

"THE COWBOY OF ST. JIM'S!" RIPPING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN!

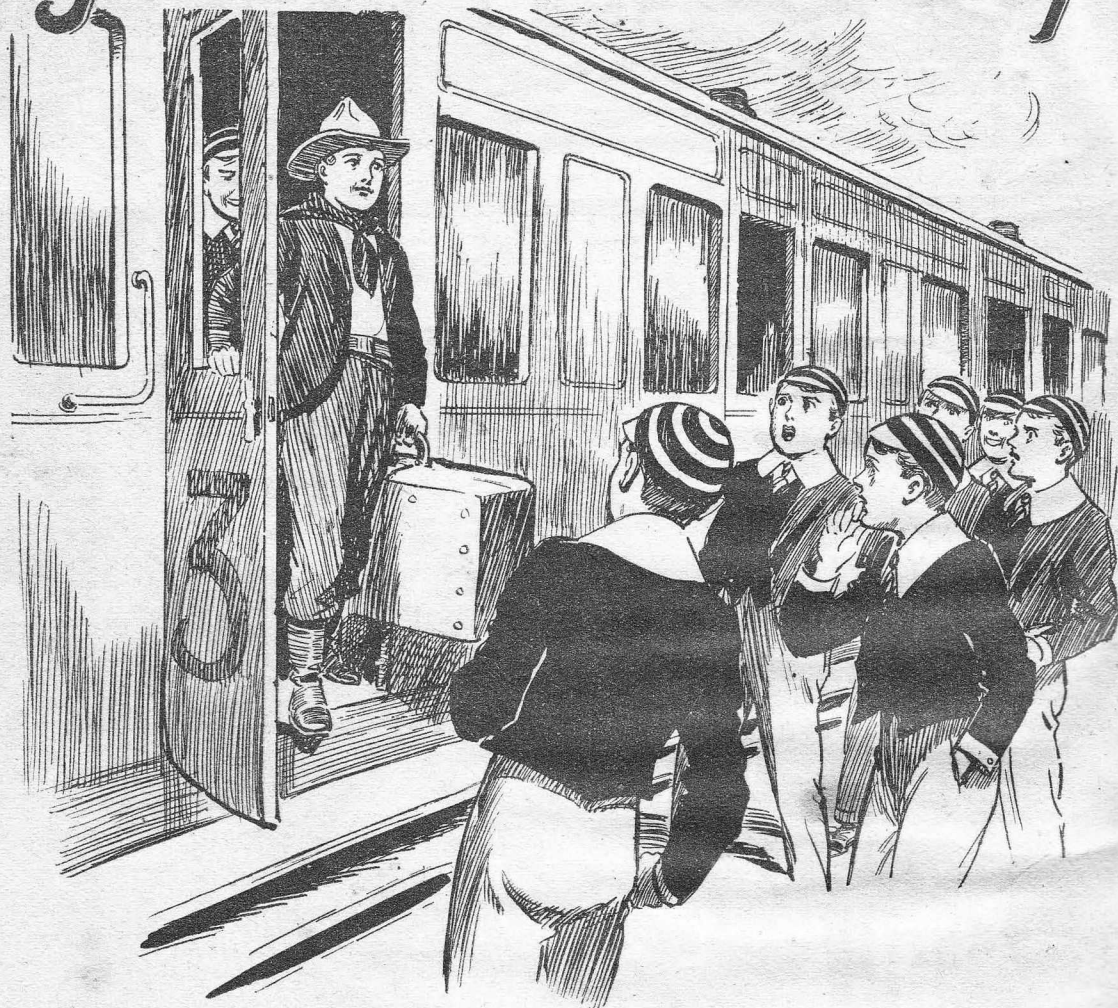
CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS -
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



The COWBOY of



When Buck Finn came to St. Jim's there were some who thought he would be "easy meat" for ragging—but they found him rather tougher than they had expected—and how!

CHAPTER 1. The Telegram.

"HURRAH! It's from Tom Merry!"

Monty Lowther, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, uttered that wild shout as he raced across the quadrangle. It was a crisp winter morning, and the quad of the old school was glimmering with white, the snow inches deep on the ground, and thick on the branches of the leafless elms.

The juniors of St. Jim's were mostly out of doors, getting up an appetite for breakfast by pelting one another with snowballs, when Monty Lowther suddenly gave that shout, and raced towards the gates.

A youth in uniform had entered at the gate, and the buff-coloured envelope he held in his hand showed that he had brought a telegram.

Hence Lowther's excitement.

For Tom Merry, the hero of the Shell, had been long away in strange lands, and among strange people, and this day he was expected to return.

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Manners and Lowther, his chums in the Shell, knew that he would let them know what train he was coming by, and the sight of the messenger was enough for Lowther.

He bore down upon the startled youth from the post office with both hands outstretched for the telegram. It was seldom that the cool and drawling Monty allowed his excitement to get the better of him, but he was simply bubbling over now.

"Hand over!" he exclaimed.

Manners was on the spot the next moment, his usually quiet face full of animation, and his hand also outstretched.

"Hand over!"

"If you please—"

"Hand over!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Digby of the Fourth, dashing upon the scene. "I expect that wire is for me!"

"Rats! It's from Tom Merry, of course!"

"Tom Merry, rats! Blake is with him, and, of course, he would wire to me what train he was returning by!" exclaimed Digby hotly.

"Stuff! That wire's from Tom Merry to Manners or me."

—TO THE SCHOOL AFTER THEIR HOLIDAY IN AMERICA!

ST. JIM'S! By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Bosh! Here, Herries, line up, old chap, these Shell rotters are trying to collar our telegram."

"Hold on a second while I tie Towser up—"

"Come here, you fathead!"

"Oh, all right!"

And Herries, who was giving his dog Towser a run in the snow, left the bulldog to his own devices and rushed up to his chum's aid. A warm argument immediately began between the equally excited Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers, during which the telegraph-boy vainly tried to make his voice heard.

But there was a sudden interruption to the dispute.

Three juniors rushed over from the direction of the New House—a long-limbed fellow with a rugged, honest face; a fat junior with a figure and face like a budding Falstaff; and a keen, canny Scottish lad—no others than Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—known all over St. Jim's as Figgins & Co.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "Here's a wire from the giddy travellers—of course, it's for me. Hand it over, young 'un."

"If you please—"

"Oh, don't jaw—hand it over!" said Kerr. "Can't you see we're waiting?"

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "It's thoughtful of them to let us know what train they're coming by. We must have a bit of a feed ready for them."

"Clear off, you New House rotters!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "That wire is from Tom Merry, and it's for us!"

"Bosh! It's from Blake or D'Arcy, and it's for us!" shouted Digby.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Figgins. "It's for us, of course! Tom Merry wrote to me from New York, and said he would—"

"Of course it's for us!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "It stands to reason they will want a feed when they get in, and they know they would have to wire to me about that. I've been planning it ever since they started from Southampton."

"I'm going to have my wire—"

"You're jolly well not going to have my wire."

"I tell you—"

"Look here—"

"Hand over that wire, young 'un!"

"If you please, the wire is for—"

"Give it to me!"

"But, if you please—"

"Nuff said! It's mine!"

"It's mine!"

"It's ours!"

There was a scuffle in the snow. The telegraph-boy was shouldered by a struggling junior, and staggered against the gate. The envelope fell from his hand, and was pounced on at once by Lowther.

"Got it! Come on, Manners!"

But Manners was lying in the snow with the weight of Fatty Wynn on his chest. It was Digby who "came on," and he came on with a rush that bowled Lowther over, and the next moment Digby had grabbed the telegram, and was scudding across the quad with it.

"Stop him!" shrieked Figgins.

"Stop him!" yelled Lowther.

Reilly of the Fourth came out of the School House. Lowther and several more were speeding on Digby's track, and Digby did not see the Irish junior in his haste. He dashed right into Reilly, and they rolled over together in the snow.

"Ow!" roared Reilly. "Wooh!"

Digby jumped up, gasping. But Lowther was upon him, and he went down again with a bump in the snow.

He dragged Lowther down, and Figgins fell over Lowther, and Kerr over Figgins. A struggling heap of juniors rolled in the snow in a gasping mass, and gasped, and panted, and shrieked.

"Hallo! Is that a new winter game?"

It was the voice of Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

He stood looking down on the confused combatants with

a grin. Digby looked up from pommelling Figgins, with a red and excited face.

"They want my wire—"

"My wire!"

"It's my telegram from Tom Merry—"

"It's my wire from Blake—"

"It's ours!"

"Rats! It's ours!"

"I tell you—"

"You School House waster!"

"You New House monkey!"

Kildare laughed and walked away. He did not feel inclined to wade in and separate nearly a dozen struggling juniors.

A girlish form crossed the snow from the direction of the Head's house, and a pair of startled blue eyes looked in alarm at the scene. Kildare raised his hat to Miss Cleveland—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's Cousin Ethel.

"What—what is the matter?" exclaimed the girl.

The captain of St. Jim's laughed.

"It's a new game of the juniors, I think—something to do with a telegram. They will be all right."

"Oh dear! Figgins!"

Figgins was rolling Lowther over in the snow, and jamming as much as he could of it inside his collar. Lowther was struggling and kicking frantically, but most of his kicks took effect upon Digby, who was pinned down by Manners and couldn't get out of reach.

The sound of Cousin Ethel's voice wrought a wonderful change in the warlike Figgins.

He released Lowther instantly and jumped up, covered with snow. He blushed scarlet and felt for his cap to raise it—but his cap was gone.

Cousin Ethel looked at him. Kildare smiled and walked away. The rest of the juniors slowly separated.

"Dear me!" said Miss Cleveland. "Is it a quarrel? I hope not."

"Oh, no!" said Figgins immediately. "We—we never quarrel. That was a—a—a—"

"That's it," said Lowther, scraping the snow from his neck, "a—a—a—"

"Exactly," said Digby, "a—a—a—"

"A little scrap," said Figgins.

"Just for fun," said Kerr.

"It was really a little tussle over a telegram," said Figgins, gaining courage as Cousin Ethel showed no sign of scepticism. "All a joke, of course. I hope you haven't got any snow down your neck, Lowther."

"None to mention, Figgy," said Lowther, with elaborate politeness.

"A little tussle warms you up on a cold morning," explained Figgins. "It was over a telegram which—which really belongs equally to all of us."

"That's it," said Manners, quite brightly. "It's a wire from Tom Merry to all the chaps—all of us, you know—"

"Addressed to the whole family, as it were," said Fatty Wynn.

"Dear me," said Miss Cleveland, looking interested. "A telegram from Tom Merry! My Cousin Arthur was going to wire me this morning to tell me which train he was coming by. Perhaps Tom has wired instead to you."

The telegraph-boy came panting up.

"Where's that telegram, gentlemen?" he asked, in distress. "If you please—"

"It's all right, young 'un, it's for us."

"It isn't, if you please, sir."

"Oh, come, it's for one or another!"

"It's for a lady."

"WHAT!" shouted all the juniors together.

"It's for Miss Cleveland."

The juniors looked at one another with sickly expressions. The telegram, trampled on and very wet, lay in the snow. Figgins picked it up. The wire had been for Cousin Ethel all the time, and the girl's expression was very demure as she took it from Figgins.

"It's—it's wet," said Figgins. "I—I say, we're awfully sorry! We—we thought it was for us, you know."

"Just like a New House bounder to put his hoof in it," muttered Lowther.

"Why, you were the first who—"

"Oh, rats!"

"You may open it for me, Figgins," said Cousin Ethel. "I think it is from my Cousin Arthur."

Figgins opened the telegram.

It certainly was from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's. Nobody but the one and only Arthur Augustus would have spent sufficient money on a telegram to make up that number of words.

Cousin Ethel glanced over it and smiled, and handed it to Figgins again.

"It's from Arthur," she said. "Please read it out!"

Figgins read it out. The message was characteristic of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Dear Cousin Ethel,—I was disappointed to find you were not at Eastwood. We're coming by the 3.30 in the afternoon. Will you mention to the House dame to have Study No. 6 cleaned and dusted ready? Tom Merry says, tell all the fellows, as they may want to meet the train. Blake says, ask Fatty Wynn to get a feed ready. Wally says, ask Jameson if his white mice are all right. Skimpole says, tell the chaps he's going to give a series of lectures on manners and customs in the Wild West. There will be no charge for admission. With kindest regards, from your affectionate cousin,

"ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, as he finished. "Isn't that like Gussy? I suppose he's blued a month's pocket-money on that."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I suppose some of you will be meeting the train?"

"What-ho!" said Lowther.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Figgins. "And there will be a celebration feed, Cousin Ethel. You will come, of course?"

"It will be ripping!" said Fatty Wynn persuasively. "I've had a Christmas pudding from my people, and we've been raising a subscription to do this in style."

"I will come, with pleasure."

"Hurrah!" shouted Figgins. "I—I—I mean, I'm glad, Miss Ethel. I'll call for you, if I may, this afternoon."

"Thank you very much, Figgins!"

Cousin Ethel tripped away. Glances were cast on Figgins from all sides like an array of daggers.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Lowther.

"The nerve!" remarked Digby.

"The bounce!" growled Herries.

"What's the trouble?" said Figgins defiantly. "If you're grouching because I'm going to call for Cousin Ethel, you can go and grouse. She would naturally like the best-looking chap to call for her."

And Figgins walked away, followed by a derisive cackle, which seemed to imply a general doubt as to his being the best-looking chap in the party.

CHAPTER 2.

The Rescue!

"**B**AI Jove, there's the old place again!"

It was Arthur Augustus who made the remark.

Five juniors were seated in a first-class carriage in the train which was steaming out of Wayland Junction, and speeding towards Rylcombe, the station for St. Jim's.

Embarkments and hills were white with snow, and leafless branches swayed like ghostly arms in the winter air.

Far away across the glistening landscape rose a tower crowned with white—the ancient tower of St. Jim's. There was a rush of three juniors to see it as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke, and the swell of St. Jim's gave a wail as he was flattened against the carriage door.

"Pway keep off, deah boys! You are cwashin' me! You are simplay wuinin' the shape of my coat! Weally, Tom Mewwy—Blake!"

"Yes, that's the old place," said Tom Merry brightly, "and I'm jolly well glad to see it again, for one."

"Yaas, wathah! But pway do give a chap woom—"

"Looks much as it used to, except that there's snow on it," grunted the unpoetical Wally. "Pongo! Pongo!"

"Pway let that bwute wemain undah the seat, Wally!" expostulated his elder brother. "He has wowed us enough on board the steamah and in the wilds of Western Amewicah, and weally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"

"We shall be at Rylcombe in five minutes," said Tom

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Merry. "I expect there will be a lot of the chaps at the station to meet us."

"Yaas, wathah! Our return in style will cweate quite a fuwore."

"A which?"

"A fuwore!"

"He means a fuwore," chuckled Jack Blake. "Yes, rather. It isn't every Fourth-Former at St. Jim's who has been over the Rocky Mountains."

And the juniors grinned contentedly. They had been on their travels, and they had come home safe and sound. Far away had their travels taken them—across the Atlantic, across the Rocky Mountains, across the grasslands of Arizona. They had come back, looking much the same—a little sunburnt, a little older in manner, perhaps, but the same set of merry youngsters.

Tom Merry looked ruddy and breezy and happy. Jack Blake was almost bronzed, and the glow of perfect health was in his cheeks. Wally was the Wally of old—happy, healthy, untidy, and irrepressible. Arthur Augustus, needless to say, was the beautifully dressed Gussy so well known at St. Jim's. His skin was slightly sunburnt, but otherwise he was exactly the same as when he had started on the voyage to the West. His trousers were as elegantly creased, his necktie tied as beautifully, his silk hat as glittering, his waistcoat as gorgeous, his gloves as perfectly fitting, his eyeglass as prominent as of old.

Skimpole looked much the same, but there was a shade of added thought upon his expansive brow. He looked like one who had travelled and seen things. A large leather bag on the rack contained his notebooks, full to the very brim with notes to be used in his book of travel. He was sitting now with a book on his knees, jotting down some important point from memory.

In the corner of the carriage sat a lad who was looking out of the window, and keeping very silent and thoughtful.

He was rather below the usual size for his age, and very sparely built; but there was a wiriness in his frame, and a "cute" alertness in his eyes, which would have shown a keen observer that he was all there, and knew how to take care of himself.

His face was unmistakably American in type. The nose was long and thin, the eyes grey, keen, quick. He was dressed in the style of a cowboy, which looked somewhat out of place in England. He had declined to change until he reached the school, determined to be comfortable as long as possible.

He was chewing something as he sat there, quiet and thoughtful. Doubtless he was thinking of the home he had left, and of the new life that was before him.

For Buck Finn hailed from the Wild Western land of Arizona, and he had returned with Tom Merry from the United States to enter at St. Jim's.

He was the son of the foreman of the ranch belonging to Tom Merry's uncle, and on the ranch Tom had met him and made his acquaintance.

Whether he liked him or not, Tom Merry hardly knew; but certainly Buck Finn had some sterling qualities, and, anyway, Tom Merry meant to see him through as far as he could, in the troubles that were undoubtedly before him at St. Jim's.

"Few more minutes, and we're there," remarked Jack Blake, tapping Finn on the shoulder.

The American boy started out of his reverie.

"Gum! Is that so?" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon Buck Finn. "Pway do not be alarmed at the pwspect, deah boy. I will take care of you."

Buck Finn looked the swell of St. Jim's up and down.

"I guess I can take care of myself," he remarked.

D'Arcy smiled indulgently.

"My deah chap, I don't want to make any wude wemarks about the Fah West, and its vevy honest and weputable inhabitants. But, as a mattah of fact, you are wathah a new thing in new boys for St. Jim's, you know."

"I dare say I shall waken it up a bit."

"The pwopah thing for you to do," said D'Arcy severely, "is to entah the place with a humble and civil mannah, and gwadually learn to know the wopes. I am willin' to help you on."

"Thank you for nothing."

"Weally, Finn, I wegard you as a wathah ungwateful wottah. It is no joke for a fellow of my standin' in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's to take up a stwangah fwom an uttally unknown countwy."

"Don't do it, then."

"Weally, Finn, I shall be stwongly inclined to take you at your word. But I wegard it as a duty to look aftah you, and show you how to dwess in a becomin' mannah, and so forth."

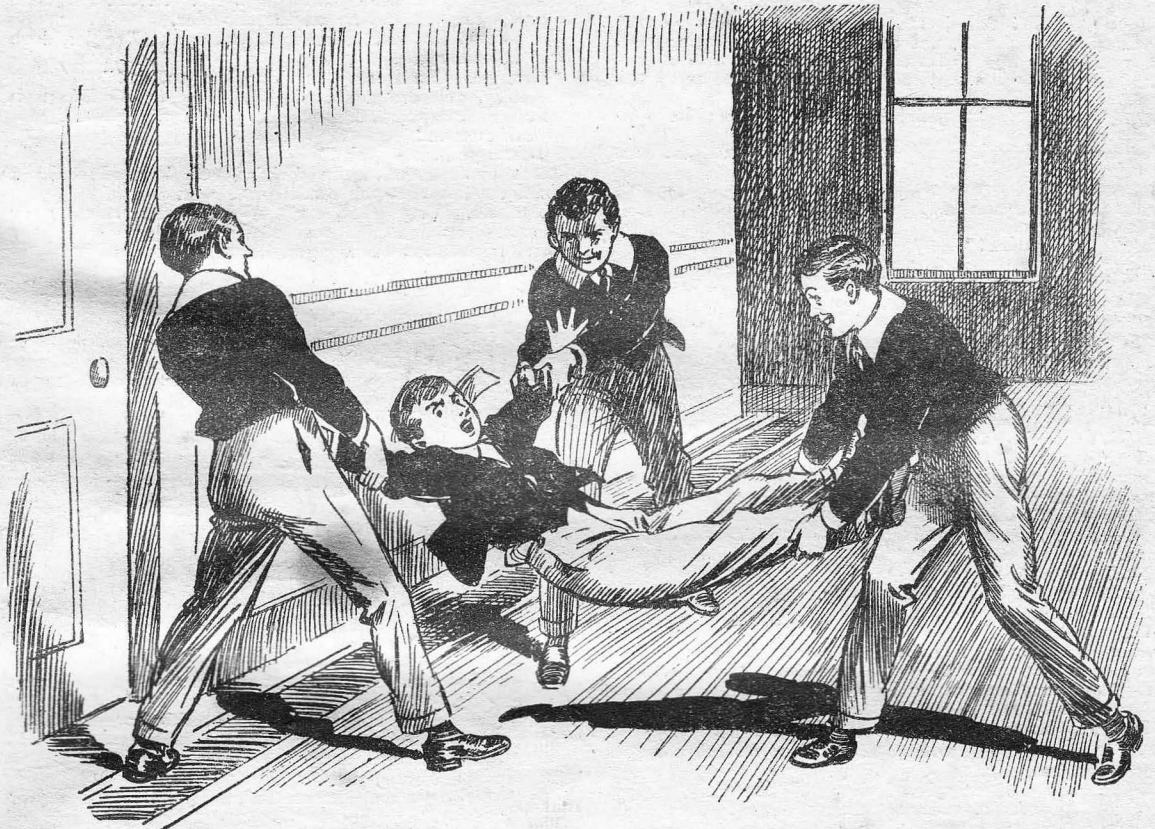
"Better not start doing that duty," said Buck Finn. "You may run up against a snag."

