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HIGH JINKS AT ST. JIM'S! TOM MERRY & CO. IN THE LIMELIGHT—

A KNOCK-OUT for KNOX!

CHAPTER 1: The Innocent Baggy!

QUICK!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Quick!" gasped Trimble. "Take it! Quick!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the St. Jim's Fourth, was sauntering elegantly under the elms, on the shady side of the old quadrangle, when Baggy Trimble happened.

Arthur Augustus, as usual, looked calm and reposeful. Baggy, on the other hand, was wildly excited.

He was running hard. His fat face was flushed crimson with haste, his extensive mouth was open, and breathless gasps proceeded therefrom.

Baggy, evidently, was in hurried flight.

But he paused as he reached Arthur Augustus. Something was clutched in his fat hand, and he held it out to D'Arcy.

"Quick!" he spluttered.

"Bai Jove! Weally—"

"Take it, you ass!" gasped Trimble; and he thrust a small packet into D'Arcy's hand.

"But what—which—weally—" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

Baggy did not answer.

He resumed his hurried flight, leaving the swell of St. Jim's gazing at the packet in his hand.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

It was a packet of cigarettes.

Wrath gathered on the noble brow of Arthur Augustus. Baggy evidently had been spotted with the forbidden smokes in his possession, and he had fled from the eye of authority. And as he fled he had landed the contraband goods on Gussy.

"The fwrightful boundah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I will give that fat wottah a feahful thwashin'—"

"D'Arcy!"

"Oh! Yaas, Kildare?"

Kildare of the Sixth came up the path under the elms with long strides. Arthur Augustus' hand, with the packet in it, slipped into his pocket as he turned round towards the St. Jim's captain.

Baggy might be—and was—a frightful bounder, but Gussy was not disposed to give him away to a prefect. The cigarettes were best kept out of sight while Kildare was on the scene. Later on they could be crammed down the back of Baggy's neck, as a punishment for his stupendous cheek.

"Has Trimble passed you?" asked Kildare.

"Twimble?" repeated Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, here he is!"

At a short distance Baggy had ceased his hurried flight. Having got rid of the incriminating packet, Baggy felt more at ease. He stood leaning on an elm, sucking a stick of toffee.

Kildare strode on towards him.

"Trimble! You young rascal!" he exclaimed.

Baggy blinked at him.

"Yes, Kildare?"

"Give me those cigarettes at once!"

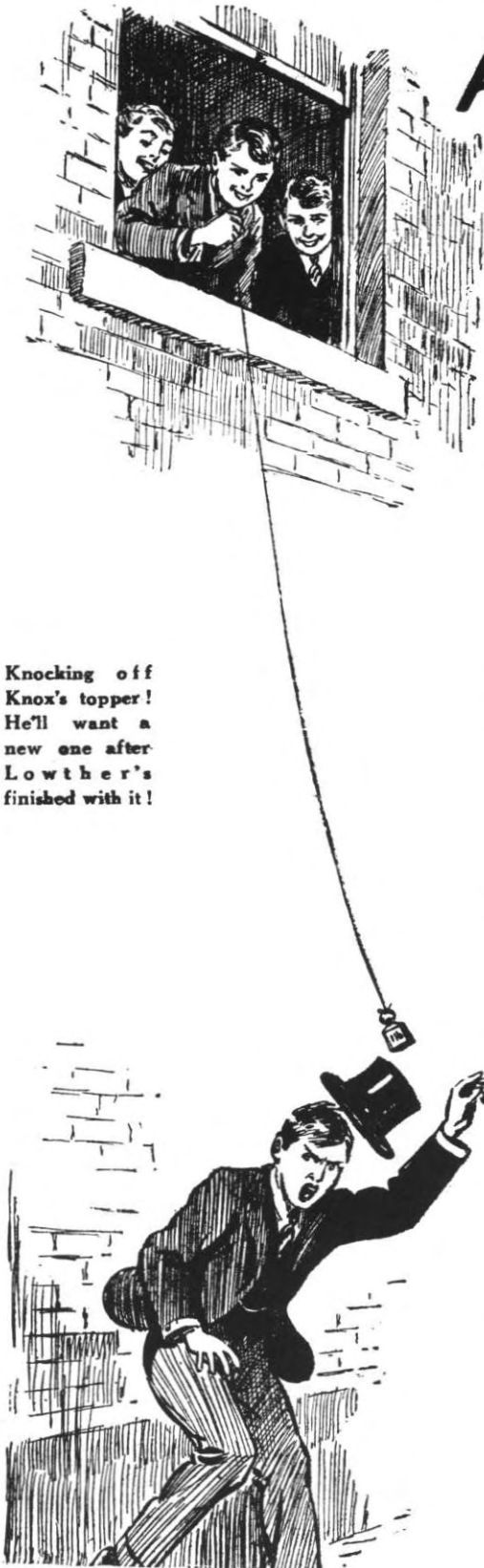
Baggy opened his eyes wide.

"Cigarettes!" he repeated.

"Yes, you young sweep! And then bend over and take six!" snapped Kildare. His official ashplant was under his arm, and he slipped it into his hand.

"But—but I haven't any cigarettes, Kildare!" exclaimed Baggy. "Wha-a-at made you think I had any cigarettes?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy breathed hard through his aristocratic nose. Baggy Trimble and the truth were almost strangers; in fact, they had hardly ever met. Not only had the fat Baggy no regard for the truth, but he really seemed to hold it in personal aversion.



Knocking off
Knox's topper!
He'll want a
new one after
Lowther's
finished with it!

—GERALD KNOX, THE BULLYING PREFECT, IN THE SOUP!

"The howwid-wottah!" murmured Arthur Augustus. And Arthur Augustus, not choosing to allow his noble ears to be offended by Baggy's fabrications, walked away. "You haven't any cigarettes!" repeated Kildare, with a glare at the fat Baggy.

"Oh, no! Nothing of the kind," said Trimble. "Why, I saw you with the packet in your hand!" exclaimed Kildare. "And you bolted when I called you."

"Did—did you call me?" "You know I did!" roared Kildare. "I—I didn't hear you, you know," stammered Baggy. "The—the fact is, I—I was thinking. I—I was working out a mathematical problem in my head, you know, and, being buried in thought—"

"And why did you cut and run?" demanded Kildare. "I—I thought I heard Blake calling me," explained Trimble. "So I—I ran to see what he wanted, you know." "You fat little fibber!" said Kildare. "Turn out your pockets at once, and hand over those cigarettes. And if you tell me any more untruths I'll take you to your Housemaster."

"I don't mind going to Railton," said Baggy. "Why should I? Being perfectly innocent—"

"Turn out your pockets." "Certainly," said Baggy. He turned out his pockets quite cheerfully, pulling out the lining to show that nothing was left within.

But there were no cigarettes. "What have you done with them?" demanded Kildare. "How could I do anything with them when I hadn't any?" argued Trimble. "I hope you don't think I smoke, Kildare. Why, it's against the rules!"

Kildare glanced round him, puzzled. The packet of cigarettes was not on Baggy, that was clear, and if he had thrown it away during the couple of minutes he had been out of the prefect's sight it should have been in view.

But it was not in view. "You see, it was a packet of toffee you saw, Kildare," explained Baggy cheerfully. "It's rather hard that a fellow can't have a packet of toffee without being accused of smoking. That's a thing I've never done. I know there are some men in the Sixth who smoke—"

"What?" "But I hope I shall never follow their nasty example," said Baggy virtuously. "I'm too careful of my health. Besides, it's bad form. I shouldn't like to grow up like Knox of the Sixth—"

Kildare breathed hard. He had a strong suspicion that Knox of the Sixth was far from being a shining example to the Lower School. But he was not there to listen to the virtuous Baggy's opinion of the black sheep of the Sixth. Baggy was rather turning the tables on him.

"You must have thrown those cigarettes away," he said at last.

"Well, if I did, they can't be far off!" said Baggy. Out of the corner of his eye he had seen D'Arcy disappear in the distance. "If you find any cigarettes lying about here, Kildare, I—I'll eat them."

"Well, I'll look!" said the baffled prefect, "and if I find them you'll go before your Housemaster." "I'm sure I don't mind going to the Housemaster, Kildare. Being perfectly innocent—"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Kildare. And with a rather angry eye, Kildare proceeded to look round for the lost packet.

After a few minutes' search the prefect gave it up. He did not come back to Trimble. Baggy, in the circumstances, had to be adjudged innocent, and Kildare walked away without another word to him.

And Baggy, as he went, winked a fat wink.

CHAPTER 2. Hats Off!

"ROTEN!" said Monty Lowther. Lowther was standing at the open window of Study No. 10 in the Shell. He was looking out into the quad. He had been standing there for ten minutes at least.

Tom Merry was oiling a cricket bat; Manners was cutting films. Sometimes they glanced at their chum and grinned.

Monty was looking for a victim. In his hand was a weird contrivance of his own humorous invention. It was a long strip of elastic; and to the end of it was fastened a small weight.

To drop that weight on a fellow's hat as he passed under the window, and jerk it back unseen by means of the elastic, seemed to the humorist of the Shell quite funny.

Already he had bagged one victim. Blake of the Fourth had passed below—the weight had dropped on his hat, and knocked it sideways and immediately vanished into the window again.

Blake's perplexed look as he set his hat straight and stared round in astonishment, had been quite excruciating. Then Knox of the Sixth came along with Cutts of the Fifth.

Lowther's eyes gleamed with anticipation. Knox, the bully of the Sixth, was just the victim he wanted. Only that day Knox had given him lines for nothing—or practically nothing!

Knox and Cutts came to a stop. They leaned on the wall and chatted; but not beneath the window of Study No. 10 in the Shell. They had stopped under the window of Study No. 6 in the Fourth, at a little distance.

The distance was not great; but it was far beyond Monty's reach. Hence his remark that it was rotten.

"Beastly luck!" said Lowther. "There's Knox—and if he'd come a little nearer I'd have caught his topper beautifully."

"Fathead!" said Tom. "Let Knox alone! He's dangerous."

"Knox ain't safe!" said Manners, shaking his head. "You'd better keep your fat-headed jokes for the Lower School."

"Knox gave me a hundred lines to-day," answered Lowther.

"I dare say you asked for them."

"He's standing there chattering with Cutts," said Lowther. "I could get him a treat. He's right under the window of Blake's study. I think I'll trot round to No. 6."

"Better not!" said Tom. "Stay where you are, ass!" said Manners. But Monty Lowther did not heed. When Monty was on the trail of a jest there was no stopping him.

He left the study, and hurried along to the Fourth Form passage.

There were four juniors in Study No. 6—D'Arcy and Herries, Digby, and Blake. The last-named had just come in, and he was telling his chums of the strange incident in the quad.

"Something nearly knocked my hat off!" Blake was saying. "I simply couldn't make out what it was."

"Bai Jove! I hope it did not damage your hat, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with concern.

"No; but it was jolly queer. Hallo, what do you want, fathead?" added Blake, as the Shell fellow came in.

"Mum's the word!" said Lowther, as he crossed to the window and looked out.

"What the thump—"

The chums of Study No. 6 stared at the humorist of the Shell as he leaned from the window and looked down at the two seniors below.

Cutts of the Fifth was just walking away; but Knox remained where he was, leaning on the wall, his hands in his pockets. There was no doubt that he was beautifully placed for Monty Lowther's purpose.

"Why, you sweep!" ejaculated Blake, as he discerned the peculiar implement in Lowther's hand. "It was you—"

"Made you jump, didn't it?" said Lowther affably. "You silly ass!"

"Now I'm going to make Knox jump," said Lowther. "He's just under the window. Keep it dark!"

"Bai Jove! That is weally wathah weckless. Lowthah! I wegard you as wathah an ass," said Arthur Augustus.



"Bow-wow!"

"Let's look!" said Herries.

And the four juniors gathered round the window to watch the result of Monty's experiment.

Lowther reached out over the window-sill, the elastic in his hand, and let the weight drop.

His aim was quite accurate. The weight dropped fairly on Knox's hat, and the Sixth Form man jumped, and a startled exclamation floated upward.

Instantly the jerk of the elastic brought the weight up again, and it was drawn out of sight.

There was a subdued chuckle among the juniors.

Knox had put his hand up to his hat, and was staring about him in amazement. He looked all round him, and then looked upward; and five faces popped back out of sight before he could see them.

"What the dickens—" came Knox's voice, in puzzled and angry tones.

Lowther peered out again.

Knox had stepped out from the wall, and was looking about him, perhaps suspecting some hidden fag of throwing stones. Gerald Knox was well aware of his unpopularity in the Lower School.

The temptation was too strong for Lowther to resist. The weight dropped again, and bumped on Knox's hat, knocking it off this time.

There was a howl of enraged astonishment from the bully of the Sixth.

He grabbed at his hat and glared upward—no doubt guessing, by this time, that the attack had come from one of the windows above.

He was just in time to see the weight, at the end of the elastic, vanish into the window of Study No. 6.

With set lips and a glint in his eyes, Knox started for the door of the School House and went in, to call on Study No. 6 and see about it.

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"I suppose it wouldn't be safe again!" he said regretfully. "It's no end of a lark, isn't it, you fellows?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, no end!" said Blake. "All the same, I've a jolly good mind—"

But Monty Lowther left the study before Blake could state what he had a jolly good mind to do.

He returned to Study No. 10 in the Shell. The cricket bat and the films had been put aside now, and Tom Merry and Manners were getting tea.

"Well, did you get Knox?" asked Tom.

"I did!" said Lowther cheerfully. "I got one Knox, and Knox got two knocks. You should have seen his face."

The juniors laughed.

Monty Lowther glanced from the study window. Nothing is so encouraging as success; and Monty, like Alexander of old, desired new worlds to conquer. And his eyes gleamed with excitement at a mortar-board that was passing below.

"Oh, good!" he ejaculated.

"Who is it now?" asked Manners.

"It's jolly old Lathom."

"The master of the Fourth?" exclaimed Tom Merry, jumping up from the tea-table.

"Yes! Look out of the window and see me nab him!" breathed Lowther. "Lathom's rather an absent-minded ass—it will surprise him no end. Now, here, I say! Yaroooh! Leggo! What—"

Tom Merry seized his too-humorous chum by the arm, just in time, and whirled him away from the window. Lowther's other arm was stretched out over the sill, ready to drop the weight on Mr. Lathom's scholastic head.

"You fathead!" gasped Tom.

"You howling chump!" roared Lowther. "You've broken the elastic now—you burbling jabberwock, you've busted the thing!"

"All the better! You're not fishing out of this window for a Form master!" chuckled Tom.

"You ass! Now the weight's gone—"

"Good!"

"It must have dropped on Lathom."

"Better keep back from the window, then," grinned Tom Merry, "unless you want Lathom to take you to the Head!"

Lowther grunted, and sat down to tea.

Down below, in the quadrangle, Mr. Lathom paused in his walk, as something dropped on the ground beside him. He blinked at it over his glasses, and noticed that it was a small leaden weight, with a piece of broken elastic attached. He blinked up at the innumerable windows.

"Goodness gracious me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Someone must have dropped that from a study window! How

very singular that such an article should be dropped from a study window! It is very singular indeed."

And Mr. Lathom picked up the weight with the kind intention of returning it to the owner if inquired after, and peregrinated on his amiable way.

CHAPTER 3.

Unexpected!

"WEALLY, Knox—"

D'Arcy of the Fourth spoke in a tone of disapproval.

Gerald Knox was a Sixth Form man, and a prefect, and Arthur Augustus merely a junior in the Fourth. Nevertheless, good form was good form, and it was not good form to hurl open a study door and stride in without even knocking.

Arthur Augustus raised his aristocratic eyebrows at Knox, and gave voice to his disapproval.

Blake and Herries and Digby rose from the study table, where they had just sat down to tea. They were not so much concerned about Knox's bad manners as about his bad temper. For his looks showed that he was in a very bad temper, indeed; also he had his cane under his arm.

"You young rascals!" roared Knox.

"Hallo! What's the row now?" asked Blake, in a rather tired voice. He was fed-up with Knox. There had been many troubles between Gerald Knox and the cheery chums of the Fourth. And now it looked as if more trouble was coming.

"Which of you knocked my hat off?" demanded Knox.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Digby.

The four members of Study No. 6 understood now. Monty Lowther's "lark" at the study window had been detected. His wonderful implement had not been quite so efficacious as he had supposed.

"Knocked your hat off?" repeated Blake.

"Yes, you young sweep! Which of you was it?"

"Nobody here knocked your hat off, Knox," answered Blake mildly. "I certainly haven't touched your hat."

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus.

"Why, we haven't been near you, Knox," said Digby.

"How could we knock your hat off?"

"Jolly innocent, aren't you?" sneered Knox. "Well, I saw the thing you used whisk into the study window after my hat had been knocked off. It was something tied on the end of a piece of elastic."

"Never handled such a thing in my life," said Blake.

"Did you think it was this study window?"

"I know it was this study window. I want to know which of you was playing tricks on a prefect?"

"None of us," said Herries.

"You deny it, the lot of you, do you?" demanded Knox.

