for I know you must be tired after an eventful experience, and no doubt your father will be waiting for your return."

Dr. Brutell's motor-car had reached the house of Mr. Stanton, the millionaire race-owner, and the girl received the keys of the car when an amazing sight met her gaze. A short distance to the left of the Stanton residence there was another motor-car in full flight.

The astonishing thing about this was that it contained a number of men, dressed in black, Bowler robes, and hoods over their heads.

"The Black Circle!" muttered Madeleine to her companion. "What can they be up to this time? I do hope father is quite safe!"

"The sight of the sinister figures had upset the girl, and she was quite pale. Her thoughts went back to those threatening letters which her father had been receiving lately.

The motor-car containing the gang was rapidly gaining speed, and it would be useless for Dr. Brutell to set off in pursuit. The doctor, followed by Madeleine, left the vehicle and hurried into the house. He knew that the visit of the Black Circle gang could only be for an evil purpose, and although the doctor did not communicate his fears to the girl, he was prepared for the worst.

Mr. Stanton had showed him one of the notes which threatened him with death if he did not immediately pay over a certain sum of money which was demanded, and they had apparently kept their word. This was the conclusion Brutell came to as he walked up the steps of the mansion.

The next morning the two had entered the building, and the first thing which met their gaze was the unwelcome sight of the policeman who had been left on guard in the hall, bound hand and foot.

This had not immediately attracted out to all the servants also. They were all bound and gagged, and deposited in various rooms in the house. The gang had evidently done their work well.

But it was Madeleine hurried upstairs to the room where they had placed her injured father the night before. A cry of dismay left the girl's lips as she realised that he was no longer there.

(To be continued.) THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 716.

# THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE

Read this magnificent story dealing with the adventures of three chums in a strange country.

By REID WHITLEY.

## THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Hobby Tarrant and Tony Matthers, with Billy Kettle, a trusted negro servant, are on an expedition in the Andes. On the journey their guides turn traitors, and steal away with most of their baggage. Without the guides, they are lost in this strange country, but they plod on until they come upon an Indian hutment. The owner is dead, but alongside the hut is his canoe, which they make use of. Presently there is an ominous noise, and, with a roar, a mile of steeply-sloping lava and rock begins to move down to the waters below. This volcanic eruption causes a tremendous tidal wave, and the seething waters carry the canoe and its occupants along at a terrific speed until they come to a narrow gorge through the heart of the mountains. The progress of the mad journey in their frail canoe is arrested by a gigantic tree almost submerged. After a while the swollen waters subside, and they see dry land again. That night they explore the valley, and meet many weird and wonderful animals, which forces them to take refuge in a forest of giant trees.

## A Queer Discovery.

NOTHING moved among the big trees, either on the ground or aloft so far as they could see, so they laid down their burdens and seated themselves. They had hardly had a moment to think since leaving their roost across the river.

"You're right smart with de torch and de gun, Marse Tony!" said Billy admiringly. "You done that bear a treat. He'd have gobbled us for sure like. But what we goin' to do now? Climb dese here trees?"

"That's the idea, Billy," agreed Tony. "Then, look here, Marse Tony. Us might go furdur along till we gets closer to dat dere lake. Then us can go up and live in a tree dat hangs over it. Then us can get water by letting down a pot on a line. Too many 'gators about for dis chile, not counting dem bron-toe-sores!"

"Your words are de words of de wisdom," said Tony. "We'll move on a bit."

Keeping a sharp look-out on all sides, they marched forward. The huge trees stood well apart, and there was but little undergrowth, so they could see for some distance. But nothing stirred. It was almost as though they had come into a sanctuary.

"What's that?" said Hobby, after they had travelled near a mile and were approaching the shore of the lake.

He pointed to something suspended by a long line of creeper, some twenty feet above their heads, gleaming in a stray ray of sunlight that had filtered through the roof of matted boughs and thick foliage high overhead.

The thing hung motionless. They moved a little nearer, and halted. There was no mistaking the object. It was a human skeleton. At sight of this, the first intimation that



human beings inhabited this wild, each acted according to his manner. Billy Kettle groaned out something about an obeh man. Hobby Tarrant stared eagerly, trying to make out what sort of man the late owner had been by the contour of the dome and the size of the teeth. Tony brought his rifle to the ready as he scanned the branches in search of a possible foe.