"Weally, deah boy—"
 "Oh, Gussy means well!" said Blake. "You see, as a new boy, you'll have a lot to go through, and you'll need friends. As we've made the journey with you from Arizona, we feel bound to stand by you at first, till you find your footing."
 "You needn't bother," said Buck Finn coolly. "I can stand alone."
 "Oh, all right!" said Jack Blake, reddening. "I shall jolly well take you at your word!"
 "I guess I don't mind."
 "If you come into the Third Form," remarked Wally, "I'll see you through. I like a chap who can shoot straight and set snares as you do, Finny."
 "Good!" said Finny.
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "Finn isn't likely to come into the Third," he said. "He'll be certain to be in either the Fourth or the Shell. I promised Mr. Poinsett to keep an eye on him—"
 "You needn't bother," said Buck Finn.

an American isn't going to be bullyragged, not much, sir. Hallo, is this the station?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 The train slowed down.
 Tom Merry threw open the carriage door before it had stopped, and waved his cap wildly from the opening. There was a roar and a rush of feet on the platform. "Here they are!"
 The next moment the doorway of the carriage was jammed with a wild crowd of juniors.

CHAPTER 3.
 Welcome Home!

TOM MERRY was first out. He did not step out—he was dragged out by main force. With Lowther shaking his right hand, and Manners his left, he was completely at the mercy of the



It was Buck Finn's first experience of the process of bumping and he did not enjoy it. He found himself bumped down, his collar unfastened, and all the breath knocked out of his body. "Gum!" he muttered. "Holy smoke! Let up!"

"Rats! I'm going to bother, and when you get to St. Jim's you'll find that a friend to stand by you is a jolly good thing sometimes."
 "I guess they won't eat me," remarked Buck Finn sarcastically.
 "They will vewy likely wag you," said D'Arcy.
 Buck looked puzzled.
 "Wag me! How can they wag me? I'm not a flag to be wagged."
 "They will wag you. Most new boys are wagged. A new boy with such a feahfully good opinion of himself as you have is absolutely certain to be wagged," said Arthur Augustus, "and, as a mattah of fact, I feel stwongly inclined to back up the waggahs!"
 "Oh, you mean they'll rag me," said Buck Finn, who had not at first caught on to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's beautiful accent. "If they start ragging me, they'll wake up the wrong passenger. You hear me?"
 "Oh, he's going to lick the whole Shell and Fourth Form!" said Blake. "Go ahead, Finny. You will find that St. Jim's isn't to be licked so easily when you start doing it."
 "I'm not looking for trouble," said Finn, "but I guess

welcomers. Digby and Reilly dragged him on the platform, and he went over, and Reilly bumped over him.
 Blake was next out. He landed in a heap with Herries and Kerr, and Wally fell over him and yelled.
 "Here, draw it mild!" gasped Tom Merry, as he sat up and groped for his head to make sure that it was still there. "Don't make it a massacre of the innocents, you know. Moderate your transports."
 "Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, taking a doubtful survey of the swaying crowd from the carriage window. "Modewate your twansports, deah boys! I am vewy glad to see your pleasuah in welcomin' us home, but weally I must absolutely wefuse to be wuffly handled!"
 "Give us your fin, Gus!"
 "How do you do, Hewwies? Oh! Ow! Don't dwag me out of the cawwiage in that wuff mannah! I feel that I shall fall ovah! Ow! Wow-wow!"
 D'Arcy's feeling was prophetic; he did fall over. His eyeglass went one way, and his silk topper another.
 "Dear me," said Skimpole, as he stepped out. "The fellows seem quite excited. Doubtless they are glad to see me again. They must have missed me very much." He

blinked round through his spectacles. "Dear me! I am treading on something. I wonder what it is I am treading on?"

"It's my neck, you horrid ass!" came the muffled voice of Jack Blake.

"Dear me, so it is! I am exceedingly sorry, Blake—"

"Gerroff!"

"Yes, certainly; but—"

Skimpole was dragged off. The somewhat dishevelled juniors were on their feet again, looking a great deal the worse for their welcome. Blake was inclined to begin punching noses, but Tom burst into a laugh.

"Hallo, you fellows, glad to see your chivvies again!" he exclaimed. "Same old long-legged Figgy—same old barrelly Fatty Wynn. Lowther, if you don't stop thumping me on the back, you'll get an upper-cut!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Glad to see your old mug again, Tommy!"

"Same here, my son," said Manners. "Did you take any photographs for me in the Wild West?"

"Heaps!"

"Good! Hallo! Who's that merchant in the carriage?" Buck Finn had not left the carriage. He was looking out with a cool stare at the excited youths from St. Jim's.

As soon as Manners directed attention to him, every eye was turned upon the American boy.

Buck Finn met the general gaze with complete self-possession.

There was nothing shy or constrained about the lad who had been "raised" on an Arizona cattle ranch.

"That's a new kid," said Tom Merry.

"Did you bring him back with you?"

"Yes."

"What is it called?"

"Buck Finn."

"My only Panama hat! Is that a joke?"

"Honest Injun!"

"Buck Finn! Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, waving his hand, "pray allow me to present Mr. Buck Finn of the Rocky Mountains!"

"Buck Finn of Arizona," said the American boy coolly, "who can lick any kid his own weight this side of the pond!"

"Hallo! You'll have a chance!"

"Have him out!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Buck Finn is under my protection—"

"More rats!" said Buck Finn coolly. "I guess Buck Finn's on his lonesome, and he don't want anybody's protection."

"You hear him, Merry?"

Tom Merry laughed good-naturedly.

"Never mind, let him alone!"

"Oh, very well, if you make a point of it," said Monty Lowther grudgingly. "It looks to me as if he's got too much cheek for St. Jim's."

"I guess I can keep my end up every time."

"And what do you reckon?" demanded Figgins.

"And what do you calculate?" asked Digby.

Buck Finn's eyes glittered at this evident reference to his American idiom.

"I reckon you're a pair of chumps," he said, "and I calculate I could lick you both into penwipers! See?"

"Come on, then!" roared Digby.

Tom Merry interposed.

"Hold on! No rows to-day!"

"Yaas, wathah! This person is a wathah impertinent person, you know, but undah the cires, I pwotest against any waggin' on an occasion like this."

"Good old Gussy!"

Buck Finn stepped out of the train. Several fellows there were inclined to roll him over on the platform for his nerve, but Tom Merry's word was law on the day of his homecoming. Buck Finn was let severely alone, but there were whispered remarks which indicated that there was a "ragging" to come.

Tom Merry and his companions marched off the platform in the midst of an excited crowd, shouting and cheering.

Blake, in the exuberance of his spirits, pushed the porter's cap over his eyes and gave the ticket-collector a dig in the ribs instead of a ticket. Jack had enjoyed the trip abroad, but he was highly excited at getting back to St. Jim's. The luggage of the party was piled on the station hack, but the juniors decided to walk. They set out at a swinging pace through the snow.

"Hallo, there's Tom Merry back again!"

It was the voice of Pilcher, the youthful leader of the Rylocombe boys in their rows with juniors of St. Jim's. He had suddenly come round the corner with Craggs and Grimes. The three of them stared at the returned travellers,

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and promptly followed up their stare with whizzing snowballs.

Biff! came the first missile on Tom Merry's chin, and then a second ball caught Jack Blake under the ear. A third knocked Buck Finn's hat off.

"Go for 'em!" shouted Figgins.

The juniors were groping for snowballs at once.

A perfect hurricane of squashy missiles swept upon Craggs, Pilcher, and Grimes, and they speedily abandoned the unequal combat, and took to their heels.

The snowballs followed them up till they disappeared, and the victorious juniors marched triumphantly to St. Jim's.

There were a score or more fellows at the gates to welcome them in. Hats were waved at the sight of the party, and there were loud cheers, and Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed a veritable triumph as they entered the old school.

Even Taggles, the porter, wore an unusually amiable grin, perhaps partly in anticipation of a tip. Arthur Augustus gave him an affable slap on the shoulder.

"Bai Jove, I'm glad to see even you again, Taggles, deah boy," he remarked.

"Yes, sir. Can I carry anything for you, sir?"

"Weally, you are most obligin', Taggles. No, there is nothin' to cawwy, but I should be glad if you would accept this half-owown."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

"But don't spend it in dwink, deah boy. I make a special condish that you don't spend it in dwink."

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir!" said Taggles, stowing the half-crown away in his waistcoat pocket, and making a mental reservation as he agreed not to spend it in liquid refreshment.

"Here's a tanner for you, Taggy," said Jack Blake. "Catch, old son, but mind, I make it a special condition that you don't squander it in riotous living."

"Yes, sir. He, he, he, sir. Thank you, Master Blake!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on!" said Fatty Wynn. "There's not much time before the feed, you know, and Cousin Ethel's coming!"

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!"

And the returned travellers were marched across the snowy quadrangle and indoors, and a few minutes later Fatty Wynn, with his sleeves rolled up, was busy preparing the feed that was to beat all previous records.

CHAPTER 4.

Buck Finn's Experiences Begin!

"ROT, I call it!" said Gore of the Shell.

"Bosh!" agreed Mellish of the Fourth.

"Piffe!" said Sharp.

There was a discordant note in the general chorus of welcoming.

Gore, the cad of the Shell, was not slow to express his opinion that the fuss made of Tom Merry was "rot." Mellish agreed with him.

"Can't see why they make so much of that chap," said Gore. "He's not rich—not so rich as some fellows in the school, anyway."

"And he doesn't do anything to make himself popular," said Mellish.

"The fellows are all fools!"

"Absolute duffers!"

"Why," said Gore, looking round at his friends, "I should make a better captain for the Shell than Tom Merry."

"Of course you would!" said the chorus.

"Besides, a fellow who goes abroad for weeks at a time, and neglects all his duties in the place, isn't the sort of chap to be captain."

"Of course he isn't!"

"The fellows are a lot of asses! They're making an awful fuss of that fellow, just as if nobody else ever went abroad."

"You went to France yourself, last hols, Gore!"

"I did, and had a jolly time!" said Gore. "I don't see so much in going to America. There's railways over the Rocky Mountains now, and it's as safe as going to Margate. But the chaps seem excited because he's come back."

"The seniors, too!" said Mellish. "There was Kildare shaking him by the hand in the quad, and Darrell patting him on the back in the passage."

"The masters are just as dotty on the subject. Did you see Railton shake hands with him? 'Glad to see you back, Merry!' 'Poof!'"

"And the Head, too! The Head shook hands with the lot of them!"

"Can't understand it myself!"

"Then there's that wild animal they've brought home,"

said Sharp. "A native of the Wild West named Buckle, or something. What do you think of that?"

"I hear he's got cheek enough for a whole Form."

"He'll jolly soon get that knocked out of him," said Gore.

"We're not going to have a new kid putting on side here. Anybody know what Form he's going into?"

"Somebody said the Shell."

"Then he'll jolly well get ragged if he begins any rot," said Gore. "I don't like the look of him. He's too cool. I don't like Americans, anyway."

"I guess that's rather a compliment to them, sonny!"

The juniors turned quickly at the sound of the voice.

Buck Finn was coming along the passage, and he had stopped as he heard Gore's remark.

"Perhaps you're looking for a thick ear just now?" suggested Gore.

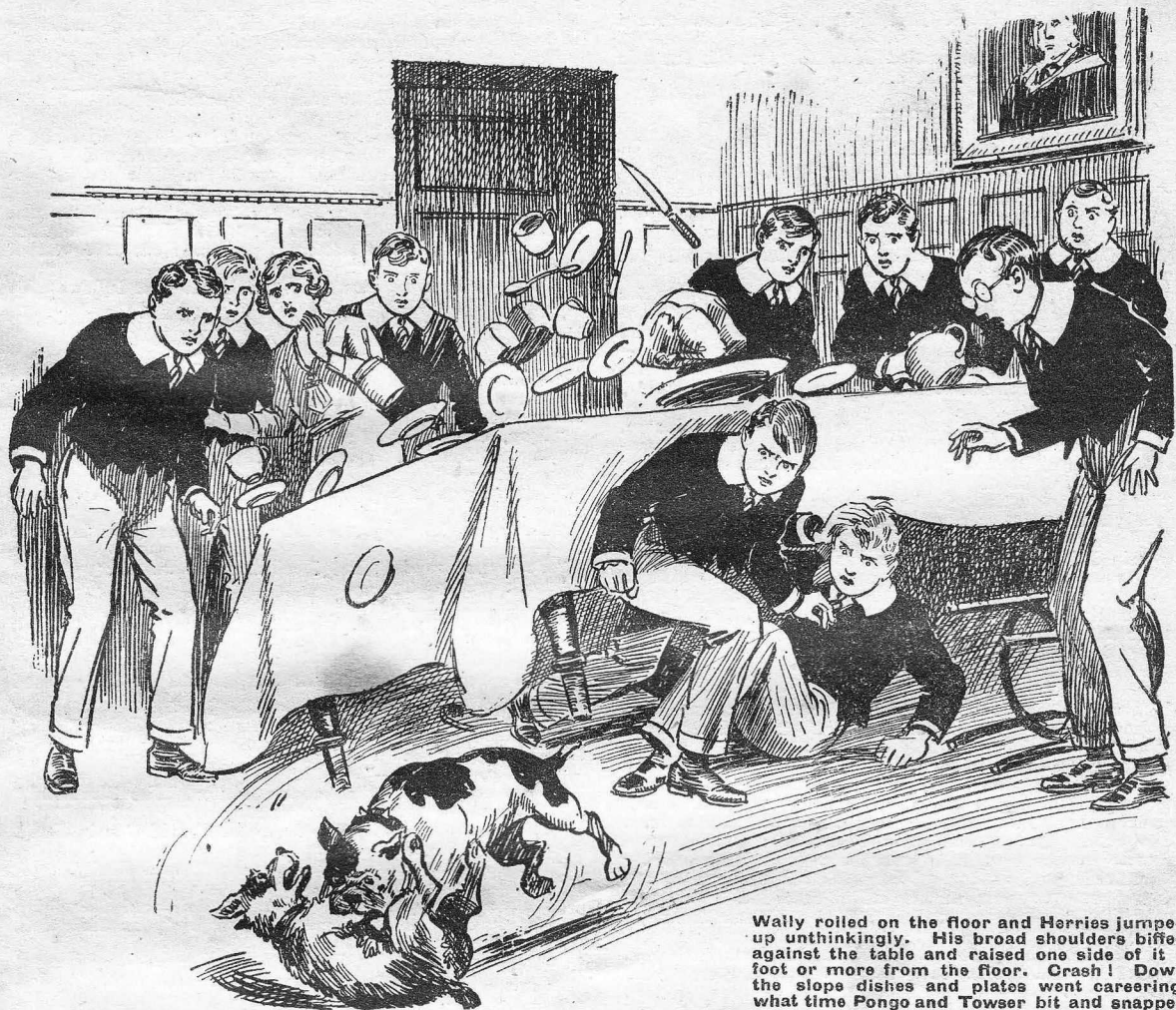
The bully of the Shell towered head and shoulders over the sparely built American boy, and he had not the slightest doubt that he could wipe up the floor with Buck Finn. And to a fellow like Gore, the ability to bully was the father of the wish to do so.

"Perhaps!" agreed Buck Finn readily. "Suppose you try it on?"

"Bump him!" said Gore.

"Hyer, one at a time!" exclaimed Buck Finn, as the grinning juniors closed round him. "Fair play's a jewel! One at a time!"

But Gore & Co. paid no attention to that. They seized



Wally rolled on the floor and Harries jumped up unthinkingly. His broad shoulders buffed against the table and raised one side of it a foot or more from the floor. Crash! Down the slope dishes and plates went careering, what time Pongo and Towser bit and snapped and snarled.

The American junior had his hands in his pockets, and he was looking at Gore quite coolly, evidently not in the least afraid of the bully of the Shell.

Gore stared at him superciliously.

"Oh! So you're the new kid?"

"I guess so!"

"Named Buckle, or something?" said Sharp.

"Named Buck Finn."

"Ye gods! What a name!"

"Anything the matter with it?" asked Buck Finn pleasantly. "I'm ready to change the shape of his features for anybody who don't cotton to it."

"I hear you're coming into the Shell," said Gore loftily.

"I guess so."

"You'll have to learn manners, I fancy. We don't intend to have any giddy new kids swaggering in the Shell, I can tell you. You'll have to learn your place, or else be shoved into it!"

"I guess I shall be all there when you start the shoving," said Buck Finn. "I was raised in Arizona. I guess I've walked over better galoots than you will ever be. Yes, sir, some!"

hold of the boy from the Wild West and proceeded to bump him.

It was Buck Finn's first experience of the process of bumping, and he did not enjoy it.

He found himself bumped down, his jacket round his ears, his collar unfastened, his breath knocked out of his body.

He was left gasping on a mat, rubbing his eyes, wondering whether he was awake or dreaming. His assailants had vanished. He blinked round him dazedly, and rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Gum!" he muttered. "Holy smoke! I wonder whether it was an earthquake?"

Gore & Co. went off, laughing, and Tom Merry met them in the passage. The hero of the Shell stopped.

"Hallo, Gore! Have you seen the new chap—Finn?"

"Finn! Yes, I think I've seen him!" drawled Gore.

"Lantern-jawed chap, isn't he?"

"Well, perhaps a little!"

"Nose like a knife-blade?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"A bit—yes. Where is he?"

"You'll find him along there, reposing on the mat!"

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

Tom Merry looked dubiously at Gore, and then hurried on. He found Buck Finn standing on the mat and dusting down his clothes.

The American boy's dishevelled appearance brought an involuntary smile to Tom Merry's lips.

"Hallo! Have you been falling foul of Gore already?" he asked.

Buck Finn grunted expressively.

"Oh, Gore, was it? I shall remember Gore. The beast! I feel as if I've been in a motor-car collision."

"Never mind; come along to the feed."

"Good! I'm jolly hungry!"

"Then come on!" said Tom Merry. "You can have a dust down in my study."

And Buck Finn accompanied Tom Merry to the room in which the feast was to be held.

CHAPTER 5. A Junior Feed!

FATTY WYNN was happy!

The subscription raised by the friends of Tom Merry for the welcoming feed was really a good one, and it enabled Fatty to "spread himself" in the matter of the preparations.

It had been easy to obtain permission to use a room for the feast. A study would not have accommodated half the guests. To say nothing of Miss Ethel and the returned travellers, there were four or five Shell fellows and half a dozen of the Fourth, and a couple of infants of the Third Form, the special chums of D'Arcy minor. Then, of course, there was Pongo.

The room was on the ground floor of the School House, and had a wide window looking out into the snowy quadrangle. There was a big fireplace at one end and a huge fire was blazing in it.