"Certainly we do," answered Blake. "As we never did anything of the kind, of course we deny it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Knox breathed hard.

"Very well," he said, "you deny it. And we'll see whether you've got the nerve to deny it to your House-master. I'm going to take you to Raitlon. Follow me! You can turn that thing out of your pockets, whichever of you has it, in Raitlon's presence."

"Bai Jove, we are just goin' to have tea, Knox—"

"Follow me!" thundered Knox.

"Come on, fathead!" said Blake. "Don't you know you have to hop when a prefect says hop?"

Blake took his noble chum by the arm, and led him from the study. Herries and Digby followed. Tea had to be left to take care of itself.

It was rather hard lines, for there was a rather special tea on the table in Study No. 6. But a Sixth Form prefect was not to be denied, and the four juniors went down the passage to the stairs, convoyed by Knox of the Sixth.

On the landing they passed Baggy Trimble coming up. Trimble blinked at them, and blinked at Knox, and grinned.

"You fellows for it?" he asked. "What have you been up to this time? He, he, he!"

"Nothing," answered Blake. "Knox is making a little mistake. But who are we to set a prefect right?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Don't keep me waiting," snarled Knox.

The juniors were not keeping him waiting; but bullying came as naturally as breathing to Knox of the Sixth.

The procession went on down the stairs. It headed for Masters' Corridor, and many glances followed it.

Knox gave a rap on Mr. Raitlon's door, and opened it. "Come in!" said the School House master, glancing in some surprise at Knox and his flock.

There were prefects in the School House who made a

Housemaster's way easier, but Knox was not one of them. Knox, as a prefect, was rather more trouble than he was worth.

Blake & Co. followed Knox into the study. They were feeling quite easy in their minds. They were quite guiltless of the charge brought against them, though as Monty Lowther had performed his stunt from their study window, Knox's mistake was rather a natural one. Still, they were innocent, and they had implicit faith in the justice of their Housemaster.

"What is it, Knox?" asked Mr. Railton.

Knox explained.

"I thought I had better bring these juniors to you, sir," he wound up. "They have spoken falsely, and that seems to me a very serious matter. Had they admitted their fault, I should have given them lines, but deliberate untruthfulness, sir—"

"Untruthfulness certainly is a very serious matter.

Knox," said Mr. Railton dryly.

"But I am prepared personally to take the word of these juniors."

Knox set his lips.

"My hat was knocked off, sir, by something on elastic that was dropped from their study window," he said.

"A foolish and disrespectful trick," said Mr. Railton. "But if these boys deny it—"

"One of them has the thing in his pocket at the present moment—I am quite sure of that," interjected Knox.

"That, at least, can be easily ascertained," said Mr. Railton. "You boys will turn out your pockets on my table at once."

"Certainly, sir!" said Blake.

"We have not the slightest objection sir, I assure you," said Arthur Augustus. "We have nothin' of the kind about us, and Knox is makin' a wathah sillay mistake."

"You need not speak, D'Arcy."

"Weally, sir—"

"Silence! Turn out your pockets," said the Housemaster.

Quite cheerfully Blake & Co. proceeded to turn out their pockets on Mr. Railton's table. The odds and ends that came from Blake and Herries and Digby attracted no special attention. But there was an exclamation from Mr. Railton, echoed by Knox, as a packet of cigarettes was turned out by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Smokes!" exclaimed Knox.

This was rather better than what he had expected to see. A trick played with a weight on elastic was, after all, only a thoughtless schoolboy trick. But secret smoking was a dingy sort of thing, and the rules against it at St. Jim's were very severe.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

His face flushed hotly under Mr. Railton's surprised and shocked glance, and Knox's contemptuous grin.

Blake and Herries and Digby stared at the packet of cigarettes as if it had been a spectre. They would as soon have expected Gussy to produce a white rabbit or a pink rat from his pocket as a packet of smokes.

"You may finish turning out your pockets," said Mr. Railton, very quietly.

The dismayed juniors proceeded, but the weight and the elastic did not come to light. By that time, indeed, the weight was in Mr. Lathom's possession, and the elastic

was equally divided between that gentleman and Monty Lowther of the Shell.

Mr. Railton signed to the juniors to replace the various articles, with one exception. He reached out and drew the packet of cigarettes across the table. He put it aside for the moment. It was Mr. Railton's businesslike way to finish one matter before beginning on another.

"The article you describe has not been found, Knox," he said.

"I've no doubt it is in the study, sir. I concluded that one of them would have it in his pocket, but—"

"Blake! The trick Knox describes was evidently played from your study window! You deny that it was played by one of you?"

"Yes, sir!" said Blake in a worried tone. He was worried about that packet of cigarettes.

"Was it played by some other boy who was in your study at the time?" asked Mr. Railton.



"Take it, you ass!" gasped Baggie Trimble, thrusting a small packet of cigarettes into D'Arcy's hand.

"Oh!" ejaculated Knox. Simple as that explanation was, Knox had not thought of it. His own nature was rather a crooked one, and he was prone to look for crooked ways in others.

"Yes, sir!" said Blake.

"In that case, Blake can give the boy's name," said Knox, with a glare at the leader of Study No. 6.

"Blake could doubtless do so; but certainly I shall not ask him," said Mr. Railton. "It is not my way to encourage tale-bearing, Knox, and I trust that it is not your way, either."

"Oh, certainly not, sir! But, in the circumstances—" stammered Knox.

"I see nothing in the circumstances to justify asking one boy to give information against another."

"Oh, very well! You know best, of course," said Knox. It was not possible for him to tell his Housemaster what he thought of him.

"No doubt you will find the boy who really played that foolish trick, Knox, and report him to me," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh, certainly, sir, if you believe that Blake is telling the truth!" said Knox bitterly.

"I certainly believe that Blake is telling the truth," answered Mr. Railton sharply.

"Very well, sir!" said Knox, suppressing his feelings. As a matter of fact, he did not believe Blake's statement. Knox had a doubting nature, and his own ways were not the ways of veracity. And it has been well said that a liar's

punishment is not that he cannot be believed, but that he can never believe others.

"And now," said Mr. Railton in a deep voice, "I must deal with a very much more serious matter. D'Arcy! You will explain how it is that you have cigarettes in your possession."

And Knox of the Sixth smiled again. Study No. 6 had escaped on one count; but one of them, at least, was to be found guilty on another. Which was at least a consolation prize for Knox of the Sixth.

CHAPTER 4.

Guilty or Not Guilty!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY paused. He coloured uncomfortably under the penetrating eyes of his Housemaster.

"You hear me, D'Arcy?" said Mr. Railton sharply.

"Yaas, sir."
"There are some boys in this House who are addicted to secret smoking," said Mr. Railton sternly. "Such boys as Crooke and Mellish have been punished for it. I did not suspect before that you were one of the number, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove! I twust you do not suspect me of smokin' cigawettes, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"You had a packet of them in your pocket. Several have been taken from the packet; it has obviously been used. Some of the cigarettes have been smoked."

"Not by me, sir."
"Very well; I am waiting for you to explain."

Arthur Augustus stood silent. Inwardly he was longing to kick Baggy Trimble all round the quad. But, though he would have kicked the fat Baggy with great pleasure, he could not possibly give Baggy away. That was a horse of quite another colour.

"I think I had better say at once, sir," said Knox, "that I have suspected these juniors of this sort of thing more than once. I have never been able actually to pin them down, but I certainly have had my suspicions."

"You jolly well haven't!" exclaimed Blake savagely.

"Silence, Blake!" rapped out the Housemaster. "How dare you! At the present moment, Knox, it certainly looks as if your suspicions were well founded. D'Arcy, if you have any explanation to make, make it at once."

"Yaas, sir! Those cigawettes, of course, are not mine."
"Then how did they come into your possession?"

"They were thrust into my hand, sir, by another fellow." Mr. Railton raised his eyebrows, and Knox sneered; Arthur Augustus' rich complexion grew richer.

"I know it sounds wathah odd, sir—" he began.
"It certainly does," said Mr. Railton. "But I shall give you a hearing, D'Arcy. You may proceed."

"A—a fellow thrust that packet into my hand in the quad, sir," said Arthur Augustus steadily. "He was in dangah of bein' found with the smokes on him, and he shoved them into my hand and bunked. I put them in my pocket to keep them out of sight."

"And why?"
"Well, sir, I thought it a feahful cheek to land the things on me; but, of course, I wasn't goin' to give a fellow away." Mr. Railton regarded him very keenly.

"And why did you keep them in your pocket, D'Arcy?"
"I was goin' to wam them down his cheekay neck, sir, when I saw him again!" answered D'Arcy.

The Housemaster smiled faintly.
"And what is the name of this boy?" he asked.

D'Arcy was silent.
"You hear me, D'Arcy?"
"Yaas, sir. But I am suah you will see that it is quite impos for me to answah that question," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"This matter is serious, D'Arcy—more serious than the foolish trick of which Knox has complained. You must rely on the judgment of your Housemaster in such matters. I ask you again the name of the boy who passed these cigarettes into your hand?"

"I am sowwy, sir, but I cannot give his name," said Arthur Augustus. "It is not only against my own principles, sir, but I should be regarded by the whole House as a sneak if I gave his name."

Blake & Co. looked at one another in silence. Arthur Augustus, from the point of view of the Lower School, was perfectly right, but it was a risky business to bandy words with a Housemaster.

There was a long pause. Mr. Railton drummed on the table with his fingers. Knox's look was almost gloating by this time.

"D'Arcy cannot, of course, give the name, sir," he said. "His whole statement is, of course, a fabrication."

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D'Arcy's lips curled.

"I am suah that Mr. Wailton does not think so, Knox!" he said.

"If you do not give the name, D'Arcy, you lay yourself under the suspicion of speaking untruthfully," said the Housemaster. "Cannot you see that, my boy?"

"No, sir! Of course, you will take my word," said Arthur Augustus. "If I were a boundah like Cwooke, or a shady outsidah like Mellish, it would be a differwent mattah. But I have a waight to expect you to take my word."

"Mr. Railton is not likely to take your word, when you are found with the cigarettes on you!" sneered Knox.

"I am perfectly willin' to twust to Mr. Wailton's judgment," answered Arthur Augustus. "Mr. Wailton has more bwains in his little fingah than you have in your nappah, Knox! I have always had a vevy high opinion of Mr. Wailton's judgment, and I am suah he will not make a sillay mistake like you, Knox."

"Oh dear!" groaned Blake.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Railton, his lips twitching. "D'Arcy, you are a foolish boy, and if I did not know you so well I should certainly find it difficult to believe the explanation you have made. But, as a matter of fact, I do believe it—and you may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "That is what I expected from you, of course, sir."

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"
"You may go!" said Mr. Railton hastily; and Blake & Co. departed.

Knox watched them depart, with feelings that could hardly have been expressed in words. He felt a good deal like a tiger whose prey had slipped away in safety.

"You—you—you are lettin' that young rascal off, sir?" he gasped.

"I should certainly not let him off, as you express it, Knox, if I regarded him as a young rascal!" said Mr. Railton.

"The evidence was perfectly clear—"
"No doubt!" said the Housemaster.

"Then—for what reason—"

"I will tell you, Knox, and it may be of assistance to you in carrying out your duties as prefect," said Mr. Railton quietly. "It is more necessary to give attention to character than to evidence. D'Arcy, for instance, is a truthful and honourable lad. He has unthinkingly placed himself in suspicious circumstances. That is all! Had such an explanation been given me by a boy like Crooke, or Mellish, or Clampe, or some others, I should not have believed a word of it. But from a boy whom I know to be honourable, and whose chief fault is thoughtlessness, I am able to accept such an explanation without hesitating."

Knox set his lips.

"In that case, sir, it does not seem much use reporting the boy to you at all," he could not help saying. "If I find him in the very act of smoking, he will spin some yarn—"

"In such circumstances it would be impossible for him to spin a yarn as you express it. I am assured that you will never find him smoking; and that if you did so, he would tell the truth about it at once."

"Oh!" gasped Knox.

"A prefect, Knox, is expected to be able to judge character," said Mr. Railton. "You err in this. You have stated that you have long had suspicions of these juniors. I am assured that such suspicions are unfounded; though I admit that I was staggered for a moment by the sight of the cigarettes in D'Arcy's possession. You must be very careful, Knox, not to allow a personal dislike of individuals to warp your judgment."

And with that, Mr. Railton made a gesture of dismissal, and Knox of the Sixth left the study.

His face was almost white with rage as he went.

He had taken Blake & Co. there for punishment, and chance had played unexpectedly into his hands. But the net result was that the young sweeps had got off scot-free, and that Knox himself had received a lecture.

Knox went to his own study, slammed the door, and kicked over a chair. Then he sat down to console himself with a cigarette!

As he smoked his thoughts turned to Blake & Co.—all of them, in Knox's amiable opinion, equally guilty! And he resolved savagely that he would run them down and show them up in a way that even Railton could not disregard. Railton, in spite of his rotten favouritism, should be compelled to deal with them as they deserved.

Knox found comfort in that resolve. The only difficulty was how? And to the "how" Knox gave long and deep reflection.

The most prominent object in the desk was a large sheet of cardboard on which was an inscription in capital letters!



CHAPTER 5.
Wrathy!

"Gussy, old man!"
"Yaas, Cardew!"
"Lend a fellow a fag!"
"Wha-a-a-t?"

"A fag, old bean!" yawned Ralph Reckness Cardew. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up in bed. Lights had been turned out in the Fourth-Form dormitory, and Kildare of the Sixth had closed the door. As his footsteps died away, Cardew of the Fourth made his request to the swell of St. Jim's.

"I fail to undahstand you, Cardew!" said Arthur Augustus in freezing tones.

"Don't I make myself clear?" yawned Cardew. "I feel just like smokin' a fag before going to sleep. So I'm askin' you for one."

"If you are implyin' that I am likely to have smokes about me, Cardew, I shall feel bound to turn out of bed and give you a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Then I withdraw the implication on the spot, old bean," said Cardew. "I wouldn't give you all that trouble for worlds; and besides, think how your beauty would be spoiled. Isn't it true that you've been run in by a prefect for smokin'?"

"Shut up, Cardew," said Levison of the Fourth. "Why?" asked Cardew. "It's the talk of the House, Gussy has lectured me for smokin' a lot of times, and now he's taken up the bad habit in his old age, why shouldn't I ask him for a fag?"

"Cheese it, fathead!" said Clive. "I've jolly well heard about it," chuckled Mellish. "Knox of the Sixth ran him in. I heard him telling Cutts that D'Arcy got off by telling whoppers. He was speaking loud enough for a dozen fellows to hear."

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Cardew, if D'Arcy won't lend you a fag, I jolly well will!" squeaked Baggy Trimble. "I've got some! At least, D'Arcy's minding them for me."

"You fat wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus. "It was your packet of beastly cigawettes that the wottah Knox saw, and he fancied it was mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to laugh at in that, you asses! If Waitlon hadn't taken my word that the beastly things were not mine, I should have got into a feahful wow," said Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Well, where are they?" asked Trimble. "You've got to give them back to me, you know. I never gave you those cigarettes. I simply handed them over to you to mind while that brute Kildare was after me. Where are they?" "They are in Waitlon's studay, Twimble. You can ask Waitlon for them if you like."

"Mean to say you handed over my cigarettes to Railton?" demanded Baggy Trimble indignantly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you'll jolly well have to pay for them. That packet of fags cost me sixpence!" exclaimed Trimble. "You owe me sixpence, D'Arcy."

"I owe you a feahful thwashin', you fat wottah, and if you don't shut up at once I will get out of bed and pay up."

"All very well to make out that you handed my fags over to Railton," sneered Baggy. "If you've smoked them, you can pay for them. I don't mind your smoking one or two, but bagging the lot is too thick. If you're taking up smoking I've got no objection, but you can't expect me to keep you in cigarettes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful fat wottah—"

"You can call a fellow names," said Trimble, "but what I want is my fags, and I tell you plainly that I'm not going to pay for your smokes. As for handing them over to Railton, you can tell that to the marines."

There was a sound of a fellow getting out of bed. The next moment there was a sound of a fellow being thumped with a pillow. Finally, the voice of Baggy Trimble rang through the dormitory.

"Yaroooh!"
 "There, you fat wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. Swipe! "That's for landin' your filthy cigawettes on me." Swipe! "That's for implyin' that I have smoked them!" Swipe! "And that is for bein' a sneakin', wotten toad!" "Yow-ow-ow-woop!" roared Trimble. "Keep off, you beast!"

"And you haven't really taken up smokin', Gussy?" asked Cardew. "You're not really plunjin' and becomin' a bold bad blade?"

Swipe!
 "Oooooop!" yelled Cardew, as the pillow landed on him. "Why, you silly fathead, what are you up to?" "I am weplyin' to your question, Cardew," answered Arthur Augustus, "and if you wepeat it I will weply again in the same mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Why, y-you cheeky image!" gasped Cardew. "Do you think I'm Trimble to be whacked with a pillow? I'll mop up the dorm with you."

He scrambled furiously out of bed.
 "You are welcome to twy," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I have no objection whatevah to givin' you a feahful thwashin'."