"It's a very interesting skull!" exclaimed Hobby. "So far as I can make out, it's hardly human at all, though I don't think it belonged to an ape. It's betwixt and between. I'd like to get it down."

"Leave it alone," advised Tony. "It has been hung by someone who might object to having it disturbed. It may be a landmark, or something of that sort. If we are to have neighbours, we mustn't begin by hurting their feelings. Come on!"

He had to drag Hobby away from the fascinating object, though Billy was glad to leave it behind.

"Dat dere sure means bad luck, Marse Tony!" he said solemnly.

"We couldn't have had much worse than we have had!" grunted Tony. "But there's the lake. I can see the glint of water through the trees. We had better choose a place and get aloft. The brush is thick ahead."

There was no lack of choice in the matter of ladders. Though the trunks of the trees were smooth and quite unclimbable, a profusion of lianas or creepers hung from the boughs, tough as cables, and so twisted together that they offered an easy ascent.

Slinging their packs on their backs to leave their hands free, they began to climb. Hobby felt up. Hobby began to gasp, but Billy, despite the handicap of the flat stones which he had brought to use as a heath, went cheerily aloft. He had reached the branches and cleared a space amongst the twigs with his hatchet before the two lads were much more than half-way.

"Dis here a fine place, Marse Tony!" he said, as they arrived, panting. "Plenty birds for to eat. I show you how to make spars. Hebbe de ban fish, too, and dere ain't no lack of firewood. Plenty dead branches."

Tony and Hobby looked about them. They seemed to have come into another world. They were in a forest above a forest. For around they had the innumerable branches of the great trees, crisscrossed and twisted together so that in many places they offered a solid, though uneven platform.

Decayed vegetation had covered this with mould in which ferns and creepers, saplings, flowers, all manner of plants, had found root and strength enough to thrive. Birds darted through the tangle—and there were other less agreeable inhabitants.

"Loramussy! Look out!" yelled Billy, almost before the two lads had seated themselves; and, as he spoke, struck out at something gliding along a branch almost above their heads.

There was a hiss, a wriggle, then Billy struck again, and a large yellow snake writhed itself over the branch that had served as threshold to this new world, and fell to the ground.

"You gotter keep your eyes skinned, gemmen!" said Billy. "Dere will be snakes and spiders, and all sorter things that stings and bites. You gotter be smart!"

"I think the first thing we had better do is to fix on a place to camp, and then start a fire. You seem to have forgotten it, Tony, but surely it's near dinner-time. I'm feeling uncommonly peckish!" said Hobby.

The hint was enough to start them on their way. With Billy ahead to clear a path with his hatchet and warn them of dangerous places, they made fair time. Half an hour's backing and crawling brought them to a tree whose outmost branches stretched well over the waters of the lake on one side, while a single mighty bough connected it with its neighbours on the other.

Thus it was almost a tree fortress, for if they hauled up or out, away the dangling lianas, nothing could come at them except



"What's that?" said Hobby, after they had travelled a mile, and were approaching the shore of the lake. He pointed to something suspended by a long line of creeper above their heads.



along that one branch, which might easily be defended. In addition, it was taller than any other tree nearby, and its upper boughs would make splendid look-out.

"We couldn't have had a better place if we had arranged for it!" said Hobby enthusiastically. "We can get to the ground on one side, and on the other we can hang about the lake and fish."

"Den, Marse Hobby, dat's just what you and Marse Tony had best do," said Billy. "Cos we got precious little of dat guano left. You catch de fish while I make de place for de fire."

They took the lines and a few bits of meat for bait, and each selecting a natural leader of linnas, descended to within a dozen feet or so of the placid surface of the water.

The fish welcomed their coming, or, at least, so it seemed, for they had barely wetted their lines when each had a bite. Tony hauled in his catch easily enough, but Hobby had trouble.

"I—I think it must be a young whale at least!" he gasped, twisting the line about his arm, while the liana ladder swayed to the tugging of his unseemly monster. "Wow! Here he comes!"

Up flashed a yard of silver, turned a double somersault in the air, and disappeared, leaving a boil of foam. Hobby paid out line, then, as the fish's splash began to haul in. Again there was a break and a rush, but this time the fish did not go so far, for it was weakening, and presently Hobby managed to get its head out of water. Thirty minutes, and it hung suspended beside him.

