

WORLD FAMOUS SCHOOL STORIES. (READ THEM.)

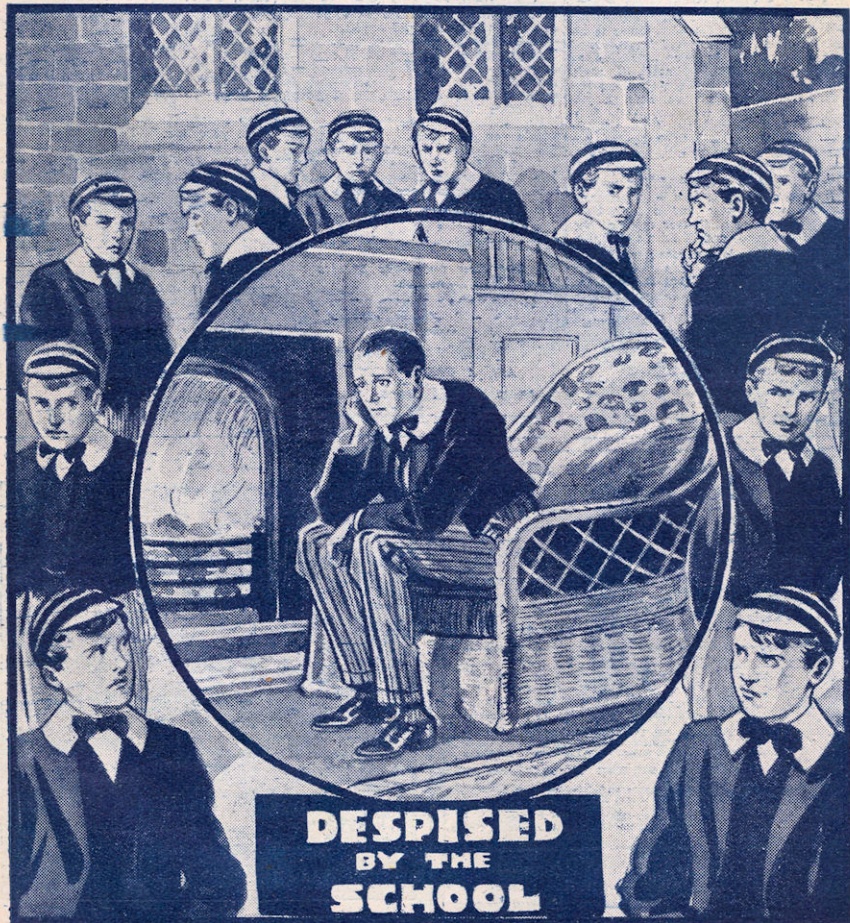
The **GEM** 1¹/₂
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No. 715
Vol. XXI

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

March 11th, 1922.



Read The Grand Long Complete School Story Inside.

:: EDITORIAL CHAT ::

My Dear Chums,—

Kit Wildrake and Tom Merry make a first-rate partnership in the magnificent new series of yarns dealing with a great mystery at St. Jim's. Of late, life at the famous school has been enlivened more than to the square inch than ever before. The Grammarians, headed by Gordon Gay, have achieved what might have been thought the impossible, and spoofed Tom Merry and his faithful band. T. M. is a champion, but even the finest brand of champion gets left, and badly, on occasions.

Still, in the long run, St. Jim's did score; but wait till next time! There is always a next time in these affairs. If Grundy had been allowed to have his way in the recent disputes, there is no question that events would have turned out differently. In the estimation of George Alfred Grundy himself, St. Jim's would have been victorious all along the line. There would have been a triumphal procession at the end with Grundy marching at the head with a nice new laurel wreath adorning his noble brow, and the air rent with cheers for his illustrious self.

The other day I was told that we did not have enough Grundy in the yarns. As the weeks pass and summer-time comes along, we shall hear more of the doughty comrade and Wilkins and Gunn.

A good many letters reach me asking for the establishment of a girls' school near to St. Jim's, so that a few more girl characters could be introduced into the stories. I am not sure that this would be really good policy. The plain fact is, we have scarcely room for more characters, and there is certainly no wish to crowd out the few girl characters who do occasionally add points to a St. Jim's yarn.

The St. Jim's favourites are known all over the world. I'll be bound to say

that at this very moment I am writing these lines there are "Gem" supporters turning over in their minds something that Levison has said, some action of that astute riddle of a chap, Ralph Reckness Cardew; or some joke that Monty Lowther has made. The St. Jim's crowd has "got there"; it is known in Australia, in Canada, in all the Dominions, and elsewhere, including France. Vive l'Entente Cordiale! I know all this is so, because of my post-bag. Letters with addresses of an immense length, for they come from a great distance up country in the wilderness, and travel via this railhead and that big town, reach me with the most touching little references to something one of the boys has said or done.

It is little considerations of this sort that prompt me to keep things such as they are—not entirely the same, for I am piling in fresh features—but to maintain the old St. Jim's idea of things. You can't beat it!

I want you to let me hear any special wishes you may have. I always try to meet said desires. I should like you also to take special notice of what the "Boys' Herald" is accomplishing in the way of lively school yarns, and likewise adventure sensations.

YOUR EDITOR.

The New Complete Stories in the

"BOYS' HERALD"

dealing with

"Teddy Heron's Schooldays"

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"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

*Half-a-crown is paid for each
contribution printed on this page.*

*If your name is not here this week it
may be next.*

A CRITICAL OPINION.

Douglas Jerrold was seriously disappointed with a certain book written by one of his friends. This friend heard that Jerrold was altogether out of heart with the book. "I hear," he remarked, "that you said it was the worst book I ever wrote." "I didn't say that," said Jerrold. "I said it was the worst book anybody ever wrote."—L. Baird, 32, Moss Lane, Pendlebury, near Manchester.

SOAP.

A boy told to write an essay on soap sent in the following:—"Soap is a kind of stuff made in cakes which you can't eat. It smells good and tastes awful. Soap always tastes worst when you get it in your eye. Father says Eskimo never use soap. I wish I was an Eskimo.—J. K. Whittingham, 17, New Road, Chippenham, Wilts.

SOAP.

Diner: "I can't drink this soup."
Water brings another kind. Diner: "I can't drink this soup."
Water again hurries up with a fresh supply, but there is the same result; the diner shakes his head. The waiter patiently fetches a fresh sort. Diner: "I can't drink this soup."
Water calls the manager.
"Why can't you drink this soup, sir?" asks the manager. Diner: "Because I have no spoon!"—Thomas Hawkins, 10, Thirlmere Road, Liverpool.

(Continued on page 16.)

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"THE REBELS ON THE ROOF."



The above picture, which is a small reproduction of the splendid coloured cover of this week's "Boys' Herald," illustrates an amusing scene from the long, complete story, dealing with "TEDDY HERON'S SCHOOL DAYS." You really must read these ripping yarns of the rollicking life at St. Budget's.

GET THIS WEEK'S "BOYS' HERALD."



CHUMMING WITH AN OUTCAST



Telling How Aubrey Racke Set Out To Deceive
The School, and What Became of His Effort!

A Grand Long Complete Story of the Boys of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. In Honour of a Hero!

"ONE shillin' each!"
"What!"
"One shillin' each!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The Shell at St. Jim's were just out after morning lessons. D'Arcy of the Fourth met them in the Form-room passage. Tom Merry stopped, and Manners and Lowther stopped with him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a nobby little notebook in one hand, and a silver pencil in the other. And there was a brisk, business-like expression upon his noble countenance.

"Just a shillin'," he said, "that's all. One each, you know!"

"A shilling each!" repeated Tom Merry.
"Yaas, wathah!"
"My dear chap," said Monty Lowther, "you're awfully good! How did you know we were hard up?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"
Lowther held out his hand.

"It's simply ripping of you, Gussy!" he said solemnly.

"Hand it out!"

"Eh? Hand out what, deah boy?"

"The shilling each."

"Bai Jove! I—"

"It will come in quite usefui," said Lowther blandly.

"Just like Gussy to do these generous things, isn't it, you chaps?"

"Just!" grinned Tom Merry and Manners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hastened to explain.

"You misapprehend, deah boy. I am not goin' to give you a shillin' each at all. You are goin' to give me a shillin' each!"

"My hat! That's a hoss of quite another colour!" said Lowther. "In its present form, the proposition cannot be entertained—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, deah boys—"

"It is more blessed to-give than to receive, Gussy!" said Lowther. "Being really generous fellows, we are willing to let you have the blessedness. And we'll have the bobs—what!"

"Pway let me explain, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus patiently. "It is a shillin' fund. I am waisin' a shillin' fund for a vewy good object. I wegard it as a good ideah to keep the contributions down to a shillin' each, so that all the fellows can contribute without missin' the money—see? If I made it a guinea fund, lots of fellows wouldn't be able to weigh in."

"Very probable!" said Tom Merry, with a laugh.

"Yaas. So I am makin' it a shillin' fund," said Arthur Augustus. "The fund, when raised, is goin' to be spent on a celebration—"

"Good!"

"In honah of Wacke—"

"Racke!" ejaculated the Terrible Three.

"Yaas, wathah! It is entially my ideah," smiled Arthur Augustus. "When I wiposited it in Studay No. 6, Blake and Heewies and Dig said it was all wot. They did, you know!"

"I don't always agree with Blake and Herries and Dig,"

remarked Monty Lowther thoughtfully, "but I must admit that at times they're right on the wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What the thump are we going to celebrate?" demanded Manners. "Who's Racke, anyhow, and what does he matter?"

"You have not forgotten that last week Wacke plunged into a wagin' wivah to wescue a dwoonin' boundah—"

"Oh!"

"Some of the fellows," said Arthur Augustus, "seem to think that it wasn't worth while to save Twimble's life. Cardew said that the game was not worth the candle, you know. I wegard that as wathah wotten. Of course, Twimble is an unspeakable boundah. I wouldn't like to say anythin' against the chap, of course, but there is no doubt that he is a feahful, no-class blightah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So it is weally all the more to Wacke's cwedit that he jumped into the watah for him, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Now, Wacke has been wegarded as a funk and a wottah. He was cut by the school for wunnin' away in a swap with Gwimes, the gwocah's boy. We were all down on Wacke. Then he goes and does this vewy plucky thing. It made me feel quite wemorsful, you know. Of course, I don't like Wacke personally. I shouldn't care to touch him with a bargepole. But that is all the more reason why one should give honah where honah is due—what!"

"Hem!"

"So I have thought of this bwright ideah," said Arthur Augustus. "It was wealthy a bwain-wave, you know. Wacke is goin' to be asked to a gwand swepad as gwest of honah. There will be speeches—"

"Oh dear!"

"And plenty of tuck—"

"That's better!"

"Wacke's health will be dwunk in gingah-pop—"

"Old fellow, we'll back you up," said Monty Lowther.

"I'd drink anybody's health in ginger-pop!"

"And I shall utter a few well-chosen words," said Arthur Augustus complacently.

"Only a few, I hope?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Not more than thirty thousand?" suggested Manners.

"Pway don't wot, deah boys! I want to to put your names down for the fund," said Arthur Augustus, opening his notebook.

"One shillin' each, please. It's a shillin' fund, so contributors are limited to a shillin'." But you may make as many contributions as you like. If you care to hand me a pound each—"

"If!" chuckled the Terrible Three.

"I leave it entially to you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus; and he entered three names in his notebook.

"How much shall I put down?"

The Terrible Three looked at one another and smiled.

This "stunt" was exactly like Arthur Augustus. Largely because he did not like Aubrey Racke personally, and could not "stand" him, he felt bound to give Racke all the honour he had earned. For the first time on record, Racke of the Shell had done—or was supposed to have done—a brave and

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generous action. It was just like Arthur Augustus to take the lead in a public recognition of that action.

"Oh, put us down for bobs," said Tom Merry. "We'll come to the spread, and I give Racke all the glory he wants. But about your few well-chosen words, old chap—"

"Yaas."

"Never mind about the well-chosen, but stick to the few!"

said Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther "shelled out" a shilling each, and Arthur Augustus pocketed the coins. He entered the sums against the names of the Terrible Three in the notebook.

"Good!" he remarked. "But as I have already observed, contributions are limited to a shillin' each, but the numbah of contributions is not limited. If you fellows care to shell out ten shillin's—pway don't walk away while I am talkin' to you, you chaps!"

But the chums of the Shell were already walking away, and they turned a deaf ear—or, rather, six deaf ears. They were willing to give honour where honour was due; but their admiration of Racke and their financial resources were both limited. So they departed. And Arthur Augustus devoted his attention to the rest of the Shell, collecting shillings, but, as a matter of fact, gathering up more chaff than cash.

CHAPTER 2.

What Carrow Knew.

"I SAY, Aubrey, old fellow—"

Aubrey Racke walked on without heeding. Trimble of the Fourth frowned, and shouted after him as he went up the staircase:

"Racke! D'ye hear, Racke?"

Racke hurried up the stairs, still deaf to the voice of the charmer. On the landing above, Carrow and Clive and Levison, of the Fourth, were chatting, and Carrow looked round with a smile.

"You're wanted, Racke!" he called out.

"Rats!" grunted Racke.

"Trimble's callin' you."

"Hang Trimble!"

"Hang him!" repeated Carrow, with a lift of his expressive eyebrows. "Hang the fellow whom you plunged into a frozen river to rescue only last week? My dear Racke—"

Aubrey Racke walked on with knitted brows. Baggy Trimble came grunting up the stairs, evidently in pursuit of Racke. Since that celebrated occasion, when Racke had distinguished himself by dragging Baggy from a watery grave, the fat junior had his gallant rescuer, certainly. But gratefully attached to him as his gallant rescuer, Trimble had never been of a specially grateful disposition, certainly. But undoubtedly he never seemed to let Racke alone since that great occasion. And the gallant rescuer's distaste for his society was open and palpable, and Trimble did not mind in the least.

As the fat junior panted across the landing, Ralph Reckness Carrow reached out, and caught him by the shoulder and spun him round. Trimble came round like a fat humming-top.

"Ow!" he ejaculated.

"Still chummin' with Racke—what?" asked Carrow.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Leggo!"

"How much has he lent you since he pulled you out of the river?"

"Only a few pounds—I mean, nothing at all," said Trimble hastily. "Mind your own business, Carrow. Yah!"

Trimble jerked his fat shoulder away, and rolled on up the Shell passage in pursuit of Aubrey Racke. Carrow gave a quiet chuckle, and Levison and Clive regarded him curiously. "You seem jolly interested in Trimble and Racke of late," said Sidney Clive, rather abruptly.

Carrow nodded.

