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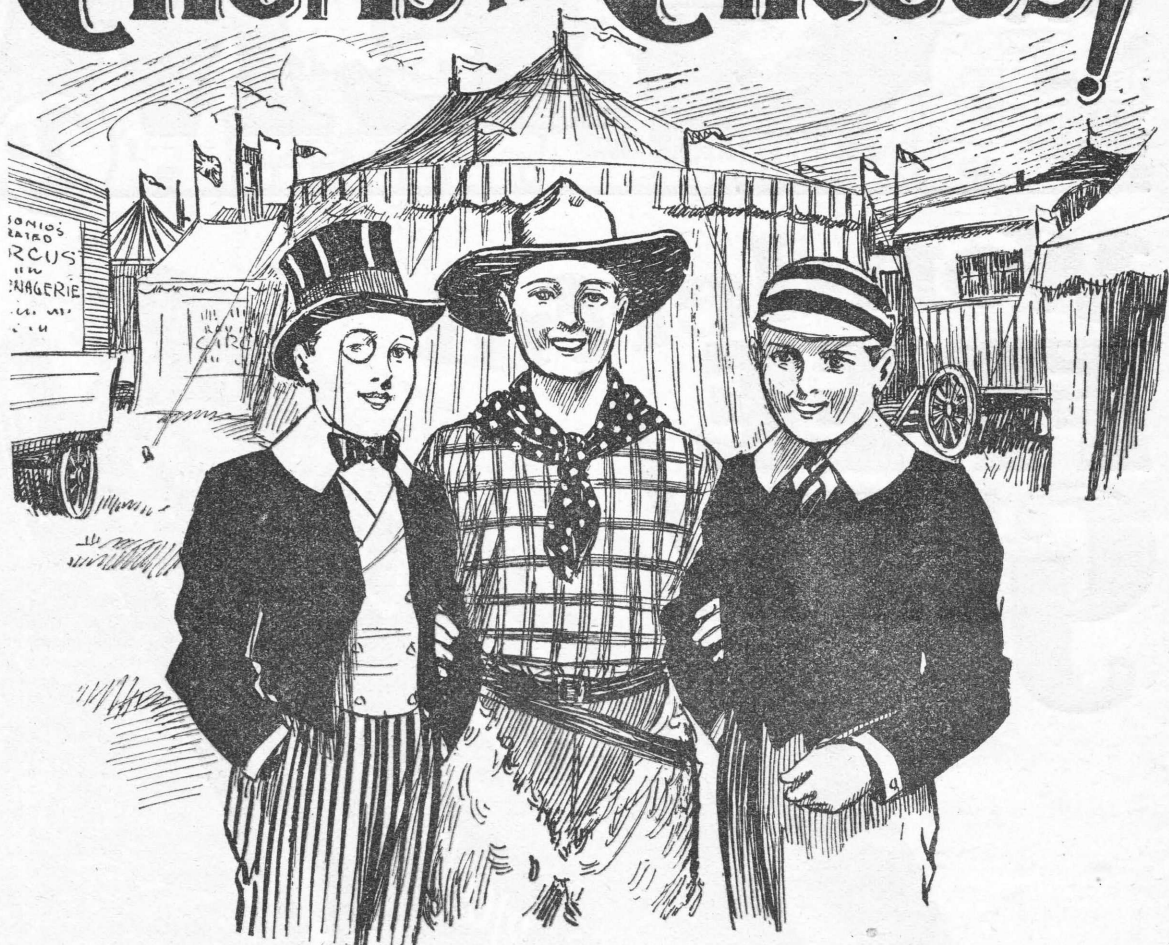


*This
Grand*
**WORKING MODEL
AERO-CAR**
for Every Reader

1ST PART GIVEN FREE WITH THIS ISSUE

READ THIS LONG COMPLETE YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO.,

CHUMS OF THE CIRCUS!



Thrills, fun and adventure abound when the great circus comes to St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy "does his stuff" as a bareback rider on Demon, the untamed terror horse!

CHAPTER 1.

"What's Up!"

"WHAT'S ON?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Something's the matter, I suppose?"

"Looks like it!"

"There's going to be a row, I expect," said Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "What have you been up to, Gussy?"

There was considerable surprise and a great deal of curiosity among the juniors at St. Jim's—especially the juniors of the Junior Forms.

The school had been summoned to Hall for the Head to speak to them after prayers, and even Tom Merry & Co., who were generally up to the times and knew what was going on, as a rule, were quite in the dark as to the cause.

For a long time there had been no such gathering of the clans, as Jack Blake described it. The fellows wondered what it meant.

That it meant a row of some kind few of them doubted. The question was, what was the matter, and who was the culprit?

There were various conjectures, and when the boys

crowded into the big Hall, a little group of Shell and Fourth Form fellows stood discussing it.

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell—confessed that they didn't know what the Head wanted, and the chums of Study No. 6 could offer no solution to the riddle.

Blake suggested that there was to be a row, but that suggestion had already been made a dozen times.

The fact that it was Wednesday caused no little alarm among the juniors—for Wednesday was a half-holiday, and if there was a row the school might be gated, and that prospect was enough to daunt any of them.

Jack Blake poked his elegant chum Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the ribs with an aggressive forefinger.

"What have you been up to, Gussy?"

D'Arcy started out of a brown study. He had been thinking.

"Ow! Weally, Blake, I wish you would not be such a wuff ass!" he remonstrated. "I uttahly detest bein' poked in the wibs! It throws me into a fluttah!"

"Go hon!"

"As to your question, I werged it as widiculous. I haven't been up to anythin'. How do you know there's goin' to be a wow?"

"Well, there's going to be something! The Head isn't callin' us together for fun, I suppose."

THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S, AND THEIR CIRCUS ADVENTURES!

By
Martin Clifford.

"I have been thinkin'—"
D'Arcy broke off as Tom Merry extracted a threepenny-piece from his waistcoat pocket and extended it towards him. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked at the coin, and then at Tom Merry.

"What is the meaning of that, Tom Mewwy?"
"Take it!"
"Weally—"
"It's yours!"
"Mine!"