The heat spread through the room, and was very welcome to the juniors as they came in. The weather was bitterly cold.

Cousin Ethel had helped Figgins to decorate the room. There were chains of coloured paper round the walls, in Christmas style, and masses of holly and evergreens. Over the mantelpiece was a big placard in red ink, done by the artistic hand of Kerr:

"WELCOME HOME!"

Underneath that cheery legend, however, some mischievous hand—probably Mellish's—had scrawled the word "Rats!"

There was a long table gleaming with white cloth and crockery and silver. The necessary articles had been borrowed from all quarters, and it was an understood thing that every male guest was to bring his own knife and fork.

The School House cook, with whom Tom Merry was a favourite—as he was with everybody—had helped Fatty Wynn nobly, and Fatty had been allowed the run of the kitchen; and a promised half-crown from the funds had turned Binks, the buttons, into the most assiduous of waiters.

Figgins had called for Cousin Ethel, as arranged, and when he brought her in, in triumph, the other guests were already there.

Cousin Ethel gave everybody a bright smile, and she had another for Buck Finn when he was introduced.

Notwithstanding his independence, the American junior was glad to come to the feed, and the thoughtfulness of Tom Merry certainly made his first day at St. Jim's brighter and pleasanter than it would otherwise have been.

Cousin Ethel took her place at the table, with Tom Merry on her right, and Arthur Augustus fully intended to take the seat on the other side of his fair cousin.

But Jack Blake came up in time.

"Gussy, old man, is that your hat Pongo's got under the table?" he asked.

"Bar Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy in alarm.

And he rushed to see.

While he was stooping down and peering under the table Blake calmly dropped into his seat. Pongo certainly did have something under the table, but it was a sausage he had purloined from the sideboard, and D'Arcy rose with a gasp of relief.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed. "It's only some gwub."

"Good!" said Jack Blake.

Arthur Augustus looked at him very expressively.

Blake was in his place and showed no disposition whatever to move.

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D'Arcy fixed his eyeglass upon Blake, but Blake never turned a hair.

"Anything wrong, old chap?" he asked affably.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You are looking as if something was on your mind."

"Sit down, old chap," said Blake. "Come and sit next to me."

Arthur Augustus, with feelings too deep for words, dropped into the next chair. Fatty Wynn was carving a turkey, and his fat face was shining with delight. The turkey was a great success, and Fatty Wynn, when he found time from the carving, showed that his appetite had not been impaired during Tom Merry's trip abroad.

And when the more solid portions of the feast were over, and conversation became more general, the travellers were called upon to tell some of their experiences, and they willingly responded to the call.

Skimpole offered to read out all his notebooks, beginning at the beginning, but as this would probably have occupied several weeks on end, the offer was gratefully but decidedly declined.

Arthur Augustus had some entertaining descriptions of the scenes of his travels, which were quite characteristic.

"People are wathah well-dwessed in New York," he remarked, "and I wemarked some vevy decently dwessed persons in Chicago. As for the Far West, the less said about their attiah the better. It is pwobably vevy suitable for the countwy, but I did not see a pwopably cut coat west of the Wocky Mountains."

D'Arcy seemed surprised by the laugh that followed his remark.

"I hear you were kidnapped, begorra!" Reilly remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I rescued him," said Blake. "I—"

"Weally, Blake, I am surprised at the statement. Surely you wemembah how I ovahcame that wascal Captain Puntah and wescued you?"

"Now, don't you talk absolute rot, Gussy!" said Blake warmly. "Didn't I find you in a garret in the Bowery in New York—"

"I found you in a gawwet in the Bowewy in New York, Blake!"

"I suggested laying for that chap Punter when he came in—"

"Pewwaps you did; but I collahed the wottah."

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Oh, you rescued each other!" said Tom Merry. "Let it go at that!"

"I should be vevy pleased to let it go at that, Tom Mewwy; but, as a mattah of fact, it was I who wescued Blake."

"Bosh!" said Wally. "It was Tom Merry and I who rescued both of you. You wouldn't have got away if we hadn't chipped in!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"I can recommend the banana fritters, Miss Cleveland," said Fatty Wynn. "I made them myself."

"Then I am sure they are delightful," said Cousin Ethel.

And Fatty Wynn beamed.

"Tell us about busting the bronchos," said Digby.

"Oh, that was nothin'!" said D'Arcy.

"Wasn't it?" said Buck Finn. "I tell you, kids, that hoss Colorado couldn't be ridden by anybody on the ranch, and D'Arcy broke him in."

"Mr. Poinsett was kind enough to make me a pwesent of him," said D'Arcy. "He came ovah in the steamah with us. I left him at Eastwood. Tom Mewwy's uncle is an old sport!"

"Is it all right about the millions?" Herries wanted to know.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Yes, it's all right. They're there; but I hope it will be a jolly long time before they come to me."

"Hear, hear!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Wally sprang to his feet.

"What's the matter with Pongo?"

Gr-r-r-r!

Bow-wow-wow!

Terrific sounds of conflict proceeded from under the table. Wally had surreptitiously passed a whole wing of a chicken to his favourite, and Pongo had been contentedly munching till a stranger came on the scene. The stranger was Herries' bulldog, Towser. Towser took a part in the proceedings at once. As Wally looked under the table the two dogs were rolling over on the floor in a furious combat.

"Look out! Call that beast off, Herries!"

"Are you calling my dog a beast, young D'Arcy?"

"Call your dog off!"

"Call your dog off!"

"Pongo! Pongo!"

"Towser! Towser!"

Yap-yap-yap! Gr-r-r-r!

Wally plunged under the table from one side with a plate in his hand, with the evident intention of smiting Towser. Herries was on the other side of the table, and he plunged under, too, and his head met Wally's with a sounding crash.

"Oh!"
"Ow!"

Wally rolled over on the floor, and Herries jumped up unthinkingly. His broad shoulders biffed upon the table and raised one side of it a foot or more from the floor. There was a yell of alarm from the juniors, and they clutched at the table to save it; but too late! Along the slope went careering dishes and plates, and there was a terrific crashing on the floor.

"You duffers!" roared Tom Merry.

The feasters were on their feet at once. Towser and Pongo separated and went racing out of the room. Wally crawled out from under the table, rubbing his head. Herries was sitting on the floor, looking dazed.

Buck Finn's hand descended on George Gore's head and the bully of the Shell gave a startled yelp. Then his head was squashed down into his plate and his features disappeared into the gravy. Squelch! "Dear me!" gasped the Head, arriving at that moment.



"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "It looks as if the feast is ruined."

And it certainly was.

Fortunately, the catastrophe happened at the latter end of the feast; but Herries and Wally received scant sympathy for the big bumps on their heads.

CHAPTER 6.

Finn Is Not Caught!

TOM MERRY stirred the fire in Study No. 10 in the Shell, and the bright glow played on his equally bright face.

His countenance was glowing, his eyes sparkling. It was good to travel and see the world, but it was good also to be back in his old haunts. After the Christmas vacation and the run across the Atlantic, St. Jim's was like an old home to which he was returning. Everything delighted him. The feed in the big room downstairs, though it had ended so abruptly, had been a delight. It was jolly to see so many cheerful and welcoming faces round him.

But after it was over he was glad to get into his own study with his own special chums, Manners and Lowther, to have a "jaw," and to look at his old quarters.

Outside in the quad there was a mist and a thaw. The windows were steaming wet; the leafless elms weeping. But inside the study all was cosy.

Tom Merry stirred up the fire and walked round the room, looking at things. Manners was developing films Tom Merry had brought back from America, and Lowther sat in the easychair with his long legs stretched out in an attitude of lazy comfort.

"It's ripping to be back!" said Tom.

"Yes, jolly!" said Lowther. "Glad to see your old chivvy about the place! We missed you—curious, wasn't it?"

"I missed you," said Tom. "I haven't heard a stale wheeze or a rotten bad pun for weeks. It's jolly cosy here! By the way, what do you think of the new chap?"

"The finny denizen of the West, do you mean? He's a queer fish."

"Oh dear, is that a pun? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's a queer bird," said Lowther. "Too independent for my taste. He will be ragged."

Manners looked up from his developer.

"I rather think that will do him good," he remarked. "He's got too much cheek by half."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, he certainly has plenty of nerve," he remarked. "Blessed if I know whether I like him or not. He's the son of my uncle's foreman, you know; and I told uncle that I would look after him as much as I could, and give him a start here."

"He doesn't seem to need much looking after," said Lowther. "My idea is that a jolly good dormitory ragging would do him good."

"A lot of the other fellows think so, too," said Manners. "I suppose you know he's been put in the Shell, Tom?"

"Yes. He's keen enough to get on, too. I fancy he will be all right."

"Yes; when he's been put into his place."

There was a tap at the door. Tom Merry, who had sat down on a corner of the table with his hands in his pockets, looked round.

"Come in!" he called out.

The door opened and Binks, the butler, put his head in.

"Letter for you, Master Merry!"

"Hand it over."

Tom Merry smiled a little as he took the letter. Binks vanished. The letter was addressed to Tom in the handwriting of his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. As Tom had only left her that morning, Miss Fawcett was a good correspondent.

"Any news?" asked Lowther.

"It's from Miss Fawcett," said Tom, opening the letter. "She must have written it immediately I left."

He glanced through the letter and laughed. It was in the same strain in which Miss Priscilla always wrote:

"My darling Tommy,—I am just a little bit anxious about your health still. You had such a colour when you came off the steamer that I could not help fearing that you were feverish. I have sent you a packet of things you will need, which will have reached the school before you. I hope you will carry out the instructions on the bottles and boxes. Take great care, my darling child, not to get your feet wet, and in case of a shower, go in and change your clothes immediately. Do not begin playing cricket until you have well rested after your travels."

Tom Merry grinned. The idea of playing cricket in January was funny. But Miss Priscilla Fawcett had a very hazy idea of the national games, and she had frequently implored Tom not to strive after too many runs at football. The rest of the letter was in the same strain. Tom Merry folded it up and put it into his pocket.

"Anything come here for me to-day?" he asked.

Lowther chuckled.

"Yes, rather! A registered parcel, with the Huckleberry Heath postmark. I forgot to tell you, but you know what's in it."

"Better look, though."

"It's in the cupboard."

Tom Merry crossed to the cupboard. That cupboard contained a variety of things—from broken fishing-rods and tackle and deflated footballs to pork pies and tinctures and colour boxes. The registered parcel was there, and Tom Merry opened it.

The contents were as he expected.

He turned out a goodly array of bottles, jars, and boxes. Monty Lowther looked over his shoulder and read some of the titles.

"'Dr. Bones' Purple Pills for Pink People'; 'Herr Humbourg's Terra-cotta Tabloids for Tiny Tots'; 'Mixture of Cod-liver Oil.' My only hat! You'll be a giddy invalid if you swallowed a tenth part of that lot, Tommy!"

"She's a good old soul," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I wouldn't think of telling her what I think of this stuff for worlds. Of course, I'm not going to take any of it."

"What will you do with it?"

"Well, the pills may as well go on the fire now. I'll tip Binks twopence to bury the rest in the garden."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Shell were still laughing as the door of the study opened and Buck Finn put his head in.

"Can I come in?" he asked in a low tone.

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, wondering at his mysterious look.

"It's a custom in England to tap at a door before you open it," remarked Monty Lowther in his blandest tone.

The American, without replying, came quietly in and closed the door. He dropped into the easy-chair Lowther had risen from, and stretched out his thin legs.

"I guess this is comfy," he remarked.

"I was sitting in that chair," said Lowther pointedly.

"Were you? Well, I guess you found it comfy," said Finn. "I do. I'll hang out here a few minutes, if you don't mind."

Tom Merry was about to ask a question when there was a sound of footsteps passing the door. They died away up the passage.

"Anything wrong, Finny?"

"Not with me," Buck Finn chuckled. "There are some galoots along the passage who want to scalp me. Blake told me I could have his 'Magnet,' and said it was on the table in his study. I smelled a mouse and found a booby-trap all ready—bag of ashes on top of door, you know, ready to biff on my head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes. Funny wasn't it?" agreed Buck Finn, grinning. "But not so funny for Blake as he expected. You see, I spotted the wheeze, and I gave that door a wide berth."

"And what's happened?"

"Well, D'Arcy was coming upstairs a minute ago, and from what I heard I guess he discovered the booby-trap—with his head."

The footsteps were repassing the door. There was a sound of several juniors hunting in the shadowy corridor. The voice of Blake was heard.

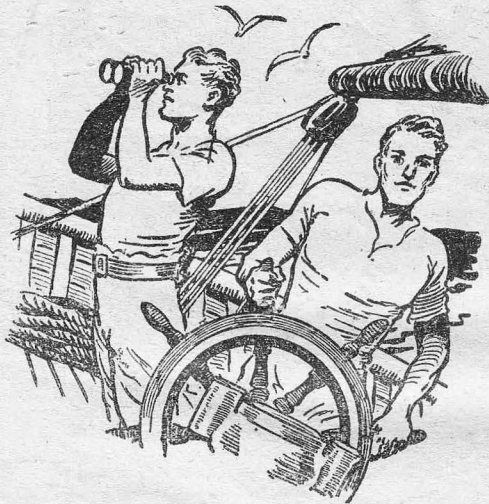
"He nipped into one of the Shell studies, then?"

Buck Finn looked grim.

"I guessed I looked in for a quiet time," he remarked. "But it looks as if—Thunder!"

The door was bumped open, and the chums of Study No. 6 looked in. Jack Blake gave a shout.

"Here he is!"



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CHAPTER 7.

The Laws of Hospitality!

BUCK FINN rose to his feet.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy had come along together to interview the cheerful youth from Arizona, and they looked as if they meant business.

D'Arcy had apparently been looking for ashes, and finding them. His hair, usually so beautifully brushed and tidy, was rumpled and unkempt, and simply streaming with ashes. His face was smothered with them. So was his elegant jacket, and his high collar was choked with them round his neck. And the eyes of the swell of St. Jim's were ablaze with wrath.

"Bai Jove, where's the wottah?"

"There!" roared Blake.

"Collar the cad!" exclaimed Digby. "Frog's-march him down the passage and duck him in the bath-room. That's about right!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry pacifically. "Hold on a minute! This kid is a guest in this study!"

"He won't be for long!" said Blake, striding towards the American.

Monty Lowther stepped in between them.

"Chuck it!" he said laconically. "Listen to your uncle."

"Get out of the way!"

"Rats!"

"Peace, my sons!" said Tom Merry. "You can't rush into another fellow's quarters, like a gang of hooligans, in this way."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Tom Merry.

"I uttaly wufuse to be chawactewised as a gang of hooligans I mean, as a hooligan, Tom Mewwy!"

"Better go slow," said Buck Finn in a drawling voice.

"I don't want to have to lick you, Blake!"

"Lemme get at him!" roared Blake.

"Pway don't be hasty, Blake. There is somethin' in what Tom Mewwy says. It's wathah bad form to make a wov in another fellow's quartahs."

"Blow his quarters! This kid has had the cheek to play tricks on us—us, the heads of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's!"

"What has he done?"

"Look at D'Arcy!"

"I'm looking at him. Excuse my laughing, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to excuse your laughin', Tom Mewwy! I weward it as wude and insultin'! I am quite awaiah that my aspect is wathah wicidulous at the pwsent moment, but that is due to the astounding cheek of this Amewican person."

"We laid a booby-trap for him in Study No. 6," exclaimed Blake.

"And he had the nerve to leave it there for us," said Digby, taking up the tale.

"It might have dropped on us!" said Herries indignantly.

"As a mattah of fact, it dwopped on me, which I weward as a far more sewious mattah!"

"We're going to rag him!"

"We're going to scrag him!"

"He's got to learn his place!"

Tom Merry waved his hand for silence.

"Gentlemen—"

"Oh, cut the cackle!"

"Gentlemen, I acknowledge that the new kid has acted in a disrespectful manner towards Study No. 6 in refusing to have a bag of ashes dumped on his head and in leaving that treat for Gussy. Undoubtedly, for his fearful cheek the culprit deserves to be hanged, drawn, quartered, and dotted on the nose. But he is a stranger in the land. In coming here he has placed himself under the protection of this study. The laws of hospitality forbid that we should allow a hair of his head to be touched."

"We don't want to touch a hair of his head. We're going to give him the frog's-march!"

"The frog's-march for a guest in this study is barred. The laws of hospitality—"

"Blow the laws of hospitality! Get aside!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Impossible! The refugee has placed himself under our protection, as it were. He is our Themistocles, and we cannot give him up to the Greeks."

"I'll Themistocles him!" howled Blake. "Are you going to shift and let me get at that American bouncer?"

"The laws of hospitality—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

And he rushed forward.

"Line up!" shouted Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three lined up promptly enough. The chums of the Fourth attacked valiantly, but Buck Finn promptly sided with his hosts, and the odds were made even. The study was a large one for the Shell, but there wasn't much room for eight excited juniors to wage warfare in it.

The table went crashing aside, and Manners' daylight developer went with a bump on the floor. Manners himself bumped over it the next moment, with Herries sprawling across his chest.

Blake was busy with Tom Merry, and Digby with Lowther. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down upon Buck Finn, and they closed, and the encounter was really terrific. They rolled over on the floor, and in a few seconds D'Arcy—he did not exactly know how—was extended on his back on the carpet—and Buck Finn was sitting astride of his chest.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of the School House. "Pway be careful, deah boy! You are wumplin' my clothes feahfully!"

Buck Finn laughed breathlessly. D'Arcy's appeal in the middle of a rough-and-tumble struck him comically.

"Upon reflection, I will make it pax," said D'Arcy. "It is bad enough to be smothered in ashes, without havin' one's beastlay clothes wumpled and wuffed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally fail to see where the cause for laughtah comes in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway make it pax!"

"I guess you'll have to explain what you mean by packs," said Buck Finn. "Do you mean travelling packs?"

"Weally, I weward your ignorance on the subject as astounding! Pax is Latin for peace, deah boy."

"Why don't you talk English?"

"Weally, I can scarcely explain while you are sittin' on my chest!"

Buck Finn laughed, and allowed D'Arcy to rise.

The swell of St. Jim's dusted down his clothes ruefully.

"If I had not made it pax," he said witheringly. "I should make it a point to administah a feahful thwashin' to you, you Amewican boundah! Undah the cires, you can considah yourself let off. Blake, deah boy, pway make it pax!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort! Tom Mewwy—"

"What's this confounded row about?" asked Kildare, putting his head into the study. "Stop that immediately!"

The combatants, who were just warming to their work, separated reluctantly.

They looked very dusty and dishevelled, and they bore very plain traces of the combat on their faces.

The captain of St. Jim's could not help grinning as he looked at them.

"Is this how you are celebrating your return, Tom Merry?" he asked.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not exactly. But the laws of hospitality—"

"Bust the laws of hospitality!" grunted Blake. "The fact is, Kildare, this new kid is too fresh, and we were teaching him a lesson for his own good when these asses chipped in!"

"As he took refuge in our study—"

"Rats! You were looking for trouble!"

"What has Finn been doing?"

"Shoving a booby-trap ready for us!" said Blake indignantly. "Well, as a matter of absolute fact, we put it up, you know, but instead of walking into it he left it for us, and, of course, D'Arcy was bound to go and poke his head into it!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You will admit yourself, Kildare, that we ought to make an example of a cheeky young beggar like that!"

Kildare grinned.

"I'll admit you'll get a licking all round if there's any more row in this study," he said. "We've had a quiet time while you've been away. Look out!"

And the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Bai Jove, you know, I think I had bettah go and get a wash and a bwush-up!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am feelin' extwemely dustay and untiday!"

"You'd better all go," said Tom Merry.

"What about that bouncer?"

"I guess I stick right here!"

Blake hesitated a moment. But it was scarcely feasible to continue the combat after the warning from Kildare. A couple of prefects sailing in with canes would soon have put an end to it.

"Well, we'll make him sit up presently," said Blake. "Of course, we don't want to be down on a newcomer. All we want to do is to teach him his place, so that he won't be always getting into rows."