"No end," he said. "It's an interestin' case. Who would have thought that Racke, who was cut by the House for funkin' in a scrap with a village kid, would turn out such a giddy hero?"

"Nobody thought so," said Levison. "But—"

"But he's done a plucky thing," said Clive. "It's not everybody who would take a header into the river, with the ice broken, to pull Trimble out."

Levison's face was very grave.

"I've been going to speak to you about this, Carrow," he said quietly. "Racke's a bit of a blackguard, as we all know. But when a chap does a decent thing, it's up to other chaps to give him credit for it. You seem to be making fun of the whole thing, and—well, it's not like you to run a fellow down. Why don't you chuck it?"

"I've been going to say the same," said Clive, rather gruffly. "The fact is, Carrow, your remarks on the subject are rather rotten. I can't make you out."

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"Ah, well!" sighed Carrow. "Dear men, I wouldn't deny Racke any credit that is his due. He's done a terrifically plucky thing, and he was so modest that he did it without any witnesses—"

"What the thump do you mean? He couldn't arrange for an audience to be near the river last Wednesday, could he?"

"Possibly he could have, but it wouldn't have suited him," said Carrow. "He's so modest. He's one of those jonnies who do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame—what?"

Clive made an impatient movement. The three juniors of Study No. 9 in the Fourth were great chums. But there were times when Ralph Reckness Carrow's cool cynicism had a rather irritating effect upon the sturdy, quiet, straightforward junior from South Africa. They were great friends, but they were never likely to see eye to eye.

"I know how you look at it," resumed Carrow. "In my rotten way, I'm turnin' the whole tragic, heroic story into a joke. And it's really a very interestin' affair—no end amusin'."

"I don't see anything amusing in it."

"Look at it from the beginnin'," said Carrow. "Dear old Racke, with those charmin' manners of his that endear him to all who know him, picks a quarrel with Grimes, the grocer's kid. Aubrey is too lofty to feel anythin' but aristocratic scorn of a grocery kid. He insults Grimes, and Grimes has the awful cheek to request him to put his hands up. Dashed revolutionary, you know—grocery kids askin' public school chaps to put their hands up! No wonder Racke stood on his dignity, an' refused."

"That's ancient history now."

"Then Tom Merry takes a hand in the game," resumed Carrow. "He walks Racke to the battle-ground, with a crowd of fellows to see fair play; and Racke—from aristocratic contempt, or some other reason—bolts like a merry rabbit!"

"Cheese it, Carrow!"

"Then all the fellows cut Racke for a snob and a funk, and Aubrey finds himself in very low water," continued Carrow, unmoved. "Even his own dear pals follow the crowd, an' give him the cold shoulder. All of a sudden, while nearly everybody is on the football-ground for a House match, and can't be present to see his glorious heroism, Racke commits a deed of terrific pluck, and sets himself right in the estimation of the House. Gussy's even raising a fund to stand him a spread of honour. Wasn't it a lucky chance for Racke?"

"Well, and what do you make of all that?" asked Levison.

"Nothin' at all," said Carrow blandly. "I'm only tellin' you an interestin' story. There are one or two triflin' odd incidents in it. For instance, Trimble, the fattest funk that ever funked, goes and risks his precious life on thin ice. Jolly queer of Trimble! He asks Gussy to lend him his skates—just as if he was tryin' to draw public attention to the fact that he was goin' on the ice—asks him before a lot of fellows. Fellows warn him that the ice is dangerous; he goes, all the same. Did Trimble ever strike you as a reckless, dare-devil sort of dashin' blade?"

Levison and Clive grinned; they could not help it. That description certainly did fit Baggy Trimble.

"I was so interested," went on Carrow, "that, while you fellows were exertin' yourselves at footer, I walked after Trimble, and honoured him with my company. I wanted to see his giddy exploits in the danger zone. Strange to relate, Trimble showed a strong repugnance for my society, which you know to be attractive an' fascinatin'. He refused to commit himself to the ice while I was with him."

"Well?"

"So I retired gracefully from the scene," said Carrow. "I left him on the towlin' path, and walked off through the wood, properly subdued."

"Well?" repeated Levison, with a curious look at Carrow.

"I came back to the footer-ground, to watch you chaps live'n the strenuous life," said Carrow. "But that was fifteen minutes later. What do you think I was doin' in the interval?"

"Well, what were you doing?"

"Sittin' on a branch in a tree," said Carrow.

"What on earth for?"

"To watch Trimble doing his daring stunts on the ice."

Clive and Levison stared at Carrow.

"Then you saw the whole affair?" exclaimed Levison, in astonishment.

Carrow nodded.

"Saw it from start to finish," he assented. "Saw Racke come up—saw the whole game, and then walked in reflectin' on the glorious courage of the excellent Aubrey."

"Well," said Clive, "you own up now that you witnessed the rescue, and yet you've been sneering at it, and, in fact, casting doubt on the whole thing. I can't understand it, Carrow, and I don't like it."

"Dear man!" said Carrow affectionately.

But Levison was eying Carrow very keenly and curiously, He was rather quicker in perception than Clive.

"What did you see from the tree-top, Cardew?" he asked quickly.

"The whole thrillin' scene."

"You saw Trimble go through the ice—"

"Hem!"

"You saw Racke plunge in for him?"

"Hum!"

"Well, what did you see, you mystifying ass?" exclaimed Clive impatiently.

Cardew smiled serenely.

"Dear man," he said, "I was sittin' in the tree-top out of sheer curiosity, watchin' the entertainment. I found it interestin' and peculiar. I knew Trimble was up to some-thing, and I wanted to know what. I learned what. Then I travelled. But it's not my biznai to blow the gaff."

"I don't catch on."

"Of course you don't!" said Cardew. "An' I don't mean to enlighten you or anybody else. Satisfyin' my own burnin' curiosity was one thing, but blowin' the gaff is quite another. If I gave my private version of the heroic incident it would annoy Racke; and we all love Racke. It would annoy Trimble; and we all love Trimble. So I'm sayin' nothin' exceptin' to you fellows. Catch on?"

"Do you mean to say that the whole thing was spoof, and that Racke never went in for Trimble at all?" ejaculated Clive blankly.

"I don't mean to say anythin'," yawned Cardew. "I only mean to enjoy the entertainment in my beastly sneerin' way, you know. Hallo, here comes Gussy, with cold business in his eye. If you have bobs, prepare to shed them now!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up, with notebook and pencil.

"Shillin' each, deah boys!" he said.

"In honour of Racke?" asked Cardew.

"Yaas, watah! Spewad of honah, you know, with Wacke as the honahed guest, in recognition of his pluck."

Cardew felt in his pocket.

"On an occasion like this, Gussy," he said gravely, "it's the duty of every fellow who admires pluck to come forward to the extent of a shillin', at least. Here's mine!"

"Thank you, deah boy. Now, Levison, Clive—"

Two heads were shaken. After Cardew's curious description of his proceedings on the previous Wednesday afternoon neither Levison nor Clive felt disposed to join in honouring the heroism of Aubrey Racke.

"Nothing doing, old top!" said Levison.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Same here!" remarked Clive grimly.

"Weally, Clive—"

"My dear chaps," said Cardew, in a tone of mild rebuke. "Never let it be said that Study No. 9 does not honour pluck, especially Racke's brand. Gussy, here are two more bobs. Put me down for the whole study. I'm more than delighted to see you takin' up the matter in this way."

"Bai Jove! You are weally a white man, Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vevy glad to see that you have a wopah appreciation of Wacke's watah wippin' conduct. I have always regarded you as a watah cynical beast, you know, so I am vevy glad of this."

And Arthur Augustus walked away satisfied.

"Cardew—" growled Levison.

"Well, old top?"

"Oh, nothin'!"

"I'm afraid Gussy's right, and that you are a cynical beast, Cardew," said Clive gruffly. "You know the whole thing's spoof, and it amuses you to see all the fellows taken in. You ought to state the facts if you know them."

"How jolly lucky for the hero of the hour that I never do what I ought!" murmured Cardew.

CHAPTER 3.

Paying the Price.

AUBREY RACKE strode into his study, and slammed the door after him. He knew that Trimble of the Fourth was following him, and that knowledge made Racke grit his teeth with rage. Crooke, who was in the study, looked at him, with a grin.

"Anythin' up?" he asked.

"Oh, nothin'!" grunted Racke.

"I hear there's goin' to be a celebration," said Crooke, still smiling. "It's D'Arcy's idea. Spread in the Hobby Club-room, with an enthusiastic crowd present, and speeches, and all that—your noble self as the distinguished guest of honour. Rippin' of D'Arcy, isn't it?"

"I wish the ass would mind his own business!" growled Racke. "I don't want a lot of jaw."

"You're too modest," said Crooke, with a shake of the head. "Why not spread yourself a little while it lasts. It mayn't last long."

Racke gave him a fierce look.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, between his almost clenched teeth.

"Just what I say," said Crooke blandly. "Trimble's no hand at keepin' a secret."

"What secret has he got to keep?"

"You ought to know better than I," said Crooke, with a laugh. "He's been stickin' you for money ever since the gallant rescue. I've seen you givin' him money a dozen times."

"I've often lent the spongin' cad money before, and nothin' has been said."

"You don't look as if you enjoy it when he comes along. My hat! Here he is now!"

Baggy Trimble entered the study.

He did not knock at the door, and he did not wait to be asked in. He rolled in as if he had a right there. Racke eyed him morosely, and Gerald Crooke chuckled.

"I want to speak to you, Racke," said Trimble. "I called to you downstairs, and you didn't answer."

"Go and eat coke!"

"If you're not going to be civil, Racke—"

"Racke's goin' to be civil," smiled Crooke. "Racke's no end attached to you, Trimble, since he pulled you out of a watery grave. He really can't refuse you anythin'. I'll leave you to it. I don't want to know the particulars of the rescue."

And Crooke went grinning from the study. Racke shut the door after him, and then turned on Trimble with a glitter in his eyes.

"You fat scoundrel!" he said in a hissing voice.

"What?"



Aubrey Racke made a jump at Mellish, and grasped him by the collar. "Here, let go!" yelled Mellish in alarm. Instead of letting go, Racke began to punch. He punched with all his force, expending all the rage that had been pent up within him for a long time. Mellish roared and struggled.

"Can't you see that you're ruinin' the whole thing?" hissed Racke. "Groke and Clump and Howle and Mellish have all noticed about your getting money out of me. Do you think they can't guess what it means? How long do you think it will be before the other fellows notice, and guess? Cardew talks as if he knows already!"

Trimble shrugged his fat shoulders. "You shouldn't spoof the fellows, if you're afraid of being found out," he said coolly. "You got up this yarn to set yourself right with the House, because they were all down on you for finking. It's succeeded, hasn't it? D'Arcy's getting up a celebration about it, and he's asked me to stand a shilling." Trimble grinned. "I'm going to, only I'm short of money. You've got no end of tin, Racke. Not that I want any of your money."

"Get out, then!"

"If I'm not welcome in this study, I'm ready to go," said Trimble, with dignity. "If you think I came here to ask you for a loan, Racke, you're mistaken!"

Racke stared at him doubtfully.

"What did you come for, then?" he asked.

"Just to tell you that I've been thinking over the matter, and I can't let it go on," said Trimble. "It's on my conscience, taking in all the fellows like this. I've got a conscience—not like some chaps. I think the time's come to speak out."

Racke drew a hard, deep breath. He knew what this meant. It was not the first time Trimble had held over him the threat of betrayal. Since the great "spoof" had come off Racke had been like a horn of plenty to Baggy Trimble. If the horn should run dry Aubrey knew what he had to expect. The whole story would be told, and Aubrey Racke's last state would be worse than his first.

"That's how it stands," said Trimble calmly. "Keep your money, Racke! I don't care to touch money made out of profits in the war, anyhow!"

"You've touched enough of it," sneered Racke. "I may owe you a little," said the fat junior with dignity. "I shall square that up. Talbot owes me five pounds—"

"Oh, stop that silly rot!"

"Figgins owes me a quid—"

"Chuck it, I tell you, you fat fool!"

"When they settle, I'll settle," said Baggy Trimble, unmoved. "I'm not the fellow to leave a loan unpaid, I hope. That's all, Racke. I'm going to explain the whole affair to Tom Merry. He may be annoyed at being taken in. He may give you a licking. The fellows may rag you. They may all cut you again. That's your look-out! I've got to act according to my conscience. As a fellow with a sense of honour, I'm bound to."

Trimble moved towards the door. Aubrey Racke stood in his way, and did not move.

He knew that he dared not break with Trimble; though how this state of affairs was to end was a perplexing problem. Wealthy as Racke was, he was feeling the drain of Trimble's incessant demands. And he hated parting with money, plentiful as it was in his pockets.

"Do you know what this kind of thing is called, Trimble?" he asked, in low, savage tones. "It's called blackmail!"

"I don't understand you, Racke. I'm not asking you for anything. I'm only stating my intention of acting in an honourable way."

"I'll give you ten shillings!" gasped Racke.

"I'm not asking you to give me anything," said Trimble calmly. "And I should certainly refuse a money gift from you, Racke. I hope I'm not the kind of fellow to take money from anybody. If you care to hand me a pound simply as a loan, it's a different matter. I could accept that!"

Aubrey Racke breathed hard.

Trimble regarded him with a smiling face. The fish was wriggling on the hook, so to speak; but Trimble knew how the wriggle would end. To do Baggy justice, he was far from realising the iniquity of his proceedings. His idea was that he was "on" to a good thing, and he meant to make the most of it. He did not care to think further—and he had the happy faculty of believing, to some extent, at least, in his own humbug. That faculty is not really an uncommon one—it helps many rogues to get through life in a state of satisfaction with themselves.

There was a minute of silence, and then Racke took out his purse—less well-filled than of old. He extracted a pound note and handed it to Trimble.

"Thanks, old top!" said the fat Fourth-Former. "It's understood, of course, that this is simply a loan?"

Racke choked. He could not venture to say all the things he wanted to say to Trimble.

"See you again when the celebration comes off," said Trimble cheerily; and he rolled out of the study, leaving the profiteer's son in a most unenviable frame of mind.

Racke walked to and fro in the study with knitted brows.

His scheme, when he had planned it, had seemed so feasible. He had been prepared to pay Trimble for his peculiar services, and the scheme had been a success. The fellow who had been scorned as a funk was now honoured for his pluck. It was a great change, and a very welcome one. But it left Racke at Trimble's mercy, and the greedy, fat junior had no compunction. How was it to end?