Cardew struck a match and sorted out a candle end. As he lighted it Levison and Clive turned out of bed and collared him.

"Let go, you fools!" shouted Cardew.
 "Back to bed!" said Ernest Levison cheerily.
 "Mind your own business!"
 "It's the business of your pals to see that you don't make a fool of yourself," said Clive, with a grin. "Going back to bed?"

"No!" howled Cardew.
 "Then you'll be put. Heave ahead, Levison!"
 Cardew struggled furiously. But his two chums were too much for him, and he was whirled off the floor and landed on his bed with a heavy bump. Levison and Clive sat on him there.

"Will you let a fellow gerrup?" howled Cardew.
 "Not till you promise to stay in bed," said Levison.
 "Well, I won't."
 "Then we'll sit on you till you do."
 "I'm going to punch that silly chump's head!" roared Cardew.

"Bow-wow!"
 "If you don't let me get up I'll—"
 "You'll what?" grinned Clive.
 "I'll promise to stay in bed, ass!" said Cardew unexpectedly.

Levison and Clive detached themselves and went back to bed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was not finished yet.

"While I've got this pillow weady I should like to know whethah there is any cthah fellow in this dorm who pwe-sumes to accuse me of smokin'," he said.

"Well, I've seen smoking going on in your study," said Dick Julian.

"Bai Jove! I am surprisid to heah you make such an uttahly unfounded statement, Julian. What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say," answered Julian. "I don't mean you, Gussy, but I've certainly seen smoking going on in Study No. 6."

"Do you mean me?" hooted Blake.
 "Not you, old bean."
 "Me!" hooted Herries.
 "Not at all, old fellow."
 "Then you mean me?" demanded Dig.

"Oh, no!"
 "Bai Jove! Then what the thump do you mean, Julian?"
 "The chimney!"
 "Wha-a-at?"

"Twice, at least, I've seen the chimney smoking in your study."

"You—you—you uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. And he went back to bed.

CHAPTER 6. The Big Idea!

TOM MERRY smiled. Manners and Lowther followed his example.

The Terrible Three were strolling in the quad in break the next morning, when they came on Arthur Augustus. The swell of the Fourth was not looking his usual placid and reposeful self. His noble brow was

corrugated—there was a glint in his eye behind his eyeglass. In fact, he looked a good deal like the Alpine gentleman in the poem, whose brow was set and whose eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

Something, evidently, had disturbed the lofty serenity of the swell of St. Jim's. And the Terrible Three bore down on him to inquire the cause.

"Wherefore this frowning brow, O Augustus?" asked Monty Lowther gravely.

"Pway don't wot, deah boys. The fact is, I was thinkin' of thwashin' Knox."

The Terrible Three jumped.
 "Thrashing Knox!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Help!" murmured Manners.
 "Well, the advice of this Co. on that subject is brief but to the point," said Tom. "Don't!"

"You see, a man who punches a prefect gets sacked from the school," said Lowther. "What should we do without our Gussy? What would St. Jim's be like without its comic relief?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"
 "Besides, you couldn't thrash one end of Knox, you know," said Manners. "We're aware, of course, that you are a terrific fighting man, Gussy. But, really, a Sixth Form man is a large proposition for a Fourth Form kid."

Arthur Augustus nodded thoughtfully.
 "I am awah that there are difficulties in the way," he assented. "Knox would be watah big for me to tackle. And there is a vevy switw wule against hittin' pwefects! Still, what is a fellow to do?"

"But what has Knox done?" asked Tom soothingly. "We know he's a bully, and a first-class bounder, and a rank outsider. But that's nothing new."

"He has attacked my weputation."

"Oh, my hat!"
 Arthur Augustus detailed the story of Trimble and the smokes, and its unexpected outcome. The chums of the Shell listened with all the gravity they could muster. To them the episode had a humorous side, which was quite lost on Gussy.

"You see, Waitton saw how it was; but that wottah Knox persists in wegardin' me as a 'smokay boundah,'" said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I tweat him and his opinions with pwopah contempt. But he has the cheek to spwead wound what he thinks of me. A lot of fellows have got hold of it, and they are chippin' me about it. That's a thing no fellow can stand."

"I say, Gussy!" shouted Mellish of the Fourth from a distance. "Can you lend a fellow a fag?"

Mellish departed in haste without waiting for a reply. Arthur Augustus breathed hard, and his cheeks crimsoned.

"That's the sort of thing," he said. "That cad Knox has started it. I see no wescource but to thwash Knox. Blake and Hewwies and Dig are against it. But what is a fellow to do?"

"Ham! I don't think I should thrash a Sixth Form prefect, old chap," said Tom Merry gravely. "It's quite outside the rules. Why not treat Knox with contempt? The proverb says that contempt will pierce the shell of the tortoise."

"Pewwaps; but I don't think it will have any effect on Knox," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "I came across the cad this mornin', and gave him a vevy contemptuous look; but so far as I observed, he did not even notice it."

The Shell fellows suppressed their smiles.
 "And that is not all," continued D'Arcy. "The fellow is such a wotten outsiders, you know, that he weally believes this wot. And he is twyin' to catch me out. I went into my studay this mornin' and found that somebody had been wootin' about. Of course, it was that wottah, wootin' about for cigawettes. Or pewwaps," added Gussy, with deep sarcasm—"pewwaps he expected to find a bottle of bwandy."
 "Dash it all, that's too thick!" said Tom. "A fellow's study ought to be safe from a prying bounder."

"I have given Twimble a thwashin' with a pillow," said D'Arcy. "But Knox is weally a worse offendah! I cannot help thinkin' that it is up to me to give Knox a thwashin'."

But—
 "There's such a lot of buts," murmured Manners. "As that Indian chup at Greyfriars would say—the butfulness is terrific!"

"Only it's a thing no fellow could stand," said Arthur Augustus. "A fellow has to think of his personal dig, you know."

Monty Lowther had been silent for some moments, which was rather unusual for Monty. There was a glimmer in his eye which told that a jest was on its way.

"I've got it!" said Lowther, breaking his unaccustomed silence.

"Bai Jove! What—"
 "Knox is making a fool of himself," said Monty. "He

hasn't a lot to do in that line—Nature did most of it to start with. But if he's set on doing the little bit that Nature left undone, why shouldn't we help him?"

"I don't quite compwehend—"

"You wouldn't, old bean. Lend me your ear," said Lowther impressively. "Knox has marked you down as a bold, bad man. You don't look the part—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"But Knox has got it into his head that you're a bold, bad man, Gussy. He's looking for evidence to prove it. Well, nice boys like us ought to be willing to help a prefect in the performance of his antics—I mean his duties. Why shouldn't we find some evidence for him?"

"What the thump—" said Tom Merry.

"Why not pull his leg and make him look a fool before the whole House?" said Lowther. "Provide the dear man with a mare's-nest to report to Railton. F'rinstance, suppose he had reason to believe that Gussy was taking to drinking—"

"Dwinkin'!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in horror.

"Just that! He would rush off to Railton to get you sacked. And when it came out that you'd only been drinking ginger-beer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! But how—"

"My dear man, leave the ways and means to me," said Lowther. "I've got the brain for this sort of thing. Suppose Knox caught you with a cigarette in your mouth—"

"I should wufeso to put a cigawette in my mouth for any weason whatsoevah!"

"You can get nice chocolate cigarettes at the tuckshop in Rylcombe, which look exactly like the real article—"

"Oh cwumbis!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "You're a genius, Monty, old man! Why, Knox would be chortled at by the whole school."

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"Bai Jove! It will be wathah funnay to pull the fat-head's leg like that," he said. "Pewways it is a bettah ideah than twashin' him."

"Depend on it, he'll get fed-up in the long run, after a few catches of that kind!" chuckled Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake and Herries and Dig joined the group of juniors. The stunt was elaborated, seven heads drawing together in deep consultation. Seven cheery faces smiled over the prospect of ragging Knox of the Sixth in that harmless and necessary manner.

"Hallo, here comes Knox!" murmured Lowther, as the prefect appeared on the path under the elms. "Don't look round! See how softly he's walking. He's trying to catch what we're saying. Nice man!"

The juniors carefully took no heed of Knox, as he passed within a short distance. But as he passed, Monty Lowther made a remark loud enough to reach his ears.

"Behind the woodshed is a safe place. You see, you have to be careful about the smell of smoke."

Knox walked on with a glint in his eyes.

The bell rang for third school, and seven smiling juniors joined the troop of fellows going to the House. Knox had taken the bait.

After class that morning, Monty Lowther wheeled out his bike, and pedalled away to Rylcombe. When he came back he had a little packet to hand to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Knox of the Sixth, absolutely certain now that his suspicions were well-founded, happily anticipated a catch that day. And seven juniors of the School House also had happy anticipations of a catch!

CHAPTER 7.

A Knock for Knox!

KNOX of the Sixth grinned.

After class that day he was keeping his eyes wide open.

The stars in their courses seemed to be favouring Gerald Knox now. For, at a time when most of the fellows had gone in to tea, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled out of the House on his own.

Knox, hanging about the quad at a little distance, spotted him at once; and, even had he not been suspicious, he could hardly have failed to notice the extreme caution of Gussy's manner. Arthur Augustus, like Moses of old, looked this way and that way. Then he walked off quite briskly, and twice he looked over his shoulder as he went, before he disappeared from view. And the direction he had taken was that of the woodshed.

So it was no wonder that Knox grinned.

He strolled in the same direction, and when he came in sight of the woodshed, out of sight of the school buildings, he trod very softly. D'Arcy was not in sight; but Knox

knew very well where he was. And, with stealthy, cautious steps, Gerald Knox stole round the woodshed to watch the young rascal fairly in the act.

He heard the scratch of a match as he turned the corner. Arthur Augustus stood before his eyes, caught in the act. There was a cigarette in his mouth—and a lighted match in his hand!

He gave a dramatic start at the sight of Knox.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

In an instant he had flung away the match, and the cigarette was jerked from his mouth, and disappeared into his pocket.

"So I've caught you!" said Knox.

"Weally, Knox—"

"Hand over that cigarette at once!" snapped Knox.

"I see no weason for handin' ovah my pwperty to you, Knox," answered Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Keep it in your pocket, then!" said Knox. "I'll take care that you don't throw it away before you see Railton. Come with me!"

"Bai Jove! You are not goin' to take me to Waitlon, Knox!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's.

"I certainly am!" answered Knox, with emphasis. "And we'll see whether your lies will get you off this time!"

"If you insist on takin' me to Waitlon, Knox, of course I am bound to obey the ordahs of a pwefect," said D'Arcy; "but—"

"Shut up, and come on!" growled Knox.

And he dropped his hand on D'Arcy's shoulder, and marched him round the woodshed and back to the House.

Outside the House, quite a number of juniors had gathered, regardless of tea-time. One might almost have fancied that they were waiting there to see what was to be seen. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Blake and Herries and Dig, Levison and Clive, Julian and Talbot of the Shell, and several other fellows, were in the little crowd. And they all stared at Knox as he came up with his hand on D'Arcy's shoulder.

"Hallo, what's the row, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Knox is takin' me to Waitlon," said Arthur Augustus.

"I wathah think he is goin' to weport me for smokin'—"

"I say, Knox, you must be making a mistake!" said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Knox, and he piloted D'Arcy into the House, puzzled by the smiling faces of D'Arcy's friends.

Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth met them as they came in. They looked at the culprit and his captor in surprise.

"Anything up, Knox?" asked Kildare mildly.

"I've caught this young sweep smoking behind the woodshed, and I'm taking him to his Housemaster," answered Knox.

"What? You're making a mistake, old man!"

"I suppose I can believe my eyes!" sneered Knox.

"Have you been smoking, D'Arcy?"

"No, Kildare."

"You'd better be careful, old bean," said Darrell.

"Railton doesn't like being worried for nothing."

"Railton's going to know just what kind of lying young rascal he is!" retorted Knox. "He seems to have pulled the wool over your eyes pretty successfully, Kildare. He can't deceive me quite so easily."

"Well, have your own way; but I fancy you're making a bloomer!" said the captain of St. Jim's.

"Leave that to me!" sneered Knox. And he piloted his catch onward towards Mr. Railton's study.

Tom Merry & Co. followed them into the House. When Knox marched his prisoner into the Housemaster's study, the crowd of juniors gathered outside. More and more

(Continued on next page.)

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fellows came and joined them, wondering what was on. Knox shut the door after entering, but Blake ventured to unlatch it again, and place it ajar. The School House fellows did not want to miss this scene.

Mr. Railton laid down his pen, and breathed hard through his nose. He was busy with Greek papers for the Sixth, and the interruption was annoying.

"What is it now, Knox?" he asked, with a stress on the word "now."

Knox smiled serenely.

"I told you, sir, that, sooner or later, I should catch this junior smoking, and report him to you."

"Well?"

"A few minutes ago I was passing by the woodshed, and I found D'Arcy there, with a cigarette in his mouth, just striking a match to light it."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, greatly shocked.

"The cigarette is now in his pocket, sir!" said Knox, with relish. "I have taken care not to give him an opportunity of throwing it away."

The Housemaster fixed his eyes on D'Arcy.

"Have you anything to say?" he asked sternly.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" answered Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I have not been smokin', sir!"

"You had a cigarette in your mouth, and had struck a match. It amounts to the same thing."

"Not at all, sir. I had no cigarette in my mouth."

Knox almost gasped.

"Why, I saw it!" he shouted. "He dropped it into his pocket, and it is there now! Mr. Railton—"

"Calm yourself, Knox. D'Arcy, do you deny that you had a cigarette in your mouth when Knox states that he saw it there?"

"Yaas, sir! Knox is makin' a mistake," explained Arthur Augustus. "I had somethin' in my mouth, sir; but it was not a cigawettee."

"Indeed; and what was it?"

"A stick of chocolate, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

There was a faint sound of suppressed chuckling in the passage outside. Mr. Railton frowned as he heard it.

"It is false, sir!" exclaimed Knox passionately. "I saw it with my own eyes, and if you make him produce it—"

"Produce it at once, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus felt in his pocket and laid the offending article on the table. Mr. Railton stared at it. In appearance, it was exactly like a cigarette, there was no doubt about that. But when the Housemaster picked it up, the feel of it was quite different. In fact, it was obviously, when he handled it, a stick of chocolate wrapped in thin white paper.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton.

"That is the cigarette, sir—" snapped Knox.

"But it is made of chocolate, Knox!"

"Choc-chick-chocolate—" gasped Knox.

"Yes! There is no harm in this," said Mr. Railton.

"It would be more judicious, D'Arcy, to buy your chocolate in a less suspicious form, and I forbid you to purchase any more articles such as this."

"Vewy well, sir! I shall obey your orders, of course," said Arthur Augustus meekly. "But so fah, sir, there has been no wule against a fellow buyin' chocolates."

"Quite so, quite so," said the Housemaster hastily.

"But—but I saw him strike a match to—light it!" gasped Knox, in bewilderment.

"He could not possibly have lighted this stick of chocolate with a match, Knox. Nevertheless, why did you strike the match, D'Arcy?"

"Because I heard Knox comin', sir, and knew that he was spyin' on me," answered D'Arcy calmly.

"What? What?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"There is no wule against a fellow stwikin' a match, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "There was no dangah of anythin' catchin' fire—especially the cigawettee, sir."

"Silence!" boomed Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy, you may go! Go at once, and tell those juniors to leave the passage immediately."

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus left the study with a cheerful face. Outside, Tom Merry & Co. gathered round him and marched him out into the quad, with roars of laughter. Arthur Augustus was chuckling.

"Bai Jove, you fellows, you should have seen Knox's face—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was quite gween, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I wathah wondah what Wailton is sayin' to Knox now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Whatever it was that Railton had to say to Knox, it could not have been of a pleasant nature. The prefect was looking quite sickly when he left the Housemaster's study.

Kildare gave him an inquiring glance as he passed. "Well, how did it turn out?" he asked. "The fags seem to be frightfully amused about something."

Knox did not answer. He stamped by, scowling, and disappeared, leaving Kildare smiling. And as he went, a roar from the quadrangle rang in his ears—not pleasantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 8.

Tom Merry to the Rescue.

"HOLD on, fathead!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hold on!" shouted Tom.

Arthur Augustus paused in surprise. It was Wednesday, and a half-holiday, and Gussy was on his way to Wayland. He was bound on a visit to his tailor, for which reason his chums had declined to accompany him. Blake and Herries and Digby were not keenly interested in suitings and trouserings. They found more interest in a rag on Figgins & Co. of the New House, and Arthur Augustus walked to Wayland town on his little own. As he was about to step over a stile that gave on to a footpath across a wide field, Tom Merry & Co. came in sight in the lane, and Tom hailed him excitedly.

Gussy paused on the stile till the Terrible Three came up.

"You ass!" exclaimed Tom. "Keep out of that field. Can't you see the notice—beware of the bull?"

"Bai Jove! I hadn't noticed it, deah boy. But it is all wight—I am not afraid of a bull!" said D'Arcy reassuringly.

"It's Farmer Judson's black bull, you ass, and as likely as not he would toss you over a hedge."