"Exactly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So just look out for to-night, Finn!"

"I guess I shall be looking out!"

And the chums of Study No. 6, with portentous looks, marched off.

CHAPTER 8.

Buck Finn Prepares for Battle!

THERE was an ominous air of suppressed excitement about the juniors when bed-time came.

The intentions of the chums of Study No. 6 were known, and most of the juniors of the School House heartily concurred in them. As a rule, any Fourth Form invasion of the Shell quarters would have been resisted by all Tom Merry's Form fellows, but on the present occasion most of the Shell agreed with them that the new boy was in sore need of a lesson.

Buck Finn must have noticed something, but he appeared to be taking no particular heed of it.

He was coolness itself, and, though Tom Merry looked at him searchingly several times, he showed no sign of uneasiness.

Darrell, the prefect, looked into the Common-room with his good-natured smile, and pointed to the clock.

"Bed!" he remarked.

"Bai Jove, it's bed-time!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am feelin' wathah exhausted. Twavellin' does take it out of

you, deah boys. Upon weflection, Blake, I weally think we had bettah leave the waggin' alone for— Ow! What are you tweadin' on my foot for, you ass?"

"Shut up!"
 "I wufuse to shut up! You have twodden on my foot in a beastlay wuff way, and I considah— If you poke me in the wibs like that again, Dig, I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"
 "Cheese it!"

Darrell gave the juniors a curious glance and left the room. The chums of Study No. 6 glared at the swell of St. Jim's, and the swell of St. Jim's glared at them.

"I uttably and positively decline to cheese it!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a set of wude boundahs!"
 "You shrieking ass! You nearly gave it all away to Darrell."

"You dummy!" said Herries. "Do you want to have Darrell following us to the Shell dormitory to-night?"
 "Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that."

"You never think at all," growled Blake. "Look at that Yankee bouncer over there, kids. Looks as cool as a cucumber."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "We'll warm him up presently," said Digby. Buck Finn was certainly looking very cool.

He strolled over to Tom Merry as the latter rose from his chair, and Tom looked at him inquiringly.

"Can I borrow something of you, Merry?" the American junior asked.

"Yes, what is it?"
 "It's in the cupboard in your room. I noticed it while I was there," said Buck. "The cupboard door was open, you know. It's in a tin."

Tom Merry looked puzzled for a moment, and then he understood, and burst into a laugh.

"Yes, certainly you can have it," he said. Buck Finn nodded and left the room.

He went directly up to Tom Merry's study, and looked into the cupboard. The first thing that met his view was an array of medicine bottles and pill boxes there.

Buck Finn did not know of the little ways of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and he stared at the collection of patent medicines in blank amazement.

"Gum!" he murmured. "Fancy Tom Merry taking this stuff!"

He looked at the bottles. There was no doubt about it; the name of Tom Merry was written upon every label. The American junior looked disgusted.

In the Far West he had rather taken to Tom Merry, and since returning to St. Jim's the hero of the Shell had given him no reason to change his opinion—till now.

But the patent medicines did it!
 "Milkstop!" murmured Buck Finn.

He pushed the things aside and reached out for what he had come for—a tin of cayenne pepper—and put it into his pocket.

Then he closed the cupboard and left the study. He chuckled as he joined the rest of the Shell going up to bed. He was prepared for the ragging now.

The Shell was very quiet—unusually quiet—as they went into their dormitory. Had Darrell, the prefect, been of a suspicious nature, he would have thought something was on, from their very quietness.

But he did not notice it particularly, only thinking that the juniors were a little less troublesome than usual.

The light was put out and the prefect retired, and the juniors lay quiet, listening to his departing footsteps.

Then Gore sat up in bed.
 "Get up, you fellows!"

A match glimmered in the darkness of the dormitory. Half a dozen others followed, and candles and bicycle lanterns were lighted.

A dozen fellows jumped out of bed. Tom Merry and his chums did not move. Tom did not intend to take any part in the ragging of Buck Finn, though whether to defend him or not he had not decided.

And Monty Lowther and Manners intended to follow their leader, whatever line Tom Merry might take.

But almost all the rest of the Shell in the School House were eager for the excitement of a ragging.

Buck Finn lay in bed, apparently dozing off, for his eyes were only half closed, and he was quite ready to jump up.

The handle of the door was silently turned, and a face looked in from the passage. It was that of Jack Blake.

Gore grinned at him. It was seldom that the cad of the Shell was on good terms with Blake and his friends, but just now their purposes were one.

"Come in!" said Gore. "I see you've got the whole family with you."

There were indeed a goodly number of Fourth-Formers with Blake.

Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy followed him in, and then seven or eight other fellows belonging to the Fourth Form, and the door was closed.

Blake grinned at the Shell fellows.
 "We've come!" he remarked.

"I see you have," said Tom Merry from his bed. "And now the best thing you can do is to go."

"Rats!"
 "Yaas, wats, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon Tom Merry. "We wefuse to go. We are here to wag that wottah for his own good."

"That's it. Where's the American?"
 Buck Finn sat up in bed.

"Here I am, I guess!" he remarked. "What's wanted?"
 "You are!"

And the Fourth-Formers drew round the American junior's bed, and Gore & Co. joined them. There were nearly twenty of the raggars, but Buck Finn did not seem to be alarmed.

"I guess you'd better go to sleep," he remarked.
 "Get out of that bed!"

"Yaas, wathah! We ordah you to immediately wise, you wottah! Get out, or I shall dwag you out by violence."

Buck Finn grinned.
 "I guess you'd better drag me out, Gussy."

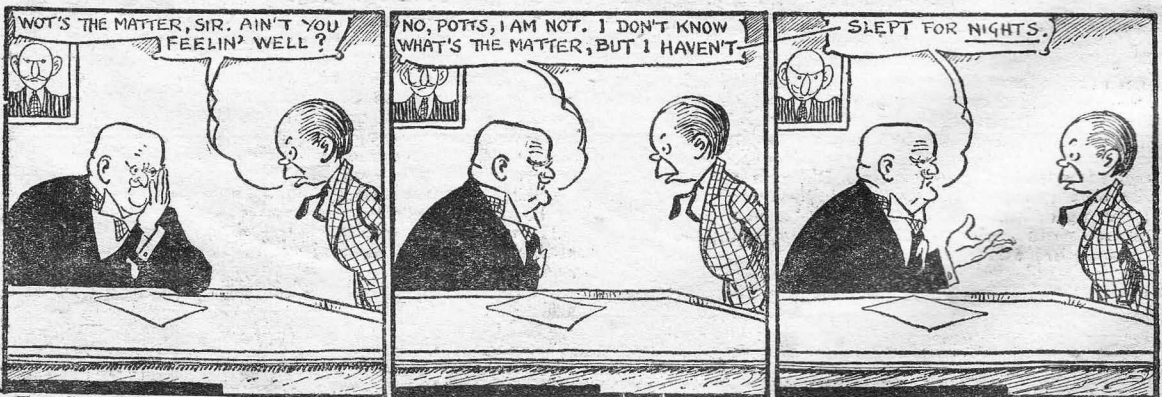
"I shall be extremely sorry to use violence," said the swell of St. Jim's; "but if you do not get out quickly, I shall have no alternative but to dwag you out."

"Go ahead, then!"
 And there were cries of encouragement from Shell and Fourth. They all wanted to see D'Arcy dragging the American out of bed.

"Go it, Gussy!"
 "Yank him out!"
 "On the ball!"

Thus encouraged, Arthur Augustus advanced upon the

Potts, the Office Boy!



American junior, who showed no sign of getting out of bed on his own accord.

Arthur Augustus wasted no more time in words. He laid hold of the bedclothes. A foot whisked out from under the blankets and prodded the swell of the School House violently in the chest.

Arthur Augustus gave a gasp and staggered back, and fell with a bump into a sitting posture. There was a roar of laughter.

"Bai Jove! What was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "It was Finn's hoof!"

"Bai Jove! The wottah has struck me with his beastly foot! I feel quite out of bweath. Upon the whole, Blake, you can pull the wottah out!"

The juniors rushed forward to claw the bedclothes off.

Buck Finn sprang up, sheets and blankets falling away round him, and the tin of cayenne pepper was in his hand and a gleam of battle in his eye.

"Come on!" he said.

But they halted.

CHAPTER 9.

A Dormitory Rag!

BUCK FINN stood erect on the bed in his pyjamas, and the juniors clustered round the bed like dogs round a deer, ready to spring.

But that tin of cayenne pepper deterred them.

Buck Finn had perforated the lid, and it needed only a sweep of the hand to send the pungent powder scattering over them. And they did not like the prospect. Buck Finn grinned at them irritatingly.

"Come on!" he remarked. "You were mighty hefty just now. Don't be backward in coming forward. I'm ready."

Blake glared at him.

"Put that tin down!"

"No fear!"

"We're going to give you a ragging for your own good."

"I'd rather be without it."

"That's not the question. You've got to have it. You will get off more lightly if you take it quietly."

"I guess I shan't take it quietly."

"Go and eat tintacks."

There was no more to be said. The raggars had either to rush on and risk the pepper, or else to give it up and confess themselves beaten, and that was, of course, not to be thought of for a moment.

"Come on!" shouted Blake. And he sprang upon the bed.

His chums were quick enough to follow him, though Gore & Co. hung back a good deal, preferring to follow at a safer distance.

"I guess you will have it, then," remarked Buck Finn. And he swept the tin of pepper through the air.

Blake closed his eyes involuntarily as the stinging cloud impinged upon his face, and then he started sneezing.

It wasn't an ordinary common or garden sneeze, but a volcanic one that shook him from head to foot, and was heard from end to end of the dormitory.

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo—schoo!"

Round swept the American junior's arm, and the pepper was scattered in wild sweeps, and there were few of the juniors who escaped it. Back they staggered from the bed, as though it was being defended by a machine-gun.

The American grinned. "Come on!" he exclaimed. "There's plenty left. I guess I haven't used half of it yet, by gum!"

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Atchoo—choo—schoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake wiped the water streaming from his eyes, and sneezed a sneeze that seemed almost like a pistol-shot.

"Come on!" he roared.

And the juniors, sneezing wildly, rushed on again.

Again the pepper swept round. But this time the defence was not quite so successful. The juniors were too furious to care for it, and they were already sneezing as much as they possibly could sneeze.

"Collar him!"

"Atchoo—collar him—atchoo!"

"Got the beast—atchoo—"

"Atchoo—drag him off—oo-oo-oo!"

Hands grasped Buck Finn in various parts of him, and he was fairly yanked off the bed. The tin of pepper went flying, sending clouds into the air, and the American junior rolled on the floor amid a heap of struggling and sneezing humanity.

"Got him!"

"Atchoo—choo—choo—o-oo!"

Buck Finn struggled desperately. Had the juniors been in their ordinary form, he would have had no chance, but they were too busy sneezing to have a tight grip on him.

He wrenched himself loose and sprang to his feet.

"Atchoo! Collar him—atchoo!" sneezed Blake.

"Bai Jove—atchoo—go for the boundah—atchoo!"

Buck sprang clear of his sneezing foes and grasped a pillow from the bed. He swung it round his head, and swiped at Gore as the cad of the Shell rushed at him.

Gore gave a howl and rolled over on the floor, and Sharp rolled over from the next swipe.

"Come on, you galoots!"

"Pillows!" shouted Blake.

And the juniors grasped pillows and rushed at Finn.

They were still sneezing convulsively, but the odds were too great. There were nearly a score of assailants with swiping pillows and bolsters, and Buck Finn had no chance.

"Sock it to him!" roared Blake, as he rolled over under Finn's pillow, and jumped up again in a twinkling. "Down with him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Buck Finn defended himself to the last. But swiping pillows sent him rolling over, and he was on the floor at last, with pillows still swiping down upon him.

The juniors sneezed and swiped, and swiped and sneezed, and in the midst of the excitement the door opened.

In the excited scrimmage the boys had not noticed that they were making a terrific disturbance, but it had reached the ears of Darrell, and he realised what was the real cause of the quietness of the Shell at bed-time.

And Darrell came up with a cane in his hand.

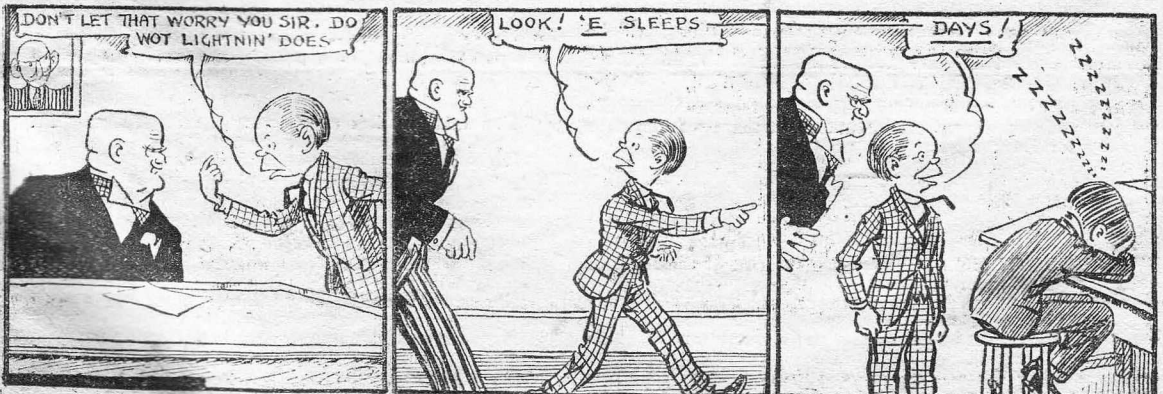
"What's the row here—atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!" gasped Darrell, coming into the dormitory and catching a whiff of the pepper. "By Jove—atchoo—oo—oo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young villains—atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"Cave!" gasped Gore.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY!



The Shell fellows dived towards their beds; but the Fourth-Formers could not do so, and Darrell was between them and the door, sneezing.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We're in for it now, deah boys!"

Darrell sneezed, and sneezed, and sneezed, and blew his nose; then he turned a very red and angry face upon the juniors.

"What are you Fourth Form kids doing here?" he demanded.

"Sneezin', deah boy!"

There was a giggle. Darrell pointed to the door.

"Get back to your own dormitory."

"With pleasuah, deah boy. I am sowwy you caught a whiff of the peppah; it is weally most unpleasant. Good-night, Dawwell—Ow!"

As the swell of St. Jim's went through the doorway Darrell caught him a lash with the cane on his pyjamas that made him hop.

"Ow—ow! I wegard that as uttably bwutal! Ow!"

"Get out, you others!"

Darrell was standing beside the door, cane in hand, with a grim look on his face. The Fourth-Formers eyed him doubtfully. The Shell fellows grinned at them from the beds, enjoying their predicament.

There was no way of getting out of the dormitory without passing Darrell, and what Darrell meant to do as they passed him was perfectly evident.

"I say, old chap," said Blake persuasively, "we came here to do our duty, you know, as heads of the Fourth Form, by—by showing a new fellow how to—behave, and not to get himself into trouble by his bumptiousness. Under the circumstances—"

"Are you going?"

"Yes, certainly; but I think—"

"Get out!"

"May as well cut," said Digby; and he made a rush for the door.

But he was not quick enough to escape the cane, and he gave a wild howl as he disappeared into the passage. His pyjamas were not much protection against the cane.

"Next man in!" said Darrell.

"Oh, rats!" muttered Blake. "Altogether, you chaps! We may get through, or some of us, anyway! Follow your leader!"

And Blake led the rush to the door.

His comrades followed him in a body, only Mellish hanging a little back. Darrell lashed out—twice, thrice—but before he had time for more the Fourth-Formers had scrambled through.

Those who had escaped the cane grinned cheerfully as they went down the passage. But Blake and Hancock and Reilly were wriggling in the most uncomfortable manner.

Mellish had hung back, and he was the last to remain, and Darrell looked at him expressively.

"Are you going to stay here all night, Mellish?" he asked.

"N-n-no!" stammered Mellish.

"You had better be going, then."

"Ye-e-e-es!"

"Or else I shall come and warm you?"

"I—I—I—"

Darrell came towards him. Mellish dodged, but there was no escaping the cane. He gave a shriek as he caught it, and bolted from the dormitory.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gore.

But he left off laughing as Darrell came towards his bed. The prefect had a quick eye, and he had noted which of the juniors had been out of bed, and he visited each one, and gave him cause to remember the occasion. Then he made a collection of the candles and bicycle-lamps.

"You can have these lamps back next Wednesday," he remarked. "If there is any more rowing in this dormitory to-night I shall ask Mr. Linton to give you a look in."

And he quitted the dormitory.

The Shell were grimly silent. Even the most ardent of the raggers had had enough; and that night there was no more ragging for Buck Finn.

CHAPTER 10.

The Scarecrow!

BUCK FINN took his place with the rest of the Shell in the class-room the next day.

Mr. Linton, the Form master, was very considerate to him, as a new boy from a far-off country, who could not be expected to know all the manners and customs of an English school.

But the boy from Arizona was falling into his place wonderfully well. He had a quick brain and a retentive

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memory, and he had studied hard in his native place to prepare for his coming to England.

He proved to be the equal of most fellows in the Shell, though in some points he was found wanting.

After morning school, when the boys went out into the quad before dinner, Buck Finn was on his guard. He knew that the raggers were not yet over, and he was on the look-out for some fresh attempts on the part of Gore & Co. to put him in his place.

But the raggers were leaving him severely alone at present. Their holding off seemed suspicious to Buck Finn, and he guessed that something was behind it, but he could not guess what it was.

There had been a thaw, and the snow was gone from the quad, save for a little heap here and there. Some of the Third Form espied Buck strolling in the quad, and, of course, the thought at once occurred to them of making a good use of what snow the thaw had left.



"Pull!" shouted Tom Merry. "All together!" The Terrible grasped him, too. They pulled—and inside the shed Gore & Co. off! "Ow! Bai Jove"

"You take his left ear, Jimmy," said Wally; "I'll take his right. Gibby can go for his nose."

"Right-ho!" said Jameson and Gibson.

And this division of labour having been arranged, the three heroes of the Third scraped up handfuls of snow, with a considerable quantity of mud in it, and kneaded squashy snowballs.

But Buck Finn, though he was not looking towards them, seemed to be able to see them all the same. He made a sudden stride towards the "Infants," and they paused with the snowballs in their hands, looking rather sheepish.

"I guess you'll drop those snowballs," said Buck Finn.

Wally snorted.

"Then you guess wrong," he replied. "Just guess again."

"Drop those snowballs!"

"Rats!"

Buck Finn said no more. He changed from words to actions. He grasped Wally by the collar, and Jameson by the shoulder. With surprising strength for one so sparely built, he brought their heads together with a bump.

"Ow!" That monosyllable escaped simultaneously from Jameson and D'Arcy minor. Their snowballs dropped to the ground, and they rubbed their heads.

Buck Finn walked away towards the House with his hands in his pockets. His jacket was splashed with snow and mud, and he was going to change it; but his assailants were in a far worse state. They rolled on the muddy ground, and they scrambled up, dirty and wet from head to foot.

Jameson and Gibson looked at D'Arcy minor.



laid hold of Finn by his arms and shoulders. Reilly and D'Arcy D'Arcy reeled back with Finn's sleeve in his grasp. It had come the swell of St. Jim's.

"You young ass!" growled Jameson. "Why couldn't you let him alone?"

"Clumsy duffer!" said Wally. "Don't blame me. If you two had backed me up properly, we'd have snatched him bald-headed!"

"I'm smothered!"

"So am I!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Wally, walking away. He made a mental resolution on the spot that he would be a little more careful in dealing with the new chum from Arizona.

Buck Finn went in to change his clothes. He looked into his box in the Shell dormitory in the School House, and his face changed. The box had been visited by the ragers, that was evident. Some of the things were gone, and other things were rumpled up, the contents of the collar-boxes

turned out, neckties and bootlaces, and socks and handkerchiefs, wildly mixed up.