There was a tap at the door, and Percy Mellish came in. Racke stared at him gloomily. Mellish, like Trimble, was a toadying hanger-on of the rich profiteer's son. Generally, he was very civil indeed to Racke. He accepted all his invitations to tea, or to a run in the car, with flattering gratitude. He laughed at all Racke's jokes, and agreed with all his opinions, and shared his friendships and his enmities. Mellish was poor, and had expensive tastes, and the millionaire's son had been very useful to him—in a contemptuous, patronising way which did not make the toady lose his patron. A difference of manner was visible about Mellish now. He shut the study door, and stood looking at Racke.

"Don't bother now," said Racke ungraciously.

"Can you lend me a quid, Racke?"

"No!"

"Sure?" asked Mellish.

Racke felt a sinking at his heart. Mellish was Trimble's study-mate, and certainly he was not in ignorance of Baggy's recent accession to wealth. Probably Mellish had put two and two together. He looked as if he had.

"What do you mean?" snarled Racke. "Of course I'm sure! I'm not going to lend you money!"

"I'm rather hard-up for a quid!"

"That's not my bizney!"

"You've lent Trimble a lot lately."

"What about it?" snapped Racke.

"Anybody would think that Trimble had a claim on you the way you've been shelling out!" said Mellish, eyeing him.

"I don't want to butt in. Your arrangements with Trimble are your own business. If there was any spoof in that affair of the river, I don't want to show it up. But I'd be really obliged if you could lend me a quid, Racke."

Aubrey Racke drew a spasmodic breath. Trimble first—and now Trimble's study-mate! Where was it to end? Aubrey Racke had a savage temper, and it had been sorely tried of late. If he could stand one drain on his resources, he could not stand two. And he realised that if he gave way to this young rascal's first demand, it would be followed by more. Between that consideration, and the rage that boiled up within him, Aubrey Racke acted in a rather drastic way.

He made a jump at Mellish, and grasped him by the collar.

"Here, let go!" yelled Mellish, in alarm.

Instead of letting go, Racke began to punch. He punched with all his force, expending all the rage that had been pent up within him for a long time.

Mellish roared and struggled.

This was certainly not what he had expected when he dropped into Racke's study for a share of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Mellish put up a fight—the best he could. But he was no fighting-man, and Racke was much bigger and stronger. He was knocked right and left, yelling and howling frantically.

"Take that, you rotter!" hissed Racke. "And that—and that—and that!"

"Ow, ow, yow, yow, ow!" roared Mellish. "Stoppit! Oh, my hat! I didn't mean—yow, ow, oooooo! Help! Oh, crumbs!"

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Racke was tired when he gave up. Mellish was more than tired. The Shell fellow jerked open the study door, swung Mellish round, and planted a heavy boot behind him. Mellish went spinning into the passage, and collapsed there on his hands and knees, roaring. Racke slammed the door.

He felt rather better now.

CHAPTER 4.

Arthur Augustus Is Indignant.

"BETTER chuck it, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Much better!" growled Herries.

"Hewies—"

"You're such an ass, Gussy, old man!" remarked Digby. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass with care, and regarded his study-mates across the table in Study No. 6.

The swell of the Fourth was rather busy. There was a stack of shillings before him on the table, and he had a pen in his hand, and was working out calculations on impot-paper. Gussy's noble brain was not strong on arithmetic.

Having counted his shillings with great care, he was now reducing them to pounds—on paper—and having had three tries, and produced three different results, he was beginning for a fourth time, when Blake & Co. drifted in.

"I do not quite undahstand you," said Arthur Augustus. "Are you wewewvin' to the feast of honah?"

"Yes, ass!"

"It is wath lackin' in taste to address a fellow as an ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "May I wequest you to explain why the feast of honah should be chucked, as you wath ineluctantly express it?"

"Well, in the first place, it's all rot!" said Blake. "I do not wegard it as wot, Blake. I wegard it as a vewy good ideah. Honah where honah is due, you know! A public wecognition of Wacke's pluck is due to him, aftah the way he has been tweated!"

"Racke's rats!" grunted Herries. "Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's all vewy well," said Blake. "Nobody objects to a spread—that's quite a good ideah. The money won't be wasted—it will all come back in tuck. But Racke—I think Racke had better be cut out of the show!"

"But it is in honah of Wacke."

"You're such an ass, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as an ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I fail to undahstand you! Aftah what Wacke did—"

"The question is, did he?" said Blake. "Yeas, wathah!" He plunged into the icy wivah for Twimble and saved his life, and cawwied him home to St. Jim's on his back!"

"He brought him in wet," agreed Blake. "Lots of fellows saw that! Nobody seems to have seen anything else."

"Nobody else was pwesent. Neahly ewevybody was on the football gwound at the time. You do not mean to say, Blake, that you doubt the stow?"

Blake shifted uneasily. "Well, I hate to think so," he said. "I believed it all serene at first. Mr. Railton took it all in—complimented Racke on his courage, and all that. But—"

"But—" said Dig, shaking his head. "Weally, you fellows, I'm surprisid at you! Wacke so seldom does anythin' that isn't caddish, that it's up to us to wecognise a decent thing when he does it."

"Yes—if he does!" grunted Herries. "But a lot of fellows are beginning to think that he hasn't."

"Bai Jove!"

"Cardew was making fun of the whole thing, from the start," said Dig. Arthur Augustus gave a sniff.

"Cardew makes fun of ewevythin'," he answered. "There is nothin' sawced to that cynical boundah! He even makes fun of the Head's sermons—which I wegard as bein' the vewy last wot in bad taste. But as a matiah of fact, Cardew has subscribed to the shillin' fund. He put up three shillin's—one for himself, and one each for his study-mates as they wufused to pay up."

"Pulling your leg," said Herries. "Cardew likes to see fellows taken in and made fools of. It amuses him."

"That's so," said Blake. "Besides, where has Trimble been getting all his money from lately?"

"Has he been gettin' any?"

"He's always spending money now."

"I weally don't see how it concerns us, Blake."

"Fathead! He's been seen bagging money from Racke by lots of fellows. Why should Racke lend him money? Trimble never squares."

"I don't see—"

"Of course you don't," said Blake. "You couldn't see anything that wasn't jammed right under your silly boko. Mellish is Trimble's study-mate, and he says out right plain that Trimble is squeezing money out of Racke to keep it secret about spoofing the school."

"But how—"

"Nobody saw the merry rescue," said Blake. "They came in dripping—that's all. Mellish hints pretty plainly that it never took place at all, and that Racke put Trimble up to spin the yarn."

"Gweat Scot!"

"Just like one of Racke's dodges," said Herries, with a nod. "He was cut for funking the scrap with Grimes, and so he thought of this stunt to set himself right. I wonder we didn't guess before."

"Looks jolly fishy, anyhow," said Digby. "Better shove those bobs into the poor-box, Gussy, and let it drop."

"Wats!"

"You see—" said Blake. Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. His expression was scornful and lofty.

"I do not see!" he answered. "I wegard all this as wotten. Wacke has played up for once like a decent chap, and I am certain not goin' to suspect him of spoofin'. I am standin' by Wacke, and I am goin' ahead with the public wecognition. I do not like Wacke; in fact, I wegard him with great wepugnance. But fail play is a jewel."

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!" said Blake. "I do not wegard that as an intelligible remark, Blake. I am sure that you fellows are alone in this wathah wotten opinion—"

Blake grinned. "Ask up and down the passage," he said. "You'll find ewevybody thinks the same. I've spoken to Tom Merry, and he won't say one way or the other, but I can see what he thinks."

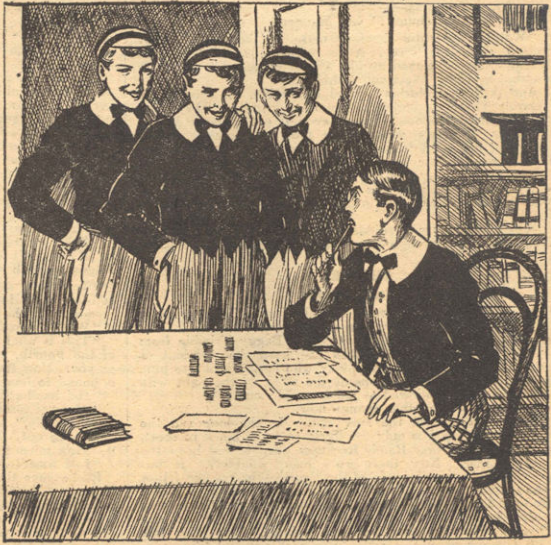
"Wubbish! I will go and see Tom Mewwy about it. Put that money somewah while I am gone, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus, rather perturbed in his noble mind, quitted Study No. 6. He walked along to the Shell passage, and looked in at Study No. 10. The Terrible Three were discussing something; but they ceased as the swell of St. Jim's appeared in the doorway.

All three of the Shell fellows looked uncomfortable. Arthur Augustus was not particularly observant; but he could guess that they had been discussing the affair of Racke.

"Hallo! How's the fund getting on, old scout?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Goin' strowg, deah boy. I have not had any subscriptions to-day; the fellows seem to be fightin' wathah shy of it. But there are already forty-seven shillin's and thirty-four sixpences and a lot of ooppahs. It will be a great spread. I have come heah to speak to you fellows about



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rather busy counting the stack of shillings that lay before him on the table. Having had three tries and produced three different results, he was beginning for a fourth time when Blake & Co. drifted in. "Better chuck it, Gussy!" said Blake. "You're such an ass, old man!" remarked Digby.

Wacke. Do you fellows doubt that he fished Twimble out of the vivah?"

"Silence. I wegard such a doubt as wathah wotten!" said D'Arcy hotly.

"You see, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Mellish has been jawing—"

"Mellish is a backbitin' cad!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"He's all that!" he agreed. "But it's pretty clear that Trimble is getting money out of Racke. Racke isn't the fellow to part with quids for nothing. Why is he doing it?"

"That's his biznai, not ours."

"Certainly; but he must have a reason. It looks—"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"Pway speak out, deah boy. Do you or don't you believe that Wacke pulled Twimble out of the vivah?"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I can't say I don't believe," he answered at last. "That would be too strong. But I've got some serious doubts on the subject."

"Same here," said Manners. "It looks like a trick of Racke's to get out the scrape he was in through funking."

"Just that!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm not going to condemn the chap without proof; but—but it looks too thumpin' fishy!"

"Wubbish!"

"Now look here, Gussy—"

"Wubbish!" repeated the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "I am standin' by Wacke! With a little encouragement, he might turn out quite a decent chap, you know; he has done one good thing, and that shows there is some good in him. Unless it is clearly proved that he did not wish his life to wescne Twimble, I am standin' by him."

"Well, it can't be proved," said Tom. "Neither of them is likely to tell the truth about it. That is, of course, if it was a spoof."

"A chap is innocent till he is proved guilty," said D'Arcy. "That is good law, Tom Mewy."

"Yes, I know, I'm not down on Racke," said the captain of the Shell. "But—but I can't help doubting. I've seen him handing Trimble money, and he looked as if he found it a bitter pill to swallow. Why should he square Trimble against his will?"

"Pewpaws you are mistaken, deah boy. You are wathah obtuse in some mattahs, you know."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"You frabjous chump!" said Manners. "I—"

"Wats! I refuse to allow myself to be influenced by wotten suspicions," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard Wacke as havin' played up like a weal white man, and I am standin' by him. Wats and wubbish!"

And Arthur Augustus quitted Study No. 10, leaving the Terribl's stars staring at one another grimly. They were not suspicious fellows; but they did not possess Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's unsuspecting faith in human nature. They did not want to do even Aubrey Racke an injustice; but the whole affair was beginning to look too fishy.

But Arthur Augustus had no doubt. He was determined not to have any. He was going to stand by Racke, if he was the only fellow left in the School House to stand by him!

Which was very creditable to the Honourable Arthur Augustus' heart, though not, perhaps, to his head!

CHAPTER 5.

Under a Clowd,

AUBREY RACKE came into the junior Common-room, and glanced round him and scowled.

Since the thrilling rescue of Baggy Trimble from the frozen river, Racke had been the recipient of unaccustomed civility from fellows who hardly spoke to him, as a rule. By common consent the affair of the fight with Grimes had been allowed to fall into oblivion.

But there was another change now.

Truth will out, in the long run. In the long run the cleverest falsehood is only too likely to come home to roost, as it were. At first Ralph Reckness Cardew had been the only doubter. Now there were many doubters. It was growing clear that Trimble of the Fourth—the rescued fellow—had some hold on Racke, which he was putting to profit. Mellish, Trimble's study-mate, had stated his opinion openly—after being kicked out of Racke's study. Levison and Olive had hardly concealed their opinion, after their talk with Cardew about his adventures that eventful afternoon. Taking one consideration with another, as the song says, the whole thing was looking fishy in the eyes of the School House juniors.

Racke could read the thoughts of the juniors. Nobody spoke to him as he came in; some averted their eyes, some turned their backs. Two or three smiled sarcastically.

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Mellish was there, and he grinned evilly. Racke was paying for the thrashing he had given the cad of the Fourth; though even without Mellish's intervention the same state of affairs would probably have come about.

Arthur Augustus was sitting at the chess-table with Manners. Manners had just mated him in six moves from the start, and Arthur Augustus was scanning the board in great puzzlement. It puzzled Arthur Augustus to be mated by anybody. It often happened; but Gussy regarded these happenings as a series of extraordinary flukes. Interested in that puzzle, Arthur Augustus did not observe Racke's entry for the moment. A sort of change in the atmosphere, as it were, made the swell of St. Jim's look up, and he saw Racke, and noted his reception.

The colour flushed into Gussy's cheeks. He rose to his feet, and called across to the outcast of the Shell.

"Wacke, deah boy!"

Racke looked at him sourly.

"Would you care to play a game of chess, old fellow?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had never called Racke "old fellow" before. It was a sort of gage of defiance to the fellows generally.

Racke came across. Crooke of the Shell, quick to take his tone from his surroundings, had looked another way to avoid Racke's eyes.

D'Arcy's cheery call came as a helping hand to a drowning man. It was very welcome to Aubrey Racke.

Manners vacated his seat at the chess-table, and Racke dropped into it. Several fellows who had been watching the chess strolled farther away. They did not want to be near Racke.

"White or black, old scout?" asked D'Arcy.

"Anything you like," muttered Racke.

His eyes were on the board, and his ears were burning. "White, then," said Arthur Augustus, beginning to set out the pines and pawns with resolute geniality.

Arthur Augustus did not like Racke. In ordinary circumstances nothing would have induced him to sit down to a game of chess with the black sheep of the Shell. But he was standing by Racke now. He was backing up Racke, and he was going to see Racke through. He believed in the fellow, and there was no limit to Gussy's loyalty.