"Yes. You deserve it. You ought to have a threepenny-bit every time you think, old man," said Tom Merry solemnly. "It will encourage you. And if you save them all up, you will have two or three shillings by the end of the year."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, deah boys, I can see nothin' whatevah to cackle at in Tom Mewwy's ridiculous wemarks! As I observed, I was thinkin'! I think that this gathewin' is pwobably due to Gore!"

"Whose gore?" asked Monty Lowther.
"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! I mean George Gore of the Shell! You wemembah that he was expelled fwom St. Jim's—"

"That's an old story now," said Tom Merry, who noticed that Gore of the Shell was within hearing, and didn't want to wound him.

Gore had been trying, in some ways, to amend since that time. His "sacking" had been a severe lesson to him, although the Head had allowed him to come back, and Tom Merry wanted bygones to be bygones.

"Yaas, wathah! But it has stwuck me that pewwaps Gore is goin' to be expelled again, you know!"

"Rats!"
"If you say 'wats' to me, Mannahs—"
"Well, I do," said Manners. "Gore has turned over a new leaf. The Head allowed him to come back. Why should he expel him again?"

"Well, he has certainly turned ovah a new leaf, but he has had welpases," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

"Oh, ring off—Gore can hear you!"
"Bai Jove, if Gore is here I may as well ask him his opinion!"

"Don't be an ass!"
"I decline to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy! Pway dwy up, as I should be sowwy to make a vulgah scene in Hall by givin' you a feahful thwashin'!"

Tom Merry grinned, and Arthur Augustus turned to the junior who had always been called the cad of the Shell. He gave Gore a scrutinising glance through his eyeglass.

"Gore, deah boy—"
Gore's face was darkly clouded. He glared at the swell of the Fourth Form, and his eyes glinted. D'Arcy's remarks had not pleased him.

"Gore, deah boy, do you wegard it as pwob that you are to be sacked again?" asked Arthur Augustus cheerfully.
"Oh, shut up!" growled Gore.

"Weally, Gore—"
"Go and eat coke!"
Blake caught D'Arcy by the arm and swung him back

among the Fourth Form fellows. D'Arcy's glass dropped to the end of its cord.

"Bai Jove, Blake—"
"Don't be an ass, Gussy! It isn't Gore this time! More likely you have been playing the giddy goat!" said Blake.

"I decline to admit anythin' of the sort. I am not in the habit of playin' the giddy goat. Pewwaps, howevah, if it is not Gore it may be Glyn."

"Hallo!" said Bernard Glyn, the inventor of St. Jim's.

"Who's that bragging that they know me?"
"I wegard it as pwob that it is Glyn. He may have been fixing up some more of his wotten inventions, or the Head may have sat down in his electric chair—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"No such luck!" chuckled Bernard Glyn. "The biggest game I ever caught in that was our respected German master, Herr Schneider!"

"Yaas, I wemembah that occasion. Pewwaps it is Kangawoo, then?"

"Why, what the dickens can I have been doing?" said Harry Noble, more familiarly known as "Kangaroo" in the School House at St. Jim's. "I've been as good as any little Georgie in the goody-goody book!"

"More likely some New House rotter!" said Digby. "Figgins, old man, is it one of your crowd that's going to be expelled?"

Figgins of the New House grinned genially.
"Not likely!" he said. "I hear, though, the Head's going to deliver some new instructions, concerning the School House mainly."

"Bai Jove! What are they?" asked D'Arcy suspiciously.

"About kids washing their necks every morning," said Figgins, "and changing their collars at least once a week."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Kerr and Wynn. Figgys's chums in the New House, delighted at seeing Arthur Augustus drawn in this way. "Good old Gussy!"

"I wegard Figgins' wemark as insultin'! Do you think it would attwact much attention, Blake, if I were to give Figgins a good thwashin'?"

Jack Blake grasped his excited chum by the arm.
"I rather think that it would, you ass!" he replied.

"Shut up! Lathom is blinking this way!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here's the Head!"
The juniors were quiet at once, and they stood in perfect order in respectful silence, as Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, entered the door at the upper end of the Hall.

CHAPTER 2. Good News!

DR. HOLMES glanced at the ranks of the gathered Forms—seniors, juniors, and middle school, all in order, with their eyes fastened upon him.

Mr. Raiton and Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemasters, had glanced round severely, but it was not needed—the buzz of talk died away as the Head entered.

Dr. Holmes coughed.
"Boys!"

There was a deep breath.
"What was coming? What was the crime, and who was the culprit? Upon whose devoted head were the vials of Dr. Holmes' wrath to be poured?"

The seniors looked grave; the juniors exchanged glances of alarm.

But Tom Merry felt relieved as he scanned the Head's face. The usual kindly expression was still there. Dr. Holmes would not have looked like that if he had been upon a stern errand.

"Boys, to-day is a half-holiday at St. Jim's."
The school was St. James' Collegiate School, but it was never called anything but St. Jim's, even by the masters or the Head himself, except upon state occasions.

OUR FREE GIFT!

This issue contains the **FIRST PART** of the Pioneer Aero-Car, consisting of the car itself, together with the wheels. The **Second Part**, viz., complete driving mechanism, wheel axles and propeller, will be given with **Next Wednesday's GEM**. Full instructions for making up the Aero-Car will be found on page 18.

Monty Lowther gave an audible groan.

"It's coming, kids! We're going to be gated—"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "Can't you see?"

"See what?"

"If the Head were waxy he wouldn't say 'St. Jim's.' It's always 'St. James,' when he's got his wool off."

"Jove! I forgot that!"

And the juniors were comforted. Tom Merry was certainly right.

"To-day is a half-holiday," repeated the Head. "I have received a communication from a—an Italian gentleman, offering to come to the school and give an entertainment to the boys."

"Oh!"

"Phew!"

They understood now.

More than once entertainments had been given at the school, especially at the end of the term—cinematographs, or lectures—generally to the utter boredom of the boys, who took it all as kindly as they could, as it was intended for their amusement.