"That's all wight, deah boy. I'm in wathah a huvwuy to get to Wayland, and this short cut saves a quartah of a mile. If I see the black bull, I shall wun like anythin'."

And Arthur Augustus dropped on the inner side of the stile and started walking across Mr. Judson's field.

"Come back, you ass!" shouted Tom.

"Come back, fathead!" roared Manners and Lowther.

Arthur Augustus did not heed. An appointment with a tailor was an appointment with a tailor. On any less important matter, D'Arcy might have listened to the voice of reason. But a lounge suit that was a thing of beauty and promised to be a joy for ever, was growing under the tailor's hands, and Gussy had to be fitted, and a herd of buffaloes would not have stopped him, let alone one black bull.

"The utter ass!" growled Tom Merry, leaning on the stile and watching the elegant figure of the swell of St. Jim's. "Let's hope the bul! is asleep. The frumptions fathead."

The Terrible Three remained watching, rather anxiously. Mr. Judson's black bull was famous in the neighbourhood for his bad temper. People sometimes took a short cut across the field, but they had to be very watchful, and ready to run. It really was not safe, as Mr. Judson's notice-board near the stile plainly stated.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lowther suddenly. "Look!"

"Gussy!" yelled Manners.

Gussy was half-way across the field, when, from a fringe of willows by a pond, a terrifying figure emerged.

It was a magnificent black bull; an enormous animal. Mr. Judson had taken prizes for that bull, but not for his amiable qualities. Even the farmer's men were rather afraid of that bull, and approached him with great caution, and never alone. He looked a magnificent brute, but savage as a wild beast. He had discerned the swell of St. Jim's, and he stood lashing with his stumpy tail, his evil red eyes glittering. Arthur Augustus came to a sudden halt.

The bull was directly in front of him. Arthur Augustus was fearless by nature; he feared no foe of any sort. But even Gussy realised that passing the bull was not to be thought of. The brute was evidently making up his mind to attack, and there was only one thing for Gussy to do. Throwing dignity to the winds and holding on his hat with one hand, Gussy turned and ran back towards the stile.

There was a deep-throated bellow from the bull, a roar that made the blood of the Shell fellows turn almost cold. Then the great brute rushed on the track of the fleeing Fourth-Former.

"Run!" yelled Tom. He clambered on the stile in his alarm and excitement and waved his hand. "Run for it!"

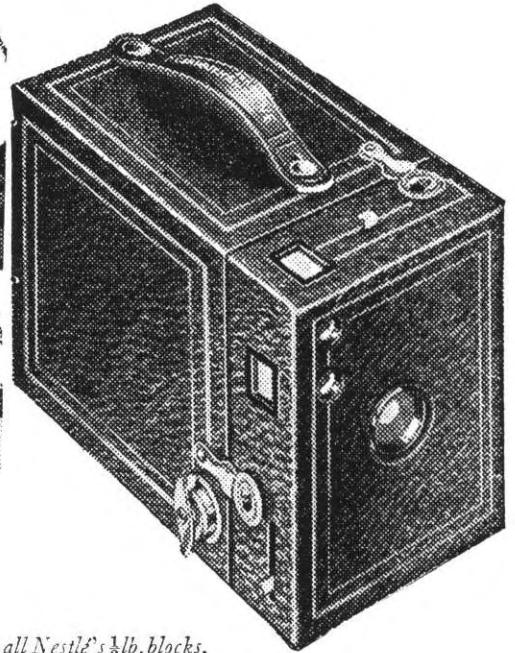
"Put it on!" shrieked Manners.

(Continued on page 12.)

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A Knock-Out for Knox!

(Continued from page 10.)

Arthur Augustus was putting it on. Behind him he heard the heavy thud of thundering hoofs, he could hear the heavy breathing of the ferocious brute. The bull was close behind, and as fast as Gussy ran, the bull ran faster. His head was lowered as he rushed down on the swell of St. Jim's!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom.

He stood on the stile, his face white with anxiety. D'Arcy was racing, but the bull was gaining, and Tom could see that the brute would overtake him before he reached the stile. A feeling almost of sickness came over him at the thought of Gussy flying in the air from the savage horns, to be gored and trampled.

"Tom!" shouted Manners and Lowther together, as the captain of the Shell jumped down into the field.

Tom did not heed them. He tore off his jacket and ran towards D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's, running his hardest, and breathing in great gasps, came tearing up.

"Keep on!" panted Tom.

He ran past Gussy towards the bull.

"Tom!" groaned Lowther. Manners clutched the top bar of the stile, white as a sheet.

Tom Merry, at that moment, was taking his life in his hands.

But though his heart was thumping, his head was steady and cool. Hardly a yard in advance of the thundering bull, he leaped to one side, and tossed his jacket on the lowered horns.

Then he sprang away, barely escaping the mad plunge of the great animal.

There was an infuriated bellow from the bull. The jacket, hooked on his horns, hung over his eyes. The great brute lifted his head, roared and bellowed, and endeavoured to shake off the clinging thing which was blocking his sight. His ferocious rage was almost blood-curdling to watch. He stamped and raged in a circle, trying to clear his eyes.

Arthur Augustus had turned round, with some vague idea in his noble brain of helping Tom Merry. Tom grasped him by the arm, and dragged him on towards the stile.

"Quick!" he panted.

"Oh cwikey! I— Oh cwombs—"

"Quick!" gasped Tom.

Manners and Lowther reached over and grasped them, and fairly dragged them across the stile. They dropped on the safe side, just as the bull succeeded in freeing his head from the clinging jacket.

The great animal glared round with bloodshot eyes, seeking his prey. He came on towards the stile with a terrific rush.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

In his fury, the bull rushed right at the stile, and there was a crash. But the wooden bars, fortunately, were stout and strong, and did not give way. The bull roared again, with pain as well as rage, and stood pawing the ground, glaring at the victims beyond his reach, and bellowing. Far across the fields and meadows rang the din of his fury.

"Oh cwombs!" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "What a weally feahful beast! I am vewy much obliged to you, Tom Mewwy. That howwid bwute would have wuined my twousahs—"

"What?" gasped Tom.

"I have no doubt whatevah, deah boy, that he would have wuined my twousahs if he had tossed me," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Look at his beastly horns!"

"You frabjous ass—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You piffing fathead—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"You—you—you—" gasped Tom Merry. "I've saved your precious trousers—I suppose your idiotic life isn't worth mentioning. Bump him!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you fellows—leggo! I pwotest—yawwooooo! You uttah wuffians!" roared Arthur Augustus, as the three Shell fellows collared him, and bumped him in the lane. "Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"There!" gasped Tom Merry. "That's for being a silly ass! Now give him another for being a frabjous chump."

Bump!

"And now another for being a frabjous fathead!"

Bump!

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"Yawwooh! You feahful wuffians!" roared Arthur Augustus. "You are uttahly wuinin' my twousahs! Yow-ow-ow! I will give you a feahful thwashin' all wound. Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet, his noble face red with wrath. The Terrible Three regarded him smilingly, as he gasped and spluttered. For the moment, Gussy had quite forgotten the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"You—you—you wuffianly wottahs!" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "If you had not shaved my wife—I mean saved my life—I would thwash you, Tom Mewwy. I would weally give you a wecord thwashin'. Go and eat coke, and be blowed to you!"

And Arthur Augustus jammed his hat on his noble head and walked off—taking a longer way round this time.

He was tired of short cuts and black bulls.

The Terrible Three, chuckling, waited by the stile. The black bull wandered away at last; and Tom nipped over the stile and recovered his jacket, jumping back into the lane with it very quickly as a roar resounded over the field.

"My hat! It's in a lovely state!" he said ruefully. "But I suppose it was better than letting the bull gore that fathead." And having dusted his jacket, and made it look as respectable as possible, Tom put it on, and the chums of the Shell resumed their ramble.

CHAPTER 9.

Which Black Bull?

"JOLLY old Knox!" remarked Lowther.

The Terrible Three smiled.

Knox of the Sixth was not looking jolly. It was a couple of hours after the adventure with Mr. Judson's black bull; and the chums of the Shell were turning their footsteps homeward towards St. Jim's and tea, when they came on Knox of the Sixth. The prefect looked far from jolly. There was a scowl on his face, which deepened at the sight of the three cheery faces.

"Poor old Knox!" grinned Manners. "He's been after Gussy ever since he caught him with a chocolate cigarette; but he hasn't had any luck. Blake told me he was rooting about after them this afternoon, before Gussy went out; I suppose he hoped to catch them playing nap, or smoking Havana cigars, or mopping up brandy-and-soda."

The juniors chuckled. The adventure of the chocolate cigarette had not cured Knox of his suspicions, or convinced him that he was wasting his time on Study No. 6. On the other hand, it had made him more vicious and obstinate. The whole House had laughed over that incident, from the Sixth to the Third; and Figgins & Co. had taken the story over to the New House, and the New House had laughed as heartily as the School House. Which was extremely unpleasant for Knox, and made him yearn, with a deep yearning, to catch that young rascal D'Arcy in the act of wrongdoing, and prove it against him beyond doubt. That there was nothing to catch him in, Knox refused to believe. His opinion on that subject was firmly fixed, and there are none so blind as those that will not see.

He came striding on, and stopped as he came up to the Shell fellows. He gestured to them to stop, and the three juniors came to a halt. Knox was a prefect, and had to be given his head.

"You've been out all the afternoon?" asked Knox.

"Most of it," said Tom.

"Have you seen D'Arcy?"

The juniors smiled. Evidently Knox was "rooting."

"Yes, we saw him some time ago," answered Tom.

"Where has he been this afternoon?"

"In Wayland."

"Wayland!" repeated Knox suspiciously. "There's a good many places in Wayland that are out of bounds."

Monty Lowther closed one eye at his chums—the eye that was furthest from Knox. Tom Merry and Manners stood silent, leaving the talking to Monty. They knew that one of his humorous efforts was coming.

"I don't think you ought to ask us questions about a chap, Knox," said Lowther argumentatively. "We can't tell you whoppers; and we can't give a man away. It places us in an awkward position."

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"That means that D'Arcy has been out of bounds, and that you know all about it," he sneered.

"That isn't a fair question," said Lowther. "Railton wouldn't ask us questions like that."

Tom and Manners said nothing. They could see—though Knox was too suspicious, and too eager for information, to see—that the playful Monty was drawing him on.

"Well, you'll kindly remember that you're talking to a Sixth-Form prefect," said Knox. "I want to know where you saw D'Arcy."

Monty Lowther hesitated. His hesitation was well done; in fact, in the best style of the Junior Dramatic Society. "Out with it!" snapped Knox. "I want a plain answer, without any beating about the bush. Where did you see D'Arcy?"

"I—I—if we're bound to say—" stammered Lowther.

"Out with it!"

"Well, we saw him coming away from the black bull," admitted Lowther.

"The Black Bull!" almost shouted Knox.

His eyes fairly flashed. The Black Bull, in Wayland, was the most disreputable public house for many miles round. A few terms before, a St. Jim's man had been expelled for visiting the Black Bull and the dingy set of sporting men who foregathered there.

That Monty was alluding to Mr. Judson's black bull, Knox, of course, had not the faintest idea. Tom Merry and Manners caught on at once; and played up automatically, as it were.

"Shut up, Monty!" exclaimed Tom.

"Sneak!" hissed Manners fiercely.

"Oh, I—I say!" exclaimed Lowther. "I—I didn't mean to sneak, of course, but Knox asked me, and—and he's a prefect."

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Leave Lowther alone, Tom Merry!" exclaimed Knox. "This is not what would be called sneaking. It's a serious matter, and you're bound to help a prefect who's trying to catch a young rascal who's disgracing his school. You saw D'Arcy coming away from the Black Bull, Lowther?"

"Don't answer," said Tom.

"Well, look here, how can I help answering?" demanded Lowther warmly. "Besides, you yourself tried to keep D'Arcy away from the black bull. You know you did, and he wouldn't take any notice."

Knox's look was gloating.

"You'd better speak out plainly," he said. "This ~~matter~~ is pretty serious. You tried to keep D'Arcy away from the Black Bull, Merry?"

"Ye-e-es," faltered Tom. His ~~hesitation~~ was as artistic as Lowther's. "I—I thought I ought to stop him, if I could."

"And he refused to take any notice?"

"Yes," admitted Tom.

"And after that you saw him coming away from the Black Bull?"

"Ye-e-es."

"All three of you saw him?"

"I suppose we may as well admit it now," said Manners. "We all three saw him. After all, it's his own look-out. We all tried to keep him away from the black bull in the first place, and he took no notice."

"Very well," said Knox. "I shall require you to repeat this statement later in Mr. Railton's presence."

"We don't want to say anything to Railton about D'Arcy," objected Lowther. "We're not sneaks, Knox."

"We don't want to waste Railton's time," urged Manners. "It's hardly fair on me," said Tom Merry. "What will all the fellows think, Knox?"

"You'll come to Railton's study after tea," said Knox, unheeding. "I shall take D'Arcy there immediately he comes in. You will be required to give evidence that you saw him going to the Black Bull, that you tried to stop him, that he went all the same, and that you saw him coming away afterwards. That's what you've told me, and what you've got to tell Railton."

"It's true," said Tom; "but—"

"That's enough."

Knox walked away, no longer scowling. He was looking quite merry and bright. The game was in his hands at last. He was going to convict a disreputable young rascal of pub haunting, with overwhelming evidence to prove his guilt. And this was an awfully serious matter, for it was the "sack" for such an offence as this. And when the young scoundrel was expelled it would be demonstrated to all whom it might concern that Knox had been right

(Continued on next page.)

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all along the line—that Knox, with his unusual perspicacity had seen what other prefects, and even the Housemaster, could not see. No wonder Gerald Knox walked away as if he was walking on air.

The Terrible Three gazed at one another as Knox departed. They said no word till he was out of hearing. But their gaze was expressive.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" said Tom Merry, at last. "Is that born idiot really going to take Gussy before the Housemaster, and us as witnesses, because Monty made a fatheaded pun?"

"Is he really fool enough?" gasped Manners.

"My dear men and brothers, he's fool enough for anything," said Monty, with a chuckle. "He's glorying in this. This is going to set him up as the prefect who really knows things. The man who cannot be deceived. He knows all about the Black Bull in Wayland. I believe he's been there himself at times."

"But—but fancy Railton's face when we tell him it was Farmer Judson's black bull that we tried to keep Gussy away from," gurgled Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear, it's too rich!" gasped Manners.

And at the thought of the coming scene in Mr. Railton's study the Terrible Three threw themselves on the grass, and fairly kicked up their heels in a paroxysm of merriment which would probably have made Gerald Knox a little doubtful, had he beheld it. But Knox of the Sixth was already well on his way back to St. Jim's, with a really startling report for his Housemaster this time.

CHAPTER 10.

Before the Beak!

"HERE he comes!"

"He, he, he!" gurgled Baggy Trimble.

"Here's Gussy!"

"Here's the jolly old one-and-only!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lifted his eyebrows in surprise. He was accustomed to receiving a certain amount of attention as the best-dressed and most elegant fellow in the Lower School at St. Jim's. But he was not accustomed to making a sensation like this.

Mr. Railton was taking the House call-over in the quad, and the fellows were gathered under the tall library windows, the usual place for gathering when roll-call was taken in the open air.

D'Arcy looked from one face to another, perplexed. Evidently his arrival caused a sensation. Why, he could not guess.

"Safe, sound, and sober?" asked Crooke.

"Weally, Cwooke—"

"He's tight!" squeaked Baggy Trimble. "Look at that flush in his face! He's red! That's because he's tight."

"Bai Jove! You blithewin' young ass, Twimble—"

"What on earth have you been up to, Gussy?" exclaimed Julian.

"Nothin', deah boy!"

"You've been to Wayland?" asked Levison of the Fourth.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Out of bounds?" asked Clive.

"Wathah not. My tailah in the High Steet is not out of bounds," said the perplexed Gussy. "What are you dwivin' at?"

"Has your tailor changed his quarters to a pub?" asked Cardew.

"I wogard that as a wiculous question, Cardew. If my tailah had his quartahs in a pub I should wufuse to wogard him any longah as my tailah."

"You haven't been pub-hauntin'?" jeered Crooke.

"That question is an insult, Cwooke. You have only to wepeat it, if you want your nose punched!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Well, it's all over the school that you've been nailed coming out of the Black Bull at Wayland," sneered Crooke, Arthur Augustus jumped.

"What?" he yelled.

"Of course, we know there's nothing in it, old man," said Ernest Levison. "But it's all over the place. Fellows are saying, right and left, that Knox of the Sixth caught you at the Black Bull."

"Bai Jove! It must be some wotten joke!" said D'Arcy.

"If Knox of the Sixth said anythin' of the sort, he was lyin'!"

"I heard that two or three fellows saw him," remarked Mellish. "Some Shell men, from what I heard."

"I heard that it was Tom Merry and his lot," grinned

Cardew. "What have you been up to, Gussy? I think you ought to remember that you're a distant relation of mine, and remember how particular I am in such matters."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"It was Tom Merry gave you away," said Clampe of the Shell positively. "I heard Knox say so to Kildare. He didn't mind me hearing—in fact, I'm jolly sure that he was talking out loud, specially to be heard."