Baggy Trimble came into the Common-room while the chess was in progress, and blinked round inquiringly.

"Looking for Racke?" called out Wilkins, with a laugh, and there was a laugh from several other fellows.

"Yes, as a matter of fact I am," said Trimble. "Is he here?"

"Short of cash again?" asked Grundy of the Shell, with a snort.

Trimble did not answer that question. He spotted Racke at the chess-table, and crossed over to him. Racke's face became crimson. Trimble had no tact. A request for money now, which Racke dared not refuse, would give the finishing touch to the affair. Every eye in the Common-room was turned on Trimble.

It was tactless of Baggy; but as a matter of fact he rather preferred to tackle Racke in public. In private, Racke's savage temper was likely to get the better of him, and he was liable to break out and give the fat junior the kicking he deserved.

"Hallo! Busy, old fellow?" said Trimble genially.

"Yes," muttered Racke.

"Pway don't interwupt the game, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, with some severity.

"Trimble's short of cash," remarked Monty Lowther satirically. "He wants Racke to help him out. Racke's so generous that he won't refuse!"

"Well, Lowther—"

"This is what comes of savin' a chap's life," said Cardew of the Fourth, with great gravity. "It gives him a claim on you. Now Racke's saved his life, Trimble feels that Racke is bound to lend him money. Don't you, Baggy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it ten bob!" Trimble whispered in Racke's ear.

"Presently," whispered back the hapless Shell fellow.

"Speak out, Baggy!" called out Blake. "Let's all hear it. How much are you asking Racke for?"

"I—I wasn't—"

Racke gave the fat junior a bitter look. Even the obtuse Trimble understood that he was putting his foot in it rather seriously. He blinked round at the grinning juniors.

"Look here," exclaimed Grundy of the Shell. "Let's have this. If Racke has been spoofing us, we want to know. Let's make that fat bouncer tell us the truth."

"He couldn't," said Monty Lowther. "Truth and Trimble are strangers. They've never been introduced!"

George Alfred Grundy strode forward and grasped Baggy Trimble by the shoulder, and jerked him into the middle of the room.

"Now, what were you whispering to Racke about?" he demanded.

"I—I wasn't!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Why, we all saw you!" roared Grundy.
 "I—I mean, I—I was asking him—"
 "Well, what were you asking him?"
 "To—to lend me"—Trimble gasped—"to—to lend me his Latin dictionary. I—I've lost mine."
 "So you whisper to a chap when you're asking him to lend you a Latin dictionary?"
 "Eh? Yes, exactly!" gasped Trimble.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "What has Racke been giving you money for?"
 "He—he hasn't!"
 "Did you really fall into the river last week?" continued Grundy.
 "Did Racke really pull you out?"
 "Of—of course!"
 "Weally, Gwunday!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round from the chess-table. But George Alfred did not heed him.

"Wasn't it all a spoof, got up between you and Racke?" demanded Grundy.
 "Certainly not!"
 "Haven't you been sticking him for money ever since to keep it dark?"
 "Nunno!"
 "Then why has he been shelling out?"
 Aubrey Racke's face was almost livid. He kept his eyes on the chess-board. Trimble blinked at him helplessly, and blinked at Grundy, and blinked at the grinning crowd of juniors.

"He—he hasn't!" stammered Trimble.
 "We know he has!" said Manners.
 "He's lent me some," said Trimble. "I suppose Racke can lend me money if he likes? He knows I always square."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You've had pounds out of him," said Mellish. "I know what it's for!"
 "Oh, you go and eat coke!" said Trimble. "Like your cheek to think you could get money out of him too! I—I mean—"

"Hallo! Is that the game?" chuckled Monty Lowther.
 "Mellish after the loaves and fishes, too!"
 "Racke kicked him out," said Trimble. "Serve him right, too!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Mellish was crimson.

"I never—" he began.
 "Birds of a feather ain't they?" said Monty Lowther. "Now, make a big effort, Baggy, and tell us the truth. You never were in the river at all, were you?"

"Certainly! I—I went on the ice, you know, with—with my usual reckless daring, you know—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Racke plunged in for me," continued Trimble. "Brought me out at the risk of his life. Didn't you, Racke?"
 Racke did not answer. His very lips were white, and he did not look up.

"Speak up, Racke!" chortled Blake. "Trimble's calling you as a witness. You ought to know whether you did these heroic stunts or not."

"I was in a fainting condition," went on Baggy. "Racke carried me home on his back. Didn't you, Racke?"
 "Fairly hefty chap to do that!" commented Blake. "Is it one or two tons that you weigh, Trimble?"
 "Yah!"

"It's all true and above-board," said Trimble. "If you fellows think Racke got me to spin the yarn, you're mistaken. He never said it would put him right with the fellows after his finking Grimes—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was never discussed between us at all," pursued Baggy Trimble fatuously. "Not a word! As for arranging for it to happen while all the fellows were on the football ground, it never even occurred to us. Did it, Racke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.
 "Go it, Baggy!" said Monty Lowther admiringly. "We're getting nearer and nearer. You were both jolly wet when you came in. I suppose you splashed one another—what?"
 "Did you?" roared Grundy.

Trimble jumped.
 "Yes—no—not at all," he stammered. "I—I got wet in the river, of course. Racke got wet plunging in after me. We never even thought of getting water in our caps and splashing—"

Trimble was interrupted by a roar of laughter. Baggy's peculiar way of keeping a secret had pretty effectually let the cat out of the bag now. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking startled.

"It's fairly clear now," said Tom Merry. "You're a spoofing little fat beast, Trimble. And as for Racke—"
 "There ain't a word for Racke!" said Herries.

Aubrey Racke rose to his feet. Grundy made a movement towards him, but stopped. The look on Racke's face dis-

armed even Grundy. In silence, Aubrey Racke walked out of the Common-room, leaving the chess unfinished, and Arthur Augustus staring blankly at the board. Trimble blinked round after him. He dodged out of the Common-room and followed Racke. This was an opportunity for getting his little loan; and that was all that the fat and fatuous Baggy was thinking about.

CHAPTER 6.

Arthur Augustus Is Not Convinced.

RACKE threw himself into a chair in his study, his face pale, and beads of perspiration on his brow. His house of cards had been knocked to pieces; he realised that clearly now. He sat plunged in gloomy, miserable thought. But he was not left alone long with his thoughts. Baggy Trimble's fat face looked in at the door cheerfully.

He nodded to Racke, who fixed a grim stare upon him.
 "The fellows seem to be getting suspicious somehow, don't they, Racke?" said Trimble. "Rather low to be suspicious, ain't it? But depend on me to see you through, old top. They won't get much change out of me."

Racke did not answer.
 "Now, about that ten bob—" hinted Trimble.
 The shell fellow burst into a hard laugh. It was rather amusing that Trimble should think that he was still worth bribing, after the scene in the Common-room.

"I could do with a pound," continued Trimble. "But if you're short of money, Racke, I'll make it ten bob. There!"
 Racke rose to his feet.

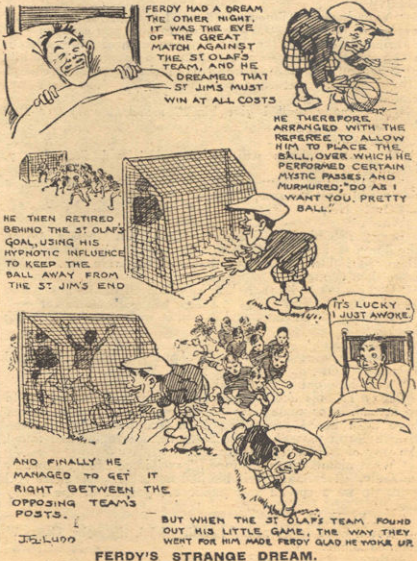
In this disastrous hour there was one consolation left—he had nothing more to fear from Trimble, and he could afford to "take it out" of that unscrupulous youth. He picked up a cricket-stump, and strode towards Trimble, who dodged out of the doorway in alarm.

"Yaroooh! Keep off!" roared Trimble. "I'll tell all the fellows! I'll give you away! I'll— Yoooooooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!
 Baggy Trimble fled for his life. Racke pursued him along the passage, lashing with the stump.
 The whacks of the cricket-stump rang loudly, and more loudly still rang the fiendish yells of Baggy Trimble.

It did not take Trimble long to reach the staircase, though it seemed quite a long time to him. He went down the stairs three at a time, with great activity, howling and yelling.

Racke stopped at the landing, and turned back. He tramped back into his study, hurried the stump into a corner,



and threw himself into the chair again. He was done with Baggy Trimble, at all events.

Trimble, breathless, and boiling with rage, did not stop till he was in the Common-room. Trimble, too, realised that it was over now, and that the horn of plenty had, at last, run dry. He rolled into the Common-room, gasping and spluttering with wrath.

"Ow, ow, ow!" he gasped. "The beast! I—I say, Tom Merry, listen to me, you beast! I say, Racke's taken you fellows in! Ow! He's just been pitching into me because—because I told him I was going to—own up! Ow, ow! Wow!"

"You fat spoofer!" said Tom. "You've owned up already!"

"Let him run on!" grinned Lowther. "Go it, Baggy!"

"It was all spoof!" gasped Trimble. "I—I never wanted to—go in for it at all, you know. It wasn't because Racke offered me two pounds. It—it was really a lark, you know."

"You didn't fall through the ice?" grinned Blake.

"No!" retorted Trimble.

"And Racke didn't pull you out?"

"No!"

"It was all lies from beginning to end—what?" roared Grundy.

"It was a—a—a lark, you know."

"And you've been getting money out of Racke, under threats!" said Tom Merry contemptuously.

"He may have made me a few loans," said Trimble. "That had nothing to do with it, of course."

"Oh cheese it!"

"Dear old Trimble!" said Monty Lowther. "It will be a sad day when the policemen come to take him away. It's bound to happen sooner or later. Why did they send him to St. Jim's, when there's a room vacant in a reformatory?"

"Look here, you know—"

"We've got the truth at last," said Grundy, with a snort.

"Racke spoofed us all, and Trimble has been blackmailing him. A precious pair! Of the two, I think Trimble's rather worse than Racke. We ought to report this to the House-

master."

"Oh, I say!" gasped Trimble, in utter dismay.

"Let's take him to Mr. Railton!" grinned Blake.

"Railton would be no end interested, after his compliments to Racke on his giddy heroism."

"Ow!"

"We won't do that," said Tom Merry. "But we'll give the fat rotter a lesson. Anybody got a stump?"

"I'll get one!" said Grundy, with alacrity.

"I—I say, what are you going to do?" gasped Trimble.

"I—I've owned up, haven't I—like a really honourable chap?"

"Your brand of honour isn't good enough for St. Jim's," explained Lowther. "We're going to give you a lesson—"

Trimble backed to the door, but two or three pairs of hands stopped him. Manners and Wilkins and Kangaroo lifted him and flapped him face downward on the big table. George Alfred Grundy returned with the stump. The door was closed.

"How many shall I give him?" asked Grundy. "Two hundred?"

"Yaroooooh!"

"I think a dozen will be enough," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Ask Trimble!" suggested Lowther. "Do you think a dozen will meet the case, Baggy?"

"Ow! Help!"

Whack!

Baggy Trimble roared and wriggled. But Grundy laid on the dozen with a powerful arm. By the time he had finished, Baggy Trimble was feeling that a dozen were considerably more than enough.

"Ow, ow, ow!" he roared, as he rolled off the table. "You awful rotters! You-ow-ow! I'll go to the Housemaster—"

"Do!" said Grundy. "I'll come with you, and bring Racke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of—of course, I won't sneak about you fellows!" gasped Trimble. "Ow, ow! Wow! Wow! Wow!"

"Kick him out!" said Blake.

Baggy Trimble dodged out of the room without waiting to be kicked. For some time afterwards dismal groans might have been heard proceeding from Trimble's study in the Fourth Form passage. Once more the fat junior had found the way of the transgressor hard.

"What about the giddy fund?" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly, after Baggy Trimble had departed. "Is there still going to be a spread and public recognition of the merry herc?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll have to go round handing back the bobs, Gussy!" grinned Blake.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

His noble countenance was set.

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"Every fellow who equuquahs the return of his bob can call in at Studay No. 6 for it," he said. "It appears that I am the only friend Wacke has left."

"What?"

"Which?"

"Gussy, you ass!" exclaimed Jack Blake blankly. "You've heard it all—you know that it was all spoof—"

"I know nothin' of the sort, Blake," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I do not take the slightest notice of Twimble's statements. It would be vevy unfaith to condemn Wacke on Twimble's evidence."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You don't mean to say that you're still standin' by Racke now we all know the facts?" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you dummy—"

"I refuse to be called a dummay, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I certainly refuse to turn my back on Wacke because that fat wotthah has coughed up a fresh cwop of lies!"

"He was tellin' the truth for once," said Cardew.

"Wats!"

"Gussy, you ass—" said Tom Merry.

"Wubbish!"

"Look here, Cardew," broke in Levison. "You can speak out now. You know the facts!"

Cardew laughed.

"I wasn't goin' to blow the gaff," he said. "But now Twimble's owned up, I may as well weigh in. I saw the whole thing—"

"You saw it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"With my own merry blue eyes," smiled Cardew. "Racke and Trimble splashed each other with water from their caps—neither had the nerve to step into the river. I saw the whole jiddy entertainment from a tree-top."

"Bai Jove!"

"And why didn't you speak out?" exclaimed Tom Merry hotly.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"It wasn't my biznai to blow the gaff," he said. "Besides, it was rather amusin' to see dear old Aubrey in the role of giddy herc. I've been gettin' a lot of entertainment out of his stunt."

"You cheeky ass—" growled Grundy.

"You ought to have spoken out!" said Tom.

Cardew bowed.

"I stand corrected," he said. "What our dear Uncle Thomas says, goes! Anyhow, I'm speakin' out now, to save Gussy from makin' a fool of himself. I've given you the straight goods, Gussy."

"You hear, Gussy?" snapped Blake.

"I have heard Cardew's ridiculous statement, Blake," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Cardew.

"I do not believe a single word of it," continued Arthur Augustus.

"We all know Cardew's wotten jokes. I am vevy sorry, Cardew, to see you descend to pweawication for the sake of a wotten joke!"

"Great gad!" said Cardew.

"Gussy, you ass—" bawled Blake.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus crossed to the door.

"Where are you going, fathead?" shouted Herries.

"I am goin' to Wacke!"