"My only Aunt Semphonia!" murmured Blake. "It's a giddy lecture—some awful geology or botanical lecture! My only aunt! Do you remember the frabjous ass who gave a lecture on the original of species?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You ass! The origin of species!"

"I knew it was some rot. I—"

"Shut up—let's hear the Head!"

"The name of this gentleman is—is—" Dr. Holmes referred to a card he held in his hand. "The name of this gentleman is Signor Tomsonio."

"Bai Jove!"

"He is the proprietor of a travelling circus and hippodrome."

"Bravo!"

"He offers to bring his circus to St. Jim's for the afternoon and plant it in the field attached to the playing fields, so that every boy at St. Jim's may have the opportunity of patronising it."

"Hurrah!"

"Silence, please, till I have finished. I regard a circus entertainment as being both harmless and amusing, and Mr. Railton, who saw the circus when it was in the neighbourhood of Rylcombe a short while ago, gave me a favourable report of it. I think it would be a good plan to allow the Italian gentleman to bring his show to the school for the entertainment of my boys. I have therefore granted him permission to use the field for the erection of his tent, and he will arrive early this afternoon."

"Hurrah!"

Dr. Holmes smiled as the cheer rang forth.

He was the kindest of headmasters, and left no stone unturned to make his boys more comfortable in every way, in giving them instruction, and in providing for their hours of leisure.

But it is safe to say that he had never done a more popular thing than in permitting the "Italian gentleman" to pitch his tent on the ground adjoining St. Jim's.

Some of the fellows had visited the circus when it was at Rylcombe, and they had liked it exceedingly, and they would be very glad of a chance to go again, while those who had not gone were very anxious to go for the first time.

And so the boys cheered.

Dr. Holmes waited for the cheer to die away, and then he spoke again, when something like silence had been restored.

"I hope I need not caution you to be careful in regard to this circus," he said. "I have heard that when this same travelling circus was staying at another school some of the animals, among which was a tiger, were released for a trick by a foolish person. I think I can trust you all not to meddle with anything that does not concern you."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said D'Arcy.

Dr. Holmes looked at him. Arthur Augustus stepped forward from the ranks of the Fourth Form, feeling that he was called upon to say something.

"You can wely upon us, sir," he said. "As a mattah of fact, I shall make it a point to keep an eye on the youngstahs—"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake.

"I decline to shut up, Blake. I wish to assuah Dr. Holmes that he can wely on me—"

"Very good, D'Arcy. That will do."

"I assuah you, sir—"

Blake and Herries dragged the swell of St. Jim's back into his place. There was a ripple of laughter through the great Hall.

"You frabjous ass!" muttered Blake.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Ring off!"

"That is all I have to say to you, my boys," said

Dr. Holmes. "I am sure I can rely upon you to remember what I have said."

"Certainly, sir," said Kildare of the Sixth, captain of the school.

And the Head retired, and the meeting broke up.

There was an excited buzz of talk as the boys poured out of the Hall.

"A circus!" said Blake, with deep satisfaction. "And I was afraid it might be another lecture on the origin of speeches—"

"Species!"

"I mean species. One's as good as another, I suppose, though?" said Jack Blake aggressively. "Blessed if there'd be any sense in either. I was afraid it was a lecture, and I hoped it was a cinematograph show, and it turns out to be a circus! Hurrah!"

"Hip-pip!" said Kangaroo.

"We'll roll up in our thousands, of course," said Tom Merry. "I remember those circus chaps at Rylcombe—they were a fine set of fellows. You remember the chap who did the turn with the tiger? What was his name?"

"Jack Talbot," said Manners.

"Yes, that's it."

"There's something good about a fellow named Jack, I've always noticed that," said Blake.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "But he was decent. And then that clown chap—Joey Pye—the original Joey Pye, he called himself—he was ripping!"

"And the girl rider—"

"Clotilde. Yes."

The Shell and the Fourth Form fellows separated to go to their different class-rooms.

There was a thoughtful look upon the features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He seemed to be turning something over in his mind.

"Do you know, deah boys—" he began suddenly, as they neared the class-room.

"No, I don't!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo, Lathom's not turned up yet!" said Blake, entering the class-room. "It only wants one minute to time. Lathom is late! What does he mean by it? I can't have Form masters behaving in this way."

"Blake, deah boy—"

"Keeping us waiting!" said Blake indignantly. "He jolly well knows how anxious we are to get on to the cube roots and deponent verbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, I was goin' to say—"

"Hallo! Were you speaking, Gussy?"

"You know I was, you ass!"

"Well, I thought I heard a row, but how was I to know that it wasn't somebody filing a saw?" demanded Blake.

"You uttah ass! However, I was goin' to say, apwopos of this circus coming to St. Jim's, I have always wathah fancied myself as an acwobat."

"Go hon!"

"You must have noticed my twicks on the pawallel bars in the gym—"

"I've noticed you fall off them."

"I was not alludin' to that. You must have observed that I can turn somersaults in a weally extwaordinary way—"

"Yes; extraordinary somersaults, and no mistake!" agreed Blake, and Herries and Digby giggled.

"Weally, Blake, you persist in misunderstandin' me. I have always fancied that I could be a weally wippin' acwobat if that had happened to be my line of bisney."

"Curious, the fancies people have, isn't it?" said Blake, with a nod.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I wonder where Lathom is?"

"Nevah mind Lathom. I am certain that if I twied I could turn handspwings and double somersaults like that chap Pye in the circus."

"Of course—I don't think!"

"As a mattah of fact, I twied, in the pwivacy of the dorm, after that time we went to the circus, and I was quite satisfied with the wesult."

"Some chaps are easily satisfied, aren't they?"

"Weally, Blake, I considah—"

"Give us a show now," suggested Digby. "Lathom isn't here yet."

"Bai Jove! It's not a bad ideah!"

"Go it, then!" said Jack Blake. "I'll hold your coat!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated, and his chums grinned. That grin decided the swell of St. Jim's.

"Vewy well, deah boys!"