"Jee-rusalem!" he shouted. "Look at it! It's plated! Plates instead of scales! It's as old as the bronzo, and—"

"Ten times as toothsome—I hope!" put in Tony. "But Burry up. I'm afraid something will turn up to scare the fish away. Let's get all we can while the getting's good."

They continued with excellent fortune for a quarter of an hour, then their luck turned abruptly. The lines dangled in the water, but nothing approached them. Either the fish had moved on, or—

"Higher up!" cried Tony, of a sudden. "There's something rising over there!"

They both grabbed their catch, and began to climb. After their experiences of the morning they each felt that the upper air was healthier than that close to the water. They did not linger, yet they were only a few feet farther from danger when, with a swirl that sent waves lapping against the shore, a thing like an enormous lance-head stabbed up from the depths.

Two evil eyes set at the end of stalks protruding from either side of the head, swivelled round and fixed upon the climbers as though deciding whether they were good to eat or no. A moment the head swayed to and fro upon its long neck, then disappeared as swiftly as it had come.

"Up, man—up!" cried Tony to Hobby, who had lingered to gaze fondly on this latest novelty. "He's going to come up under you."

Hobby made a frantic spurt. Again the water boiled, this time directly beneath him. Tony saw a black mass in the midst of the heaving water. He had brought his rifle with him, slung at his back, even though it had been a hindrance, and now he blessed his foresight. Unlugging it he blazed off at the dark body of the thing, even as its head shot aloft. Perhaps the long jaws that suddenly opened to display a double row of saw-like teeth might not have reached Hobby, but fortunately the bullet must have struck home, for the head drew back. There was a violent concussion under water, and a long wave rose and travelled across the lake at great speed. The enemy had beat a retreat.

Hobby turned a pale face to his friend. "Thanks, old man! I think you saved me that time. He would have had me if you hadn't fired. What a beastly brute!"

"Seems to me they're all that," replied Tony drily. "What was that thing, d'you think?"

"It looked like what they call a plesiosaurus, said Hobby; but I don't know certainly. Anyhow, the name doesn't matter. The thing was quite enough. I don't want to see it again at such short range. I'm jolly glad they can't fly!" And, with a sigh of heart-felt relief, he hauled himself upon the branch,

and made his way towards Billy, bearing his trophies.

Billy had not been idle. He had hacked away inconvenient branches, and used them to make a small platform where the three could sit or lie. This he had surrounded by a network of linnas that it was next to impossible to fall overboard. And, having wedged his flat stones securely in a fork of three great branches, he had collected a pile of dried wood and lit a fire.

So long as this was carefully controlled there was no danger of setting the tree-top in a blaze, all the branches about them being sheathed in thick bark.

"You sure has done mighty well, gemmen!" he exclaimed, as he saw the fish. "You ain't seen no more brown-foes, has you? I kinder 'ought I heard a bit of splashing."

"That was a plesiosaurus," said Hobby. "It nearly got me."

"Den I dunno why you calls it dat," replied Billy. "Cos I sorter reckons you weren't pleased you saw it." With which fearful, though unconscious pun, the darkey got to work on the fish.

Soon an appetising odour floated away through the tree-tops, and they began their meal. Afterwards Billy set to the making of snares which he proposed to set for a variety of large pigeon that seemed very plentiful, while Tony and Hobby climbed aloft to get a view of the country.

"Since we are stuck here till we can find a way out, we may as well learn all we can," said Tony, as they started up the liana ladder hanging from an upper branch. "Take care of yourself, Billy! Fire a shot if you're in danger, but not otherwise."

"Sure not!" promised Billy. "And you gemmen look out for snakes. They is sate de bad medicine."

But neither snakes, spiders, nor any other poisonous creature appeared as they climbed aloft, and soon they were ensconced in a high crook, which allowed a clear view all round the horizon. They looked in vain for any break in the terrible rock wall that encased them. As far as they could see the cliffs rose to a great height, and in the distance a towering mountain closed the prospect.

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"I expected nothing else," said Tony. "If there had been any way out of these strange creatures would surely have found it long ago."

"Why? Why should they wish to leave a place where everything suits 'em? Even if we find men here that wouldn't prove that there is no way out, but that they don't want to go."

"I can't imagine them wanting to stay!" growled Tony. "But look over there!"