"What for?" shrieked Blake.

"To assnah him that I have faith in him, dear boy, and that I am standin' by him!" said Arthur Augustus calmly.

And the swell of St. Jim's walked out of the Common-room, with his noble nose high in the air; and he left the whole room gasping.

CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Sees It All.

IT was commonly said in the Lower School at St. Jim's that when the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had an idea in his noble head, wild horses would not have dragged it out. It was not often, perhaps, that he had an idea there. But when one was there, it was a fixture.

Arthur Augustus rather prided himself upon possessing the firmness of a rock. His study-mates were sometimes exasperated by his possession of what they termed the obstinacy of a mule.

On the present occasion, Arthur Augustus seemed to be combining the firmness of a rock with the obstinacy of a mule.

It was not a case for argument. Arthur Augustus, from a lofty and generous sense of duty, had taken Racke of the Shell under his noble wing. He did not like Racke personally; but that only made him all the more determined to see that Racke had justice. For once, a fellow who was a

great deal of a rotter and a great deal of a blackguard, had played up in a manly way—so Arthur Augustus believed. It wasn't fair play that his old reputation should rise up and smite him, as it were—that he should be doubted and condemned, simply because he was Aubrey Racke. Trimble's word would not have been taken against anybody else. Arthur Augustus was resolved not to take it against Racke.

So the swell of St. Jim's proceeded to the Shell passage, to call on the outcast, and assure him that he had at least one supporter left, in the midst of a crowd of doubting Thomases.

He tapped politely at Racke's door, and opened it. If Gussy had needed anything to spur him on in the line he had taken, the sight of Aubrey Racke at that moment would have done it.

Racke was sprawled in his chair, his arms hanging listlessly, his whole attitude one of utter despondency.

Never had the cad of the Shell felt so utterly "down" in all his shady career.

Matters had been bad enough for him before he had planned that remarkable stunt with Trimble. Now they were worse. To the scorn and contempt he had had to endure before, were added ridicule and derision. The funk had been despised—the pretended hero was laughed at as well. The miserable trick, seen through now by all the juniors in the House, or nearly all, covered Racke with shame as with a garment.

He glanced up dully as D'Arcy entered. His eyes glowed with spite and malice; he only thought, at that moment, that a fellow had come to mock him, to triumph over him in his degradation. Racke was not likely to understand the thoughts and feelings of a fellow like D'Arcy of the Fourth.

But he did not speak; he was too dispirited to speak.

Gussy came gracefully into the study.

"Buck up, dear boy!" was his first remark.

Racke started.

"There's a silvah linin' to every cloud, you know, old fellow," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

Racke could only stare. This was not in the least what he had expected.

Arthur Augustus took a seat on the corner of the table. His famous eyeglass was turned on Racke's pale, tormented face.

"I trust I need not assuage you, Wacke," continued the swell of St. Jim's, "that I do not believe a word of Trimble's statement."

"You—you don't believe him?" mumbled Racke, hardly able to believe his ears. He could only stare. That Trimble had, for once, been confessing the truth, was obvious to every fellow but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And D'Arcy did not believe him! Evidently the powerful brain of Gussy had its own mysterious processes.

"Not a word!" said D'Arcy. "He has just spun us a yarn, and I don't believe a word of it! I am suah that you did not act in the mean and wotten way that he described."

"Oh!"

"Twimble has been gettin' money out of you?"

Racke nodded.

"The awful wottah! But you should not have given him anythin'" said D'Arcy. "Of course, I see it all!"

"You—you see it all?" stammered Racke.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, nodding sagely. "It's a shockin' thing, Wacke!"

Racke continued to stare. If Gussy saw it all, why was he there, evidently friendly and sympathetic? Gussy proceeded to explain.

"The othah fellows don't seem to catch on, you know," he said. "I feah that they are wathah down on you, Wacke. They don't see it all as I do. You see, your reputation is wathah against you, if you don't mind my mentionin' it. You have done wathah a lot of wotten things, Wacke, since you have been at the school. But that is all the more reason why you should have justice when you play up like a weal white man—what! I see it all! You wesued Twimble, and that fat wottah considahed that he had a claim on you—the wottah would bowwow money of a German Hun, if he could—I see it all! It is because you wouldn't let him stick you for any more money that he has told this yarn."

"Oh!" gasped Racke.

"You see," said Arthur Augustus, "on Twimble's own showin', he has acted like a howwid beast. If he has acted like a wotten beast in one way, why not in another? I wgard his ingwatitude and wascaloty with howwah. He has spun this wotten yarn about a fellow who saved his life. You did save his life, didn't you, Wacke?"

Racke's tongue clove to his mouth. Somehow or other, a lie seemed to come harder just then. D'Arcy's simple, loyal faith touched some chord in Racke's hard heart. Let alone, abandoned, despised, deserted even by his own shady chums, Racke was fairly down in the depths—and the kind-hearted swell of St. Jim's was, just then, something like a ray of sunshine in deep darkness to the wretched fellow. Racke was not much given to generous emotion, but at that moment there was something very like gratitude in his breast, and his eyes were moist.

He felt a strong desire to tell D'Arcy the truth. He checked that desire, but he could not, somehow, bring himself to utter a direct lie. In answer to D'Arcy's question he only nodded.

But that nod was enough for Arthur Augustus. He ran on cheerily:

"Believe me, dear boy, I do not doubt you for a moment. I am only howwidat at Twimble's wotten wascaloty. I trust that the fellows will come wotton and do you justice. Anyhow, you have one fwiend, Wacke, if my fwiendship is any use."

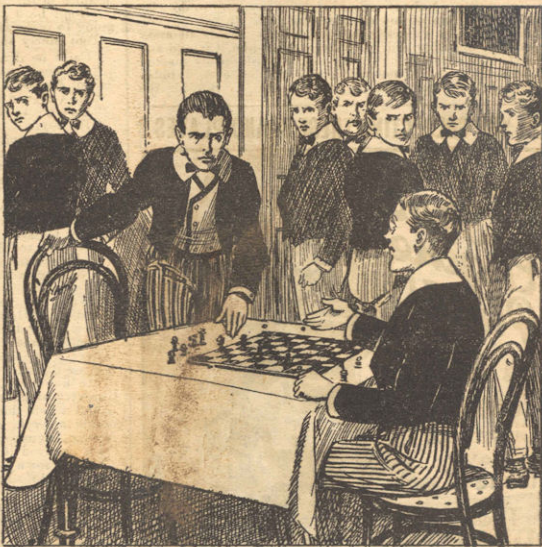
Racke choked.

"You're a good chap, D'Arcy!" he gasped at last.

"Not at all, dear boy. I want to see fair play, and you are goin' to have justice," said D'Arcy. "Pwavy don't blame the othah fellows for not seein' it all as clearly as I do. I have wathah a gift of tact and judgment, you know, and those youngstahs are wathah thoughtless."

Racke smiled faintly.

His look was almost affectionate. Racke had never had what could be called a friend. He was not a nature for friendship. But it came into his mind then, what a difference a friend like Arthur Augustus would have made to him. He would have been a different kind of fellow—and Racke, just then, wished from the bottom of his heart that he had been a different kind of fellow. No doubt it was disgrace and misery that had brought repentance, but his repentance was sincere enough for the time.



"Would you care to play a game of chess, Racke?" asked Arthur Augustus. Racke came across and dropped into the seat Manners had vacated. Several fellows who had been watching the chess strolled away. They did not want to be near Racke. "White or black, old scout?" asked D'Arcy. "Anything you like," muttered Racke.

"You're a good chap," he repeated. "But I—I—" He broke off miserably.

"Back up, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "The fellows will come round. Anyhow, I'm stickin' to you. Wely on that."

And with a cheery nod Arthur Augustus quitted the study. Racke sat still for a long time after he was gone. He was looking, and feeling, better now. Crooke did not come to the study. He did his prep that evening elsewhere. While Racke was "down," his pal wanted to have as little to do with him as possible. But Racke did not miss him. He did not want Crooke. He was thinking, with a softened heart, of Gussy's generous faith; thinking of the difference it would make to him if he could keep Gussy's friendship; and thinking, too, that he would try to be more worthy of it. Which was a very unaccustomed frame of mind for Aubrey Racke of the Shell.

When the juniors went up to their dormitories that night, Arthur Augustus made it a point to call out in the corridor: "Good-night, Wacke, old chap!" "Good-night, D'Arcy!" called back Racke. And he gave Tom Merry & Co. a glance of defiance as he went into the Shell dormitory.

In the Fourth Form dormitory Blake and Herries and Digby glared at their noble chum.

"You ass!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Why can't you cut that rotter, like the rest?" demanded Herries.

"Weally, Howvies—"

"Fathful!" remarked Digby.

"Refuse to weryly to a wude and diswepathful wemark, Digby," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Are you standing by Racke?" hooted Blake.

"Yaas, watah!"

"We won't let you!" bawled Herries.

"Wats!"

And with that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER 8.

Standing By Racke.

THE next day it was clear to Aubrey Racke that he was sent to Coventry. Nothing had been said on the subject. The juniors seemed to agree upon it tacitly. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with Racke. The cup of his offences was full. In the circumstances, he fully expected that his friends would fall away from him, and they did. Crooke avoided him, Clampo and Chowie kept carefully out of his way, Mellish openly sneered at him; Trimble did not count, anyway, but even Trimble bestowed upon him looks of lofty contempt. But for the

loyalty of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the lot of Aubrey Racke would have been indeed a hard one. But the more the school was down on Aubrey, the more determined was Arthur Augustus to stand by him, and he stood by him nobly.

To all expostulations and remonstrances on the subject, Arthur Augustus had one emphatic reply—"Wats!"

After morning lessons he joined Racke in the corridor and walked out into the quad with him. Blake & Co. watched him with great exasperation.

"Let's go and bump him!" suggested Herries.

"That would only make the silly ass more obstinate," said Blake. "He's not the going to pal with Racke. We'll stop him somehow."

Stopping Arthur Augustus was not, however, such an easy matter. Having set his hand to the plough, as it were, Gussy did not look back. He was going to stand by Racke, against all the school if need were. At first he had not exactly intended to pal with Racke, but he found that that was what came of it. He bestowed his company upon the ostracised junior, and it was such a relief to Racke to have somebody to speak to, that he quite forgot to be bored by Gussy's lofty ideas and high-flown notions, as he regarded them. In the absence of his former friends, Aubrey had to give up banker and nap in the study, and in the presence of his new friend he did not care to smoke cigarettes as usual, so there was a general improvement in Racke's manners and customs. Arthur Augustus was doing him good, though how long it would last was another matter.

But there was no doubt that D'Arcy's loyal kindness had a good effect upon the black sheep of the Shell, and that he was a better fellow for it. For some days the two were constantly together out of the Form-rooms, D'Arcy's own friends growing more and more exasperated.

There were hot arguments in Study No. 6; and as Arthur Augustus refused to hear anything against Racke, and as Blake & Co. did not measure their words on that topic, the arguments grew hotter and hotter.

The result was that Gussy came much less into No. 6, and that he saw much more of Racke than of his own chums.

Blake & Co. consulted with the Terrible Three on the subject, but the chums of the Shell could not help.

"Give him his head," said Monty Lowther. "There's nothing in it. But give it him."

"Don't be a funny ass!" growled Blake. "How are we going to make Gussy see sense, that's the question."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he answered.

"He won't see what's plain to every other fellow in the School House!" growled Herries.

"He's a good little ass!" said Tom, laughing.

"He's got to chuck Racke!"

"He won't!" said Manners. "He won't chuck him till he finds him out. And Racke will take jolly good care that he doesn't do that. You see, Gussy's powerful intellect soars far above such a commonplace thing as evidence."

"The rotter may be leading him into mischief," said Blake. "You know how soft Gussy is. A fellow like Racke might easily lead him into something. He's bound to have a bad effect on anybody he associates with. It's bad for Gussy."

"Or good for Racke!" suggested Tom.

Blake snorted.

"Nothing will do Racke any good. He's past praying for."

"Well, I'm not so sure," said the captain of the Shell seriously. "He's out with his shady pals, and chumming with a really decent chap. It may do Racke a lot of good."

Another sniff from Blake. That youth evidently did not believe that there was much good to be discovered in Aubrey Racke.

"If he doesn't chuck it we'll jolly well send him to Coventry along with Racke!" he declared.

And when the exasperating state of affairs had lasted nearly a week, Study No. 6 delivered that ultimatum to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He received it calmly.

"I am sorry, dear boys," he remarked. "I am bound in honour to stand by Wacke. How you youngsters will get on without me I cannot imagine. If you get into scwapes, who is goin' to get you out?"

"You silly ass!" hooted Blake.

"That is not an answah, Blake."

"Are you going to chuck up Racke?" bawled Herries.

"Certainly not."

"Then this study will chuck you."

"Vewy well, dear boys. I shall not condescend to argue the point," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I am vewy sorry for you, but you have only yourselves to thank."

(Continued on page 18.)

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THE ISLAND OF PLEASURE

A Magnificent Story of Adventure and Daring on an Uninhabited Island.

READ THIS FIRST.

Donald Gordon and his brother Val leave St. Christopher's School, in company with Tommy Binks and Septimus Todd, a junior member, commonly known as "Scat," to join their uncle, who is on a big plantation in the Solomon Islands.

Captain Targe, in charge of the schooner Wittywake, learns of the party's quest. He plans to abandon the boat and leave them to their fate, with the intention of overthrowing the wealthy plantation owner and obtaining hold of his land. Taga, the black cabin-boy, hears of this, and warns the party. Unknown to the villainous captain, he places the boys in one of the ship's boats, and they are about to make their escape when Anna, the captain's daughter, taking the opportunity of getting away from the harsh treatment of her father, joins them.

Not long after the party has started on their perilous journey a severe storm breaks out. The party are thrown from their boat, but, luckily, get washed up on the "Island of Pleasure."

Cast on the island, they at once set about preparing their new home, and refresh themselves with some fruit which they find growing on the island.

Scat and Tommy are on a fruit-gathering expedition, when they are startled by a strange sound—the swishing of sand and a faint creaking noise, as though someone was rubbing thin strips of metal together.

"What is it?" whispered Tommy.

(Now read on.)

Turtle Bay.

SCAT was only half-awake. At Tommy's whisper he moved slightly, and the fat youngster turned on him.

"Shut up, you fool!" he warned. "There's someone down there on the beach. Listen!"

There was a long moment's silence, then quite distinctly came the curious sound that Tommy had heard—a metallic, scraping sound, followed by the swishing of sand.

The moon had risen above the trees now, and its silver light was pouring down on the stretch of white beach.