He took off his jacket and handed it to Blake. Then he unhooked his watch and gave it to Digby to hold. Then he placed his eyeglass in the hand of Herries, and his



Mr. Lathom did not see D'Arcy, and D'Arcy did not see his Form master until it was too late. Over went the amateur acrobat and rolled at the very feet of Mr. Lathom, and his heels came with a far from gentle impact on the Form master's waistcoat. "Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

pocket-wallet was confided to the care of Figgins, and a handful of loose cash—silver and copper—to Kerr.

Then he was ready.

"You see, I am goin' to turn a somersault," he remarked.

"I take a little wun, and then—"

"Well, take the little run."

"I'm just goin' to begin—"

"Lathom may be here any tick."

"Yaas, I suppose I had better huwwy up."

And Arthur Augustus took a little run towards the door, and—stopped. There was a hoot from the Fourth.

"What's the game now?" demanded Blake.

"I—I—I wasn't weady!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Oh, go it!" said Figgins.

"Vewy well."

Arthur Augustus retreated and took another little run. Then, as he drew near the door, he slackened, but he sped on again with an effort. It wasn't so easily done, when he came to do it, as he had expected, but he was bound to go through with it now.

Down went his head, and his hands and his feet went over in the air.

"Bravo!" shouted Blake. "Oh, gum—my hat!"

The Fourth made a rush for their Forms. On the doorway had suddenly appeared the form of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. The little short-sighted Form master was coming in to take the class, and he did not see D'Arcy—and D'Arcy, naturally enough, did not see him till it was too late.

"Look out, Gussy!"

But the warning fell upon deaf ears.

Over went the amateur acrobat, and rolled at the very feet of Mr. Lathom, and his heels came with a far from gentle impact upon the Form master's waistcoat.

Mr. Lathom gave a gasp, and staggered back right across

the passage to the opposite wall. And Arthur Augustus bumped down in the doorway and sat there, seemingly turned to stone, staring with horrified eyes at the Form master.

CHAPTER 3.

Truthful Augustus!

"**B**AI Jove!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Weally—"

"What!"

"I'm awfully sowwy—"

"D'Arcy!"

"It's a giddy duet!" murmured Jack Blake. "Tenor and baritone! Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth, after the first shock, could not help laughing. Arthur Augustus was still sitting in the doorway, too breathless to move. Mr. Lathom was staring at him as if he were some remarkable specimen of a new kind of animal.

"D'Arcy, how dare you!"

"I'm awfully sowwy, sir—"

"Get up! Get up this instant!"

"Certainly, deah boy—I mean, deah sir!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet and felt over his bones to make sure that none of them were broken.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "This—this is extraordinary! I—I never saw such a thing before! Are you out of your mind, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir!"

"Then you deliberately planned this assault upon your Form master?"

"No, sir."

"Then what does it mean?"

"It was a twick, sir—I was doin' an acrobatic turn,

sir," said D'Arcy sheepishly. "I didn't know you were comin' in, of course, sir."

"I should say not," said Mr. Lathom sarcastically. "I should certainly say not, D'Arcy! Do you regard the Form-room as being the proper place for acrobatic tricks?"

"Bai Jove, sir, I never thought of that!"

"You will think of it another time, perhaps, D'Arcy, as you will have five hundred lines to write out for your thoughtlessness on this occasion," said Mr. Lathom dryly.

"Oh, sir—"

"Go to your place at once!"

"With pleasuah, sir!"

Arthur Augustus went to his place. Mr. Lathom walked into the Form-room with a great deal of dignity. The juniors indulged in suppressed chuckles.

"You frabjous ass!" whispered Blake, as D'Arcy sat down beside him and dusted his coat. "I wonder you weren't sent into the Head to be caned."

"Weally, Blake—"

"You might have winded poor old Lathom with your hoofs."

"I wufese to have my feet chawactewised as hoofs, Blake. It was an accident, and I wegard it as wathah low-down of Lathom to give me five hundwed lines."

"Five thousand would be nearer the mark, you ass!" said Digby.

"I wufese to be called an ass! Under the circs—"

"I am sure there is someone talking," said Mr. Lathom, looking round.

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

And the talk ceased.

Mr. Lathom never had a very easy class to handle in the Fourth, and they were a little less attentive than usual that morning.

All thoughts were fixed upon the coming circus.

The fellows who had been to Signor Tomsonio's show in Rylcombe had to tell those who hadn't all about it, and those who hadn't had to ask those who had what it was like. And a dozen conversations were going on most of the time during the morning.

Mr. Lathom, who was a patient little man, with a sweet temper, as a rule, was exasperated into using his pointer on youthful knuckles once or twice; but it made little difference—except to the knuckles, of course.

There was a German lesson that morning, however, and when Herr Schneider took over the Fourth he showed himself less patient than Mr. Lathom had been.

"Tat you are silent!" he exclaimed, as soon as the first buzz rose.

And the buzz ceased for nearly a minute.

The German master, who had had troubles of old with the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, kept one eye slyly open, on the look-out for a delinquent, determined to make an example of the next boy he caught talking in class, instead of following with proper interest the thrilling excursion into the realms of German irregular verbs.

"D'Arcy!"

Herr Schneider rapped out the word suddenly, and the swell of St. Jim's gave a jump.

"Yes, sir?"

"You vas talk to Plake."

"Oh, sir!"

"Vat you say to him—hèy?"

Arthur Augustus turned red.

"If you please, sir, I should pwefer not to answah that question," he said. "I am sowwy you found me talkin', sir."

"I tink tat is fery likely, D'Arcy. I insist upon knowing vat it is tat you say to Plake. Anyting tat is said in te class-room is for te master to hear."

"Yaas, wathah, sir; but—"

"Repeat vat it is tat you haf said to Plake!"

"Weally, Herr Schneider!"

The German rapped the desk with his pointer with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Repeat tat, D'Arcy, instantly!"

"Very well, sir; but I do not wish to wepeat it."

"At vunce! You hear me?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Den vat vas it tat you said?"

"I said we must be careful, sir, because the—the—"

"Go on!"