"That is uttah wubbish," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy would not give a man away. Besides, there was nothin' to give away. Pewwaps Knox has been discovahin' a mare's nest again."



Knox came along just in time to see a ciggy!

"Very likely," said Levison. "But he seems jolly sure about it; for it's all come from Knox. He seems to want the whole House to know about it."

"Weally, it is vewy perplexin'," said Arthur Augustus. "But I can see that I shall be dwiven to thwash Knox in the long wun."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here comes Railton," said Cardew. "He looks jolly serious about something."

"It's about D'Arcy," chuckled Trimble. "It's rather serious, sacking a man. Of course, D'Arcy will be sacked."

"You uttah ass!"

Mr. Railton came through the groups of fellows; and many eyes turned on him. It was seen at once that the Housemaster's face was unusually grave. Few of the fellows doubted that that unusual gravity was caused by the report he had received from Knox of the Sixth concerning Arthur Augustus. Gussy himself, in fact, was the only fellow who doubted.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came along; and their faces were quite bright and cheerful. Blake and Herries and Digby arrived with them; and they were actually smiling. As they were Gussy's special chums,

they might have been expected to look concerned, in the circumstances—but they didn't look in the least concerned. Probably the Terrible Three had already given them inside information.

"Oh, here you are, Gussy!" said Blake, smacking his noble chum on the shoulder. "Glad to see you again after your wild time."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silence, there!" called out Kildare of the Sixth.

Mr. Railton, standing on the library steps, glanced over the crowd of School House men. But he did not, as usual, proceed immediately with call-over. He had a



Gussy's mouth, and a lighted match in his hand!

painful duty to perform before the fellows were dismissed. His keen eye singled out D'Arcy in the ranks of the Fourth.

"D'Arcy!"

"Adsum!" answered Arthur Augustus.

He was rather surprised to hear his name called first; but he answered as usual.

"Come here, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!"

Arthur Augustus walked cheerfully forward, and stopped at the step on which the Housemaster stood. Every eye was fixed on him. Knox of the Sixth gave him a look that was positively gloating.

Mr. Railton's keen eyes scanned the junior's face. If Arthur Augustus was a shady character, covering up rascalities with a consummate hypocrisy, he certainly did not look the part. But Knox's report, and the names of his witnesses, had fairly staggered the Housemaster this time.

"D'Arcy, I have received a serious report concerning you from a prefect!" said Mr. Railton, in a voice that was heard by the whole House assembled before the library steps.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances that were absolutely blissful. They had expected an inquiry in Railton's study. But to have it at call-over, in open quad, before all the House, really put the lid on. They looked forward gleefully to seeing Knox's face, under that sea of eyes, when the absurd truth came out.

"Yaas, sir!" said Gussy calmly.

"You have been out of bounds this afternoon?"

"No, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"To my tailah's at Wayland, sir."

"It has been reported to me that you have visited a low public house at Wayland, and were seen coming away from the place."

"Indeed, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Do you deny it?"

"I twust, sir, that I am not expected to deny so wickidulous a thing!" answered Gussy calmly. "I should pwefer to tweat it with contempt."

It was a serious moment; but smiles passed along many faces. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could always be relied on to deal with any matter in his own inimitable way.

"I must ask you to be explicit, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton coldly. "The matter is serious. You may be expelled from the school. You certainly will be expelled if you have been guilty of the conduct ascribed to you. Have you, or have you not, visited a low resort in Wayland known as the Black Bull?"

"No, sir!"

Mr. Railton glanced round at Knox. The prefect stepped forward. He made an effort to look serious and solemn. It was not the moment for exhibiting his gloating triumph. There was a breathless hush in the crowd.

"Knox, you reported to me—"

"If Knox has weported anythin' of the kind, sir, he was speakin' untwuthfully!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Silence!"

"My report to you, sir, was founded on the statement made by three juniors in the Shell," said Knox, with a venomous glance at D'Arcy. "I had reason—or so I considered—to keep observation on D'Arcy this afternoon. When he left the school alone, without his friends, I had no doubt that he was going to some questionable place. This suspicion was strengthened by his deliberately dodging out of my sight—"

"I did nothin' of the kind!" interrupted Arthur Augustus. "I took some short cuts because I was in a hurwy. I did not even know that you were spyin' on me, Knox."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" boomed Mr. Railton.

"Silence!" echoed the prefects.

Silence was restored; and Knox continued.

"I was looking for D'Arcy, when I came on three boys of the Shell; and they, in answer to my questions, admitted, unwillingly, that they knew where D'Arcy was. They stated that they tried their hardest to keep him from going to the Black Bull; that he had disregarded them and gone; and that they had seen him coming away from the place afterwards. They were extremely unwilling to give me this information, but they gave it; and I warned them that they would be required to repeat it in your presence, sir."

"Quite so. And the boys?"

Every head was bent forward to catch the names.

"Merry, Manners, and Lowther, sir!"

All eyes turned in the direction of the Terrible Three.

"Merry, Manners, and Lowther, step forward!" said Mr. Railton.

And in the midst of a dead silence the Terrible Three came forward.

CHAPTER 11. Not a Pub!

TOM MERRY & CO. were looking as grave as possible. They smiled inwardly; outward smiles were barred at such a moment of awful solemnity. The dead silence was broken by a murmur from some of the Fourth.

"Sneaks!"

The Terrible Three heard that murmur; but they did not seem disturbed thereby. Most of the fellows gazed at them in silence. They simply could not understand the position, when three of the most decent fellows in the House came forward to give information against a friend. But some of the keener fellows suspected a rag.

"Silence!" called out Mr. Railton, frowning.

But, as a matter of fact, the Housemaster's look at

the chums of the Shell was much less kind than usual. He had a very strong opinion on the subject of tale-bearing. A fellow who gave another fellow away, for any reason, was not likely to find favour in Victor Railton's eyes. Still, he had no choice but to act on the report that had been made to him.

"Merry, you have heard Knox's statement. Kindly repeat to me, before all the House, what you stated to Knox."

"It was really I, sir, that made the statement," said Monty Lowther. "My friends only backed me up."

"Then you may speak, Lowther. No doubt you considered it your duty to give this information to a prefect," said Mr. Railton dryly. "Having given it, you must now repeat it to me."

"I thought I was bound to answer Knox's questions, sir, as he is a prefect," said Monty artlessly. "I have always been told, sir, that a Sixth Form prefect must be obeyed by all Lower boys, and being very respectful by nature—"

"Kindly come to the point, Lowther! You informed Knox that you had seen D'Arcy of the Fourth Form coming away from the Black Bull."

"Knox asked me if I'd seen him, sir—"

"Answer yes or no."

"Yes, sir."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

He stared at Monty Lowther like a fellow in a dream.

"You tried, in the first place, to keep D'Arcy from going to the Black Bull?"

"Yes, sir! We all tried. We called him a fathead!"

"And an ass!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Railton. "Lowther, kindly keep to the point. I do not desire to hear what ridiculous expressions you may have used. You state that you endeavoured to keep D'Arcy from carrying out his intention?"

"Yes, sir!"

"You say the same, Merry and Manners?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"But he persisted in spite of your advice?"

"Yes, sir!"

"After that you saw him coming away from the Black Bull?"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Railton turned sternly to Arthur Augustus, who was standing with his eyes and mouth wide open, staring blankly at his friends of the Shell. Arthur Augustus was wondering whether this was some weird dream.

"D'Arcy, you have heard the statements of these three Shell boys. Do you still deny that you visited a public house this afternoon?"

"Oh, yaas, sir! I have not been anywhah near a pub, sir! I weally think that these chaps must be dweamin', or off their wockahs!"

"Don't you remember, Gussy?" exclaimed Lowther. "Why, we all three tried hard to keep you away from the black bull—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We told you it wasn't safe," said Tom Merry. "Why, I pointed out the notice-board to you!"

"The—the what?" ejaculated D'Arcy, gaping in his amazement.

"The notice-board! There was a notice up, 'Beware of the bull!'"

"And that bull's well known to be dangerous," said Manners.

"And you had to run," said Lowther. "You surely remember running away from the black bull, Gussy?"

"But—but that was Farmer Judson's black bull!"

stuttered Arthur Augustus. "That was a fewocious quad-wuped, not a public house."

"Who said it was a public house?" asked Lowther. "We never told Knox anything about a public house. We told him we saw you coming from the black bull, as we were bound to answer his questions, he being a prefect."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped, and then he grinned. His noble brain caught on to the joke at last.

Mr. Railton had listened to this interchange of remarks with an extraordinary expression on his face. He interrupted at this point.

"Lowther!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"What does this mean? Knox's report to me was that you saw D'Arcy coming away from a public house called the Black Bull, a low resort in Wayland."

"Wa-a-a-was it, sir?" ejaculated Lowther, in dramatic surprise. "I certainly never told Knox anything of the kind, sir!"

"Certainly not!" said Tom Merry warmly. "I most certainly never mentioned a public house to Knox."

"Neither did I, sir!" said Manners. "Knox asked us where we'd seen D'Arcy, and we told him. We never saw him in Wayland at all—we haven't been in Wayland this afternoon. We saw him coming away from the black bull—Mr. Judson's black bull—"

"Mr. Judson's black bull?" repeated the Housemaster dazedly.

"Yes, sir!"

There was a dead silence for a second or two. Then from the whole assembled House there burst a roar of irresistible laughter. Even the seniors, even the stately prefects themselves, joined in it. They could not help it. The whole House rocked with laughter.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole School House, and the quadrangle rang and echoed with it. Mr. Ratcliff, who was calling over his House on the steps of the New House, stared across with a frown. New House men turned their heads and craned their necks to see what was going on. Even the Head looked out of his study window in wonder. Seldom had St. Jim's echoed to such a Homeric burst of hilarity.

For some minutes Mr. Railton strove in vain to restore silence. Even the prefects were yelling with laughter, and failed to back him up. But something like order was restored at last.

Knox was the only fellow who did not laugh. He was not feeling like laughing. His feelings were indescribable.

"Silence, silence!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "The next boy who laughs will be caned! Silence! Lowther, tell me at once what happened while you were out of gates this afternoon, and be explicit."

"Certainly, sir!" said Monty meekly. "We were going for a stroll, and admiring the beauties of Nature, sir—"

"I warn you to keep to the point, Lowther."

"And we saw D'Arcy getting over a stile into Mr. Judson's field, sir. Knowing that the black bull was there, we ran up and warned him. We called him an ass and a fathead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Be brief, Lowther."

"You see, sir, that bull is rather dangerous," said Lowther innocently. "So we tried our hardest to keep D'Arcy away from the black bull, just as we told Knox. A little later we saw him coming away from the black bull—just as we told Knox. That's all, sir. When Knox asked

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CLAIM COUPON No. 10

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Ask two chums, to whom you have shown your name in this list, to sign in the space provided below.

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M. J. Armstrong, 68, Elmfield Avenue, Teddington, Middlesex; H. Attaway, The Nook, Point Out Road, Bassett, Southampton; E. Bailey, 12, Adams Street, Milton, Staffs; E. Bristow, 45, Harbinger Road, Millwall, E.14; J. Brown, 5, Selborne Street, Walsall, Staffs; C. H. Chatton, Hillside, Hassall, Sandbach, Cheshire; C. Cockshull, 31, Wharley Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22; D. M. Colquhoun, 48, Farington Street, Dundee, Scotland; A. Cooper, 17, Litchfield Road, Sutton; E. Duerinck, Waerlooshofstreet, 22, Antwerp (Kiel), Belgium; L. Elkins, Nyewood, Westleigh Avenue, Coulsdon; E. Evans, 47, Alfred Stre Bow, E.3; R. Fairbank, Moly Hill House, Newhey, Lanes; R. Ferrier, 21, Powis Square, Brighton; E. R. Ferry, 26, Park Parade, Wembley, Middx.; R. Gilbert, 128, Ripon Road, Winton, Bournemouth; W. Gordon, Lough Road, Islandmagee, Belfast; J. A. Hall, 25, Newfield Road, Coventry; B. Hinds, 148, Palace View, Bromley, Kent; C. J. Howlett, Les Blanchettes Cottage, St. Martins, Guernsey; T. Humphries, 4, Charlemont Road, Clontarf, Dublin; J. Ives, 4, May Crescent, Lincoln; J. J. Jones, 33, Broad Street, Griffithstown, Pontypool; H. Kay, 62 Ward, Hope Hospital, Pendleton; D. Kellock, Base, Fort William; W. C. Liddiard, 12, Cadvan Road, Ely, Cardiff; H. Lines, 100, Robin Good Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham; D. Massey, 35, Wickham Avenue, Bexhill-on-Sea; J. Merrick, 15, Fortneys Lane, Cork, Ireland; E. Moore, 16, Marsden Road, Blackpool, S.S.; J. H. Neale, 35, Myrtle Gardens, Hanwell, W.7; J. T. Owens, 2, Limerick Road, Redland, Bristol; A. Pool, 2, Bedford Row, Tavistock Road, Plymouth; L. J. Pope, 158, Westmount Road, Eltham, S.E.8; H. Proctor, 20, Fox Street, Pitsmoor, Sheffield; L. Rees, Woodlands, Resolven, near Neath; G. Robinson, 35, Edward Street, Grimsby; A. J. Rowsell, 27, Anston Avenue, Worksop; J. Shuter, 24, Shelley Road, Oxford; D. W. Smith, 40, Reading Road, South Shields; S. Smith, 22, St. Peters Row, E. Gt. Yarmouth; K. W. Taylor, Elmore, Roman Road, Salisbury; C. Thomas, 27, Dyffryn Place, Gorseinon, Glam; G. H. Thompson, 30, Penman Street, North Shields; P. Vernon, 89, City Road, Park, Sheffield; G. W. Walker, Westmorland Villa, Westmorland Road, Huyton, near Liverpool; D. Ward, 15, Brooks

Hall Road, Ipswich; J. Williams, Old Police Station, Crossash, near Monmouth; F. Wilton, Cleave, Wear Giffard, Bideford; W. G. Wright, 14, Garfield Street, Bedford; M. Zolofsky, 38, Bourverie Road, Stoke Newington, N.16.

All claims must be submitted before Thursday, June 26th, after which date the Gifts claimed will be forwarded and no further claims be recognised.

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21-6-30.

A KNOCK-OUT FOR KNOX!

(Continued from page 16.)

us whether we had seen him, of course, we told him all about it, as we were bound to do, Knox being a prefect."

The House nearly went into convulsions again, as they listened to Monty's artless explanation.

Mr. Railton breathed hard and deep.

"Did you deliberately mislead Knox, Lowther? Was it your desire to give him a wrong impression?"

"Oh, sir! How could I mislead a Sixth Form prefect, who is so much older and cleverer than a Shell fellow?"

"Were you aware, Lowther, that there is a low resort in Wayland by the name of the Black Bull?"

"I have heard of it, sir; but, of course, I don't know so much about such places as Knox does, not being a prefect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What, what? Lowther, you must have been aware that Knox misunderstood you—that he thought you were alluding to a public house in Wayland. You should have corrected that false impression at once—"

"I should think it cheeky, sir, to correct a Sixth Form prefect," said Lowther humbly. "I respect the prefects too much, sir."

Mr. Railton breathed hard again. He gave Knox of the Sixth one look that almost withered that wretched individual. The Housemaster was crimson with vexation. The whole scene had become utterly ridiculous. Knox, obviously was being "guyed" by these cheeky juniors, and the Housemaster was sharing that unenviable distinction with him.

"Go back to your places!" rapped out Mr. Railton. "Roll-call will now be taken. Silence!"

The Shell fellows dutifully faded away. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not dismissed so easily.

"Pway allow me to speak, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's respectfully but firmly. "I have been accused of wotten conduct. I have a wight to know whethah that wotten accusation has been withdrawn."

"Certainly it is withdrawn, D'Arcy! The whole thing was a mistake—a foolish misunderstanding. Go to your place!"

"I am bound to remark——"

"That will do!"

"Yaas, sir. But I am bound to remark that an apology is due to me. Knox had no wight whatevah to suppose that I had gone pub-hauntin'. It was a wotten insult! And he is bound to apologise!"

"D'Arcy, you need say no more. You are completely exasperated, and Knox, I am sure, is sorry. Now go to your place."

"Vewy well, sir."

Arthur Augustus trotted back to the Fourth, who received him with open arms and broad grins. Blake snacked him on one shoulder, Herries on the other, and Dig slapped him on the back. The juniors could have hugged him. Quite innocently on his own part, Gussy had been the means of making the bully of the Sixth look an absolute idiot before the whole House. Every fellow in the Lower School was rejoicing, and even his fellow-prefects had no sympathy to waste on Knox. From the head of the House to the smallest fag, the bully of the Sixth was an object of ruthless ridicule.

Mr. Railton proceeded hurriedly with roll-call. He was anxious to get it over, and the grinning House dismissed. When it was finished, he went very quickly into the School House, and he signed to Knox to follow him. Knox followed with lagging steps. The interview before him was not an attractive one.