"They could hear the murmur of the surf breaking on the reef that guarded the bay, a dull, steady monotone; and from behind them the trees whispered under the fret of the gentle night wind."

"I don't think it is very dangerous, Tommy," said Scat, who had suddenly developed an intense sleepiness.

"Don't you, by James?" Tommy returned. "Well, if you can lie here and listen to it, I can't! Get up!"

He dragged the unwilling Scat to his feet, and they began to move out from the shadow of the trees.

The beach was about a quarter of a mile wide in that part, and the sea seemed a long distance away.

Tommy was moving ahead of his companion, and as he emerged into the full moonlight he came to a halt.

"Look, Scat—look!"

Scat hurried to his side, and peered in the direction of Tommy's outstretched arm; but Scat was rather short-sighted, and he could see nothing in front of him.

"Look at what?"

"Rocks! Rocks on the move—dozens of them! This island is haunted!"

A harder stare down towards the sea made Scat aware of the fact that in front of him were nine or ten hummocky rocks, just showing above the smooth sand.

"Great Scott, one of them is bumping itself!" Tommy whispered again. "See—just on the left!"

They had not noticed the nearest bump until now. It was elevated in the sand, and presented a rounded, sloping edge, which, as Tommy and Scat looked at it, moved and sank deeper into the sand; then, a moment later the clacking sound began again, and a shower of sand shot out from where the black object was buried.

"Goodness!" Scat whispered excitedly. "I've got it! They are three turtles!"

"Turtles! Jimmy, I believe you're right! Of course they are!"

Tommy sprang down the sand, followed by Scat, and came to a halt some three or four yards away from where the great turtle was digging steadily into the sand. There were other turtles landing on the beach, and the clacking sound that Tommy had heard was the rasping of their hard flappers under their hummock-like shapes as they came tumbling on.

"I—I know what's happening. That beggar that you see is a female turtle, and she's going to lay eggs."

"Turtle eggs," said Tommy. "Why, I've heard they're top-hole! By James, we're in luck, Scat! Let's get some!"

He was about to make a pounce on the turtle, when Scat grabbed him by the arm.

"Steady on, Tommy!" he said. "I know that will alarm the creature, they bolt at once. Just you wait a bit. I think I can manage this. Go slow!"

Scat dropped on his hands and knees, and began to crawl towards the half-buried creature. He was careful to keep behind it, and the reptile betrayed no fear at his presence.

When Scat reached the hollow in the sand he lay flat on his face, then turned and signalled to Tommy.

"Get ready, old chap!" the tutor whispered, in a tense, eager voice.

Tommy crept to Scat's side, and watched the latter lean forward and cautiously insert his hand into the hollow. In another moment it was withdrawn, and a round egg placed in Tommy's hands.

"There are dozens of them already!" Scat breathed excitedly.

Then began what was surely the swiftest egg collecting that they ever took part in.

It is a well-known fact that the female turtle lays only thirty or forty eggs at a single sitting, and that process is carried out at amazing speed.

Scat, flat on his stomach on the warm sand, scooped out egg after egg, for Tommy to receive and place behind him in a neat heap.

"Talk about robbing a hen-house!" Tommy breathed. "Why, this is egg-gathering made easy! Stick it, old bird! We'll give those fellows something to think about when we get back to the camp!"

In his excitement he moved slightly, and his cramped position brought about disaster. He began to sway, tried to steady himself, then fell forward on the back of the half-buried reptile.

Tommy was a heavy-weight, and his abrupt landing on that creature's back brought the egg-gathering operations to a close. There was a whooping sound, then the snapper-like head of the turtle shot out, and the flappers began to wave.

"Silly ass!" said Scat. "You've disturbed her now—she's off!"

There was a heave and a violent lifting of the sand, as it rolled off the hump-like back, and a moment later Scat heard a yell of dismay.

"Hang it, I've fallen on the eggs and bust them!"

The turtle was now well out of the sand, and Scat rose to his feet.

"Clumsy fool!" he said indignantly. "You have spoilt the whole affair!"

By "a jaw" by Jove!" came Tommy's angry response. "I'll see about that! She made me bust her eggs, but I'll have her herself! Stand clear!"

The fat figure rose, and a bound saw Tommy pass Scat.

The unfortunate ending to the egg-collecting had aroused Tommy's ire, and he made a rash and threw himself on the turtle.

By "a jaw" by Jove!" came Tommy's angry response. "I'll see about that! She made me bust her eggs, but I'll have her herself! Stand clear!"

slid away from her, and all he received was a violent blow from the flapper as it freed itself. Then began a chase which Scat regarded as the most humorous incident he had ever witnessed.

Again and again Tommy tried to turn the turtle away from its object, the sea, and he took tumble after tumble in that effort. "Help me, you fool—help me! It weighs a blooming ton, and I can't shift it!"

Once Tommy did manage, by an extra effort, to grab the side of the turtle's back and lift it so that two flappers hung helpless. He tried with all his might to upset the equilibrium of the reptile, but once again the soft sand beat him, and he came down on his knees, the turtle crashing on top of him, and a howl of pain broke from his lips as the heavy creature crawled over his head and shoulders, scraping him with her rear flappers.

Scat sat on the sand helpless with laughter, and could not even raise his voice to encourage the stout turtle-hunter.

"I'll beat you yet, you brute!"

Tommy scrambled to his feet again. "In any case, I'm going to see you don't get away!" he snorted.

It was a long time that had come to Tommy. Around his waist, by way of a belt, he had wrapped a stout vine, and now that belt was released, and he proceeded to make a loop at one end of it. Then he looped the other end round his wrist, and, watching his chance, darted at the turtle again, and slipped the large loop over her front flapper, drawing it tight.

All this time the turtle had been crawling steadily down the beach, heading for the sea, and when the loop was adjusted, she was only some twenty or thirty yards from the water's edge.

"Come along, Scat! Help me now, and I'll drag the brute back from the sea!" Tommy yelled.

Scat managed to rise to his feet, and walked down the beach; but while he was still some ten yards away from Tommy the final amazing incident happened.

Perhaps the turtle sniffed the sea, or maybe she had stored away a little reserve speed for that occasion; in any case, the last stretch of wet sand was covered at a rate that surprised Scat.

Tommy, tugging and straining to try to divert the turtle from her course, was dragged on until he found himself splashing in the sea.

"She's done me! She's done me—Wow!"

This final part of his protest went up in an involuntary howl, and Scat saw Tommy jerked from his feet, then, in another moment, a double streak in the sea indicated what had happened. The loop round his wrist had tightened, and so at the psychological moment when he ought to have let go, he found it impossible, and the fat turtle, in its own element now, went swimming out into the blue waters of the lagoon.

"By James, he'll be drowned, the silly ass!"

Scat sprinted for all he was worth down the beach, and flung himself into the sea, then began to swim madly forward in the wake of his stout companion; but, after he had covered fifteen or twenty yards, a cunning cry reached him, and he saw Tommy and the turtle vanish.

The turtle had sought bottom, and Tommy had followed it.

Scat's heart almost stood still, for it seemed to him as though that humorous episode was going to have a tragic end. He commented on the matter as a moment after moment passed, then suddenly there came a splash and a gurgle from his left, and up out of the sea came the stout head and shoulders of his pup.

Scat started at the sight of Tommy that he gave vent to a shout of delight, and swam towards the fat youngster.



Suddenly Tommy was jerked from his feet. The loop round his wrist had tightened and he found it impossible to leave go. The turtle went swimming out into the blue waters of the lagoon, dragging Tommy behind it as a tug-boat draws a barge.

"How did you manage it, Tommy? How did you manage it?"

Tommy turned towards him, and held up his right wrist to which the vine was still attached.

"I didn't manage it at all!" he commented. "It was the blinking turtle that let me go when she had finished with me. My limbs, I thought I was done for, and I don't believe that I've got a square inch of skin on my knees. The beast dragged me along the coral bottom for miles!"

They turned and swam shoreward, and finally, landing on the beach, Tommy tottered up into safety, then dropped with a groan.

On examining the vine, Scat found that some sharp projection in the coral formation had severed the tough material.

"A narrow escape for you, old chap!" Scat observed. "You were a fool to try to lasso a turtle; it isn't done!"

"Don't talk to me about turtles!" Tommy groaned. "Just look at my knees! I don't think that I am cut out for these hunting expeditions. Anyhow, I always seem to run up against trouble!"

Scat was looking along the beach, and he turned to his companion.

"There are plenty of turtles here still," he said. "They don't seem to have taken very much notice of your feat. Let us both tackle a smaller reptile. This time Scat and Tommy, having bought their experience dearly enough, carried out their attack in a more intelligent way.

Each of them tackled a flapper, and a combined heave saw their victim swung over on its broad back after a grim struggle.

"There you are, you brute!" said Tommy. "That settles you, anyhow, and I hope you're the brother of that beggar who nearly drowned me!"

By now the other turtles on the beach had taken alarm, and they could see the black shapes hurrying down into the sea with the result that about ten minutes later the beach was clear again.

"It's all right," said Scat. "They'll come back. I think we'll have to call this Turtle Bay. We ought to find it a very useful hunting ground, for turtle flesh is delicious."

Tommy was staring down at the captive, who had now withdrawn into its shell. He shook his head.

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"Hanged if I can see how we're going to get at the meat here!" he said, putting his hand on the hard, coral-encrusted covering. "Seems to me it would take a charge of dynamite to get through this stuff. Let's see if the bottom pulls off."

He reached out to grab at the smooth underside, and, as he did so, Scat gave vent to a warning shout.

"Look out, Tommy!" he cried.

He was only just in the nick of time, for Tommy had chosen the wrong end for attack, and a moment later the snake-like head shot out, and Tommy's hand just missed the quick snap of the turtle's jaws.

"They take a bit right out, old fellow, if they fasten on one!" Scat declared.

Tommy had leapt aside, and he shook his fist at the helpless reptile.

"You wait till you're soup," he said. "See what I'll do to you then!"

"We can't take it back ourselves," Scat interposed. "We might just as well leave it here. We shall want three or four of us to drag the beggar home."

They retraced their steps, and Tommy, passing close to the spot where the turtle had been laying its eggs, searched through the squabby remnants of the heap. He discovered three unbroken eggs.

"They'll do," he said. "It will explain why we didn't get back last night, and that's the main thing. I'll bet Anna will be pleased."

"I think we ought to get back now," was Scat's sage suggestion. "The moon is up, and it will be easy for us to follow the beach. I don't think we ought to wait any longer."

His suggestion was adopted, and, picking up their load of fruit, the return journey was resumed. Somewhere about midnight, although, of course, none of the little group of castaways had any idea of the true time, Tommy and Scat climbed over the barrier of rocks, and were challenged by the voice of Don.

"All right, Don!" Scat returned. Don's figure arose from the side of the half-completed hut, and came towards them.

"Don't you ever sleep, old chap?" Scat asked.

His leader was carrying a stout pole, and he leaned on it now, smiling at Scat.

"I don't take any chances, old boy," Don returned. "You never know what may happen here, and it is just as well for one of us to keep guard."

He helped Scat and Tommy to unload, and stowed their fruit away in the little space that Anna called her larder.

Tommy hurried off at once into the hut, and made himself comfortable on his heap of dried leaves, but the tutor sat for a moment with Don in the shadow of the little structure.

"Do you mean to say that you keep watch like this every night, Don?" he asked.

The sturdy youngster smiled.

"More or less," Don returned. "But, you see, I don't require much sleep at any time. All you fellows are working hard, and need a good night's rest."

"But, hang it, you work harder than any one of us!" Scat answered. "We all ought to take turn about watching."

"No, no; that's all right. Don't you worry about me."

And later on, when Scat laid himself out on his heap of leaves, he saw through the open space that was to be the door, the sturdy, upright figure of Don sitting on the ground among the boulders. Don was leaning on his staff and looking steadily seaward, a strong, patient figure under the silver beams of the moon.

"You are a good chap!" Scat thought sleepily. "You work a jolly sight harder than any of us, and yet you go without your sleep. I wonder what you are watching for? What is there to be afraid of?"

Inquisitive Tommy.

THE ceremony of placing the door in position was celebrated by a special feast. It consisted of turtle soup and turtle flesh, and Tommy, recognising himself as the chief provider of that meal, was duly eloquent.

The door itself was a crude affair, and might not have met with the approval of a master-builder. It was held in position by twisted vines, and the fact that it had actually swung to and fro on its crude hinges was in itself a great contentment to the little group.

Anna insisted on going out and in of the hut several times just for the mere pleasure of swinging the door.

"Yes, it is a real door, with real hinges," said Scat. "We're getting on fine!"

With the roof in position, and the walls completed, work had been commenced on the interior. Don had fixed up a structure of stout poles and strips of tough palm-leaves forming a number of bunks.

Scat and Tommy occupied the two bunks on the left of the structure, while Val and Don owned those on the right. Don had provided a bunk for Taga, but the copper-skinned native refused to sleep in the hut. Taga had his own ideas, and preferred to lie outside, having made a little nest for himself on the leeward side of the hut near to the cliff.

Anna's shelter had now become a very solid structure, for Taga had worked on it, weaving the roof native fashion, and had also fixed up a stout floor, raised some two feet above the level of the sand, making Anna's quarters very cosy.

With the hut completed, and a plentiful supply of fruit and fish, the added luxury of milk from the nanny, which, by the way, had a couple of tiny kids that were the pets of the camp, the food supply was adequate enough.

Turtle Bay had been visited on several nights by Taga and Don and Val, and it was seldom that they returned camp-handed.

Tommy had noted that Val and Taga had developed a trick of vanishing early in the afternoon after the work in the camp was finished.

Don, a wise leader, did not overtax the strength of his chums. When the hut was completed he had fixed up a definite schedule of work. The work in the camp began at sunrise, and the midday meal, prepared by Anna, marked the close of the duties of the day. The afternoons were free, and any of the party could do just what he pleased for the rest of the day.

Scat had fashioned for himself a butterfly-net, and also managed to make a fairly serviceable ladder of tough, knotted vines and strips of bamboo. With the ladder wrapped round his shoulder, and the butterfly-net on its long pole, Scat used to take himself off immediately the midday meal was over.

The tutor was obviously enjoying himself, and he returned night after night, weary out, but in perfect happiness, with fresh specimens for his collection of butterflies and moths.

Scat had also chosen a space just on the verge of the trees, and had commenced to work on it, clearing and grassing, with the result that it was now a perfect garden. Seeds and cuttings from the various plants that he discovered were placed in the warm brown earth; each in little rows, as it was formed, seemed to bring additional delight to its patient owner.