"I would wathah not, sir."

"I command you!"

"Vewy well, sir—because the old wottah has the cornah of his eye upon us," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

The German stood transfixed.

There was silence in the class for a few seconds, and then a roar burst forth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

The German master glared furiously at the class. But they still giggled; they could not help it. That D'Arcy should repeat exactly what he had said to Blake, considering what it was, struck them as funny.

"Oh, you ass!" murmured Blake. "This will be a licking, as sure as a gun."

"I could hardly do othahwise than tell the twuth, Blake."

"D'Arcy! Poy!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"You are insolent—"

"I hope not, sir. You asked me, and I have answahed against my will, as I have explained to you, sir," said D'Arcy, with great respect.

"Insolent poy! Come out before te class!"

"With pleasuah, sir."

"Hold out your hand."

The German master took a businesslike grip upon the pointer. D'Arcy eyed it doubtfully. A cut from the hard, unyielding pointer was worse than a blow from the cane.

Arthur Augustus held out his hand in the most gingerly manner.

Herr Schneider made a swipe at it, and, acting on second thoughts, Arthur Augustus withdrew his hand.

The pointer, meeting with no resistance, swept down, and caught the German master a crack on his knee that rang through the Form-room.

"Ach!" yelled Herr Schneider, dropping the pointer, and clapping his knee in both hands, and dancing on the other leg. "Ach, Himmel! Oh! Yaroo!"

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, and looked at him.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ach! Donner! Blitzen! Yah!"

"What an extwaordinary performance!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It may be a welief to the feelings, but I cannot but wegard it as lackin' in dig."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"It is weally no laughin' mattah, Blake. I am vewy sowwy to see one whom we should wespect sacwificin' his dig in this way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The German master dropped his damaged leg. His glare was perfectly ferocious as he turned it upon Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy, I—I weports you to te Head! Go to your place!"

"Certainly, sir. I am vewy sowwy for that accident."

"Go to your place!" thundered Herr Schneider.

And Arthur Augustus went to his place, and the German lesson proceeded. But the lesson was punctuated with suppressed chuckles, and Herr Schneider limped all through it, and he was still limping when he dismissed the class.

CHAPTER 4.

The Circus!

GLAD enough were the Fourth to be dismissed that morning. The Shell were already out, and the two met in the wide, flagged passage and fraternised.

In the exuberance of getting out of the class-room, it was not unusual for the juniors to begin rows in the passage—Form rows, or house rows, or any rows that happened along. But just now there was peace.

Figgins & Co. of the New House met Tom Merry and Blake of the School House with grins of cordiality, as if the prophesied time had come when the lion was to lie down with the lamb.

"Jolly fine afternoon, too," said Figgins, as he slapped Tom Merry on the shoulder. "Cold, but fine; ripping day for a walk. I'm going down the road to meet the circus."

"Oh, are you?" said Fatty Wynn, before Tom Merry could reply. "What about dinner?"

"Blow dinner!"

"Now, don't be an ass, Figgy!" said Wynn, in a tone of patient remonstrance. "Don't be a silly ass, you know. You can't go very far down the road and get back in time for dinner."

"Well, we're going to miss dinner, then."

"No fear!"

"It would do you good to miss a meal, Fatty," said Tom Merry. "A change is always good, you know; and that would be a really drastic change."

"Oh, don't be funny! You can go down the road and meet the blessed circus, if you like, Figgy; but I'm going to stay in for dinner."

And Fatty Wynn marched off before he could be remonstrated with.

"Well, I'll come," said Kerr. "You, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, rather! Come along, my sons!"

"I've got some photographs to develop, and Monty is going to help me," said Manners. "I'll see you later."

"Right you are!"

"Goin' out, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus, as Tom

Merry, Figgins, and Kerr came down to the doorway with their caps on.

"Yes, we're going to meet the circus."

"Good!" exclaimed Blake. "I was thinking of that myself. We'll come along."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway wait ten minutes while I get my toppah!"

"What-ho!" grinned Tom Merry. "I'll wait ten seconds, and give you a thick ear, if you like."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Come on!" said Blake. "We'll go and meet the circus, while Gussy goes and meets his topper. You coming, Dig?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Gussy!"

"Weally, Dig—"

The juniors crossed the quad.

Arthur Augustus hesitated a moment, and then dashed upstairs, and dashed down again with a topper. He had done it in ten seconds instead of ten minutes, but he had not had time to change his collar or necktie, and his face was reproachful as he ran after the juniors and joined them half-way to the gate.

"Hallo," exclaimed Blake, in surprise, "here's Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gr-r-r-r-r-r!

Arthur Augustus gave a jump, as a particularly savage-looking bulldog came up, straining at the chain which was held by Herries.

"Bai Jove! Keep that beast away, please, Hewwies."

"He's all right," said Herries. "I'm going to take him for a run. Where are you chaps off to?"

"To meet the circus."

"Good! The walk will suit Towser."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Herries with a stare that ought to have disconcerted him, if it did not freeze him; but it had no effect whatever upon Herries.

"Hewwies, deah boy—"

"Come on, Towsey!"

"I object to walkin' out in company with that wotten dog. He has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Well, you needn't come," said Herries. "Towser won't mind."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Rats!" said the master of Towser cheerfully.

And he led the way, Towser growling joyously at having a run. The festive bulldog soon jerked the chain out of his master's hand, and skipped away on his own. The juniors followed him down the lane, Herries calling after him with a voice of authority to which Towser did not pay the slightest heed.

"Pway let him go, Hewwies!" said D'Arcy. "He is evah so much bettah at a distance, you know."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Herries. "Towser, come back! Towser! Towsey!"

Towser clinked the dragging chain along the road without turning his head. There was a sudden yap-yapping in the lane, however, and Towser looked back with a businesslike expression in his eyes.

"Bai Jove! Here's Wally and Pongo! Now there will be a wow!"