The crowd broke up, with loud chortles. In the Housemaster's study, Mr. Railton talked to Knox for a steady ten minutes, and every word went home like a punch on the solar plexus. And while Railton talked, Knox had the pleasure, or otherwise, of hearing howls of laughter from without.

"But—but—but they tricked me deliberately, sir!" Knox gasped. "Lowther knew—Merry knew—Manners knew—they all knew! I—I—I was taken in! It was a trick—a practical joke——"

"I am well aware of that, Knox. You laid yourself open to this absurd practical joke by your prying, suspicious methods——"

"Mr. Railton!" gasped Knox.

"I cannot blame these juniors for making a fool of you when you persisted in making a fool of yourself," said Mr. Railton. "Much more serious is the fact that you have made a fool of me, your Housemaster. The boys were naturally indignant at your unfounded and miserably suspicious, and they led you on to place yourself in a ridiculous position—and you fully deserved it!"

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Knox spluttered.

"I do not blame them—I blame you! And I forbid you to bring me any further reports concerning D'Arcy. The whole House is laughing at you, Knox—and I dislike the sight of the office of prefect being brought into ridicule. You had better leave D'Arcy severely alone, and you may then perhaps escape making a fool of yourself again before the whole House."

Knox of the Sixth almost crawled from the study when the Housemaster had finished with him. He was feeling quite feeble.

CHAPTER 12.

What Trimble Saw!

TOM MERRY & CO. laughed loud and long. The whole House laughed. The New House, when they heard the story of the black bull and the Black Bull, roared as loudly as the School House. In fact, Knox of the Sixth, though no humorist, had succeeded in setting the whole School in a roar. Where the most brilliant humorist might have failed, Knox had brought it off—unintentionally. St. Jim's was tickled from end to end.

It was not nice for Knox.

During the next few days Knox's face wore an almost incessant scowl. Fellows smiled when they saw him; and he heard continual references to black bulls. His fellow-prefects told him quite plainly what they thought of him and his intelligence. They had enjoyed the joke, but they were sensitive about the dignity of the prefectship. They were really days of torment for Knox, and he could not, or would not, realise that he deserved it all. For the belief was still fixed in his narrow, suspicious mind that he was right and everybody else was wrong. He had been fooled and ridiculed—not by fellows who were indignant at unjust suspicions, but by young rascals who had shady secrets to keep and wanted to throw odium upon a zealous and dutiful prefect. That was Knox's persistent view.

But it was futile to express that view. When he expressed it, Kildare told him not to be a fool, and Darrell advised him to shut up, and Rushden said he was rotter to think as he did. That was all the encouragement Knox got from other prefects. Even his pal, Cutts of the Fifth, told him he was backing the wrong horse, and advised him to chuck it. All of which only made Knox more obstinate and determined to prove that he was right.

But Knox's campaign had grown very difficult. The young scoundrels were too sharp for him; if they had shady secrets those secrets were remarkably well kept. No further report could be made to the Housemaster—Mr. Railton's foot had come down heavily on that! There was still the Head, and Knox trembled at the thought of making a report to Dr. Holmes which might turn out another mare's-nest. He simply dared not drag the headmaster in the matter if there was the remotest chance of another mistake.

And how could he be certain there was not a mistake when he had to deal with such clever, cunning, and unscrupulous young rascals?—that was his charitable opinion of Tom Merry & Co! And so, as he writhed day after day under the ridicule of the House, darker thoughts came into Knox's narrow mind—thoughts of making sure—absolutely sure—of pinning his victim down by evidence of his own manufacture.

To do him justice the thought startled him at first, and he dismissed it. But it returned, and he began to dwell on it. Being perfectly certain that he was in the right, it seemed to his prejudiced mind that any means would be justified to prove the truth. It was only the truth that he wanted to prove—what he believed the truth. Telling falsehoods in order to proclaim the truth was certainly a questionable method, even to Knox's bitter mind; but the more he thought of it, and the more the House derided him, the more justifiable it seemed to him.

He hesitated—and he who hesitates is lost! His mind was made up at last, and he waited only for an opportunity.

Meanwhile, he took Mr. Railton's advice and let Arthur Augustus alone. And that cheery youth, having plenty of other matters to occupy his noble mind, almost forgot Knox's feud, and, indeed, his existence. Tom Merry & Co. concluded that the bully of the Sixth was fed-up, and had given up the game, and they flattered themselves that they had taught him a much-needed lesson.

"Knox has taken the knock, old beans," said Mr. Lowther, in Study No. 10. "It's the knock-out for Knox!"

"It is," agreed Tom Merry. "It are! Anyhow, he's quiet now, and that's all we wanted."

"I don't quite trust him," remarked Manners. "I know he feels jolly vicious! Still, I fancy he's given up the sleuth business. He didn't make much of a success of it, did he?"

"It's rather a pity," said Monty reflectively. "I had an idea of fixing up a brandy bottle for him to discover in

Gussy's study—with lemonade in it. I could get an empty bottle from the grocer's—"

"Fathead!" said Tom. "Even Knox wouldn't be fool enough to fall for that! Blow Knox! We've got the House to think of now!"

And Knox was dismissed from consideration, the cricket match with the New House being a matter of much greater importance.

On Wednesday Tom Merry & Co. were meeting Figgins & Co., of the New House, on Little Side, and when the match came round not one of the heroes of the School House was giving Knox a thought. Certainly Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not; his aristocratic mind was equally divided between his beautiful flannels and the great game.

Monty Lowther shaded his eyes with his hand when Arthur Augustus, elegant and spotless, arrived on the cricket field. Gussy turned his eyeglass on him in surprise.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, Lowtah?" he inquired. "Dazzled, old bean," explained Lowther. "Are you really real, or is this only one of those beautiful visions that fade away like the mirage?"

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"If this were only a beauty show, instead of a cricket match we should have the New House beaten at the start!" declared Lowther.

"Wats!"

Tom Merry won the toss and the School House went in to bat, and Figgins & Co. into the field. Quite a number of men from both Houses gathered to see the game—House matches were very keenly contested at St. Jim's, and even slackers like Crooke, Scrope, and Mellish turned up to watch. But from amid the crowd a fat figure detached itself after a time, and rolled away to the House.

Baggy Trimble had something on hand more important than watching a cricket match. Having heard D'Arcy's remark concerning the spread that was to follow the game, Baggy had business indoors. Baggy's idea was that it would be rather a pity to leave that spread till the end of the game, especially as he, Baggy, was not likely to be asked to join in it. Baggy considered it a much better idea for the spread to take place simultaneously with the game. Tom Merry & Co. could have the game, and Baggy the spread—which seemed to Baggy a very fair division.

Tom was batting in great style, though Lowther was already out to Fatty Wynn's bowling, and Manners had been caught in the field by Kerr. But Talbot of the Shell had joined Tom at the wickets, and the batting was going strong.

Baggy rolled into the House, loafed about a few minutes, and then went up to the Fourth Form passage. The junior studies were completely deserted that fine afternoon—not a fellow remained indoors. Nothing could have been more propitious for Baggy.

But in such matters it was necessary to be very cautious. It was certain that there would be a terrific row when the feed was missed. Baggy had to make assurance doubly sure. He tiptoed along the Fourth Form passage to Study No. 6. The door was shut, and Baggy listened outside it with keen ears—used to listening outside doors.

To his surprise, there was a sound in the study.

It was a soft sound, as of someone moving stealthily. Baggy breathed hard and deep. Blake and D'Arcy were in the School House junior team; Herries and Dig were in the crowd watching—Baggy knew that all the owners of the study were absent. But someone was there; and Trimble wondered whether it was someone on an expedition like his own.

He listened for a minute or so, and then stooped and peered through the keyhole. He gave a jump, and barely suppressed an exclamation as he sighted the fellow in the study.

"Knox!" breathed Baggy.

It was Knox of the Sixth! He was standing before a desk belonging to D'Arcy, with a bunch of keys in his hand. He was trying key after key on the desk.

Baggy grinned.

Knox apparently was searching for hidden cigarettes! Yet—was he searching? Baggy could see his profile as he stood at the desk, and there was a white, strange look on Knox's face that startled him. If ever Baggy Trimble had seen a guilty face, he was looking at one now. And Baggy felt his fat heart jump. Something was wrong!

Knox tried key after key, and at last he found one that fitted. He lifted the lid of the desk.

He removed nothing from it; instead of that, he took several articles from his own pockets and placed them in the desk.

Baggy Trimble, glued to the keyhole, watched breathlessly. A glimmering of the truth was coming to him now.

Trimble was far from being a particular fellow. His fat nature was prone to ways that are dark and tricks that are

vain. But he was shocked and horrified now, his fat face quite pale. For he knew very well what the prefect was doing!

The lid of the desk closed softly on the articles that Knox had placed within. Trimble had seen what they were—several packets of cigarettes, a folded pink sporting paper, a box of playing cards. Evidence enough to convict the swell of St. Jim's of being the young blackguard that the wretched Knox believed him to be!

There was a faint click as Knox unlocked the desk.

"Oh jiminy!" breathed Trimble.

It flashed into his fat mind that Knox was about to leave the study now. He tiptoed hastily away to the next study and popped into it out of sight.

A minute later he heard the door of Study No. 6 open and quiet footsteps pass away down the passage.

Knox of the Sixth was gone.

"Oh jiminy!" repeated Trimble faintly. He was feeling horrified and terrified, and it was some time before he ventured out into the passage.

And when he ventured out at last he was not thinking of the spread in Study No. 6. That, attractive as it was, had faded from Baggy's mind. He hurried out of the House and hurried back to the cricket field.

CHAPTER 13.

Leaving It to Lowther!

TOM MERRY was out at last. Levison of the Fourth had gone in to join Talbot; and Arthur Augustus, who was next on the list, was waiting with his beautiful bat under his arm. Tom was watching Levison, who was facing Redfern's bowling, when he felt a tug at his arm, and looked round at Baggy Trimble.

"Don't bother now, tubby," said Tom, and he shook off the fat hand.

"You don't want D'Arcy flogged or sacked, I suppose—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"He never paid me that sixpence for the cigarettes," said Baggy. "But—"

"What do you mean, you fat ass?"

"I can't yell it out before all the fellows. Come away."

Tom Merry looked at Baggy again and then followed him. Manners and Lowther went with him.

"Now, what is it?" asked Tom, as they stopped near the pavilion. "Get it out! If you're fooling—"

Baggy in gasping tones blurted out his story. The Terrible Three listened, staring at him.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Tom.

"It sounds jolly thick!" said Manners suspiciously. "We all know Trimble!"

"You silly chumps!" gasped Baggy. "I tell you I saw him put the things in Gussy's desk; and, though the brute never paid me that sixpence—"

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther, with a whistle. "This is pretty thick—even for Knox—if it's true!"

"It can't be true," said Tom.

"Easy enough to prove it," said Manners. "Get the key of the desk from Gussy and let's go and look."

"Oh, my hat! Poor old Levison's out!" exclaimed Tom, as a roar from the New House rang over the field. And he ran back.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a cheery grin.

"Old Levison's had wathah bad luck," he remarked. "Figgys's caught him out. I wathah think he won't catch me out, deah boy."

"Go in and win, old man," said Tom. "But I want the key of the desk in your study first."

"It's in the pocket of my blazah, deah boy, on the wall yondah."

"Right! Get going now, old bean; and mind you make the runs."

"Yaas, wathah."

Arthur Augustus marched out into the field as Levison came off. Tom Merry took the bunch of keys from the pocket of the blazer and rejoined Manners and Lowther.

"You fellows go," he said; "I can't very well leave the field. Let me know what you find."

"What-ho!"

Manners and Lowther started for the House.

"Look here, you know—" began Trimble.

But Tom Merry did not heed. He returned to the group to watch the performance of Arthur Augustus at the wicket.

Arthur Augustus was doing well so far. He was certainly the most elegant cricketer on the field, but he was getting the runs.

Tom was still watching him when Manners and Lowther returned. Manners was looking rather grave, but there was a lurking grin on Monty's face.

Tom gave them an inquiring look.

"It was true!" said Manners quietly.

"The awful rascal!" said Tom, with a deep breath. "We shall have to see about this after the game!"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"I've seen about it already, old bean," he answered. "You can leave it to your Uncle Montague. Dear old Knox won't make much of a catch when he takes Railton to peep into that desk. My belief is that Knox is going to get the surprise of his life."

"You've made it safe for Gussy?"

"Safe as houses!"

"That's all right, then!" And Tom's attention returned to the cricket. "Oh, my hat! There goes Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus had made 20, when Fatty Wynn's bowling found him out. His face was rather rueful as he came off.

"Not really out, old bean?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas. Wemarkable, isn't it?"

"Talbot's still going strong!" remarked Levison.

"Yaas, isn't it odd that Talbot should be still in, while I am out?"

"Frightfully odd!" chuckled Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus shook his noble head; he was quite puzzled. But he cordially cheered the mighty hits that Talbot of the Shell was making with Blake at the other end. And when the School House were all down for ninety he remarked:

"I'm wathah sowwy I did not make that century. We need it! But we're goin' to beat the New House."

To which the School House men agreed, though the New House-men seemed to hold a different opinion.

CHAPTER 14.

The Knock-Out!

"ROT!" said Kildare tersely.

Knox smiled unpleasantly.

"I'm reporting the matter to you as head prefect," he said. "Railton has told me to take no more reports of D'Arcy to him—"

"Shows his sense!" grunted the captain of St. Jim's.

"I can take it to the Head if you like," said Knox. "I'm prepared to do so. But I thought—"

Kildare rose impatiently from the study table.

"I'm bound to take it up, as you know," he growled, "but I'm certain it will turn out a mare's-nest. You dislike the kid, and will believe anything against him. Any fellow in the House will tell you that he's thoroughly decent. I'll do as you ask as you insist. The desk will be opened in D'Arcy's presence, and I'll eat all the contraband goods we find there. Go and fetch him and let's get it over."

Knox shrugged his shoulders and left the captain's study. A few minutes later he appeared on Little Side where the School House innings had just ended.

"My hat! Here come's Knox!" murmured Monty Lowther, and he gave the bully of the Sixth a cheery nod. "Awfully kind of you to look in on our little game, Knox! This is an honour."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"D'Arcy is wanted!" said Knox. "Follow me to the House, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove! What—"

"Follow me!" snapped Knox.

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. Evidently the plot was working!

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

"But what the thump—!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Come on, old bean; it's all right," said Monty Lowther.

And Arthur Augustus followed Knox, the Terrible Three accompanying him, and Blake and Herries and Digby joining up. The seven juniors arrived at the House and found Kildare waiting for them in the doorway with a frown on his face.

"Here he is, Kildare!" said Knox.

"Come up to your study, D'Arcy," said the St. Jim's captain.

"Vewy well, Kildare."

In a state of great surprise D'Arcy followed Kildare and Knox up to the Fourth Form passage, Tom Merry & Co. trailing behind. They passed into Study No. 6.

Kildare stopped at Arthur Augustus' desk.

"D'Arcy! Knox believes that you have things in this desk—against the rules of the House. Are you willing for it to be opened by a prefect?"

"Yaas, wathah! Knox is a sillay ass, Kildare."

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"You have the key to the desk?"

"Bai Jove! No!"

Knox grinned.

"No doubt he has lost the key—in the circumstances," he sneered.

Kildare's face grew stern.

"D'Arcy! Where is the key?"

"I weally do not know, Kildare—"

"What do you mean? You must know where the key of your own desk is."

"Not at all, deah boy. I lent it to Tom Mewwy—"

"Here it is!" said Tom.

He handed the key-ring to the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare fitted the key to the lock and unlocked the desk. Knox breathed hard! Perhaps at that moment his conscience smote him. But he told himself that it was, after all, only the truth that he was trying to establish—by rather irregular means! He set his lips.

Blake and Herries and Digby were smiling contemptuously. They were well aware that D'Arcy's desk contained nothing contraband—or at least, should have contained nothing contraband.

Kildare threw up the lid of the desk.

Then he uttered a startled exclamation.

Knox echoed it.

There were many articles in the rather untidy desk, though of the articles Knox had placed there there was no sign. The most prominent object was a large sheet of cardboard on which was an inscription in capital letters.

"THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT KNOX OF
THE SIXTH WAS SEEN TO UNLOCK
THIS DESK AND PUT SMOKES AND
CARDS AND A RACING PAPER IN IT.
TRY AGAIN!"

There was dead silence in the study for a moment. Knox of the Sixth gazed at that accusing message white as a sheet, scarcely breathing.

Kildare stood transfixed.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

There was a roar from Blake.

"So that's it! Knox, your rotten hound—"

"Silence!" gasped Kildare. "What—what does this mean? Who—who wrote this? What does it mean?"

"It means what it says, Kildare," answered Monty Lowther blandly. "Knox will find his property in the dust-bin, if he wants it—four packets of cigarettes, a racing paper, and a pack of cards! That message was meant for Railton, when Knox brought him here to find what he had put in Gussy's desk."

"Good heavens!" breathed Kildare.

Knox tried to speak. But the words would not come. He licked his dry lips. His eyes had a hunted look. His terror at that moment was almost pitiable.