"The pesky scallawags!" muttered Buck Finn. "Where's my other jacket, and the trousers, and the pesky boots? The rotters!"

He left the dormitory. He met the Terrible Three in the Hall below, and stopped to ask them about his things.

"Wherefore that worried look, Finny?" asked Tom Merry.

"Some galoot has been raiding my box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was it you chaps?"

"Not a bit of it!" said Monty Lowther. "We should never have nerve enough to lay hands upon the belongings of a free American citizen."

"Oh, don't be funny! Do you know where my duds are?"

"Haven't the faintest idea. But ask Gore."

Finn walked away, leaving the chums of the Shell laughing.

He looked round for Gore, and a little later the sound of laughter in the woodshed drew him in that direction.

Gore & Co. were leaving the shed. They grinned hugely as Finn came up. Wally was with them, and, of course, Pongo.

Buck Finn glanced at them with a dark brow, which only made the juniors laugh louder.

"Have you taken my clothes?" demanded Finn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Oh, don't ask it!" implored Wally. "You ought to shove on a mask or something, you know, before you ask people to look there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Buck Finn looked and felt greatly inclined to rush at the crowd of them, but he thought better of it. He passed them, and Gore & Co. walked off, laughing, and the American junior looked into the shed.

Then he uttered an exclamation:

"By gum!"

There were his clothes! Gore and his friends had fastened up several broom-handles and other sticks, and arranged Buck Finn's clothes on them. The arms were stuck out, and the whole thing was evidently an imitation of a scarecrow, and after the first moment Buck Finn could not help grinning as he looked at it.

On the wall close by the figure were scratched the words:

"BUCK UP, FINNY!"

It was a pun, of course, upon his name, and the youth from Arizona grinned at it. But Gore, who was never good-natured, had carried the joke further than any of the better sort of juniors would have carried it. He had splashed the clothes with mud, and torn them in several places, to render the likeness to a scarecrow more striking. And the clothes, now that Finn had found them, were not likely to be of much use to him.

"The pesky galoots!" muttered the junior from Arizona. "I guess I'll take their advice, and buck up. And here goes!"

And Finn, with a vengeful light in his eyes, went to look for Gore.

CHAPTER 11.

On Vengeance Best!

GORE was in his study. He was still grinning over the joke on the American junior. But he had another reason for looking pleased, also.

There was a pie on the table before him, and Gore had given himself a liberal helping. Gore was usually flush of money, and he frequently eked out the school fare with supplies from the tuckshop in this way. He liked Dame Taggles' pies, and he was enjoying this one all to himself. There were a good many fellows who would have been willing to join him, but Gore thought he could manage that pie alone. He intended to try, anyway.

Mellish of the Fourth looked in at the door. He had seen Gore at the tuckshop, and he was on the look-out for crumbs from the rich man's table.

"I say, Gore, old chap," said Mellish quite affectionately, "that looks like a ripping pie."

"It is ripping," said Gore.

"It's a jolly big one, too!"

"Yes, it's a good size."

"Half an hour to dinner yet," said Mellish agreeably.

Gore nodded.

"Yes, that's why I've got a feed, Mellish."

"I suppose you don't want me to help you out with it?" suggested Mellish, coming to the point at last.

"Not at all, dear boy! I fancy I can manage this alone."

"I'm jolly hungry."

"So am I."

"Don't be a mean pig, you know!"

"Looking for a thick car?" asked Gore, half rising from the table.

Mellish did not reply to the question, but scowled and scuttled off down the passage.

Gore settled down to his plate again, but another interruption came. Skimpole shared that study with Gore, and Skimpole looked in. His eyes glistened behind his big spectacles as he saw the pie.

"Dear me," he remarked, "this is indeed a tempting comestible, Gore!"

"No good your being tempted," grunted Gore; "there's none to be given away!"

"I can get a plate, Gore, if you would like to bestow upon me a portion of that exceedingly nice pie."

"Go and eat coke!"

"I consider that suggestion frivolous in the extreme. It is impossible to regard coke seriously as an article of diet. Besides, I am hungry, and I should greatly prefer a portion of that pie."

"Get out!"

"I must decline to get out of my own study. If I may make a suggestion, it would be best for us to content ourselves with moderate helpings of the pie and give the remainder to the poor. Does that suggestion commend itself to you, Gore?"

"No, it doesn't!" roared Gore. "Get out!"

"Really, Gore—"

Gore jumped up and seized an ebony ruler. Skimpole skipped out of the study and ran. It was his own study as much as it was Gore's, but the bully of the Shell was not in a mood to be reasoned with then.

Skimpole's footsteps died away, and Gore grinned and sat down again.

"This is all right," he murmured, as he started on a second helping of the pie; "if only I'm not interrupted by a lot more of those rotters! It's good!"

He was too busy to hear a faint footfall, or to see a face that was peering in at the door. It was that of Buck Finn.

The youth from Arizona had tracked the ragger to his study, and he was on the trail for vengeance. He grinned as he saw how Gore was occupied. Silent as a cat, he entered the study on tiptoe.

Buck Finn was too intent upon his own business to have any eyes for the fact that he was himself observed. As it happened, Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, was passing along the corridor, and the stealthy movements of the junior caught his eyes and amazed him.

The Head came along the passage quickly, wondering what was going forward.

Buck Finn, without the slightest suspicion that the eye of authority was upon him, crept into the study.

Gore did not look around. He was busy, and he had just filled his plate to the brim with rich gravy.

Slowly and cautiously Buck Finn stole behind him and stretched out his hand over Gore's head.

It was at this moment that the Head reached the door.

Buck Finn's hand descended upon Gore's head behind, and the bully of the Shell gave a startled yelp. Before he could do more than that his head was snatched down into his plate and his features disappeared into the gravy.

Squelch!

"Dear me!" gasped the Head.

Gore struggled wildly, but the grip on the back of his head held his face down well into the plate. He made a tremendous jump to escape, and the table went flying from him, and dish and plate went crashing to the floor.

Gore leaped up, his face streaming with pie.

Buck Finn looked at him and roared with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beast!" shrieked Gore, who was too blinded by pie to see the amazed Head standing at the door regarding the scene. "You hound! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha! This beats cock-fighting!" roared Finn.

"It beats taking a fellow's clothes and making them up into a scarecrow!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Dear me!"

This time the boys heard the Head's exclamation.

Buck Finn swung round, turning rather red.

"Boys!"

Gore wiped the pie from his eyes and nose. He was nearly stuttering with rage, but the presence of the Head prevented him from hurling himself upon Finn.

"Dear me," said the Head, smiling in spite of himself,

"you should not have done this, Finn! It is a—very rough joke! If I did not gather that it is done in return for a trick played on you by Gore I should punish you."

"Yes, sir," said Finn meekly.

"As it is, you may go. Gore, you should reflect that it is neither kind nor hospitable to play practical jokes upon a newcomer to the school, and that it sometimes leads to unfortunate results for the practical joker himself."

Gore could not speak for fury.

Finn grinned and left the study, and the Head shook his finger solemnly at George Gore.

"Remember my words, Gore! You should not play tricks upon a new boy, and in the circumstances, I cannot sympathise with you at all!" And the Head's gown rustled away down the passage.

Gore glared. When the Head was safely out of hearing he said things—expressive and emphatic things that would have gained him a sound flogging if the Head had been able to hear them.

CHAPTER 12.

Arthur Augustus Catches It!

"I SAY, deah boys—"

"Shut up," growled Blake, "he'll hear you!"

"Undah the cires, Blake, it is imposs to shut up, as I have somethin' important to explain to you. I think—"

"Don't start telling whoppers!"

"I wefuse to have any statement of mine wegardad as a woppah, and I wegard your wemark as extremely wiculous. I think—"

"No, you don't—you can't!"

"I think," repeated the swell of St. Jim's with emphasis, "that undah the cires it would be far bettah to stop this waggin'!"

"Cheese it!"

"I decline to cheese it!"

"He'll hear you, you shrieking ass!"

Blake grunted. He was strongly inclined to take the swell of the School House by the ears and jam his head against the brick wall. Only the thought that by doing so he would cause D'Arcy to make more noise than ever restrained him.

The chums of Study No. 6 were preparing a pleasant little surprise for Buck Finn. It was dusk in the quadrangle, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were crouching behind an angle of the chapel wall, waiting for the American junior to come by.

Reilly had made a little wager with Finn that he could

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not walk as far as the chapel rails and back to the gym in two minutes. Buck Finn had willingly taken on the wager. He was certain that his long legs could cover the distance in far less time.

Reilly, of course, was acting in concert with the chums of Study No. 6. Finn would come swinging swiftly round the corner, and they were ready for him. Blake had borrowed a pail of whitewash from Taggles' lodge. He had borrowed it without asking the permission of Taggles, it is needless to add. About that time Taggles was looking for his whitewash, and his voice was audible in angry tones round about the spot whence it had disappeared.

But that was far from the chapel, and the chums of the Fourth could not hear him—nor would they have heeded him if they had heard.

If Finn passed that corner without being on his guard he would be transformed into a ghostly object at one swoop of the pail.

The Fourth-Formers were chuckling over their kindly intentions, when all of a sudden Arthur Augustus started raising difficulties.

That was not at all unusual with D'Arcy, who usually chose a critical and anxious moment for beginning an argument. Blake let the swell of St. Jim's have the last word, in the hope of getting him to shut up, but D'Arcy was not to be rung off so easily.

"I beg that you will pay a little attention to my remarks," he said. "I think—"

Digby made an anxious gesture.

"I believe I can hear him coming!"

"All the more reason why I should get on, then. You see, I'm beginnin' to think that this waggin' has gone fah enough. Tom Mewwy says—"

"Blow Tom Merry!"

"Certainly, deah boys, if you like; but he says that it's hardly the thing to keep on waggin' a stvanganh in the land, and I for one begin to wegard it as wathah bad form, you know."

"Rats!"

"If you say 'wats' to me, Blake—"

"I didn't say 'wats,' I said 'rats,'" said Blake gruffly. "Now shut up, or I shall bang your napper against the wall next!"

"I uttably wefuse to have my nappah banged against the wall," said D'Arcy with dignity. "What I was goin' to say is—"

"Shut up!"

"Nothin' of the sort. I wegard this waggin' as wathah bad form, and I must, as a gentleman, wefuse to have any furthah hand in it!"

"Don't, then; but shut up!"

"I must withdraw from the entiah pwoceedings."

"Travel off, then!"

"Good!" said Herries. "Buzz off, and we can work it without you! It will come easier without you to help!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Buzz off! What are you hanging about for?"

"Upon reflections, it is impos for me to leave you chaps to be guilty of bad form, eithah. I must wemain and persuade you to give up the ideah."

Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"Do you want to be found dead one of these days, Gussy?" he asked.

"Certainly not, deah boy."

"Then buzz off, quick!"

"I decline to buzz off. As a membah of Study No. 6, I wefuse to be mixed up in any bad form. As a fwiend to you fellows, I must see that you are not led into any bad form by the exuberance of youthful spiwits," said D'Arcy, in quite a fatherly manner. "Pway give up the ideah and come along!"

"Quiet; I can hear footsteps!"

Digby peeped round the corner and popped back excitedly.

"It's Finn—he's coming."

"Sh! Not a sound!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Silence!"

"Undah the circs, it is impos for me to be silent—"

"Will you shut up?"

"I much wegwet that I am compelled to wefuse to shut up."

"Hallo! What's that!" came a voice in the gloom.

The footsteps ceased. Buck Finn had evidently heard the voice of the swell of the School House round the corner.

Blake gave a growl, and caught up the pail of whitewash and rushed forward. He did not mean Finn to escape.

D'Arcy sprang after him and grasped at his arm.

"Weally, Blake, I entweat you— Owowowowowow!"

D'Arcy broke off in a wail of anguish.

Blake had raised the pail to swoop the contents at the

(Continued on page 19.)



Send your Jokes to—

"THE GEM JESTER,"

5, Carmelite Street,

London, E.C.4. (Comp.)

Half-a-crown will be paid for every joke that appears in this column.

A SECOND ATTEMPT!

Tommy: "That lady gave me sixpence for being polite. I stepped on her foot and apologised."

Uncle: "Good boy! What did you do then?"

Tommy: "Stepped on it again, but it didn't work."

K. EBLING, King's Lynn, Hooton Road, Willaston, Wirral, Cheshire.

A TALL STORY!

Draper: "You will find this is all pure wool, madam."

Lady: "Then why is it marked 'Cotton'?"

Draper: "Ah, madam, that is just to deceive the moths!"

R. SMITH, 117, Manchester Road, Thurlstone, Penistone, Sheffield.

HOT STUFF!

Johnny (reading a book): "What does it mean by 'seasoned troops,' dad?"

Dad: "Mustered by the officers, and peppered by the enemy, my boy!"

R. BERRY, Lukes Row, Whittle, Nr. Chorley, Lancs.

BLOWN OUT!

Thin Boy (to fat boy): "What are you getting out of bed for?"

Fat Boy: "I'm just going to tuck myself in!"

LESLIE COLLINSON, 14, Milton Road, Wimbledon, S.W. 19.

HE DIDN'T MIND!

Mother: "Quick, Johnnie, run and fetch a doctor. Baby's swallowed one of your marbles!"

Johnnie: "That's all right, mother, I've got plenty more!"

—V. RUSSELL, 12, Lawford Gate, Bristol, 2.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PICTURE.

After-dinner Speaker: "Gentlemen, did you ever stop to think—I say, did you ever stop to think?"

Bored Listener: "Did you ever think to stop?"

R. PURDON, Glebelands, Vicarage Road, Elanduino, North Wales.

HIGH FINANCE!

Mother: "Where is the sixpence I gave you for taking your medicine?"

Willie: "I spent threepence and gave Sammy the other threepence for taking the medicine."

T. HUMPHRIES, 19, Albert Street, Wednesbury.

HE REMEMBERED.

Pat: "That was a fine simivment Casey got off at the banquet last night."

Mike: "What was that?"

Pat: "He said that the sweetest mimories in loife are the ricollections of things forgotten!"

—D. LOWMAN, Reynolds St. Port, Shepstone, Natal, S. Africa

NEWS, VIEWS, AND STORIES FROM—



Address all letters : The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! I've got some great news for you. In next week's GEM you will find the first story in a grand new series of South Sea Island yarns, written by famous Cecil Fanshawe. Don't miss the opening story, or you will be missing a treat indeed! The same applies to next Wednesday's long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., which is entitled:

"THE MYSTERY FOOTBALLER!"

Martin Clifford is writing at the top of his form these days; each yarn gets better than its predecessor. There will also be another column of jokes to give you your "tonic" laugh. Talking of tonics, the weekly "dose" of "GEM" is the best I can recommend; it is certain to drive your blues away. Old readers know this already. New readers—and we are getting them every week—will soon find how true my words are. Now for some news parts.

THE CAT AND THE GREYHOUNDS!

He was just a common or garden cat, perhaps rather fed-up with strolling round the tiles and annoying human beings with his wailing, so he betook himself to the Wembley Stadium for a little excitement. A greyhound race was in progress when he strutted on to the track. Then the fun started! Some of the greyhounds found chasing the cat much more to their liking than running after a stuffed hare. Result—the race was declared void by the solemn-looking stewards, and so was the cat, in a manner of speaking, for he had the misfortune to run into the metal arm holding the imitation hare. He couldn't have felt much when he ran wallop into it, but it put paid to his life—all nine of 'em, in fact!

UNBREAKABLE!

Ever smashed a cup or a saucer—or a dish? I bet most of you have at some time or another, when you've been trying to make yourself useful about the house! But take comfort—they are going to place unbreakable crockery on the market very soon, which will be made of concrete. Concrete is rapidly coming into favour as the stuff with which to build skyscrapers and battleships without steel girders. The new stone age, so to speak!

MYSTERY!

Here's another "cat" story, which also ended tragically for the cat. A lady motorist left her car in the street for about an hour while she went to visit some friends. On her return she pressed the self-starter button of the car, and

immediately there arose an agonising shriek. In alarm the motorist sent for a mechanic. He nosed about, and reported that there was a piece of fur round the cooling fan, and suggested that perhaps the lady driver had dropped a portion of her fur into the engine at some time or another. This the lady stoutly denied. She was right, for when the car was taken into a garage and dismantled, the remains of a cat were found wedged into the engine. Now, here's the mystery—how did that unfortunate cat get underneath the closed bonnet of that car? There was hardly room for a mouse to have crawled in—let alone a full-sized cat!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Spectator at footer match: "What position is that fellow supposed to be playing in?"

Proud father: "Er—er—he's my son. He's—a—back, or somethin'!"

Spectator: "Back? I should say drawback, myself!"

THE MARRIAGE DANCE!

People with a craving for originality have been married in an aeroplane, married in a swimming-pool—married in all sorts of places! Now comes news that a couple who were engaged in a thousand-hours' dancing contest in Madrid, got rather bored with the business, so to relieve the monotony they got married while they were dancing!

A FISHY STORY!

A resident of Hythe reports an amazing occurrence. He declares that he was walking to his work one day, when, of a sudden, something plopped down from above, and smashed through his newspaper. What was it? You'll never guess! It was a real live goldfish, weighing about nine ounces! The nearest house was two hundred yards away, so it couldn't have come from there—and there was no other pedestrian about. Now, where did that goldfish come from? Examination of the fish showed no signs of damage to suggest that perhaps a bird had pinched it and dropped it whilst in flight. Moreover, the fish was very much alive and kicking; so much so that the surprised "angler" took it home, made a pool for it in the bottom of his garden, and gave up trying to solve the mystery. Can you blame him?

I-SEE-ALL!

Chicago is noted among other things for its gangsters, but the typists and office-boys employed in certain offices there are much more perturbed about an

invention which keeps tally of all the they do—or all that they don't do—during working hours. This invention is in the form of an automatic movie camera which, cunningly concealed from view, is able, nevertheless, to take faithful pictures every day of the staff at work. Any slacking is duly noted* by this camera, which discharges its films automatically. In slow motion, on the screen, the energy of every employee is truthfully shown. There's no getting away from the tell-tale films—for the camera does not lie!

THE PAPER SKYSCRAPER!

"Yes, sir," said the American business man, looking round for a skyscraper all to himself. "That building will just suit me down to the ground! Looks mighty substantial." "Substantial," echoed the seller of the property; "why, I should just say it is! That skyscraper, sir, is built of the very latest material—special hardened brown paper, faced to a metal framework!" Can you imagine the business man fainting after that admission! But, believe it or not, American architects these days are experimenting with a new building material which is principally brown paper. A special process hardens this paper until, it is alleged, the paper becomes stronger than concrete. But give me concrete, every time!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Our office-boy gave me a fright to-day. The door opened and in he came—walking backwards! I was about to recommend the immediate attention of a doctor, when our office-boy explained his stunt. You see, he wears glasses, and he's read in an American paper that if your spectacles become dimmed with moisture when you enter a warm room on a very cold day, try walking in backwards. By this odd means the glasses remain clear. Sounds fantastic, doesn't it—but our O.B. swears that it's a stunt that works according to theory. You fellows with specs. ought to try it!

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAID!

People who were looking at the mountains of Glacier National Park just recently, rubbed their eyes and then pinched themselves to make sure that they weren't dreaming. For, in place of the snowy-white peaks, was a covering of golden snow! How did this phenomena come about? The experts say the presence of the golden snow was due to the yellowish fluid discharged by millions of insects, each about one-sixteenth of an inch long. What a worrying time these experts must have had before they reached that conclusion!

ANSWER TO GEORGE TADBY, OF READING.

The man who "invented" the penalty kick, George, was Mr. William McCrum, of Milford, Co. Armagh, who, incidentally, died early this month. In the days before the penalty kick came into being, unscrupulous players who could see a certain goal being scored against them did not hesitate to trip the marksman about to shoot, or to handle the ball. The ref. could only award a free kick for an offence like that—and a free kick, as you know, is not the same as a penalty kick. Nowadays, for an infringement inside the penalty area the kicker has only the goalkeeper to beat—and records show that the majority of penalty kicks result in a goal.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE COWBOY OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 17.)

shadowy form of Buck Finn, and D'Arcy's grasp on his arm had dragged it aside and changed the direction of the torrent of whitewash.