D'Arcy minor, with Pongo on a chain, came trotting along the road. Although Wally belonged to the Third Form, and was the inkiest and untidiest fag at St. Jim's, he was not at all awed by the Fourth Form and the Shell. He nodded to Tom Merry & Co. with profound coolness, and yelled to Herries:

"Herries, keep that beastly tripehound of yours away from Pongo!"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Herries, with a disdainful sniff. "Towser is very particular what he eats."

Wally glared wrathfully at the owner of Towser.

"If he goes for Pongo, I'll—I'll jump on him!" he exclaimed.

Herries chuckled.

"Sorry for your legs if you do," he remarked. "Towser is a particular dog. He wouldn't take more than one bite at a mongrel like that, and I don't suppose one bite would kill him. If it did, you could pick up a waster like that anywhere for a bob."

Wally's feelings were too deep for a verbal reply. He tramped on without speaking, keeping a tight grip on Pongo's chain. Though Pongo had no chance whatever in a tussle with Towser, the little shaggy mongrel was always trying to get at the bulldog, and he certainly had heaps of pluck, if little prudence.

"Bai Jove, what a wow these bwutes make—yappin' at one another!" said Arthur Augustus. "The wow is gettin' on my nerves! Are you sure the circus is comin' this way, Figgins?"

"Well, it was at Greyfriars last, and this is the only road from Wayland to St. Jim's, unless they take the foot-path through the wood," said Figgins sarcastically.

"I cannot see them yet."

"That's because they're not in sight," exclaimed Figgins. "When they're in sight, you'll see them fast enough."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Here they are! Listen!"

Ta-ra-ra-ra-tara-ta!

It was a blast from a bugle, and it was followed by a blare from a cornet. The sounds floated through the keen, cold air from the bend of the high road ahead.

The juniors hurried on, and, as they rounded the corner, the sight of the circus burst upon them all at once.

CHAPTER 5.

Towser Causes Trouble!

SIGNOR TOMSONIO'S World-Famous Circus and Hippodrome was an imposing spectacle when it was on the march.

There were, at least, a dozen caravans, as well as wagons galore; and, mingled with them in the procession, came an array of curious animals, including elephants and camels and giraffes—at least, one giraffe. Upon the innumerable horses rode most of the circus company, and some of the bandmen were playing their instruments.

The rub-a-dub of a drum mingled more or less melodiously with the notes of a bugle and a cornet, and whether there was music or not, there was plenty of noise, and that was really what Signor Tomsonio wanted.

For the procession was a standing advertisement of the circus—or, as the original Joey Pye, the funny merchant of the troupe put it, it was a walking advertisement.

All who came to their doors and to the hedge gaps to look at the passing circus were possible customers, and they had no lack of coloured handbills, distributed on all sides, to tell them exactly when and how they could see the unequalled performances of Signor Tomsonio's Circus.

Upon a van from which, at intervals, proceeded a deep roar, showing that some powerful animal was confined there, sat a handsome lad of about Tom Merry's age, whom the hero of the Shell knew at a glance.

It was Jack Talbot, the tiger tamer, known on the circus bills as Jungle Jack.

Beside that van rode a young girl upon a black Arab, which she sat with infinite grace, and her, too, the juniors knew at a glance. It was Miss Clotilde, the girl rider, and one of the greatest attractions of Tomsonio's Circus.

Joey Pye, the mirth merchant, was seated on the back of a donkey, with his face to the tail, in full clown's costume, with daubed cheeks and a paper hat. His fat, good-natured face was grinning—its usual expression. He passed remarks with pedestrians on the road, joked with the other members of the company, and even presumed at times to pull the august leg of Signor Tomsonio, the monarch of all the goody array.

Sometimes his remarks fell upon a dark, handsome fellow who was riding a pony in the cavalcade, who was looking sullen and thoughtful. It was Jim Carson, the "Handsome Man," as he was called, between whom and Joey Pye there was no love lost.

An old man with a coppery complexion, and eyes dimmed by the incessant indulgence in strong liquor, was perched upon an elephant just behind Joey, and as Joey had his face to his steed's tail, he was looking towards the elephant rider.

"Mind you don't fall off, Doc!" he called out, a little anxiously. And then he went on to himself: "Blessed if he hasn't been at it again!"

The man he called the Doc was holding on to the elephant's back with both hands, but he slid to and fro as if his seat was unsafe—as, indeed, it was, for it needed only a glance at the man to see that he had been drinking.

"Doc, do you hear?"

"Warrer marrer?"

"You'd better get off Oliver Cromwell," said Joey Pye. "Take my tip, and get into one of the vans. Oliver can go alone."

"Mm-m-m-m or—orrright!"

"Don't be an ass! You're not all right!"

"Mm-m-m-m or—orrright!"

By way of showing he was all right the Doc slid right off the elephant's back, and only saved himself from a nasty fall by catching hold of one of the animal's huge ears, and hanging there.

Joey Pye gave a shout.

"Look out! Catch him!"



A nimble, active figure came speeding from the corner of the road, and as the Doc slid from his precarious hold, he was caught in the grasp of Tom Merry.

The weight of the falling Doc carried Tom Merry right over, and he went sprawling on the ground, the Doc sprawling over him.

But Tom had broken the man's fall, and in all probability saved him from breaking a limb, which would certainly have had serious consequences to a man of the Doc's time of life, and of his habits. A system soaked through with strong liquor was not calculated to stand a serious accident, and survive.

But now the Doc was not hurt, save for a slight shock.

He rolled off Tom Merry, and sat in the lane, and blinked amazedly at the circus, and the grinning schoolboys.

"I'm orright," he murmured. "I'll have one more, Carson. I'll see you under the table, anyway."

The Handsome Man grinned. He was not a good-natured man. It was rather an amusement of his to encourage the Doc in his wretched habits—partly from a feline cruelty of nature, partly because Jack Talbot was attached to the old man, and disliked seeing him degraded. And the Handsome Man was the enemy of the young tiger-tamer.

"You'll put yourself under the ground if you keep on like this," grunted Joey Pye. "Help him up, somebody."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The man is drunk!"

Joey Pye waved his hand.