Kildare looked at him. The cold, piercing contempt in his look brought a flush to Knox's pale face.

Kildare's lip curled.

"You had better go!" he said.

Knox made an effort to pull himself together, but failed, and he turned and crept from the study like a beaten cur. Kildare breathed hard.

"You fags can get back to your cricket!" he said.

And the juniors went.

Tom Merry & Co. beat the New House, and there was a great spread in Study No. 6 to celebrate the victory. Arthur Augustus had been a true prophet. It was a great celebration—and an honoured guest at the festive board was—Baggy Trimble! It was agreed by all that Baggy for once had deserved well of his country, and for one occasion, if for one only Tom Merry & Co. made much of him.

Knox had had his lesson. He had been frightened as he had never been frightened before, and perhaps, too, it was borne in on his mind that he was not so right as he had obstinately supposed. At all events, he gave up the trail; even if he had wished, he would not have dared to keep it up.

He was only too glad to leave the matter where it was, and to have done with the noble Gussy, while Gussy, on his side, was certainly glad to have done with Knox.

As Monty Lowther expressed it, Knox had taken the knock, and this time it was a knock-out!

THE END.

(There will be another corking yarn of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "SPEEDMEN OF THE RIVER!" Miss it, chums, and you'll regret it!)

ANOTHER RIP-SNORTER FROM THE PEN OF JOHNNY CARTER, of Broken B Ranch, Texas!



ONE TON WILLY

GETS LANDED IN MORE FUN
AND TROUBLE WHEN
"THE CIRCUS
STARTS!"

CHAPTER 1.

A Curious Couple!

SAY, gents, the name is Johnny Carter, and it's a fed up cow-waddy talking to you about the fattest gent as ever trod dirt in Amer'ca. Maybe you done heard about me, and maybe you done heard about One-Ton Willy, the self-constituted sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch.

But I'll bet if you've heard from Hank Smith, the deputy sheriff, you haven't heard a kind word about One-Ton. No, sir. Hank Smith loves One-Ton like a nigger loves garlic. There were several things as used to make Hank Smith shudder, pull faces, and use bad language. One of them things was castor oil, and One-Ton was all the rest.

In case you don't happen to know, or you done forgot, which isn't likely, I'll tell you and the cock-eyed world that One-Ton was built rather slender in the waist, like a balloon, and he trod as light as thistledown stuck tight on an elephant's foot!

Gee, boys, I don't suppose you ever saw a balloon perched up on two short, thick legs, and with a pumpkin set on top of it. But if you have, then you've seen the general outlines of One-Ton as you'd see him if he was standing on the skyline with the sunset behind him. He became sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch partly by accident and partly because us boys let him on account of the fun we was expecting.

Unfortunately, the fun never happened, and One-Ton got so swelled in the attic he got a nuisance to all and sundry, and us waddies tried all we knew to make him tired of the job. Anyway, gents, the fact remains, as the nigger said when he left the beak and feet of the chicken he'd stole, One-Ton always managed to come out of trouble with the luck hanging on to him, and sitting pretty.

We sits in the saloon and allows we'll leave things jest where they is.

But Hank Smith allows he's more determined than ever. "There must be some way of getting even wid that lump o' fat," he growls.

"Hear, hear!" I chimes in.

"But not my ear," snarls Long Lane. "I only got one lobe left, and I aims to keep him in the family!"

"Waal," drawls Red Ryan. "I ain't blaming you none, buddy. Ef you axes me I'll say we'd better leave things as they are, and jest watch out for what happens along. Maybe we'll see a chance of getting rid of One-Ton and making Hank sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch."

"You is plumb opti—opti—hopeful," says Hank, who don't know the English language like I does. "But a-setting, still and waiting ain't in my line. Howsomever," he says.

"Since I can't think o' nothing to do, and you hombres ain't got so many brains atween you as two slugs and a wireworm, there ain't nothing we can do 'cept what we are doing, which is nothing a-tall!"

After that, there is nothing to do and nothing to say, and we does 'em both pretty cleverly, and we sets there looking glum. Long Lane is a-setting opposite me. My back is turned towards the door. I'll tell you that so's you'll understand what happened.

I'm not thinking of anything particular, jest thinking of nothing very busily, and drinking now and again in a gentlemanly manner, like I always does, when suddenly I see Long Lane's head go up sharply. His mouth comes open and his chin drops accordingly. His eyes open wide, and his eyebrows begin to go up—and up—until I get plumb scared in case they get caught up in his hair.

Then Ryan glances up, and he stops short with his glass half-way between the table and his mouth, which is unlike Red. And just about then I feels a cold lump of air from outside hit me on the back of the neck, and I knows the door is open. I slew round in me chair, and right away I get the creeps and willies.

Hank is staring likewise, and he gasps something awful. "It can't be true!" he mutters. "I haven't had enough!"

And I agrees with him, though I don't say so. I jest couldn't speak then, gents. There are some things what is too deep for words, and what I saw then was all of 'em. Yes, sir. What I saw was a little guy about three feet high, all togged up in city clothes like a stockbroker. He

was a tiny undersized runt what looked as if he'd stopped growing afore he fell out of his pram, and hadn't bothered to go on with it since. He was a man, and a middle-aged man, at that. He had a most lovely moustache. He was a man, right enough, but not a grown man. He was a dwarf, and the dwarfist dwarf I ever saw.

Not that that was all by a long sight. There was a lady with him, and she was the biggest, fattest lady I ever clapped eyes on. I never saw so much lady at one time in all my life. Honest Injun, gents, that female lady was big enough to make One-Ton Willy look like a skeleton. She was six feet high, but what her girth, and her acreage was, I ain't good enough at arithmetic to guess, and I don't believe you'd ever work it out, 'cept in algebra, with elastic figures.

Where them two freaks came from was sure a mystery, because we all knew there wasn't any sich people near Hammertoe Gulch. Yet there they was, unless we was all seeing falsehoods. And the said fat lady was real flesh and blood, because she is struggling to get through the doorway, and going red in the face. She tried it front ways, and she

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GORILLA NEARLY CAPTURES SHERIFF!

Then Sheriff captures Gorilla—and a
fair maiden's heart!

dare you insult a respectable, hard-working, helpless, innocent lady? How dare you, you over-eating, outside in fat sheriffs? Ef I wasn't a lady I'd tell you what I thought of you, you miser'ble worm of a bloated fat lump o' meat! and further, mister——"

I don't know how much more she would ha' said, but all the time she is talking, One-Ton is retreating away from her while she steps up to him, her fat fists clenched and waving about under his fat nose. One-Ton nearly gets to the door, walking backwards, when, all of a sudden, the said door is burst open, though no human being enters. No, sir, it's a snake, I reckon. Leastways, I thought it was a snake. It was grey and long, shaped like a hose pipe, only it had a mouth on the end.

Jumping rattlers, I has the willies. That snake curls in at the door, and, as true as I'm standing here, gents, it catches hold of One-Ton's collar and yanks him outside. Yeah, it does that! And One-Ton never has moved so fast backwards as he does then. One second he is here, so to speak, and then he isn't!

The door slams shut and our sheriff isn't anywhere a-tall, and the fat lady, Rachel Polonski, looks like she'd burst, she is laffing so hearty. And the dwarf is doubled up with mirth, till he looks dwarfer than ever.

"Oho, ho!" he bellows. "It's Little Eric done got him!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Girl and the Gorilla!

US waddies stares at one another, not knowing what to do and sort o' feeling queer about going outside where One-Ton has gone in sich a hurry. But the dwarf jumps down off the table and rushes out, and the fat lady goes after him to see what's doing. After that, we all allows there's no harm in a look-see so long as we're careful, so we goes to the door on tiptoe and peeps out. The moon is very generous with moonbeams that night, so we has no difficulty in seeing what there is to see. And, believe me, gents, that same is an eyeful, and I don't mean maybe.

For, be it known, gents, that wasn't no snake a-tall. Nope! It was the trunk of an elephant, and the big beast was walking calmly down the street with One-Ton's Stetson perched on its fat head, and in his trunk was One-Ton's six-shooter, while One-Ton hisself was a-setting in the middle of the road, all collapsed up like a sack of flour what had sprung a leak and been dumped.

But suddenly the fat lady lets rip a yell.

"Whar's my cove man?" she bawls. And right away Long Lane dives into a doorway and stops there, and us hombres get in front of him to hide him. Rachel Polonski starts waddling as hard as she can go back towards the saloon, and we let her go. We continue on to where the circus is camped, to see what is to be seen. And the things we do see was enough to make a feller have nightmares every day of his life.

There is all sorts of wild beasts, like lions, and big snakes, and two more elephants, and leopards, and things. And in one big cage is a gorilla. Leastways, them circus

guys says that is what it is. But the most amazing thing about that gorilla is the pretty girl in his cage combing his hair like he is a big baby.

While he stands there watching, she finishes, and comes out of the cage, and we all steps forward to find out what she calls herself. We takes off our hats and grins at her.

"Howdy, miss?" we says. And then we can't say any more, along of us being too shy, and she is smiling so sweetly at us it sort of ties our tongues, and there we is jest grinning and fidgeting about.

Then, bust me if Long Lane doesn't step forward, with his hat in his hand, as bold as you like! And him only just run like mad and hid in a doorway to get away from a lady! Now, what d'you know about that? He ups and speaks his bit.

"Why, howdy, miss?" he says. "You're just the sort of pretty young lady I've been looking for all me life."

And does she like him? She looks up into his face, which is a few yards higher than hers, and she smiles so sweetly, it makes him go all goofy like, while us waddies want to kick him hard and often. We is plumb disappointed in Long Lane after the way he's treated Rachel Polonski, and we think he's no right to shoulder us away from the gorilla charmer. Red Ryan tried to butt in.

"It's a nice day, miss," he says, forgetting it's evening with the moon shining.

Then Hank has a go.

"Pardon me, miss," he says. "Can I show you the beauty spots of this township?"

"You sure have got lovely eyes, miss," I says.

But does she take any notice of us? I'll say not! We might have been all that's left of the dog's dinner for all the glances we got from her. She is smiling up into Hank's eyes while he is telling her what a fine chap he is.

Then I hears a noise behind me, and, turning, I sees One-Ton standing there, looking rather put out.

"Hey, One-Ton," I says. "Don't you like no circuses?"

"No, I don't!" he snaps.

"Performing monkeys never do!" snarls Hank.

"Be civil!" snaps One-Ton. "I don't like circuses along of the animiles and suspicious characters what comes along with 'em. I got enough to do keeping law and order amongst a set o' good-f'r-nothing cowpunchers, without having to deal with circuses."

And right then I gets an idea. The place where we is standing is in the middle of the tents and caravan things, and is lit up by the moon and the acetylene flares. I gazes round, thoughtful like, so's One-Ton won't see I'm grinding my own axe, so to speak.

It isn't that I am really jealous o' Long Lane, but I sure does think he's no right to get in front of his betters, and that he ought to be taught a lesson in manners. And I isn't worrying about taking any spokes out of One-Ton's wheel just then. Them things isn't in my brain, but I gets that idea, and I speaks my part.

"You're plumb right, sheriff," I says. "These here circuses is chock full of aliens and foreigners. Look at that girl Long Lane is flattering. She's too pretty, she is, and her style of beauty don't belong to Amer'ca, England,



Hagen trips over a tent rope, and Red Ryan puts out his foot to stop his hat, and shoves his boot clean through it!

nor Mexico. If she ain't a Bulgarian Turk from Greece, then I'm a negro with freckles," I says. "If I was you, One-Ton," I goes on, "I'd start with that—girl, and go all round this yer circus and ax 'em for their papers."

Does he bite? He does! There's only two things he knows about the law. One of 'em is that a guy who thieves is a thief, and the other is that foreign aliens must have identity papers. He starts looking plumb important, and staggers up to the right spot, touching his hat.

"Scuse me, miss," he says, in his squeaky voice. "Can I trouble you—"

"Quit!" snaps Long Lane.

Us waddies stand by and look on, we do, and we're enjoyin' ourselves, when suddenly Hank Smith grabs my arm.

"Look what's blown in, cowboy!" he whispers in my ear. And, straightaway, I see Rachel Polonski, the fat lady, and she's looking for someone. When she spots Long Lane she's found him! And the look on her face spells trouble in big letters. Yeah, I'll tell the world! She looks all round her. She picks up a stick, tests the strength of it, but it snaps, and she shies it away. Then she sees the gorilla what is jumping up and down in his cage, his eyes focused on Long Lane's back.

Believe me, gents, it was strange round about then. Us boys was jealous of Long Lane keeping the pretty girl to himself. The fat lady, who thought Long Lane was her cave man, was jealous of him flirting with the said pretty girl, and the gorilla was jealous because he reckoned the pretty girl was his property, or else that Long Lane was eating her for supper, or something like that. Anyway, the jealousy flying about them parts just then was something awful, and, to cap matters, there was One-Ton jealous of the dignity of the law and his badge of office. Can you beat it?

CHAPTER 3.

One-Ton Scores Again!

ONE-TON is staggering up to Long Lane, with a do or die look on his fat face, when Rachel Polonski gets an idea. She goes to the gorilla's cage and opens the door. Then she runs! Dear heart, how that fat woman could run! She was that fat she seemed to float along in the air like a balloon. But the gorilla wasn't worrying about her, even if she would keep him in fresh meat for six months. No, sir, that brute leapt down and started aft after the pretty girl.

"It's not going to happen!" snarls Hank, drawing his gun. "If that brute lays a paw on either the girl or Long Lane, I'll let his brains out. I don't hold with such monkey tricks."

But right then something happened. One-Ton had come up behind Long Lane, and, having got his six-shooter back out of Mother Malone's shack, he digs the muzzle or same into Long Lane's ribs.

"Git up, cowboy!" he snarls. "And keep gitting! I'm having a heart to heart talk with the lady."

Well, Long Lane cain't argue. He puts up his hands, gits off the box and walks away, with his face as black as thunder on a dark night! One-Ton sits down beside the pretty girl, and grins all over his fat face.

"That's how we do it!" he bleats.

"And how!" laffs the girl. "That guy was saying he's so brave he has bandits for breakfast and dines off'n cattle rustlers, w' cardsharper sauce, finishing up wid rattle-snakes, and a hold-up man f'r supper," he says. "But what's hurting you, mister?"

"Nothing, sister," says One-Ton, starting to go all shy. "I was only wondering if so be you're an alien foreigner."

"Me?" she blared. "Say, big boy—aw—gee, you got me all wrong, you have!"

"Sure, I'm plumb sorry!" says One-Ton. "But I got me duty to do. You ain't offended, air you?"

He sort o' leans sideways towards where she had been and he comes up against something that isn't girl, and he cain't kid himself it is. There's a worried look in his eyes. He turns his head and stares slap into the eyes of Mister Gorilla.

But he don't stare for long! Gee, no, that he don't! He lets rip one bloodcurdling yell, and he jumps. The gorilla claws out at him, growling, and slits his shirt all down the back. But One-Ton gets going, he does, and the big monkey is after him, while Hank Smith leans against a tent pole and laffs till he cain't cry no more!

Most of the people what was there went and got out of the way. Some of 'em hid in the tents and caravans. Some of 'em climbed up posts and some just ran down the street to the saloon. But the boss of the circus, Mister Leo Hagen, is plumb on the spot, running after the gorilla, which makes three of 'em running, and shouting like mad to us waddies.

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"Don't shoot! He's worth money! Don't shoot!" And he didn't mean One-Ton, neether. That Hagen guy is wearing a red jacket and a top hat—one of those hats what looks like a stove pipe cleaned up with boot blacking. And he's all right till he trips over a tent rope. He comes down a wallop, his hat flies off his head. Red Ryan puts out his foot to stop said hat and shoves his boot clean through it.

Meanwhile, One-Ton is still running and beginning to flag. The gorilla is gaining on him and growling something fierce, when suddenly One-Ton spots a cage with the door open. Natcherally, it's the gorilla's cage, but he don't stop to think about that. In he dives, and the door clangs behind him, leaving the gorilla outside, snarling enough to turn your blood to iced sarsaparilla.

One-Ton staggers and leans against the bars. Then he sees something glittering on the floor. He stoops and picks it up, shoves it in his pocket, and then starts to breathe a bit easy, when, all of a sudden, the cage door swings open again. You see, it hadn't latched a-tall.

The gorilla don't give any warning. He leaps up into that cage. One-Ton turns and staggers back against the farther wall of said cage. The gorilla snarls at him, crouches, then jumps with all his might. The pretty girl screams with horror, but One-Ton is so plumb scared—not that I blames him any—that his fat legs won't hold him up any more, and he flops to the ground as if someone had pulled him down. Fact, gents!

And that gorilla missed him, went clean over him and hit the wall with his ugly face such a buster that it dazzled him, and he saw all the stars in the sky, Hollywood, Broadway, and Piccadilly Circus, London, Eng., in one big dazle. Before he could tell one star from another One-Ton was up and away like a good 'un. He left that cage so quick that the gorilla caught a cold from the draught. He came out, shut the gate with a bang and latched it, locked it, barred it, and then made a face at the gorilla.