Down it swept, in a blinding stream, full upon the head of the swell of St. Jim's. In a second D'Arcy was streaming white from head to foot.

"My—my hat!" gasped Blake.

"Ow! Oh, bai Jove! Ow!"

A yell of laughter came from Buck Finn.

It was gloomy in the dusky quad, but he could see the white streaming form of D'Arcy, and he guessed at once what had happened.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake grasped the pail to give Finn what little was left in it. But the American junior promptly vanished. His laugh rang back mockingly from the dusk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 13.

A Friend In Need!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS blinked through the whitewash that was streaming over his face. He looked down at his clothes; they were as white as a miller's. Jacket and waistcoat, trousers and boots, all were snowy white.

"Bai Jove!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared at him, and burst into a roar. Buck Finn had escaped, but Arthur Augustus had caught it, and the change in the destination of the whitewash struck the chums as funny.

"Well, of all the duffers!" said Blake, wiping his eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Digby. "Are you fond of whitewash, Gussy?"

"I wegard you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to laugh at in this howwid accident. I wegard you as a set of beasts. My clothes are uttably wuined!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am in a feahful state——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, speechless with indignation, marched off. Whitewash was running down his neck, dripping from his clothes, and squelching from his boots as he walked. Seldom had the swell of the School House found himself in such a terrible state.

His only idea was to get clean, but as he walked off hurriedly towards the School House he remembered what a strange sight he would present if anyone saw him in the light. He didn't want to run the gauntlet of a hundred pairs of curious eyes.

He paused ere he entered the radius of light cast by the School House windows. A voice, singing a snatch of an Irish song, came to his ears with the sound of footsteps.

"Have you heard of the widow Malone, ochone.
Who lived in the town of Athlone, all alone——"

"Weilly!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus eagerly. Reilly had been a sharer in the plot for whitewashing Finn, and D'Arcy naturally expected help from him. Reilly heard his name called and looked round.

But D'Arcy had forgotten that his appearance, comical in the light, was calculated to be startling in the dark.

Reilly gave one glance at the figure, looking like a ghost through the gloom, and then uttered a yell and took to his heels.

"Weally, Weilly——"

"Ochone! Sure and it's a ghost! Ochone!"

"Bai Jove! What a feahful ass! Weally, Weilly——"

But Reilly was gone.

Arthur Augustus paused anxiously to think. How was he to get into the School House without attracting a crowd? If somebody would fetch out a hat and coat for him—— He turned back towards the chapel to find his chums, but they were gone. He could hear Blake's laugh ringing from the direction of the lighted gym, and he had not the slightest doubt that Blake was retailing the story to an appreciative audience.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus in great distress. "What the deuce am I to do? I can't march into the House in this state; I should be wiculed howwibly."

"My—my 'at! Wot's that?"

It was the voice of Taggles, the porter. Taggles was looking for his pail of whitewash, having guessed that some of the juniors had removed it. He had just caught sight of the ghostly figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he stopped, his eyes nearly starting from his head.

"Oh lor'! The ghost!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Taggay, deah boy——"

"What—what—what is it?"

"Weally, Taggles——"

"Jiminy!" said Taggles. "It's Master D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A-playin' ghost, an' a-frightening of 'onest men," said the school porter indignantly. "I'll report yer!"

"I'm not playin' ghost. This is howwid whitewash——"

"My whitewash!" roared Taggles.

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"My whitewash! You're the young himp who's collared my whitewash to play ghost with!"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"Weally, Taggles, you can hardly suspect me of delibewately wumin' my clothes with this howwid stuff."

"My whitewash! I'll report yer!"

"I am extremely sowwy that——"

"My blessed whitewash! Kim on!"

Taggles grasped the junior by the shoulder.

Arthur Augustus wriggled.

"Pway welease me, Taggles——"

"Kim on!"

"Can I come and clean myself down in your lodge?"

The school porter simply snorted.

"Can you? Ha, ha, ha! You collar my whitewash to play ghost, and then you want to clean yourself down in my lodge! Ha, ha, ha! Kim on!"

"Where are you dwaggin' me, you howwid wuffian?"

"You're goin' to the 'Ead!"

"Weally——"

"Kim on!"

"I uttably wefuse to go to the Head in this state!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, struggling violently. "Welease me, you wottah! I wefuse to appeah before Doctah Holmes in such an extremely disweputable state!"

"Kim on!"

"I wefuse! If you wish to weport the mattah you can wait till I've changed my clothes. If you do not immediately welease my shouladah, Taggles, I shall lose my tempah and stwike you!"

"Kim on!"

"I wepeat that if you do not welease me——"

"Kim on! Wastin' my whitewash and givin' me a 'unt for it!" said Taggles indignantly. "That whitewash was worth two shillings!"

"I shall have gweat pleasuah in wefundin' the two shillings, if that is all that is the mattah, Taggles, and I will make it thwee if you will let me clean myself down in your lodge."

The school porter softened at once. As a matter of fact, he was only working up to a tip all the time, though the swell of St. Jim's had been unaware of that fact.

"Well, kim on," he said; and he changed his direction.

Gladly enough Arthur Augustus gained the shelter of the porter's lodge.

There he cleaned off the greater part of the whitewash. But what remained was quite sufficient to turn him into a ghostly figure in the dark, and there was evidently nothing for it but to get a coat or change his clothes.

A grinning face looked in at the window of the porter's lodge.

"I guess you'll want some new duds."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Buck Finn.

"Yaas, wathah!" he remarked. "This is most unfortunate. I wathah wish I had let Blake thwow the stuff ovah you now, deah boy!"

"I kinder guessed what was on," said Buck Finn. "You'll never get that stuff off. Shall I lend you my coat to get into the House?"

"Bai Jove, I shall be feahfully obliged, you know!"

"Come on, then."

D'Arcy quitted the porter's lodge, and Buck Finn jerked off his coat and held it while the swell of St. Jim's slipped it on.

Arthur Augustus buttoned it up round his chin, with a sigh of relief.

"That's awfully good of you!" he remarked.

Buck Finn grinned.

"Oh! One good turn deserves another, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! But this is a gweat welief to me. Fwom this moment, deah boy, I am stwenuously opposed to any furthah waggin'."

The American junior chuckled. He had held his own

pretty well so far with the raggers. But D'Arcy was in earnest.

"I wegard you as a decent sort," he said. "I shall stwenuously oppose the waggahs now. I should be glad if you would come for a little stwoll with me on Saturday, Finny, and I will show you woud the countwy."

"I guess I'll come."

And Arthur Augustus entered the School House and slipped upstairs, the coat concealing his curious appearance, and he was soon bathing and changing his clothes.

CHAPTER 14.

A Pull All Together!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had made up his mind on the point, and he kept to it, and he argued with Blake & Co. into taking the same view.

"You see, deah boys, it's hardly the pwopah thing to do to wag a stwagah in the land," he remarked. "I know this Amewican chap is wathah cheekay, and wants sittin' on to some extent, but, weally, this waggin' is grin' too far."

Jack Blake only grunted.

"Besides, I have now taken him up as a fwiend," said D'Arcy. "I pwesume that no gentleman pwesent wishes to wag a fwiend of mine."

The gentlemen in Study No. 6 grunted.

"Anybody waggin' a fwiend of mine will have to make up his mind to dwop my fwiendship," said D'Arcy in a tone of finality.

"Oh, if you put it like that," said Blake solemnly, "of course, there's no alternative but to stop the ragging."

"Of course!" said Digby.

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"I am vevy glad to see you look at it in the pwopah light, deah boys," he said. "In a case of doubt, you know, you can always wely upon me to tell you what's the pwopah thing to do."

"What should we do without you?" said Blake. "Nothing to grin at in dull times—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We should have to start keeping a monkey in the study, or something."

"I wefuse to continue a fwivolous discussion," said D'Arcy, with dignity; and he walked out of the study, leaving the chums chuckling.

He met the Terrible Three downstairs, and proceeded to explain his new views to them. They listened solemnly.

"Don't you agwee with me?" asked D'Arcy. "You see, it's hardly the pwopah thing to do, you know."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "It's beasty bad form, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And when you chased Finn into our study, and ragged him there, you were guilty of fearfully ungentlemanly behaviour."

"Well, not exactly—"

"Really hooliganism," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Horrid!" said Manners. "Finn will think that D'Arcy was brought up in a slum!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Tom Merry slapped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder.

"I'm jolly glad to see you improving," he remarked.

"I must admit that you have been rather ungentlemanly, as you say so yourself—"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"But if you mean to improve, I'll help you. There's nothing I like so much as helping you Fourth Form kids to improve your manners."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"So buck up, Gussy. And you can depend upon us to help you and point out little things whenever we notice you getting rude or gruff in your manners."

D'Arcy was speechless for the moment with indignation. The Terrible Three nodded at him solemnly and walked off, leaving him still speechless.

Buck Finn was lounging on the steps of the School House, and he grinned at the chums of the Shell as they came out.

"How are you getting on?" asked Monty Lowther affably.

"Do you find that St. Jim's is up to the mark of anything out in Arizona?"

"Some," said Buck Finn. "I guess I like the place, though there certainly are some funny freaks knocking about in it!"

Manners giggled, and Lowther turned pink.

"What are you cackling at, Manners?" he asked politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't, old son; it's not music, you know! I say, Finny, I shouldn't wonder if you are looking for a chance of getting rolled head first down those steps!"

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"I guess I'm ready to be rolled!"

"Then I'll jolly soon—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "Remember the instructions we have just received from the one and only. No more wagging!"

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Buck Finn.

"Don't you be too jolly independent!" said Tom Merry. "When Gore & Co. get hold of you in a quiet corner you'll want help."

"I guess not! You go and eat pills!"

"Eh?"

"And drink patent medicines!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"Now don't you be too funny, Finny, or else I shall start on you myself!" he said warningly.

Buck Finn chuckled.

"I guess I could wipe up the ground with a milksop!" he remarked.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Then I'll jolly well give you a chance!" he exclaimed.

"Come over to the gym—"

"No, you won't!" said Lowther. "If I musn't, you musn't!"

"Look here—"

"Rats! Come on! Remember the instructions of the one and only!" grinned Lowther. "You're not going to fight!"

Tom Merry gave in. He gave Buck Finn an expressive glance and walked on with his chums.

"He must have seen Miss Fawcett's patent medicines!" grinned Manners. "And he's set you down as a chap who lives on 'em, Tommy."

"Oh, I don't care!"

The Terrible Three were chatting under the elms when there was a patter of feet, and Arthur Augustus came up. The swell of the School House looked a little out of breath and his eyeglass was dangling at the end of its cord.

"Study on fire?" asked Lowther kindly.

"Certainly not, Lowthah! I was goin' to ask you if you had seen Buck Finn?"

"Yes, met him at the station the day he came."

"Pway don't be funny! I mean, where is he?"

"He was on the steps of the School House a quarter of an hour ago."

"Bai Jove! Then I missed him! I want to speak to him vevy particulalhy. I have been thinkin' ovah what you said, Tom Mewwy, and I have come to the conclusion that I owe Buck Finn an apology, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughin' mattah for the new chap to wegard me as havin' acted in an ungentlemanly mannah. I am surprised at you, Tom Mewwy! I should be glad to know where he is, so that I can tendah an apology at once."

"Bettah ask farther on," grinned Lowther. "Hallo, here's Reilly, and he looks as if he'd seen a joke. What are you cackling at, young Belfast?"

"Faith, and it's funny!" said Reilly.

"Are you alluding to your face?"

"Sure, and I'm alluding to the omadhaum from Arizona! Gore and his lot have got him in the woodshed."

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "More ragging, I suppose."

"Faith, and they're going to anoint him with tar. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, this is too bad!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Gore ought to draw a line somewhere. I think we'd better take a hand."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the cires, I considah that we ought to chip in, you know, and wescue the pwisonah."

And Arthur Augustus started off towards the woodshed.

The Terrible Three followed quickly, and Reilly joined them. They reached the shed, and heard a terrific din proceeding from within. The door was crammed with juniors watching the proceedings.

Buck Finn was in the hands of the enemy.

He had suddenly been rushed in the quad by a crowd of them, and whisked into the shed before he knew what was happening.

Gore was dipping a tarbrush into a pot, while the youth from Arizona was held in a firm grip by Sharp and Gale and Norris.

The bully of the Shell was grinning gleefully.

Even Buck Finn looked a little daunted at the prospect of being anointed with the horrible sticky mess on the tarbrush.

"Look here," he said. "I guess you'd better go slow! If you touch me with that stuff there will be big ructions! I warn you!"

"He's going to thrash the lot of us," said Sharp, in pretended alarm. "Hold him tight before he wades in and whips the whole school!"



Down swept the torrent of whitewash in a blinding stream, full upon the swell of St. Jim's. In a second D'Arcy was streaming white from head to foot. "My—my hat!" gasped Blake. "Ow! Oh, bai Jove! Ow!" yelled D'Arcy. A shout of laughter came from Buck Finn, for whom the whitewash had been intended! "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Buck Finn made a desperate effort to tear himself loose. There was a struggle, and the crowd swayed to and fro. Tom Merry forced his way into the doorway.
 "Here, hold on!" he cried. "Gore—"
 "Get out!" shouted Gore. "Mind your own business!"
 "I tell you—"
 "Get out!"
 And his friends took up the cry:
 "Get out! Leave us alone!"
 And Tom Merry was hustled back.
 But the momentary diversion had given Buck Finn his chance.
 He wrenched himself loose from the hands of the juniors and made a bound to escape.
 "Hold him!" roared Gore.
 The juniors crowded to intercept the American youth's path to the door, but the window was near at hand.
 Buck Finn made a spring towards it, and plunged through head first.
 Gore gave a yell.
 "Collar him!"
 The ragers sprang after the American.
 Half a dozen hands grasped his ankles and legs as he plunged through the window-frame, and dragged upon him.
 Finn clutched at the frame of the window, and kicked and scrambled. Tom Merry & Co. rushed to his aid.
 "Pull!" shouted Tom Merry. "All together!"
 The Terrible Three laid hold of Finn by the hands, arms, and shoulders. D'Arcy and Reilly grasped him, too. They pulled, and inside the shed Gore & Co. pulled.

"Ow!" gasped Buck Finn.
 Gore & Co. hung on like grim death.

CHAPTER 15.

Buck Finn Dresses for the Occasion!

"Ow! Oh!"
 Buck Finn gasped breathlessly. He felt as if he would be pulled into two pieces by the rival parties.
 Gore & Co. had no intention of letting go his legs, while the Terrible Three were pulling as hard as they could to get him through the window.
 "Ow! Hold on!"
 "We're holding on!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.
 "We'll have you out!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Go it, kids!"
 "Hold him!"
 "Bai Jove, he's comin'!"
 "You, you'll have my arms out!" gasped Buck Finn.
 "Nevah mind, deah boy, the west of you is almost certain to follow."
 "You—you—you ass!"
 "Bai Jove, I wegard that as wathah ungwateful! Still, we'll do our best. Pull like anythin', deah boys! I can feel him comin'!"
 "Ha, ha, ha! It's his sleeve that's coming!"
 It was!

D'Arcy reeled back, with Finn's sleeve in his grasp, and sat down on the ground. The sleeve had come off.

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry. "Lend a hand here!"
 "Pway excuse me a moment! I am out of bweath, and the shock has thrown me into quite a fluttah!"

"Ass! Buck up!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Ow!" panted Finn. "Ow! Wow—wow—wow—wow!"

He struggled in the little window and kicked out. His right foot came loose from Gore's grip and caught Gore under the chin.

The bully of the Shell gave a howl and collapsed. Buck Finn kicked out again, and Mellish roared with pain as a heavy boot clumped him on the chest.

That was Finn's chance.

The grasp upon his legs had relaxed and the pull on his arms was dragging him through the window. He tore himself loose at last, and went plunging through and fell in a heap to the ground with those who had pulled him out.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

The rescuers were on their feet in a moment.

Tom Merry dragged up Buck Finn and rushed him off as Gore & Co. came pouring out of the shed.

"Come on, kid!"

And for once the independent youth from Arizona obeyed orders.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, as they stopped at last in the quad. "That was a nawwow shave for you, Finnay!"

"I guess I'll make Gore sit up," said Buck Finn. "And I'm much obliged to you chaps."

"Yes; considering that some of us are milksops," agreed Tom Merry cheerfully.

Finn turned red.

"I—I'm sorry I said that," he replied. "I guess I was mistaken there. But I'm blessed if ever saw a chap taking so many patent medicines before."

Tom Merry laughed as he walked away. He did not feel inclined to explain.

Arthur Augustus tapped the American youth on the shoulder.

"You wemembah we are goin' for a little stwoll togethah," he remarked. "It's a half-holiday here on Saturday, you know, same as on Wednesday, the day you came. The weathah looks like 'bein' wathah good, and I shall be able to show you the village and the countwyside."

Buck Finn nodded.

"I guess I shall like to have a look round," he said. "I'll put on the best duds I've got to do you credit."

"Vewy good. I am glad to see you have such a wegard for good form," said Arthur Augustus beamingly. "It will be a pleasuah to take you woud."

Gore was looking sulky for the rest of the day. He would have been glad of a chance to corner the new boy again, but Buck Finn had profited by his experience, and he was too wary.

Neither was there any further ragging in the Shell dormitory.

The chums of Study No. 6 having given up the rag, the Fourth Form paid no more nocturnal visits to the Shell quarters. And in his own dormitory, Tom Merry's influence was enough to put down the rag.

Gore would have kept it up, but Tom Merry spoke plainly on the point.

"'Nuff's as good as a feast," he said. "You can chuck it now, Gore, unless you are looking for trouble."

At which Gore scowled fiercely.

"You're not going to bully me, Tom Merry," he declared. Tom Merry nodded.

"I'm not going to bully you, Gore, but I'm going to wipe up the floor with you if there's any more ragging in this dormitory."

And Gore growled and gave in.

Dormitory raggings were over, but in other quarters the new boy had to be still on his guard. But the curious thing was that all the raggings had failed to make the least change in the manners and customs of Buck Finn. He was just as cool and had just as much nerve as at the start, and, upon the whole, he seemed rather to enjoy a state of warfare than otherwise.

The following day, after morning school, Jack Blake looked round in vain for the swell of St. Jim's. The weather was fine for once, and the juniors were turning out for football practice. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was nowhere to be seen.

Jack Blake ran him to earth at last in Study No. 6.

The swell of St. Jim's was standing in front of the tall glass, surveying his reflection in it with much satisfaction.

He really looked very nice.

He was dressed in beautifully fitting garments, and his

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waistcoat was a dream of colours, the crease in his trousers was absolutely perfect, and his necktie was a triumph.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "I weally think that's wathah decent!"

Blake chuckled.

"Is that the rig you're getting up for football practice?" he asked.

D'Arcy turned round. He picked up a glossy silk hat and began to polish it.

"Football pwactice!" he said. "I am not playin' football this aftahnoon, deah boy!"

"What are you doing then, duffer?"

"I object to the word duffah, Blake. As a matter of fact, I am goin' to take the new fellow woud and show him the country."

"Oh! Better come and play footer."

"Undah the cires, it is impos for me to play footah. Pway do you think this purple tie agwees with the colour of my waistcoat, Blake, or do you think a wed one would be better? Blake—Weally, it is wathah wude of Blake to walk away while I am speakin' to him!"

Arthur Augustus thought out the problems of the ties, and finally decided to keep on the purple one. Having come to this momentous decision, he donned his silk topper and sallied forth from the study.

There was no doubt that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked a perfect picture. As he went down the corridor, feeling pretty well satisfied with himself, towards the Shell passage, he gave a sudden start. What appeared to be a curious caricature of himself was approaching him.

"Bai Jove!" snapped D'Arcy.

It was Buck Finn.