"Glad to see you again, young gents! You remember Joey Pye—the only one—the original Joey Pye? You're quite mistaken by my friend, the Doc, Master Sarcy—"

"D'Arcy, if you please, deah boy."

"Ahem! My mistake! The Doc has been out in the sun a little, that is all."

"Orright," mumbled the Doc. "Out in the sun, you know. M-m-m-m orright!"

"Gweat Scott!" said D'Arcy, who did not know the significance of Joey Pye's slangy explanation. "Does getting in the sun have that effect upon a chap, you know?"

Joey chuckled.

"Ain't it right, Doc?"

"Orright!" mumbled the Doc. "Set 'em up again. I'll see you under the table, anyway, Bibbly."

"Vewy peculiar," said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha! Awfully peculiar!" said Blake. "I suppose he was thirsty when he was out in the sun, and this is the result."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't tread on that elephant's toes, Gussy. He mayn't like it, you know," said Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

"Keep back from the elephant, please, young gentleman!" called out Signor Tomsonio. "He's a little bit excited; it's the Doc's fault."

"Orright!" grunted the Doc. "See you under the table, anyway."

"You worm!" said the signor in disgust. "A nice state to be in at midday."

"Surely it wasn't his fault, if he's been out in the sun, sir?" suggested Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the circus master.

"H'm! No, certainly not!" said Signor Tomsonio. "I— Hallo! Keep those dogs away from the elephant! Oliver Cromwell doesn't like dogs—"

The elephant was beginning to trumpet.

Pongo had circled round his master, upsetting D'Arcy minor by getting his legs tangled in the chain, in the excitement of the Doc's fall. To jerk the chain out of Wally's hand was nothing, then, to Pongo. And, careless of the weight against him in the combat, Pongo had gone at once for Towser.

Towser was only too glad to oblige him. They rolled in the road, yapping and snapping, and rolled right under Oliver Cromwell.

The elephant could have crushed both of them with a stamp from one foot, but he seemed to be scared by the dogs. He trumpeted with a deafening sound, and tramped wildly out of the line of march. The juniors promptly scattered out of the way. The elephant was for the moment uncontrolled—the man who should have been looking after him was sitting half insensible on the ground.

"Stop him!" roared the signor.

But there was no time.

Trumpeting madly, the elephant marched down the road, the way the juniors of St. Jim's had come.

The boys stared after him.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "There'll be trouble now!"

"What a pity he didn't tread on Towser!" remarked Blake.

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"Look here, Blake—"

"Aftah him, deah boys! He ought to be captured before he can do any damage!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"How are you going to capture him, ass?"

"Stop, you boundah!" shouted D'Arcy.

He was already sprinting after the elephant, with his silk hat on the back of his head and his eyeglass streaming at the end of its cord.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

And the St. Jim's juniors dashed after Arthur Augustus.

Several of the circus hands, roared at by Signor Tomsonio, dashed after them, joining in the chase of the elephant.

Oliver Cromwell was usually a quiet-tempered animal, but the Doc's clutch on his ear, and the scare of the dogs, had excited him tremendously. The sight and sound of pursuers excited him still more. He broke into a trot, and went lumbering along at a speed which taxed the runners to keep pace with.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "I nevah thought an elephant could run like that, you know!"

"Phew! Look there!"

The butcher's cart from Rylcombe was coming down the road. The driver saw the elephant bearing down upon him, and, with a yell of terror, he turned his horse into the hedge.

Leaving horse and cart to take care of themselves, he took a flying leap over the hedge, and sprinted for his life.

Oliver Cromwell took one squint at the cart, and passed on without harming it at all, and went lumbering on towards the gates of St. Jim's.

The school gates were wide open, and the shouts of the boys could be heard from within. Oliver Cromwell's curiosity seemed to be aroused. He stopped at the gates and looked in and trumpeted.

"Gweat Scott! He's goin' in!"

Oliver Cromwell took one look back at his pursuers, and then lumbered through the school gates.

CHAPTER 6.

A Visitor in the School House!

TOM MERRY & CO. put on a spurt, and gained the gates. There they halted, panting, and started after the elephant.

Oliver Cromwell had halted at the fountain in the quadrangle, and was snuffing up water with his trunk, whether for drinking purposes, or for offensive purposes if he were attacked, the juniors did not know.

"We may get him now."

It was Jack Talbot's voice. The young tiger-tamer, though he had started later, had caught up the juniors in the lane.

He ran straight towards the elephant, calling him. There was not an animal in the circus who was not fond of Jungle Jack, but Oliver Cromwell was too excited now to heed his voice.

He withdrew his trunk from the water, and lumbered on towards the New House. A crowd of alarmed juniors swarmed into the House to get out of his way, and the great doors were slammed and bolted.

Oliver Cromwell snorted at the door, as if he wanted to go in, and then, seeing his pursuers on his track, he turned away and trotted over to the School House.

Manners and Lowther were on the School House steps, apparently petrified with astonishment.

The elephant came up, and Manners and Lowther bolted wildly into the House, and Oliver Cromwell, finding the door open, tramped in after them.

Tom Merry gave a gasp as the elephant passed up the broad stone steps and tramped into the School House.

"My only hat! There'll be the dickens to pay now!"

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was in his study.

There were fellows in the passages, but they were very quickly in their studies, too, when they caught sight of the elephant.

Behind locked doors they waited, palpitating.

Oliver Cromwell wandered up and down the passage, bumping and tramping, and occasionally trumpeting.

Mr. Railton, who was trying to write in his study, raised his head with a look of annoyance.

"What a dreadful noise the juniors are making this afternoon!" he murmured. "I shall really have to interfere!"

He rose and opened the door of his study.

"Boys!"

There was no reply, and the tremendous noise still continued.

"Boys! Why—what—"

Oliver Cromwell, attracted by his voice, turned round and looked at him. Mr. Railton made one bound back into his study and slammed the door.



"Bravo!" yelled Blake, and the crowd gave a cheer. Demon was trying by every means in his power to get rid of its rider, and all the time D'Arcy clung to his back like a limpet to a rock.