He pointed to a peninsula jutting into the lake a mile or more away. The trees there grew almost in the water, and appeared higher than their neighbours. From this peninsula ascended long, thin columns of smoke.

"A village!" exclaimed Hobby. "Why, there are seven or eight fires, at least. That's good! We will go to see them, and they will help us."

"Try to make a meal of us most likely," said Tony. "You said that skull belonged to a creature which was scarcely human. I guess we'd better leave that village alone."

"My dear chap, creatures with that sort of skull would not know enough to make a fire," replied Hobby blandly. "Those fellows over there must be altogether a higher race. Very likely there are two races, or perhaps those are the fires of Indians who come here to hunt."

"They can't complain of any scarcity of game, then," said Tony.

When they had gazed their fill on the far-flung landscape, they descended and spent the remainder of the day in making their camp more comfortable and safe. By sunset they had finished a quite respectable hut, floored with branches, and roofed with broad leaves fastened together with liana string.

Billy had contrived to hang a great bundle of thorns above the single bough which formed a bridge to the nearest tree, so that nothing with a tearable skin could possibly pass without severe damage. All the liana ladders on the land side were hauled out of the ground.

Thus secured, it seemed unlikely that anything could get at them. None the less, Tony insisted that they should keep watch and watch, and set Billy to take the first turn of duty. Then, with the beginning of the nightly concert of wild beast noises, he and Hobby rolled themselves in their blankets and were quickly asleep.

### A Night Alarm.

SEVERAL hours had passed when Tony awoke. The fire had burned down to a mere heap of dying ashes. Billy, faithless to his trust, snored beside it. The night was full of noises. There were splashing in the lake, and farther away, beyond the belt of tall trees, the roaring of

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the tigers reverberated from the cliffs. On the ground beneath some heavy creature passed with thudding feet.

It was not these noises that riveted Tony's attention, but an odd sort of whispering or murmur close at hand. There was no wind. Not a leaf rustled, or he would have thought the sound was made by the stirring of the foliage.

For a minute he lay still, listening. The sound seemed to come nearest. He located it presently. Whatever made it, lurked amongst the branches of the tree nearest to the camp. What could it be?

He stretched out a hand to rouse Hobby; took a look at the other, and knocked it over with a clatter. At once the sounds ceased. Hobby stirred and grunted. Tony shook him.

"Kouse up, old fellow," he whispered. "There's something watching us from over there."

"Eh? Oh, bother you! I was in the middle of a beautiful dream. I was in the dear old city of London. Mother looked so nice! I saw a plateful of cream buns before me, and—"

"Shut up! Wake Billy!" commanded Tony, in an imperious whisper.

"There's something watching again and obeyed. Billy woke to his prod.

"Wo-ow!" he yawned. "Whasser matter? I just shut my eyes to keep de smoke out 'em, Marsa Tony." He yawned again.

He pointed to the shadowy mass of the neighbouring tree.

"Something there. Be quiet!" he murmured. "Be ready, but don't shoot unless I fire first."

Rigid and expectant they waited for what should happen. For several minutes nothing stirred. Tony began to snore softly, though he kept his eyes fixed on the dim outline of the branch that bridged the gap between them and the suspected tree.

At that the murmuring began again. Something hastened in a high-pitched voice. There was a suppressed howl, then silence once more. And then a blur moved out upon the branch and ran swiftly to the barrier of thorns hanging over it. Another dimly seen form followed, then several more.

Billy breathed hard through his nose, his hand moved towards his pistol butt. Tony gripped his arm restrainingly while he stealthily lifted one of the torches which he had prepared for an emergency like this.

"Don't shoot!" he murmured very softly, and slid the torch into the fire.

A frizzle, a hiss, and the thing flared up. Tony whirled it once and sent it flying on to the bundle of thorns, where it hung blazing, to the great discomfiture of the things that crouched on the further side.

They yawned in half dozen different keys, as they caced back to the friendly darkness. Only for a moment could the three get a good view of them, but that moment sufficed.

Were they men? Short of stature, immensely broad of shoulder, long of arm, covered with thick, reddish hair, they looked scarcely human. Yet they did not run on all fours like apes, and the noises they made were certainly speech of a sort.