The American youth had said that he would dress in his best and do his friend credit, and he had kept his word.

But the Arizonian youth had not come to St. Jim's fully provided with articles of attire in the D'Arcy style.

His Eton suit did not fit him well, appearing to be mainly composed of elbows and knees. His boots were large and far from shapely. He had borrowed a pair of spats from Lowther, but they did not fit his boots, and the effect of them could not be said to be elegant. He had obtained the loan of a fancy waistcoat from Lefevre of the Fifth, but it was three or four sizes too large for him. He had donned a high collar—also borrowed—and his neck was twisted to a most uncomfortable angle. Added to these attractions were a pair of huge gauntlet gloves, a necktie a little on one side, and a gold chain across his fancy waistcoat that might have been made of anything but gold. But the crowning beauty was an eyeglass which was jammed uncomfortably into his eye.

Arthur Augustus looked at Buck Finn, and Buck Finn grinned at Arthur Augustus.

The youth from Arizona was evidently well pleased with himself.

"Shake, pard!" he exclaimed. "I guess this get-up licks creation!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Like it?" asked Finn, with a downward glance at his attire. "Pretty good, eh?"

"Er—ah—yaas, wathah!"

"I guessed I'd be a bit fashionable this time, though I don't overdress as a rule," said Finn. "I wanted to do you credit."

"Ya-a-as!"

"Are you ready?"

"Er—weady—yaas!"

"Then come on, old chap! Give us your arm!"

And with his arm linked in Buck Finn's, the swell of St. Jim's sallied out into the quadrangle and walked down to the gates.

CHAPTER 16.

Up a Tree!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS and Buck Finn attracted considerable attention as they crossed the quad.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at them, and Blake and Herries and Dig called out polite remarks from the footer ground. Figgins & Co. passed them and took off their caps and bowed to the ground with great humility.

Buck Finn looked a little puzzled, and Arthur Augustus was very red.

"Seems to be something up somewhere," said Finn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I guess they're surprised to see a chap from Arizona dressing in such style," the American junior remarked. "They didn't reckon I could get out a rig like this."

"N-n-no; I suppose not."

"I never wore a plug hat in Arizona," remarked Finn, taking off his topper and glancing at it proudly, and then

replacing it on his head. "I kinder guess that it suits me pretty well—eh?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And this giddy waistcoat. What do you think?"

"Wippin'!"

"And the chain—eh?"

"Nobbay!"

"To tell you a secret," said Finn, lowering his voice, "it isn't real gold; it's rolled gold."

Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"You don't say so!"

"I guess I do, though. But it looks all serene—eh?"

"Oh, yaas, wathah!"

They left the gates of St. Jim's, and strolled down the road. It was a pleasant winter afternoon.

Rylcombe village came in sight, with its ancient houses and inn, and the old church with its ivy-covered tower.

There was something very interesting to Buck Finn in the village. The old church had been built before the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, for instance, and that fact was very curious to the boy from the Far West.

But if the village was interesting to Buck Finn, it was also a fact that Buck Finn was of considerable interest to the village.

Perhaps his gorgeous get-up attracted the attention of the village youths, most of whom were idle that afternoon, and many of whom were looking for trouble with St. Jim's boys to relieve the monotony of a holiday.

Craggs, Pilcher, and Grimes were drinking ginger-beer outside the Rylcombe Arms when the two juniors strolled past.

The three heroes of Rylcombe immediately exchanged glances, and Pilcher deftly jerked the remains of his ginger-beer from his glass in the direction of the juniors from St. Jim's.

There was a wail of anguish from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The ginger-beer had gone over his trousers, and the liquid left a stain on the cloth. The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass upon the humorous Pilcher with a glare that ought to have frozen him on the spot; but the village youth only grinned.

"I guess I'd lick him," said Buck Finn.

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs.

"Yaas, wathah! Pilchah—"

"Hallo!" said Pilcher affably. "Is that you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, it is I. I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Grimes jumped up.

"Collar 'em!" he shouted. "Duck 'em in the horse-trough!"

The villagers gave a yell of approval.

"I guess not!" said Buck Finn, clenching his fists. "I'm not taking any duckings this weather. Go slow!"

"Collar them!"

"Bai Jove, if you approach me I shall give you a thwashin' all round!" said D'Arcy. "On reflection, I will let you off, Pilchah."

"Thank you for nothing!" grinned Pilcher. "Collar them!"

"I wegard you as a wude wottah!"

"Collar them!"

The village lads gathered round thickly. The juniors of St. Jim's put up their fists. Buck Finn had allowed his eyeglass to drop, but the monocle still adorned the eye of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

His eye gleamed through it with the light of battle.

"Come on, you wottahs!" he exclaimed.

"Hurrah! Duck them!"

"College cads! Collar 'em!"

"We've got to vamoose!" whispered Buck Finn. "Come on, D'Arcy, make a run for it!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Come on, I tell you, while we've got the chance."

"I am afwaid it's impos, deah boy. It would be a sevius infwaction of my dig for me to wun away."

Buck Finn snorted.

"Don't be an ass! They're a dozen to two. Besides, it isn't running away; it's a charge and a running fight—see?"

"Yaas, wathah; that althas the case. But undah any cires I could not consent to wun away. I have no objection to a charge and a wunnin' fight."

"Come on, then!" whispered Finn. "Our goose will be cocked if we hang on here."

"I'm weady!"

The village lads were closing round in a thick circle, but hesitating to rush on. It was the two juniors who made the rush. They charged, and in a moment they were fighting desperately.

D'Arcy's silk hat went he knew not whither, and Finn's topper disappeared under foot. Hitting out right and left, they broke through the crowd and ran.

"After them!" roared Pilcher.

The village lads, shouting and whooping, dashed in pursuit. The juniors gained the lane leading to St. Jim's, and then Arthur Augustus paused.

"Bai Jove, I've dwopped my toppah!"

"Come on!" yelled Buck Finn.

"Wats! I've lost my toppah!"

"Come on!"

Finn ran straight on. D'Arcy hesitated a few moments, and then followed him. The village boys were whooping only a few yards behind.

Finn stumbled over a stone and almost fell.

"Buck up, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wun like anythin'!"

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"We can't get away!" muttered Buck. "I'm going up this tree."

"But weally—"

"You cut on, if you think you can get to the school, and tell Tom Merry."

"Bai Jove, that's a good ideah!"

Arthur Augustus went whizzing down the lane. He was a good runner, and he put his beef into it this time. Buck Finn shinned up the tree like a monkey, and gained a branch. There was a yell below as Pilcher, Craggs, Grimes & Co. halted.

CHAPTER 17.

The End of the Rag!

BUCK FINN clung to a branch and looked down at the crowd of village fellows in the road. They roared and shook their fists.

Although they did not really mean to hurt the junior, it was probable that he would have a rough time if he fell into their hands. He did not mean to risk it.

"Come down!" roared Pilcher.

"Yah!" shrieked Grimes. "Come down!"

"Boo, boo!" yelled the crowd. "Come down!"

Buck Finn looked at them with perfect coolness from above.

"I guess I'm pretty comfy here," he drawled. "I'm staying."

"Yah! College cad!"

"Oh, go and eat turnips!"

"Yah! Come down!"

"Come up and fetch me!"

The villagers looked dubiously at the tree. The odds were greatly on their side, but it would not be easy work to climb the tree and fetch the American junior down.

Finn grinned at them mockingly.

"Come up and fetch me, you galoots! You daren't!"

Pilcher's reply was to catch hold of the gnarled trunk and drag himself upward. Craggs and Grimes speedily followed his example.

Buck Finn waited for them with perfect coolness.

As soon as Pilcher came within reach, Finn reached down and grasped him by the hair, and proceeded calmly to shake him loose from his hold on the tree.

Pilcher gasped with alarm.

"Hold on! I shall break something if I fall! Cheese it!"

"Sorry, but you're going down!"

"Ow! Leggo, and I'll go down!"

"I guess you will."

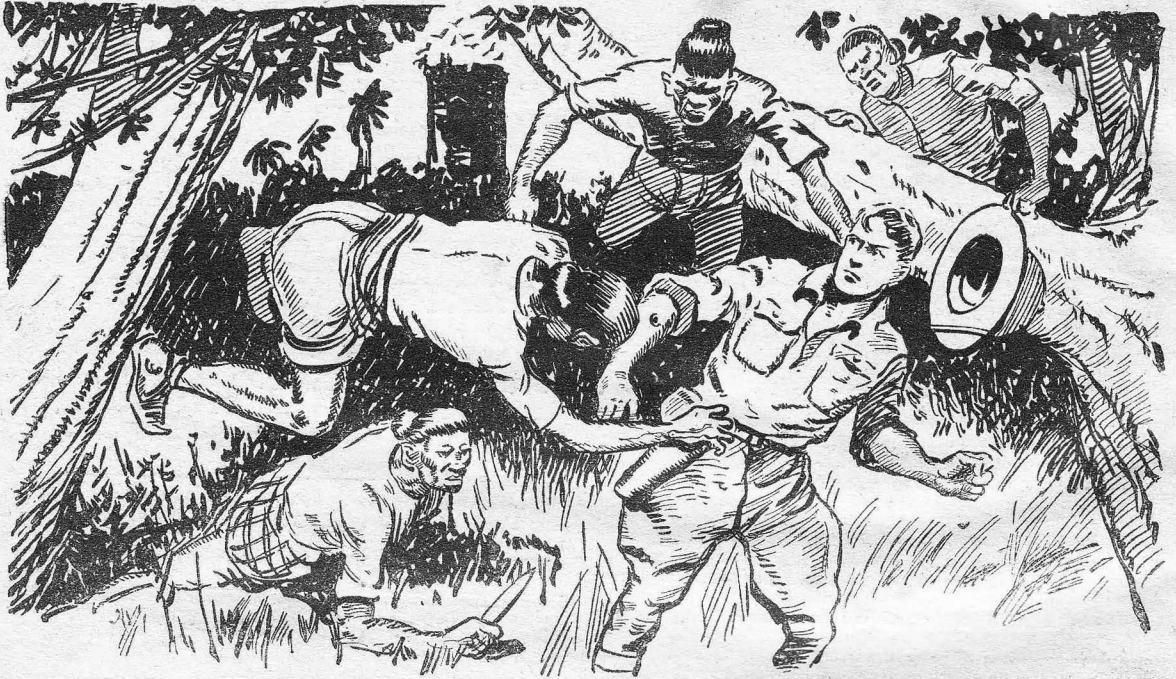
Finn let go, and Pilcher climbed down. Craggs and

(Continued on page 28.)

LIGHTNING BRUCE BRADMAN, THE SPEED ACE, TAKES—

THE LAST TRICK!

By
GILBERT CHESTER.



Bruce Bradman joins a revolution—and puts an end to it—before it starts!

CHAPTER 1.

The Tower of Silence!

BRUCE BRADMAN halted by the sandy beach and gazed out across the sparkling expanse of sunlit sea. Behind him lay the long Malay peninsula, with its endless tracks of virgin forest. Ahead a blue horizon—and beyond it, Selong.

Selong, the Malay island kingdom, where Sam, the white rajah, had ruled; and where Sam, his undergraduate nephew, would soon be ruling.

To Bruce Bradman, the world famous speed ace, Selong was more than that. It was a goal as hard to reach as any "Finish" banner of all the fiercely fought races in which he had driven. It was a goal, too, which he had crossed Europe and Asia a-wheel to gain. Now it was almost within his reach.

"The last lap, Jimmy," he said, turning to the fair-haired young man who stood beside him. "The rajah's boat's getting close in. And his rebellious subjects don't know he's coming."

"Thanks to you, old chap," Jimmy Cope exclaimed with generous warmth. "Their scouts have been so busy chivvying us and the good old bus through the wilds of Asia, they won't think of watching the liner. He'll land and catch 'em bending before that gun-running ship they're waiting for arrives."

"You've been a bit helpful yourself, come to that," Bruce countered. "You've run a pretty considerable risk, posing as the rajah, and leading 'em on a wild-goose chase. Takes a bit of sand, I reckon, to stand up and offer yourself as a target to a bunch of thugs who are out to bump you off. And they've had umpteen goes at it, since we started out on this picnic."

"Well, you were in it, too, old cock—up to the neck," Cope rejoined stoutly. "And it wasn't your pigeon. Talking of Selongese, though—I've been thinking. Kind of curious, isn't it, how those blighters have managed to hang on our trail ever since we left London. It's uncanny the way they've managed to keep tabs on our movements."

"I've been puzzling over that myself," Bruce concurred. "Still, they've failed, and that's the main thing. It shows, what's more, that they haven't rumbled the big bluff you're putting up. They still believe you're the rajah. And, thanks to that, the Big Noise himself will reach Selong undetected and take their rebel pals by surprise."

"Well, all we've got to do now is to await that boat we

arranged should meet us," Cope commented. "I've been worrying a bit—that she isn't here. I wonder—if that means anything," he added, frowning.

"Huh!" Bruce ran a shrewd eye along the deeply indented shore.

A vast expanse of dark green forest stretched as far as could be seen—even heights of green, slashed at intervals by brighter patches—like gorgeous lacquer panels let into the walls of some Eastern shrine.

"I don't know," he added thoughtfully. "A ship might put into one of these little bays, and lie there out of sight. One might get a better squint at them from that tower, whatever it is, down coast there." He pointed to a squat white structure rising from a neighbouring eminence. "I'll nip across and have a look. You get back to the car. You're still a bit groggy from that touch of fever."

Cope nodded and strolled back towards the spot where the racing car waited amongst the trees, with Joe, the ex-sailor mechanic, in charge. Alone, Bruce walked towards the tower along a winding path that pushed its way amongst the clinging vines, where brightly coloured flowers vied with the brilliant plumage of the noisy parrots that chattered amongst them.

But for the nature noises about him the forest was still. No breath of wind stirred. Even the echo of his own footsteps died muffled amidst the overhanging forest giants. In a brown study Bruce rounded a sharp turn in the path, sighted the tower vaguely through a veil of undergrowth and stepped towards it.

It was then that the forest woke, like the rip of lightning flash, to life. From the boughs above brown shapes dropped on him—so many human thunderbolts.

Something landed on his back with a thud that sent him pitching forward. He crashed, face on, into a patch of matted grass. As he strove to rise a ton weight of humanity overwhelmed him. He jerked up on his knees, fought with the fury of despair, then went down again, gripped in a vice-like lock of many hands.

Again he reared up, his mighty shoulders braced to a herculean task. The weight above him shifted slightly. As might some shaggy bear, he shuddered. And the shudder almost shook the mass of brown men off him.

Then something tightened round his throat. The air went misty in the tropical heat. He stumbled forward once more, and lay still. When he remembered things again, it was to find his limbs tightly-pinioned.

Steel thongs drove viciously into his wrists. They were crossed behind his back and as immovable as though gripped

by a frightful cramp. He ceased struggling, twisted his neck a shade to glance upwards, and found a knot of brown-skinned men looking down at him in cynical triumph.

They were the Selongese who had been trailing him ever since he had left England with his companions. They had got him—on the very threshold of victory!

Achmet, their saturnine-faced leader, stepped forward as the speedman stirred. He had a pistol in his hand, and it covered the captive.

"If you think to shout out, Bradman," he hissed, "you may forget the intention. Your voice would not carry, for one thing. And for another we shall deal presently with your friends. Just as we have already dealt with the ship you hired to meet you. We will spare you the trouble of hunting for it. It is not here."

"Now, how the deuce did you know all that, you cunning devil?" Bruce thought. Aloud he retorted: "Well, what are you going to do?"

Achmet smiled coldly, and there was evil in the ice mask of his ascetic features.

"We are going to put you beyond opportunity of further mischief, Englishman. We regret the necessity. But since you have chosen to interfere in what is none of your business, your fate be upon your own head."

Bruce looked up at him coolly, though, truth to tell, the race track champion was far from feeling unconcerned.

"The British Raj has a long arm, Achmet. If you are thinking of killing me, you had better think twice."

Achmet shrugged.

"We shall not kill you, Englishman. Yesterday, we might have done so. Or to-morrow we might have given ourselves the pleasure. But to-day, we may not. It is the Day of Peace, and sacred in Selong. On it, a man may shed no blood."

"Oh, good! Nothing like sticking to the calendar—what?" Bruce yawned languidly, aware that his only hope of safety lay in an attitude of supreme contempt. "Well, what's the big idea?"

"You will see," Achmet rejoined impassively, and made a sign to his compatriots. "Lift him, brothers."

The Malays bent and raised their prisoner. Helpless and like a log, the speed-ace was borne forward along the path till the vines ended at the crest of the little hill. Here the tower stood up upon the cliff-edge—a square erection of white stone, and some twenty feet high.

In its base was a small door. To this Achmet stepped. He took a key from his pocket and opened the door. He stood aside while his comrades carried Bruce into the building and up a winding stairway in its dark interior.

For a minute gloom masked the party. Then the blinding glare of sunlight smote them. They had emerged on to the tower-top, where a bare stone slab lay naked to the cloudless sky.

Around the slab was a circular pavement, separated from it by a deep, trench-like gap, its bottom an iron grating, below which loomed darkly the gloomy depths of the inner tower.

"Wait!" Achmet raised a hand, and his fellows dropped Bruce on to his feet.

They stood silent as statues, their hands supporting him. He might have been a mummy, held upright for inspection.

Bruce shot a glance seawards, but glimpsed no vessel. He crushed down his disappointment, and looked back at his captors. Everything was still as death, save for the strident call of birds in the trees around.

"You are wondering what is this place?" Achmet suggested, with a sinister suavity.

"Mildly," Bruce answered, with another of his yawns.

Achmet's smile broadened, and unpleasantly.

"You are sleepy, yes? Good—for the sleepy have one desire, and that is rest. Therefore, we have brought you here, that you may have your desire, O Swallower Up of Roads. As is meet, there shall be a mighty swallowing—a swallowing after your own heart."

"There will be a mighty swallowing—by the British Raj!" Bruce replied pointedly. "That is to come. Meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile, the British Raj knows nothing," Achmet purred. "Indeed, I fear, the British Raj, despite its boasted omnipotence, its much-vaunted omniscience, will never know anything. Who will tell him? For this, Bruce Bradman, is the Tower of Silence. That which takes place within its sacred walls is known to no man. The fowls of the air have its dread secret in their keeping."

Despite himself, Bruce started. The sound of that sinister name, the Tower of Silence, rang through his brain with the echoes of a pistol-shot. The heat of noon notwithstanding, his spine numbed to an icy chill. On his face and forehead great beads of perspiration stood out.

Achmet's thin lips twisted in a cruel sneer.

"It is the burial place of the Parsees, Englishman. A strange people, but, as it happens, a convenient people. Some of them have settled in a neighbouring town to trade.

And they have brought their peculiar customs with them. Do you know what they are, Bruce Bradman?"

He waited, while the racing man stood, tight-lipped but silent.

"I will tell you," he resumed, his thin voice like corroded brass. "When a Parsee dies, he is not placed upon a funeral pyre, nor is he buried in a grave. His corpse is brought here, to this tower, and laid out on that slab. There they leave him—to the sacred vultures which fill these silent groves. And, in a short time, nothing is left but the bones. And they fall through the iron grating to the black depths of the tower."

He laughed.

"We do not need to kill, Bruce Bradman. Why should we rouse the wrath of the all-powerful British Raj, which frowns on killing? Besides, it is our sacred day of peace. So"—he stepped back, a sneer on his hatchet face—"we leave you to the birds. Let them answer for you to the British Raj—if there should ever be a need for answering!"

He signed to his men, who raised the prisoner. Trussed up like a fowl, Bruce was powerless to resist. It was as though they lifted a wooden log.

They bore him to the slab and laid him on it. As his body touched the heated, sun-baked surface, he heard a faint tinkling sound. Something had fallen from his pocket on to the stone. As they stepped away he rolled over on his back, covering the fallen object. He did not know its nature, but could feel its outlines—a small, hard lump between his shoulder blades.

Achmet saw the movement, but mistook its intention.

"Do not think to escape by rolling, Englishman," he said.