That first feast of breadfruit deserves mention, for after it had been baked in the hot bricks, and the bread grass split in two, the white interior tasted just like the crumb of a new-baked wheat loaf, although slightly sweeter. It was voted by the castaways as being perfectly fine.

The orange fruit, too, became a prime favourite, for its delicious custard is both tasty and sustaining; indeed, during those first few months on the island, every one of the party recognised that Scat was invaluable, and once Tommy openly apologised for past misdeeds.

"By James, Scat, I used to chaff you no end about your blinking botany," the stout youngster declared, "but now you are so handy now, I think I'll take up botany myself when we get back home."

The only individual who did not cease work about the camp at noon was Don.

There was always something to do, and long after the others had vanished Don considered his work. There were so many obstacles to overcome, so many little problems to solve in order that the bountiful sources of Nature at hand should be utilised, that the hours were passed in a trice.

Just where Tommy spent his afternoons was a mystery, until one day, searching for flowers in the jungle behind the cliffs, Anna discovered a hammock, a rudely-constructed cot under a tree, a pale green mat, and the girl did not reveal her discovery, but next day, on returning to the spot, she saw Tommy sprawled in it, fast asleep. That was Tommy's way of spending his afternoons.

But curiosity at last aroused the stout youngster into action. The constant vanishing of Taga and Val required explanation. Tommy had fackled Val several times, but the youngster had laughed off his questioner, and, finally, Tommy made up his mind to do a bit of sleuthing on his own. He knew that it would be impossible to follow Taga, for the quick-eyed native would see him once, so the stout youngster set about the task in his own way.

Early one morning he approached Don. "I think I ought to have another shot at those goats," he said. "I have got a new scheme now."

"That scheme consisted of a long length of tough vine, which he had formed into a rough sort of ladder. He had been working diligently, and had made himself a nuisance in the camp, for once an extra-deadly cat had seen the noose settle round Seat's neck, and Tommy, jerking the cord, had almost strangled his long-suffering tutor.

"I thought that there must be something behind all this work," Don commented. "What are you going to do—lasso a goat?"

"Not exactly," Don didn't think I could catch the beggars that way, the other day," Tommy said. "But I have found out that nanny is very fond of bananas, and what I think of doing is getting five or six bananas and climbing up the cliff; then, if I put a banana or two in the loop, and hide behind a bush, perhaps one of those goats would come along and try to eat the fruit, so that I could jerk the rope tight and collar it."

Don laughed. The plan was typical of Tommy, for, of course, it meant that the stout youth could sit behind a bush for hours, waiting for a goat to walk into the trap. It was a much easier way than chasing it over hill and dale all day!

"All right, old chap," said Don. "No reason why you should not try it." "I want to get away early," said Tommy. "It is the deuce of a long tramp up there to the hill, and I'll have to start now."

"Very well; you can go." "Hail an hour later, Tommy, with a plentiful supply of food which Anna prepared for him, set off up the cliff, apparently bound for the hill that loomed in the distance beyond the trees. However, as soon as he was in the trees, Tommy changed his course, and headed seaward again.

Taga and Val always went off along the beach, and Tommy, after working his way seaward, came out on the sand with a soft zephyr to soothe him, and the murmur and fret of the sea on the coral-reef below him was a lullaby that Tommy could not resist. He fell fast asleep, and it was only the hot rays of the sun pouring down on his head that roused him, and he realised that he had wasted the better part of the day.

"Confound it!" he told himself. "I dare say I have missed them!"

He knew that it was well on in the afternoon, and it was more than likely that Val and Taga had already passed along the beach below. He rose to his feet and stretched himself, then turned to the left, and, crossing the spur, came to a halt on the other side. Below him was a rugged stretch of beeches, tall, black, and forbidding. So far as he could see, this stretch of coast was a sheer cliff, and there was no sign of vegetation along its course. It presented a very different aspect from the jungle-clad beaches on the other side.

"Jimmy, I don't like the look of you at all!" Tommy told himself. "This blinking island seems to have all sorts of scenery! Hullo! What's that?"

Where a huge mass of boulders arose—in a cone he had caught a movement, and, as he watched, he saw something creep out from its base into the sea.

The surface of the sea was much rougher here, and another glance gave Tommy the reason, for the coral-reef ended just level with the end of the spur, and beyond it the unbroken sea came in, churning and murmuring against the bouldery cliffs.

"Well, on earth— By Jove, a canoe—no, a catamaran!"

The squat object arose and fell on the waves, and Tommy stared at it in amazement. He could see the slender massed hull, with the amaranthine patches on the dry poles, and presently he picked out two figures seated in the centre of the main portion, plying their paddles.

The catamaran crept out seaward, and lifted and fell as the long rollers met it, gliding smoothly over the waves; then it turned to the left, and went on until another out-jutting headland hid it from view.

Robinson Crusoe discovering the footprints of Friday could not have been more amazed or frightened than was Tommy as he squatted there, staring towards the spot where the amaranthine had vanished.

"Natives!" he told himself. "I'll bet they're head-hunters! What the deuce am I going to do?"

His first idea was to hurry back to the camp and inform Don and his chums; but it occurred to him that his discovery was only half-completed.

Tommy did not lack pluck, and he knew it would be wasting time for him to go with the camp, and therefore he decided that he would try to get into closer touch with these unknown visitors.

He made up his mind to work his way along the coast and see what had happened to the amaranthine and its occupants.

That long trudge over the rough, broken ground that ran along the cliffs was one of the hardest journeys that Tommy had ever tackled. Here and there were patches of stony ground, but for the most part the ground was a sort of black shale, while at one spot Tommy found himself walking over what seemed to him to be the dried bed of a stream—a stream that had been turned into stone.

He was also aware that the atmosphere through which he moved had changed. He was conscious of an acrid tang that finally revealed itself.

"Sulphur," Tommy thought. "Where the deuce am I going to?"

From the cliff the ground arose at a sharp angle, ending in a black, conical mass that stood out clear against the sky. Tommy was walking over a dead world; the lack of vegetation and the still, hot air made a deep impression upon him.

Now and again he had to climb from boulder to boulder, then let himself down into a long fissure, and again another patch of hard-baked earth would lead to more boulders.

So far as he could judge, that patch of verdureless, burnt ground formed a wedge some five or six miles long by two or three deep, and it took Tommy the best part of three laborious hours to cover it.

Now and again he would work his way to the verge of the cliffs and peer down the slope, to catch sight of the catamaran. He found that the cliffs seemed honeycombed with deep caves into which the sea surged.

There was a narrow stretch of beach below, obviously not more than forty or fifty yards broad, and in many instances it

ran clear under the cliffs, to reappear again farther down the bleak, burnt, forbidding coastline—a coastline calculated to jar the nerves of any youngster.

Finally, Tommy reached a part where the earth seemed to have cracked in two, for a huge fissure ran there, reaching from the sea up to the black cone. Down this fissure flowed a yellow-coloured stream, and a hot mist hung over the gap.

As Tommy began to descend it it seemed to him that the ground was warm under his feet, and, finally, reaching a ledge over which the yellow-coloured stream poured, he leaned forward and put his hand into the current, to withdraw it sharply, while a gasp of amazement broke from his parted lips. The water was distinctly warm, and it was from it that the mist was rising, hot and also sulphury, for the smell was unmistakable.

By this time Tommy was bathed in sweat, and his desire for further search was vanished.

"I—I wish I had never started on this confounded expedition!" he said, mopping the sweat from his brow. "I—I always seem to get into all the trouble that is going!"

He looked up at the edge of the fissure down which he had climbed, and shook his head.

"I'm hanged if I'm going to try to climb up there again! I'm going to work my way down to the beach, even if I break my neck doing it!"

Just how he managed to clamber down that precipitous slope was a thing that Tommy could never explain.

There were places where he had to lower himself down from a rock, climbing with his toes and fingers, then letting himself go until his feet touched another stone. Yard by yard he went downward, following the track of the sulphury spring, and at last he reached the final ledge, from whence the stream took a ten-foot leap into a pool that was formed in the sand.

Tommy had to lower himself over that ledge, and the sulphury water poured over him, so that it was a gasping, drenched, evil-smelling explorer that landed on the wet sand in the spray of the sulphurous water.

As soon as he regained his feet Tommy rushed across the sands, and, wading knee-deep into the waves, he allowed one or two of the great breakers to foam over him, cleansing himself from the sulphurous water and reviving his tired body.

"I've got the hang of this island now," he told himself. "It is partly volcanic, and it seems to me that I have been walking



A shout from the depths of the cave made Tommy whip round with a howl of dismay. A copper-skinned shape came leaping out, then advancing, flung back his head and laughed. "Hullo, Tommy, fella. What you doing here?" Tommy fell back on the catamaran with surprise! "Taga," he gasped.



The schooner was not more than two or three miles away, and as Val studied it a sudden fierce fear entered his heart. He turned to Taga. "Do you recognise it, Taga?" he asked. The face of the native was drawn into a mask of dismay. "Yes, I know him," he answered. "Dat ship is de Wittywako."

over the track of a blinking eruption. I hope the beggar doesn't erupt again until I get away from here!"

His getting away from there promised to be a severe task. The stretch of beach was not more than five or six yards wide, and ran on under the overhanging cliffs; the black, beetling crags and boulders seemed ready to fall on him at any moment.

Tommy was also abominably hungry, but there seemed no possible chance of his assuaging that hunger until he got back to the more fertile portion of the island again.

He started off then on his return journey along the glistening sand under the shadow of the cliffs.

Had he not been so tired and hungry Tommy might have found much interest in that long trudge, for there were parts of the cliff where the mouths of caves stood, and he could see the sand running away into the dark interiors. However, the stout youngster had no desire to explore them at that moment, and he kept up a steady jog-trot along the beach, glancing neither to right nor left, and so, rounding a projecting ledge, Tommy came blundering on to a small cove and saw the catamaran drawn up on the sand in front of him.

It was high on the sand, and beyond it he saw the dark mouth of a cavern.

Tommy, quickening his pace, hurried towards the catamaran, and halted as he reached it.

A shout from the depths of the cave made him whirl round with a howl of dismay. A copper-skinned shape came leaping out, and for a moment wild thoughts of smoked skulls and man-eating cannibals rushed into Tommy's mind, then the advancing shape flung back its head and laughed.

"Hallo, Tommy fella! What you doing here?"

The revulsion of feeling was so great that Tommy fell back on the bow of the catamaran, putting his hands to his side.

"Taga, you—you blinking brown skunk!" Tommy gasped. "What's the game—oh?"

From the cave another figure appeared, and Val hurried across the strip of beach towards his chum.

"By Jove, Tommy, this is a bit of luck!" Val said. "Taga and I can't manage that blinking catamaran, and we want a third person to help us. We were trying to take it round to the camp just now, but the waves beat us."

"Then it was you—you that I saw?" Tommy gasped.

"Yes."

Now, Tommy had intended to tell Don and his companions the harrowing tale of

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his awful experiences, but this matter-of-fact statement of Val's rather knocked that on the head, for it was obvious that he had undertaken that dreadful journey along the bleak cliffs without much justification.

"How did you get here?" Val asked.

Tommy glanced at his scarred feet, remembered that decent, the sulphur-tainted air, then sighed.

"Oh, I just—just dropped in, old chap!" he said. "I wondered what you and Taga were up to, and I thought I'd find out."

Which was certainly a very modest way of describing the grim experience.

"Right-oh! We'll have to buck up now," said Val. "As you're here you might as well help us. Come on, we're ready!"

Taga and Val hurried into the cave, and returned presently with their paddles, also a spare one, which Val slipped into Tommy's hand.

"We'll make you work for your living now," he said. "It is going to be tough work getting through the breakers, but we'll manage it all right."

The catamaran was pushed down the sand and, with a final rush and a jump, the three youngsters launched it, clambering on board.

Taga and Val had been practising with their paddles, and it was mainly due to their efforts that the light craft was able to clear the first breaker; then, with the three paddles going steadily, the catamaran was worked out of the cove, where it met the full till of the long Pacific rollers.

It seemed to Tommy as though every great billow was trying to smash the light craft, and he held his breath again and again as the great blue waves came rustling onward. However, the bow of the catamaran seemed to lift at the right moment and allow the mass of water to sweep harmlessly under it.

Half an hour's steady paddling followed, and Tommy saw ahead of them the surf breaking over the end of the reef.

"Thank goodness for that!" he thought. "Once we get in behind there it is easy work!"

Another ten minutes passed off hard, laborious toil; then suddenly Taga, who was in the bow, stood up, balancing his figure in a wonderful way as the canoe rose and fell. He was looking seaward, and stood motionless for a long moment, then turned and shouted to Val.

"Where—where?"

Val arose and followed the direction of Taga's indicating finger.

Running close-hauled in their direction, the sun glinting on its patched sails and mast, was a schooner. It was not more than two or three miles away, and, as Val studied it, a sudden, fierce fear entered into his heart.

He turned to Taga.

"Do you recognise it, Taga?" he asked. The face of the native was drawn into a mask of dismay.

"Yes, I know him. Dat ship is de Wittywako!"

Look out for next week's grand instalment of this magnificent serial. You must make a point of ordering your GEM early.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

(Continued from page 2.)

THE PIE.

Boy entering pie-shop. "One pie, please." Boy sniffs at pie. Shopman: "What are you sniffing at that pie for? I made pies before you were born." Boy: "Ay, and this is one of them!"—E. Jepps, 247, Welbeck Road, Byker, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

REAL TROUBLE.

Casey and O'Brien were having an argument at the corner of the street, and the dispute had gone to such a length that a small crowd had gathered. Suddenly a genteel, urbane spectator stepped forward and laid a restraining hand on Casey's arm. "Come, come, my man," said the stranger, "you don't want to fight. I can tell that by your face. It is too benign—" "Two by nine, is it?" bellowed Casey. "My face is two by nine! I'll show you what's what for that insult!" Then the real trouble started.—Alfred Harrop, 44, Wellington Road, Oldham.

BIG BEN.

The great Westminster clock, which has recently been cleaned, has struck through fifteen Parliaments. It was put up in 1853 when the fourteenth Earl of Derby was Prime Minister. It is the most powerful and the most accurate public clock in the world. The four dials are each 23ft. in diameter, the centres being 180ft. from the ground. The minute hands are 14ft. long, and weigh 2cwt. each. The four quarter bells weigh nearly eight tons altogether. Above the clocks are the emblems of the three kingdoms and of the principality of Wales.—Arthur Molyneux, 5, Dane Street Gardens, Dorking, Surrey.

PUNCTUATION.