They disappeared the last of the gang paused, turned, and swinging a heavy club round his head, roared out a bellow of defiance. The three had a clear sight of his face. It was the face of a man, though very far from the scale of humanity. A great red beard hung on his broad chest, while the big moustache was twisted into the semblance of horns.

Prong for an instant as though mad with rage, he hopped back and was lost to view. Then followed a smashing of twigs, a bowl of pain, a great crashing among the boughs, which swiftly died away in the distance.

"Primitive men!" breathed Hobby.

"Rush!" snapped Tony. He was listening intently, trying to make out in which direction the hairy men had gone.

Were they the people who lived in the trees on the lake shore? He thought not, for the sounds seemed to come from quite another way, over towards the nearer cliffs. As they ceased, he turned to the others. "Pretty people weren't they? And it was lucky I woke up. They would have made short work of that thorn bundle. Billy, you must never go to sleep when you are on

watch again. In war time, sentries who sleep on duty are shot. That's what you deserve. We are at war with everything, and we can only hope to save our lives by being constantly on the look-out."

"I see," said Hobby. "Marse Tony," mumbled the penitent Billy. "I never do it no more. Lemme take a turn now."

But Tony bade him go to sleep again and turn out early with the an. He divided the remaining night. Billy showed his gratitude for this by arising before dawn and catching a supply of fish for breakfast.

"I propose that we make certain about the people long there," said Tony, when the meal was eaten. "I don't think they will turn out to be our red-haired visitors. The reds seemed to be afraid of fire, or at least, unused to it. But if we leave the camp they may raise it while we are gone. What if we cut away that branch?"

"Then how are we to get across the gap?" asked Hobby.

"Dat's easy," put in Billy. "I see first class way. We'll fix one up dere." He pointed to a bough overhead. "And swing across. When we want to come back, I'll just throw another, and we gets back same way."

That solved it. But perhaps the reds will do the same."

"Not they," snorted Hobby. "They're low-brows. They don't understand ropes. Let's start."

Billy set to work with his hatchet, and after an hour's hard work, had so weakened the bough that its weight did the rest. With a mighty rending of fibres, it broke away and fell to the ground.

The tree-top camp was now a fortress in truth. With the liana ladders drawn up there was no getting at it except by a thirty-foot rope, and it was not likely to be so easily accomplished such a feat, Tony felt that the pots, the ammunition, and their few other belongings might safely be left while they went to spy out their neighbours.

"The one thing I forgot, though," he said, as Billy adjusted a rope preparatory to making a start. "I suppose that these people, whatever they happen to be, are fond of presents. And we have a couple of things to offer, except an empty cartridge case or two."

"Eh? Hold on!" muttered Hobby, and dived into his pockets.

Hobby's pocket had been the standing joke of St. Jude's, the school at which he and Tony had spent several happy years. They always contained an amazing collection of oddments. Even in the wild it appeared that they could sustain their old reputation. He turned them out and pawed over the pile lovingly. A pocket magnifier, a packet of photographic printing paper, several note-books, and many stumps of pencils, contained in a tin, were the most valuable. But without ink, a pocket case of scalpels and tweezers, pieces of cork, a small coil of wire, and many other things made up the heap, which was topped by the catalogue of a scientific instrument maker.

The cover of this was adorned by a picture in colours of a man peering into a microscope. Tony cut this off, and also appropriated the fountain pen.

With two or three brass cartridge cases, these things ought to serve. It's a certainty these savings have never seen anything like them before, and that's all that matters," he said, and set the things on the table.

One by one, they swung themselves across the gap to the tree where the reds had concealed themselves. They verified the direction in which they had retreated. It was as Tony thought. Their tracks led away from the lake shore.

Billy suggested that, since it would be hard work chopping a way through the thick tangle of creepers that twisted about amongst the boughs, they should descend to the ground and climb again when they neared their destination.

Tony agreed to this, but they had not descended more than a few feet when Hobby, who was in the rear, called out and pointed to a patch of brushwood. There, crouched close to the ground, their eyes fixed expectantly on the three, were a number of large grey wolves.

(Another instalment of this Splendid Adventure Story on next Wednesday's "Gem." Don't miss it.)



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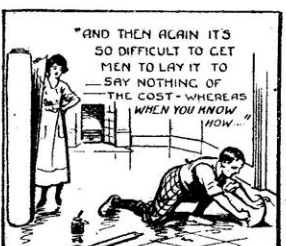
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