"If you fall from the stone it will be into the deep pit around you. You will only break your neck. Why trouble to resist when resistance is useless?"

Bruce lay motionless. He heard the slow and fading footfalls of his enemies as they descended the stairs, then the dull thud as the entrance door closed. After that, silence, save for the restless murmur of the jungle round about.

It was broken by a whirring of many wings. The vultures had detected him.

CHAPTER 2.

The Traitor!

BRUCE'S arms were tied behind him and he managed to force himself into a semi-seated posture. Through the glare of the sun he could see the birds descending. A loathsome crew of carrion, they settled in a ring along the parapet, watching him with their evil, beady eyes.

Evidently, the fact that he still moved puzzled them. And as yet they were cautious. Nothing was wont to disturb their horrid orgies on this silent tower top. And soon they would grow bolder. Presently the fierce heat of the tropical sun would overcome the victim—and then—

Bruce shuddered in his bonds and lay back again. As he did so the object on the slab pressed into his back. Remembering it, he rolled on to his side and wriggled cautiously into a fresh position, fishing for the thing.

His wrists were crossed and tightly lashed with cords, and he had some difficulty in reaching his object. His fingers were, however, free, and after a little he succeeded in securing it. From its contour, he recognised it as his stop-watch.

Instantly his hopes revived. He began fumbling at the dial cover. After many attempts, he got this open and contrived gingerly to prise the glass crystal from its setting.

The torrid sun rays, focused through the glass, would scorch and burn, if trained upon the cords which bound him. Could he hold the crystal in such a way as to effect this? It was worth trying. Indeed, it was his only chance, if a slender one.

He rolled gradually over on to his chest, so that his hands were uppermost. This done, he worked the glass slowly to and fro till he felt the heat rays generated scorch his wrists. He could not see what he was doing. He could only judge the line of focus by the heat.

At last he got the glass directed at the cords. The angle cramped his aching fingers to the point of agony. But he dared not stir. At all costs, he must hold on while the sun did its work.

The fierce rays streamed down upon him like the blast of an open furnace door. They caught the nape of his neck until his head swam and his senses reeled. Yet still he dared not stir, lest he lost the painfully found focus angle.

The concentrated stream of light flooded his pinioned wrists. It scorched his flesh with a burning bite that almost tore a scream of agony from his parched lips. An overwhelming urge prompted him to drop the glass and end the

ture. But he gritted his teeth and held on, his fingers numbed and his senses reeling.

Dimly, as through a mist, he heard the obscene fowls on the parapet stir. There was a rustling as of bats' wings in the dark. He lay so still now that the vultures were gathering courage.

Then something struck him in the small of the back with a gentle thud. The first vulture had settled. There followed another, and another.

The advance guard of foul birds had alighted to commence their filthy feast!

His blood froze in his veins. He wanted to writhe—sit up—shout—and drive the brutes from him. Yet once again he fought down the desire to move. He dared not wreck the charring action of the glass. It was his only hope.

He lay waiting, while the vultures, perching on him, braced themselves. Perhaps the glinting glass held in his palsied fingers worried them. For a minute there was nothing. Then the bite of red-hot pincers took him in the neck.

The first beak had got home.

Only by almost superhuman will did he lie rigid while the cruel beak tore at his flesh. The heat on his wrists grew beyond bearing. Through the stench of the carrion brutes above him he could sense a smell of burning.

He strained his wrists—strained—strained. The pincers gripped and tore again. The bite of the focused rays blistered. Then, with a jerk, the charred strands parted. His arms were free.

With a supreme effort, he jerked over on his back, sat up, and lashed out with his last remaining strength. He struck, punched, milled at the whirring mass of fowls above him. They rose, screeching, into the air—a spiralled column of beating wings that woke the echoes of the surrounding forests.

Forcing his numbed hands to action he groped in his pockets for a knife, found and opened it, then gashed his leg bonds asunder. Somehow, he clambered off the slab, gained the annular pavement, and gained the parapet.

The door below would be locked. He did not waste strength on a descent of the stairway. He rolled out across the parapet, gripped it, and dropped twenty feet to earth, fell, stumbled up, and staggered off into the jungle.

He guessed his pals were in danger of the Selongese. His one thought now was to reach and warn them.

It was the noise of a tick-tack that at last brought him to a stand. He leant against a tree-trunk, listening.

Tat-tat! Tat-tat-tat-tat!

Someone hidden in the undergrowth was manipulating the operating key of a wireless transmitter.

For an instant he remained where he was, stifling his stertorous breathing. Then he tiptoed forward, peering into the tangled vines.

Beyond them was a small clearing. In it a man crouched over what looked like a large suitcase. There was something familiar about it, just as there was about the stout, bent back of the operator.

Bruce recognised both case and shoulders. The former was a suitcase which presumably contained the worldly goods of Hari, Cope's Babu interpreter. And it was Hari who now stooped over the suitcase.

In it was concealed a portable wireless transmitter, which the Babu was now working.

"So that's how the Selongese always managed to get wind of our whereabouts!" Bruce muttered. "A spy in the camp!"

He tiptoed forward into the clearing, got within some feet of the Hindu, then made a spring at him. From the Babu's hip bulged a gun butt. Bruce grabbed it, whipped the pistol out, and jabbed it at the fellow's neck.

"Got you, you rat!" he blared, and jerked the traitor to his feet.

Hari went up on his toes, his fleshy, brown features bathed with sweat, and his horn-rimmed spectacles dithering on the bridge of his nose. His bulging eyes showed glassy with horror through the lenses.

"Mercy, peer and mighty mister!" he wailed, trembling in Bruce's grip. "Demonstration of compassion is highly acceptable to your humble and obedient servant. I am possessed of many dependent relatives who eat up my substance voraciously. Have a heart—"

"You treacherous reptile! So it's you who have been giving us away, is it?" Bruce answered fiercely. "By gosh, I've a mind to wring your beastly little neck!"

"But, noble earl, it was desire of all that sinful Selongese murderers should hit bloodstained trail. Have I not given loyal assistance in sustenance of aforesaid trackers? Diurnal

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leadings up garden result. In *sæcula sæculorum*, as sagacious Seneca writes, they duplicate behaviourism of bloodhound, equally sagacious animal. Which as man of wisdom, Euclid, enunciates, means Q.E.D. Which same matter lets real rajah out. Get me?"

"Hari, you're a born liar!" Bruce commented, suppressing a grin. "It seems almost a pity to destroy an expert like you. You brighten up a dull existence. Still, I don't see why I shouldn't put a bullet into you." And he glared ferociously at the shivering Babu.

"But, just judge, there is no high finance in funerals. To put cruciform object upon your humble and devoted servitor is to draw bally blank. I am in possession of significant secret of state. Have I august permission to do my stuff?"

"If you've got anything to spill, spill it, and quick!" Bruce growled.

"Great one, I will proceed to explanatory matter," Hari whined through chattering teeth. "In my mind is occurrence that no harm accrues through procurement of multiple emoluments. I sting infamous conspirators per diem. I make profitable dividend out of their excessive childish foolishness."

"You can cut the petty cash out, Hari. What were you doing with that wireless?"

"Most notorious of grandees, I am about to explain. I receive advices of immediate proximity of gun-running vessel which carts munitions to rebellious subjects in Selong. You interrupt my private correspondence with this she-ship. She is just round the johnny hornor to pick up Selongese when they have accomplished murder of yourself and honourable companions."

"The deuce she is!" Bruce murmured, and drove the gun muzzle hard against Hari's neck. "Then if you want to save your blessed bacon, my friend, just squat down at that wireless and tap out what I dictate. And, remember this—I understand Morse. If you make any bloomers there'll be a regrettable accident. Got it?"

Hari nodded.

"Sir, I have complete low down on all value of situation. On receipt of your instructions I will bulldoze parties as may be necessary and requisite for body and soul of yours faithfully."

"Very well, then, get on with it."

Bruce waited while the Babu sent a call signal out into the ether. As the distant vessel replied he commenced dictating, his trained ear listening-in to make sure from the sparking that Hari attempted no further treachery.

But the unpleasantly cold contact of the gun barrel on his neck worked miracles with the Babu. He tapped out exactly the message he was ordered. When he had done so, Bruce straightened.

"And now sign off," he said tersely.

The Babu did so. At the same instant there broke from the neighbouring jungle a rattle of gun-shots.

CHAPTER 3.

Victory!

BRUCE took a running kick at the wireless, and smashed it with his boot. As the delicate apparatus crumpled, he spun round on Hari.

"Your confounded friends are attacking Cope and Joe," he snapped.

"That will be approximately dimension of proposition, sahib."

"Then get a jerk into it," Bruce ordered. "You and I, my brave Hari, are going to charge them."

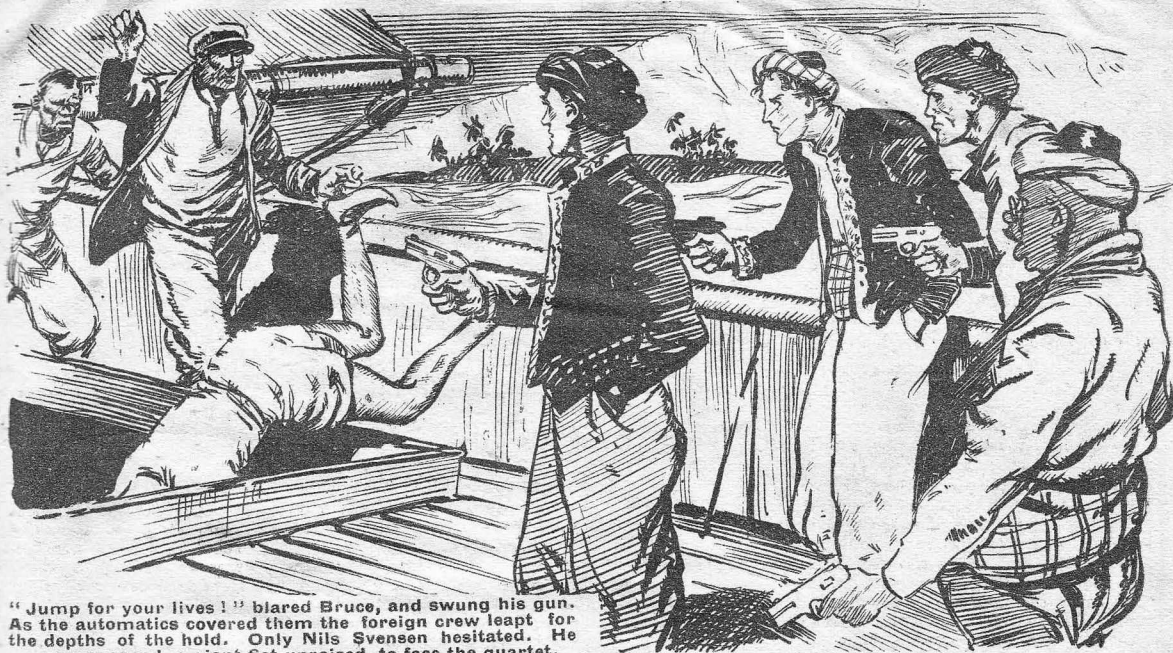
The Babu sent up a wailing bleat of terror, but the speed ace saving his pistol. Hari jumped forward, impelled by terror. Reluctantly he ran, towards the spot whence the firing came, Bruce on his heels.

The crash of their footfalls unheard through the gunfire, the pair reached the scene of action. A knot of brown men lay flat amongst the bushes before a long red racing car, where Cope and the seaman, Joe Anson, crouched, firing doggedly back at their attackers.

Like an avenging fury, Bruce Bradman took the Selongese in the rear. They broke and scuttled for the jungle, leaving two of their number dead upon the ground.

"And that's that!" the speed ace said, pocketing his pistol as Cope and the seaman came forward from cover of the car with their smoking weapons.

That night, a silver ghost in the fantastic moonlight, a great moth flitted in upon the bosom of the sheeny sea. She drew silently into a deep bay, where the forest giants towered above the gently lapping waters, and a rattle of anchor chains woke the silence of the scene.



"Jump for your lives!" blared Bruce, and swung his gun. As the automatics covered them the foreign crew leapt for the depths of the hold. Only Nils Svensen hesitated. He swung round, a giant fist upraised, to face the quartet.

It was the schooner, laden down to the Plimsoll line with arms and ammunition for the Selongese rebels.

From the undergrowth ashore a light flashed out once, twice, and again. An answering flicker broke from the vessel's deck. Then a boat pushed off from the beach and bore down through the gloom towards the ship.

A rope ladder dropped over the vessel's side as the boat swung in alongside her. Four white-robed natives scaled it and gained the deck where Nils Svensen, the Swedish skipper, met them.

"I get your wireless message," he announced gutturally. "Is this all of you?"

His blue eyes swept the small party.

The shortest and most stout member of the newly arrived group bowed. The tallest native leaned against him so closely that the pistol he gripped was hidden in the folds of the stout one's raiment.

"Admiral of the fleets, we constitute complete roll-call passenger list. Residue of party is busy on missing list. You have our instructions immediately to commence circum-navigations of straits."

The Swede grunted and lurched forward to give an order. The winches jarred afresh as they wound the anchor cables aboard. Then, silently as she had come, the schooner slipped out of the bay and ran on the slight breeze towards the island of Selong, cloaked in the mistiness of the far horizon.

The four natives squatted dumbly in the shadows of the superstructure, motionless as idols and with seeming Oriental indifference, while the vessel moved without haste towards her objective. The sole sound of her progress was the creaking brace joints, the crackle of her slack sails, and the gentle lap-lap of waves against her bows.

As the moon mounted towards mid-heaven a dim, purple line grew slowly upon the vague juncture of sea and sky—the wooded crests of Selong in the offing.

Crouched in the lee of the superstructure, the tallest native bent to scan his wrist where something phosphorescent glowed in the gloom.

"It is time," he murmured, bending low to mark his wrist-watch. He rose and went up-deck to where the skipper stood beside the blonde-haired steersman.

"It were well to get the hatches off, Herr Svensen," he said, in broken English. "I think we get close in now. Yes?"

The Swede nodded and gave an order. His polyglot crew went forward to the main hatch, and the flap of the idle sails mingled with the plonk of sledges as his seamen knocked the wedges free.

A yardarm swung in above the edge, some tackle whirled in its pulley blocks, and the cover swung clear as the ropes strained to its weight.

"Now!" the tall native barked, in perfect English.

And his companions sprang forward, reaching for their hips.

"Jump for your lives!" he blared, and swung his gun.

As the automatics covered them the foreign crew leapt

madly for the blue depths of the hold. Their passengers had got a drop on them.

Only Nils Svensen hesitated. He swung round.

"Vot—" he began, but got no farther.

Bruce Bradman's lightning fist took him on the point, and he crashed backwards through the hatch cover. As the packing-cases below received him Bruce barked a sharp command, and his comrades sprang to the tackle.

The ropes ran out through the pulley blocks, and the hatch cover descended with a thud. Bar the steersman up-deck the crew were trapped.

"O.K., cap'n!" Joe Anson's Cockney voice said huskily. "And now—"

"Put her inshore, sailor!" Bruce answered, as, with a quick step to the wheel, he spilled the astonished steersman.

Half an hour later Bruce strode to the hatch, and bawled down into the gloomy hold:

"Tumble up, you sons of sea cooks! We've got the drop on you! Get aboard the starboard boat and make it snappy!"

Suddenly Nils Svensen and his crew climbed into the boat to which Bruce Bradman pointed. The pulleys screamed, and the boat vanished outboard, oarless and unmanageable as the victors cast off.

Drifting slowly on the tide, the two boats faded in the night, their occupants helpless and adrift, till someone chose to pick them up.

"And now it's our turn, boys," Bruce murmured. "Wait a jiffy!"

He slipped away and returned shortly.

"Into the dinghy, lads! And sharp about it! We've little time to lose!"

The four dropped into the dinghy, pushed off, and rowed like demons for the faintly-defined shore. They had gone four hundred yards when Bruce eased up.

"O.K.!" he panted. "We're clear by now, I think."

The perspiring Hari collapsed, panting, over his oar, and sat staring back towards the ship.

A frightful blast shook the heated air, and where the schooner had been a crimson fan of flame stood out for a fleeting second against the star-studded sky.

The crash of a thousand falling worlds filled the night. A hail of smoking fragments fell about the rocking dinghy into the sea. It was the last of the gun-ship as the bomb Bruce Bradman had set alight sent her lofting to the skies in a myriad of riven pieces.

The speed ace turned to his companions as the thunderous echoes of the giant explosion died away, vibrant against the half-seen shore.

"That'll be the end of the revolt," he murmured. "And in three days the real rajah will arrive to take over. Boys, our little job o' work is done!"

(Next week's GEM contains the first story of a thrilling new series of South Seas stories, featuring Battler Bart Crewison and his brother Dick!)

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THE COWBOY OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 23.)

Grimes descended, too. There was no attraction in climbing the tree at the risk of breaking their necks.

Buck Finn burst into a laugh.

A number of juniors were streaming from the gates of the school, with D'Arcy at their head, and even at that distance Finn recognised Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins.

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah! Go for them!"

The sudden shout made Pilcher & Co. cease their fusillade, and turn quickly round. But they had no time to stand on their guard.

Tom Merry & Co. were charging.

Right and left Pilcher & Co. were knocked by the charge of the juniors from St. Jim's.

They put up a very feeble fight, and in less than two minutes they were scattering in a dozen directions.

Tom Merry looked up at the junior in the tree,

"You can come down, Finny."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway come down, deah boy."

Buck Finn slid down and dropped into the road.

Somewhat disappointed by the briefness of the tussle with Pilcher & Co., the juniors returned to the school.

Gore and his friends were lounging in the gateway. Gore had not come out to fight, neither was he playing football. He preferred to spend the afternoon lounging about with his hands in his pockets.

As the juniors came in, the bully of the Shell withdrew a hand from a pocket, with a cut orange in it. He squeezed it down Buck Finn's neck as the American junior passed him, and there was a yell of laughter from the raggors.

There was a yell from Buck Finn also.

"Ow! What's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.

Buck Finn twisted his neck uncomfortably. It was not a cleanly trick, and it made him feel sticky and dirty. His eyes gleamed as he turned on Gore.

"I guess I've had about enough of this!" he exclaimed.

"Put up your fists!"

Gore laughed sneeringly.

"You young ass! I could knock you into the middle of next week!"

"You'll have a chance, I reckon. Put up your fists!"

"Bah!"

Buck Finn hit out, and Gore received his knuckles on the nose. The Shell bully gave a yell.

"You—you—you—I'll pulverise you!"

"I guess I'm waiting to be pulverised. These galoots will see fair play," said Buck Finn. "Come on, old hoss!"

Gore came on. He didn't like fighting, as a rule, except with much smaller boys; but then, Buck Finn was a good deal smaller, and did not look like a fighting man.

Much to his amazement, the bully of the Shell found himself lying on his back twice in rapid succession, and the second time he was slow to rise.

"Bravo!" shouted Tom Merry. "Two to one on Arizona!"

"Huwwah! Buck up, deah boy! I could not have given that uppah-cut bettah myself!"

Gore came up to time, only to be knocked right and left, and finally he went down for the third time, and remained there.

"Nuff?" asked Buck Finn, in his concise way.

"Yes, hang you!"

The boy from Arizona looked round.

"I guess there won't be any more ragging," he remarked.

"If there is, I shall take the raggors one at a time, and there will be ructions every time. I calculate I've had enough."

"Yaas, wathah! I quite approve of the remarks of my friend, Buck Finn!"

And Arthur Augustus slipped his arm through Buck's as they walked on.

Tom Merry & Co. gave the American junior a cheer.

Gore, with his handkerchief to his nose, walked unsteadily away.

Tom Merry looked after him with a smile.

"There won't be any more ragging," he remarked.

And he was right.

The ragging of Buck Finn was over.

THE END.

(Next week's yarn, "THE MYSTERY FOOTBALLER," is packed with thrills and fun! Don't risk missing it, order your copy now!)

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