Then he turned, sighed, fanned hisself, and seeing the pretty girl, he walks up to her.

"Is this yours, ma'am?" he axes her. "I done found it in the cage." And he gives her a gold bracelet thing she must ha' dropped in there.

The girl smiles at him.

"Oh, you are brave!" she exclaims. "Gee, you're a hero!" And, I'll be branded and hogtied if she didn't throw her arms round his fat neck and kiss his fat lips.

I snarls and growls as bad as the gorilla. So did Long Lane. He steps forward to do battle, when suddenly the fat lady comes out of the tent where she'd been hiding, and spots him.

"My cave man!" she bawls.

"Oho, ho!" bellows the dwarf.

But Long Lane jest jumps like he's been stung where he can't see, and he spins round, jumps again and runs. The fat lady runs after him, and he leads her down the street, with the rest of us following and hallooing like mad. Long Lane has long legs and he gets to the saloon first. His cayuse is hitched to the rail outside. He cuts the tether, leaps into the saddle and gallops off on to the mesa, heading for home and beauty. Rachel Polonski is shouting after him.

"Stop, you coward! You air my cave man!"

But Long Lane isn't stopping for anybody, and disappears very thoroughly in the night and the distance. Whereupon, the large lady turns to us and studies us in a way that sends cold shivers down our spines.

"I don't care," she said. "Mebbe he wasn't my cave man after all. Maybe one of you gents—"

"No, you don't," I says, leaping for my horse. And before she could get the dust out of her eyes, the whole gang of us was heading for the skyline. There's some ladies I like, but Rachel Polonski wasn't any of 'em, and my pardners allowed it went that way with them, too. We lit out of town while we was safe.

We went to bed that night feeling like we'd been cheated again. We hadn't plotted a thing against One-Ton, yet he'd run smack into trouble, argued with a gorilla and come off best, with the flukiest stroke of luck as ever you saw.

That circus was only camping for the night, but it had moved on to Mesa City, so there was no excitement in town that evening, and One-Ton had the sense to keep out of our way. But it was certain sure that Hank Smith, and the rest of us, would have to break One-Ton's spell of luck somehow, somewhere, some time, and the sooner the quicker! It was sure coming to him!

THE END.

(Next week's bumper GEM will contain another amusing yarn of One-Ton Willy. Be sure you read it!)

CONTINUING OUR ROARING ADVENTURE SERIAL OF
three Britishers' Perils in Central Africa!

CHICK CHANCE -ADVENTURER!



THE STORY SO FAR.

Chick Chance and his two chums, Horace and Herbert, and Lobula, a native guide, are searching for Eustace Latimer, who has come into a fortune. He is believed to be a prisoner, together with his daughter, in Black City, in the heart of Central Africa. If Latimer does not return to England within a given time, the money will go to Burk Roscoe, a scoundrel, who is at present a captive aboard Chick's fast plane. Chick and his pals eventually arrive over Black City, which is easily identified by a prominent rocky edifice shaped like a lion's head. Chick Chance and Lobula drop from the machine by means of a parachute. They are met by the giant warriors of the Amazeli, each wearing a leopard skin and armed with a spear.

(Now read on.)

An Awkward Situation!

THE River Tambaze at this juncture—where it forked and diverged around the rock—ran swift and narrow, and was spanned by a crude wooden bridge, that had not been visible from the air, probably for the reason that it could be swung sideways like a lock-gate, cutting off communication with the opposite bank of the foaming stream when the necessity arose.

"The place is a natural fort. It is almost impregnable!" was the thought that flashed through Chick's mind, as he eyed the black warriors who guarded the approach to the bridge. He also decided, with a faint feeling of uneasiness, that the island rock presented a natural prison as well,

and one from which it would be well nigh impossible to escape. Anyone attempting to swim the river would be whisked away like a cork in a mill-race, and dashed to certain death against the jagged boulders that reared their heads above the raging torrent.

The Black City was now revealed to the airman adventurer. It was built all around the base of the rock, protected by a rampart of rough-hewn blocks of the same black basalt. There were houses and buildings of an architecture that did not seem in harmony with this race of giant black savages. Possibly they had been in existence long before the Amazeli had ever penetrated to this hidden valley and settled themselves amid the ruins of a long-dead civilisation.

Flanked by their black escort, Chick and Lobula marched boldly across the wooden bridge. Here, in an open space at the foot of the steps that wound up the face of the rock, were many more of the Amazeli, who stared curiously and coldly at these intrepid strangers who had descended upon them out of the very sky.

They leaned on their long spears, their lion-headed shields suspended by a leather thong over one shoulder. On their wrists and ankles gleamed circlets of a yellow metal which Chick Chance guessed was pure gold.

Lobula frowned uneasily and dropped a hand to the pistol at his waist.

"We were fools to come here, bird-man," he said bluntly. "These people do not look upon us with favour. Either they will kill us, or keep us prisoners here for the rest of our days."

"You're a nice, cheerful sort of a chap to have about the place," Chick reproved disgustedly. "Why, you big black boob, I didn't come here to be killed, or captured either. I came here to find Eustace Latimer, and if he's still alive I'm not going away without him."

The situation was certainly none too encouraging, but Chick felt more confident as he stared across the valley towards the lofty plateau where he knew Horace and Herbert were waiting with the monoplane. He was glad that he had left them in reserve. If things went wrong the two airmen could be depended upon to put in some good work with machine-guns and Mills' bombs that would give the Amazeli something to think about.

The ranks of the surrounding warriors suddenly parted, and they sprang to attention with a clatter of spear-shafts. Chick stared wonderingly at the man who came striding arrogantly towards them. He certainly was no negro type. His skin was a light brown in colour; his features regular and not handsome, and his hair straight, dark, and flecked with grey. He wore sandals on his feet, and a flowing robe that was girdled by a belt of solid gold. Suspended on a chain around his neck was an enormous blood-red ruby.

The newcomer addressed a question to the captain of the Amazeli, and then spoke sharply to Lobula. His cold eyes surveyed Chick Chance with an insolence that brought an angry flush to the young airman's cheeks.

"This man, he want to know how you dare to come and demand an audience with the king?" interpreted Lobula.

Chick poised himself on the balls of his feet and set his hands on his hips.

"You ask his nibs who the dickens he is, and what business is it of his?" he shot back boldly. "Tell him my business is with the king, and no one else!"

This reply evidently was not pleasing to the man in the white robe. His lean face darkened with fury, and he barked out a sharp command.

There was a stamping of bare feet on the ground as the hollow square of Amazeli made a quick step forward, and half a hundred gleaming spears swung menacingly in the air.

Chick Chance, never turned a hair, as, with a lightning movement, he flicked his automatic from its holster and levelled it in a hand that was as steady as a rock.

"Lobula!" he said quietly. "Give this fellow to understand that long before a single spear can touch me I'll blow his head clean off his shoulders!"

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The Missing Professor!

THERE was a sudden tense silence as Chick Chance, quite undeterred by the bristling array of spears that menaced him from all sides, whipped out his pistol, and levelled it at the insolent individual in the imposing white robe.

The man evidently knew something of the deadly nature of firearms. His face paled as he stared into the yawning muzzle of the automatic, and then raised his gaze to read the cold menace in Chick's hard, blue eyes.

Finally he shrugged his shoulders sullenly, and addressed another command to the waiting Amazeli. As one man they lowered their spears and stepped back. The young airman dropped his hand, but the pistol did not leave his grasp.

"That's better," he said calmly. "Now we can get on with the conversation. This guy hasn't answered my last question yet. You might repeat it to him, Lobula."

"His name Matturis, the king's head man," informed Lobula. "The king send him to ask what you want here."

"Tell him," instructed Chick, "that I understand that a white man and his daughter are being kept prisoners here, and I have been sent to fetch them away. Tell him that I come in peace, and will leave in peace, providing we are allowed to depart unmolested."

Matturis started and tugged uneasily at the tuft of beard that fringed his lower lip. Finally, beckoning them to follow him, he turned and led the way up the stone steps which were hewn in the side of the towering rock.

Chick's heart leapt with excitement and relief as he followed cautiously at the man's heels. The latter had not denied that Eustace Latimer and his daughter were still alive and held prisoners by the Amazeli. By his silence he as good as admitted that such was the case.

The young airman had succeeded in the first, and the difficult, part of his quest. It remained to be seen whether he would be equally successful in conveying the missing explorer and his daughter to the nearest port where they could catch a boat to England. He had no doubt there were many obstacles to be surmounted before this could be achieved, but he little dreamed of the perils and terrors that the near future held in store for him.

At the head of the first long flight of steps was a jutting platform and a stone archway, vigilantly guarded by two gigantic Amazeli warriors. They grounded their spear-butts and stepped to one side at a word from Matturis.

Beyond the doorway was a lofty chamber, apparently hewn out of the solid rock, and lit by two openings in the outer wall. The floor was strewn with the skins of animals, and on a low seat, draped with the tawny hide of a magnificent lion, reclined an old man with snow-white hair and beard, and a face like a dried walnut.

Behind his chair, like statues carved in ebony, stood two more Amazeli. Matturis made a deep, respectful bow, and only then did Chick Chance realise that he was face to face with the monarch of the Black City.

The latter raised his head and stared keenly at his visitors. It was evident that the king of the Amazeli was not of the same race as those he ruled. He was not of black blood. Possibly he was a descendent of the original dwellers in the city under the Lion Rock. He listened intently to what Matturis had to say, and a momentary glint of anger flamed in his brown monkey-like eyes. Then he commenced to speak in a dry, querulous voice.

"The king asks," said Matturis, through Lobula, "how you know that a white man and his daughter are here in the city of the Amazeli?"

"Should we have come here if we did not know?" was Chick's blunt response.

"The king would know what has become of the big bird with the roaring voice that brought the white man here?"

Chick pointed through the window towards the empty sky.

"Tell him it is up there—waiting and watching!" he answered. "Go on, Lobula, let him have the whole book of words. Lay it on thick. Tell him that if any harm come to us, or to Latimer and his daughter, not one, but a hundred of the great birds will drop down from the skies and wipe the Amazeli clean off the face of the earth."

Lobula evidently surpassed himself in his glowing account of what was likely to befall the inhabitants of the Black City in the event of Chick Chance meeting with any opposition to his demands. The king was visibly impressed, but Matturis scowled and bit his lip sullenly.

"The king only wishes that the white men continue to leave him and his people in peace," he announced. "How does he know that you will not return with many more of your kind once you have been allowed to depart?"

"I pledge you my word," was Chick's assurance, "that

once my friends and I leave here we never want to set eyes on the place again."

"But the white man you have come in search of may not wish to leave here?" suggested Matturis, with a malicious smile. "He is here of his own free will. I can assure you that he has not the slightest desire to depart from our midst."

Chick shrugged his shoulders incredulously and stared puzzledly at something that had been passed by the king to Lobula, and which the native now transferred to him. It was a heavy ring of soft yellow gold, that was cleverly carved in the shape of a lion's head.

"The king say, you wear that, you go where you please among the Amazeli, and you leave here just when you like," explained Lobula excitedly. "And you take Master and Missy Latimer long with you, if they want to go. But this man, Matturis, he say Master Latimer no want to leave here. He say, come this way, you find out for yourself."

The old king had already risen and disappeared through a door at the further end of the chamber. It was evident that their audience with him was at an end. Matturis led the way out into the open air and up another two flights of the stone staircase that wound towards the apex of Lion Rock.

Guards were posted at intervals, but they made no attempt to bar their way when Chick—more as an experiment than anything else—showed them the ring the king had given to him. Evidently it was a valuable talisman, the possession of which ensured him the respect and obedience of every Amazeli in the Black City.

Another flight of steps brought them to a narrow doorway, opening into the heart of the rock. It was guarded by two giant blacks. Beyond was a vast chamber, lit by embrasures in the outer wall.

The walls themselves were covered from top to bottom, and side to side, with strange hieroglyphics and symbols—not unlike the picture writing of the ancient Egyptians—carved deeply into the smooth rock.

Chick's gaze went at once to the figure of a man, who was seated on a carved stool, bending over a big block of stone that was littered with notebooks, tin specimen-cases, sheets of yellow papyrus, gold ornaments, and tablets of baked clay.

The man turned impatiently at the sound of footsteps, and Chick Chance knew that his quest was ended. He was face to face with Eustace Latimer, the long-lost explorer!

The young airman was unpleasantly surprised. He had imagined Latimer as a big, bluff, hearty man. Instead, he saw a diminutive, narrow-shouldered individual, with a head as bald as an egg, and a ragged fringe of grey hair on his long chin. His watery-blue eyes blinked querulously behind big horn-rimmed spectacles as he reluctantly set down a magnifying-glass, with which he was examining the inscription on one of the clay tablets.

"Dear me, who are you?" he exclaimed, in mild surprise. "And what are you doing here?"

"My name is Chance—Chick Chance," answered the young flyer politely. "I believe I am addressing Professor Eustace Latimer. I am the bearer of a letter from Mr. Howard Paige, of London, on whose instructions I have come here to fetch you back to England."

"To what?" Eustace Latimer looked surprised, and somewhat annoyed. Almost reluctantly he took the envelope that was handed to him, and broke the seals. "Sit down, Mr.—er—Chance. I shan't detain you many minutes."

Chick smiled grimly. There was nowhere to sit, save on the floor. It was a strange way to be greeted by the man on whose behalf he had risked his life a score of times in his daring flight to the heart of unknown Africa.

"He won't detain me many minutes. By gosh, that's a good one!" he thought whimsically. "It strikes me the old boy's a bit rocky in the top storey, and doesn't realise exactly where he is."

Eustace Latimer frowned, and mumbled in his ragged beard as he painfully waded through the typewritten sheets of the lengthy communication Howard Paige had sent him.

"Dear me! Extraordinary! Just fancy!" he muttered jerkily. "What a stickler for professional etiquette Paige is! Surely he can attend to my affairs without worrying me with all these legal formalities."

He tucked the letter carelessly into one of his numerous notebooks, while Chick stared at him in astonishment.

(Is the professor mad?—Have Chick and his chums arrived in Central Africa on a wild-geese chase? Next week's instalment of this powerful serial is the real goods. Be sure you read it!)

What the Oracle knows about the Universe would fill a quarter of a library.—Ed. (Thanks!—Oracle.) And what he doesn't know would fill the other three-quarters.—Ed. (You beast!—Oracle.)



HOW MANY BEANS MAKE FIVE??

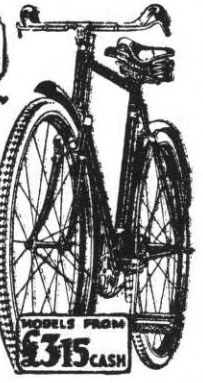


HURRAH! Likewise, chums, harrooh! The office-boy is away—he's ill. Excepting for the snores from the Editor's sanctum, and the noise of his lady typist changing her mind, all is calm and still—particularly still. I'm still here, my lucky lads, putting the extra sparkle in the GEM and filling the office-boy's desk with rubber pencils, trick pens that squirt ink in your face when you write with them, explosive cigarettes, fly-papers, and white mice. The office-boy went home with severe pains in that cavity which he uses to store away doughnuts, toffee lollypops, and slabs of chocolate. And serve him right! He deserves it, after eating a pound of monkey-nuts with their skins on and a plate of pork with an E in the month.

whiskers!" he shouted. "Look what you've done!"
"Never mind, sir," I said. "It's running smoothly—the ink, sir, I mean."
It was—all over his trousers.
"A Chepstow reader," said the Editor, "wants to know how cigarettes are packed."
"By machinery, sir," I said. "A packing machine for cigarettes consists mainly of a revolving tray. The cigs are fed into the machine, and they drop on to a travelling band in groups of five. Then another five are dropped on top of them. Then ten cigarettes move along the belt to the tray, where they are pushed into an inner case. The tray steps for a fraction of a second and a small steel arm lifts a cigarette card from a reservoir, and lays it on top of them. The revolving tray then makes a

quarter revolution and the outer cover, which is gummed together but folded flat, falls into place and opens out. With the next quarter turn the cigarettes and the picture are pushed in. The packets are then taken away by hand."
"Yes," said the Editor; "that's how they take mine. Tom Bartlett, living at Brondesbury, has a father in the Transport and General Workers' Union, and he's been told that this is the largest Trade Union in the country. Is that correct?"
"Quite correct, sir. They have 488,000 members. And it may interest Tom B. to know that the smallest Trade Union is the Manchester and District Wireworkers' Union, which has seven members."
"What naval engagement was it in which one English ship fought fifty-three ships of the enemy?"
"That was the Revenge, under Sir Richard Grenville. The engagement took place off the Azores."
"Charlie Flaxton, of Felixstowe, writes to ask what regiment in the British Army has been known as the 'Cherry Pickers'?"
"That was a name given to the 11th Hussars, because they used to wear crimson trousers."
"Crimson trousers!" roared the Ed. "You might well look scared, my lad! I've got crimson trousers now, thanks to your clumsiness, you old gargoyle. Buzz off, while you're safe!"
(Meet you all again next week, chums.—Oracle.)

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