"Father," asked Tommy, "how would you punctuate this sentence—The wind blew a five-pound note round the corner?" "I'd simply put a full stop at the end," replied father. "I shouldn't," said Tommy; "I'd make a dash after the five."—Leslie W. Fletcher, 6, Old Hall Lane, Levenshulme, Manchester.

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PEOPLES OF ALL NATIONS



Part 1 Out On Tuesday, March 14th ORDER IT TO-DAY From Your Newsgate



A Strange Visitor.

DR. BRUTELL was completely under the influence of his evil mood, and it was his intention to ride to the headquarters of the Black Circle. The doctor stopped once during his wild ride to enter a ranch-house.

He was quite unable to control his actions, and a sudden desire came over him to terrify the occupants of the house. Brutell tethered his horse to a branch of a tree, and then crept stealthily towards the open door of the roughly-built wooden shack.

"Hands up!" he shouted, in a hoarse voice, as he levelled his revolver at the two or three people in the building. They were too surprised to do other than obey the command.

The rancher and his friends had never seen such a hideous face as the one which now confronted them. They imagined that this man must be an outlaw, and a particularly desperate one at that.

The terrified rancher would have been greatly astonished had they been aware that their visitor was really a clever and greatly-respected scientist.

Brutell, in his present mood, was capable of committing almost any crime, and it is hard to say what would have been the ultimate fate of the unfortunate rancher had he not noticed a telephone hanging upon the wall of the house. The sight of this directed his thoughts in another channel.

Brutell rang up a certain number, spoke a few cryptic words which the others were quite unable to understand, and then replaced the receiver.

The doctor then turned towards the door, and, much to the relief of the people whose home he had so rudely entered, mounted his horse and rode madly away again.

Brutell had not the slightest idea what terrible things he did when under the influence of this strange malady which afflicted him so suddenly.

Even his best friends he turned upon, and, as a matter of fact, he had just now telephoned to the leaders of the Black Circle and informed them that Madeleine Stanton and her father were in residence at their mountain lodge.

He instructed them to set out at once, with the idea of capturing the millionaire and his daughter.

Fortunately, Brutell's spells of evil did not last very long, and even now, as he was riding madly towards the Stanton's home, his better nature was beginning to return to him.

Arriving at the house, the scientist put his horse away in the stable, and, dazed and exhausted as he always was after an evil spell, he made his way again to his room. Half an hour later Brutell was quite in his normal mood again, and, of course, he had not the slightest knowledge of the queer incidents which had taken place.

A Desperate Plan.

TWO or three days later Mr. Stanton broke the news that he intended saying a visit to the city. Owing to his long absence, there was a great deal of business for him to attend to.

"Would you care to accompany us?" The millionaire's question was addressed to his great friend, and Dr. Brutell replied that

THE ANSWERS

The Mystery Man

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

he would be delighted to go with them. The journey was to be made by motor-car. This, indeed, was the only means of travel which could be employed over a great distance.

The route lay through a very rugged district, and although the journey by motor would be far from ideal, it would certainly be less tiring than by horse vehicle.

But the ride was to be a far more eventful one than they imagined!

Brutell's telephone message had done its work, and the leader of the Black Circle, who was determined to capture the millionaire again, was already on their track.

The gang had camped in the woods some distance from the Stanton's house, and they were watching and waiting for an opportunity to strike.

From their position they could watch every road which led from the building.

Excitement ran high in the camp of the outlaws when they saw the large motor-car draw up outside the main entrance of the house. By the aid of field-glasses, the gang saw Madeleine and Dr. Brutell step into the vehicle, and at the wheel was Robert Stanton.

It was plain to the Black Circle that the party were off to the city, and they planned to cut the motor off at a narrow pass some miles away.

The gang mounted their horses and rode off, taking a short cut that brought them to the pass some time before the millionaire's motor could arrive. Here the villainous gang hustled themselves by loading a wagon with heavy stones.

When they had completed this task they tried a little rehearsal, so that everything would go off as they planned when the right moment arrived.

The millionaire's motor-car had already started to ascend the steep hill where the hidden danger lurked ahead.

The occupants of the vehicle were chatting merrily together, and no thought of danger entered their heads.

On one side of the narrow roadway there was a steep abyss, and it would have meant death to everybody if the car left its proper track.

But Mr. Stanton was an expert driver, and there was no fear that he would bring disaster upon them.

Meanwhile, the Black Circle gang were preparing to carry their dastardly plan into action. It was plain to them that their prey had no suspicions of their presence there.

"Look out! Jump quickly!" It was Dr. Brutell's voice which screamed out this command. Then, exerting all his strength, he picked up Madeleine, who was sitting next to him, and lifted her bodily out of the doomed motor-car. As gently as possible he threw her to the ground on the side of the motor furthest away from the abyss.

Mr. Stanton had also seen the danger, and, in response to Brutell's cries, he took a flying leap from the vehicle. He was only just in time.

Dr. Brutell intended to follow suit, but before he could get clear the wagon, filled with heavy stones and bits of rock, came crashing into the car.

With a wild yell, the gang at once started to rush down towards their helpless victims; but Madeleine and Mr. Stanton were too concerned about the sad fate of Dr. Brutell to worry much about their own predicament.

The gang were just about to swoop down on them, when a surprising and, so far as the villains of the Black Circle were concerned, a most disturbing factor entered into the situation.

A large motor-car appeared on the scene, in which there was a dozen or more policemen. The gang at once took to their heels. They had no desire, apparently, to make the acquaintance of the newcomers.

Madeleine at once hurried to the car, and greeted the chief of the police. He explained how they had followed clue after clue in their relentless search for the members of the Black Circle.

It had taken them a long time to track them down, but, day after day, the net had been drawn tighter around them.

"They can run away now, if they like," he said, with a smile; "but they won't get very far. They will be surprised to find that we have already removed their horses!"

Briefly Madeleine related the story of their fiendish plot, and of the doctor's terrible fall. "There may be yet time to save him!" she implored.

The police speedily fixed a strong rope around the trunk of a tree, and one of them then descended at the spot indicated by Madeleine.

After a search, they found him hanging over a limb of a tree growing out from the side of the cliff.

The policeman made an examination of the doctor, and found that, although he was unconscious, he was otherwise unharmed.

Dr. Brutell was carefully taken to the top; then he was placed in the motor-car, and, with the exception of a number of policemen who were left behind to round up the gang, the party drove off towards the city.

On their arrival the doctor was taken immediately to the hospital, and while he was being examined one of his evil spells came upon him. This was, no doubt, the direct result of the shock he had received.

Fortunately, Madeleine was there, and she explained the extraordinary circumstances regarding Dr. Brutell's evil spells.

The doctor was amazed when he heard the whole story; and he made a further examination of his patient. This revealed the fact that a portion of Dr. Brutell's skull had been pressing on his brain, and had caused the strange change of moods.

It was decided to operate upon the doctor, and this proved entirely successful.

Thus was Dr. Brutell cured of the strange malady which turned him with startling suddenness from a good man to a veritable demon.

Some weeks later Dr. Brutell was able to get about again, and he was sufficiently recovered to assist the police in a raid on the headquarters of the Black Circle.

They had not yet succeeded in finding this, and it is doubtful if they would ever have done without the information Brutell was able to give them.

As the leader of the Black Circle during his evil moods, Brutell knew all their innermost secrets; but until his operation this knowledge left him entirely as soon as he returned to normal.

There is little more to be said. Madeleine and Dr. Brutell, who had stuck together through thick and thin, with the consent of Mr. Stanton became engaged. And, as Madeleine put it, "they would be able to look after each other for the rest of their lives."

That night at Stanton Ranch a big feast was given in honour of the occasion, and Jack Regan and his cowboys had a real merry time together. Never again would Hammer and Pinchers or any other members of the Black Circle gang make it necessary for them to leave their beds and in the blackness of the night go out "on the trail!"

THE END.

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EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:

"CHUMMING WITH AN OUTCAST."

(Continued from page 12.)

And Arthur Augustus walked away with his noble nose in the air, leaving his chums more exasperated than ever.

When he passed them in the quad, walking with Racke, Blake & Co. gave him glares; and Arthur Augustus elevated his nose and walked on regardless. Racke looked at the Co., and looked at D'Arcy.

"Any trouble in your study, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"On my account?"

"Yaas."

Racke bit his lip.

"They're all down on you for standing by me," he said. "You'd better chuck it up, D'Arcy. I don't want to do you any harm."

"It is a question of principle!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "So long as I believe in you, Wacke, I am bound to stand by you."

"So long as you believe in me?" said Racke slowly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It will be rather rotten for you to have your own study against you."

"Nevah mind that."

"But I do mind," said Racke moodily. "You're the only fellow that's ever treated me with real decency. D'Arcy, and I—I've a jolly good mind to—" He broke off.

"A good mind to what, deah boy?"

"Nothin'," muttered Racke.

The confession that had trembled on his lips remained unspoken.

CHAPTER 9.

A Surprise in Study No. 6.

"T WOT in, deah boy!"

There were seven juniors in Study No. 6. The Terrible Three had come in to ten; and six of the seven were chatting cheerily. The seventh—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—preserved a lofty silence. Blake and Herries and Dig had sent him to Coventry, hoping that it would do him good; but so far, no benefit seemed to have resulted. When Racke of the Shell appeared in the doorway, Arthur Augustus broke his silence—to address Racke.

Blake rose to his feet.

"Don't trot in here, Racke!" he said.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I've got a boot ready for him, if he does!" said Herries grimly.

Arthur Augustus coloured with wrath.

"I have a right to ask Wacke into my study!" he said.

"I refuse to allow you fellows to intahfeah with Wacke."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Peace, my infants!" murmured Tom Merry pacifically.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite, you know."

Racke's face was flushed.

"I—I only want to speak to you a minute," he said.

"There's no need to rag. I won't come in. I can speak from here."

"You needn't waste your breath speaking to us!" growled Herries.

"Puvay, say what you like, Wacke," said Arthur Augustus, with the firmness of a rock; not to mention the obstinacy of a mule.

"Look here, D'Arcy—"

"Look heah, Hewwies—"

"If you want to be booted out of the study along with your precious pal Racke—" roared Herries.

"Wats!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"If you are askin' me to give you a feahful thwashin'."

Hewwies—

"Why, I'll—I'll—" spluttered Herries.

"Let me speak, you fellows!" broke in Racke hurriedly.

"I want to own up, if you'll listen to me a minute."

"Wha-a-at?"

The argument in Study No. 6 ceased suddenly. All the juniors stared at Aubrey Racke.

His face was crimson now.

But there was a look of resolve on it. What good there

was in Racke of the Shell had been brought to the surface—and for once, at least, Racke was acting generously.

"I've not much to say," he said unsteadily, while the chums of the School House stared at him. "D'Arcy's treated me like a real brick, and—I'm not going to see him suffer for it. What Trimble told you the other day was all true."

"We knew that!" grunted Herries.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a study. "Arcy didn't know it," muttered Racke.

"Well, that's all. I was fed up with being out, and I—I fixed it up with Trimble to play that trick, D'Arcy. He never went on the ice. He never was in the river. I never pulled him out. Cardew saw what happened, as it turns out. He told you exactly how it was. I—I own up."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

"That's all!" said Racke, with a burning face. And he turned and walked away without another word.

There was a deep silence in Study No. 6.

Racke's confession had been utterly unexpected.

Certainly, there was no fellow in the school who believed in him, with the solitary exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But that made his confession all the more amazing. He had only one friend left—and now he had cast him away—for what?

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry. "I—I say, Racke can't be such a thorough rotter as we always thought. It's rather decent of him to own up just to get Gussy out of his silly scrape."

"We all knew it," said Herries.

"Gussy didn't!" said Tom. "And Gussy would never have found it out; he likes being bamboozled, don't you, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, what do you think now, Gussy?" demanded Blake.

"Bai Jove! I hardly know what to think, deah boy. It weally appeals to me that I have been taken in."

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus relaxed into silence.

Tom Merry & Co. regarded him rather curiously. Against all evidence, the swell of St. Jim's had stood by Racke.

But now that Racke had owned up—

Arthur Augustus looked up at last.

"Wacke is a feahful fibbah," he said.

"He is—he are?" said Manners.

"He has twicked us—all of us, and especially me," said Arthur Augustus. "It is awfly wotten. But—"

"But—"

"grinned Tom Merry.

"But," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "I think you fellows will admit now that I was wight."

"Right?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How do you make that out?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"I was wight in thinkin' there was some good in Wacke. He has owned up on my account, because these silly asses were sendin' me to Coventry. That did not weally mattah at all—"

"Oh, didn't it?" grunted Herries.

"Not at all, Hewwies. You would have had to come woun, soonah or latah, when you got into some scrape, and weaquah a fellow of tact and judgment to pull you out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I weally do not see where the cackle comes in, deah boys. But to resume, Wacke has acted in a vewy straightforward way, this time at least, and I wathah think that he ought to be let off Coventry—to encourage him to keep it up, you know."

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"It must have been rather a strain on him," he remarked. "He can't have enjoyed life lately—and I dare say he's had enough! It was decent of him to own up and let Gussy out of the scrape his feathedness had landed him in—"

"Weally, you cheekay ass—"

There was a discussion in Study No. 6 while tea was finished. Nobody was inclined to admit that Arthur Augustus had been "wight" all along. But all agreed that Racke had, for once, shown up decently; and that he should be let off in consequence. And whatever was decided upon by the Terrible Three, and Study No. 6 in conjunction, was a law unto the School House juniors—so the fiat went forth!

It was a surprise to Racke.

For once in his life he had played up in a decent and honourable way; and quite unexpectedly he had his reward. The sentence of Coventry was lifted; Tom Merry himself made it a point to speak to Racke quite civilly in public. And now that the clouds had rolled by, Racke's friends—

Crooke and Clampe and the rest—were cheerfully willing to restore him to the honour of their friendship—for what it was worth!

Arthur Augustus, by some mental process peculiar to his powerful brain, satisfied himself that he had been right all along. But he spoke very seriously to Racke.

"I am sorry to have to say that you have acted like an awful wotnah, Wacke," he said. "You seem to be full of faithful whoppahs and wotten twickewy. But I believe there is some good in you somewah, if you will give it a chance.

Keep it up, deah boy! And if evah you weequial advice frown a fellow of tact and judgment, just twot along to Study No. 6."

And Racke grinned and said that he would.

THE END.

(There will be another grand, long story of the clums of St. Jim's next week, entitled "GUSSY IN A FIX!" by Martin Clifford. Be sure you order your copy of the GEM early.)

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