At the same moment Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, opened his door and looked out. Mr. Lathom was very shortsighted, and the passage was always a little dusky. He did not see the elephant at first.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "You must really make less noise, my boys!"

There was no reply.

"I can excuse a certain amount of exuberance on a half-holiday," said the Fourth Form master; "but this dreadful hubbub must cease!"

Tramp—tramp—tramp!

"Dear me!"

The solid floor creaked and groaned as the elephant tramped towards Mr. Lathom. The master of the Fourth adjusted his glasses and stared at it.

"Great goodness! It is a beast—a large animal—an elephant! Ah, doubtless he has escaped from the circus the Head was speaking of! Shoo!"

Mr. Lathom was certainly very much flurried, or he would certainly never have tried to "shoo" away an elephant as if it had been a chicken.

He waved his hands frantically.

"Shoo—shoo! Go away! Shoo!"

Oliver Cromwell halted, and blinked at him with his little eyes. Evidently he did not know what to make of the little gentleman in glasses.

"Shoo!" gasped Mr. Lathom. "If you do not go away I shall strike you with this umbrella! Shoo—shoo!"

Oliver Cromwell stood still.

"Shoo—shoo!"

Mr. Lathom brandished the umbrella and smote Oliver Cromwell upon the trunk with it. The blow was like a gnat's touch to the great animal, but it made Oliver angry.

There was a sizzling sound, and a stream of water shot from the elephant's trunk as if from a garden hose.

"Ow—ow—ouch! Oooh!"

The stream caught Mr. Lathom fairly in the face. It swept him off his feet, and he went staggering back into his study, followed by the sizzling water.

"Oh! Oh dear! Help—help!"

Splash! Siz-siz!

Mr. Lathom collapsed on the floor in a pool of water, drenched and dazed, and wondering if it was the end of the world.

"Help!" he moaned feebly. "Help!"

Mr. Railton tore open his door and rushed out. He did not particularly wish to encounter the elephant, but he could not let a cry for help pass unheeded.

He had caught up a poker as the nearest weapon. It would have been about as useful as a straw against Oliver Cromwell, but fortunately no weapon was needed.

Jack Talbot sprang in at the door.

"Don't touch him, sir! He's all right!"

The boy tiger tamer sprang up to the elephant and caught him round the trunk, speaking to him all the time with a strange caressing tone in his voice.

Oliver Cromwell calmed down wonderfully. He made no effort to escape, but stood there with the boy caressing him.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, arriving breathless at the door. "Bai Jove, deah boys, he's captured!"

"And a jolly good thing, too!" panted Tom Merry. "Lucky he's done no damage. I suppose you will be willing to have Towser shot now, Herries?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should certainly recommend that Towsah should be shot in some painless way, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Towsah has caused all the twouble."

"Rats! It was Pongo!"

"Well, will you agree to have Towsah shot if young Wally agrees to have Pongo drownded?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a generous air, as if he were making a really sporting offer.

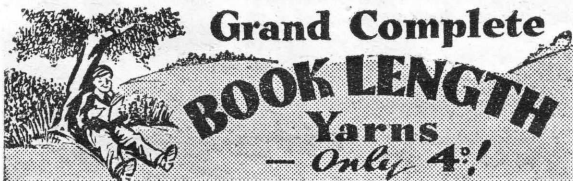
Herries only grunted.

"Don't be an ass, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Don't be a howling duffer, if you can help it."

"I wefuse to be called a howin' duffah! I wegard it as a good suggestion, and I cannot undahstand your objections."



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"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Hewwies, I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Rats!"

"Vevy well! Pway hold my coat, Blake—"

"Look!" gasped Blake. "Good heavens! Look!"

It was an exclamation of horror. Every eye was turned at once upon the elephant. The strong, muscular trunk had twined round Jack Talbot, the circus lad, and he was lifted from the floor and whirled into the air.

"Good heavens!"

"Save him!"

But there was a cry from Jack Talbot.

"Stop!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's only a trick! Stand back!"

Tom Merry gave a gasp of relief.

"It's all right!"

The juniors breathed more freely. It was indeed all right. The elephant raised Jack Talbot high in the air, till he hung over the huge head, but the lad never showed the slightest sign of nervousness.

Then slowly the great beast lowered him to the ground again.

Jack Talbot drew himself away from the encircling trunk and stood smiling at the juniors' startled faces.

"It's all serene!" he said. "It's a common circus trick. Oliver Cromwell wouldn't hurt a baby."

"Bai Jove! I was thrown into quite a fluttah for a moment, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Talbot laughed.

"Indeed, I was very much alarmed, too!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I am sorry the elephant has caused you so much trouble, sir," said Jack Talbot respectfully. "Signor Tomsonio will come and apologise for it, and he will make good any damage Oliver Cromwell has done."

The Housemaster smiled slightly.

"The damage is rather personal than anything else, and all seems to have fallen upon Mr. Lathom," he remarked.

The Fourth Form master was looking out of his study now. He was drenched, and evidently in a state of alarm.

"Mr. Lathom—"

"Ah! I—I—"

Jack Talbot turned towards the Fourth Form master.

"I am very sorry, sir," he exclaimed. "Oliver Cromwell is quite good-tempered, and he really wouldn't hurt you for worlds."

Mr. Lathom gasped.

"Ah! Ugh! I am very wet!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Ho does look wet, too!"

"I—I was very much startled!" said Mr. Lathom. "I am very wet. Really—"

"It weally wasn't the circus people's fault, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "The elephant was fwightened by a dog belongin' to St. Jim's, sir, and wan away."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"In that case the apology is due from us," said the Housemaster, smiling. "I suppose the animal will go quietly with you, my young friend?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Jack Talbot.

And he led Oliver Cromwell from the School House. The juniors crowded back to give the great animal room to pass. Oliver Cromwell lumbered down the steps, and lumbered off across the quadrangle, Talbot walking by his side.

Mr. Lathom retired to dry himself—he needed it. Tom Merry & Co. followed the elephant and the circus lad as far as the gates.

"We'll see you again this afternoon," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Jack Talbot smiled and nodded, and led the elephant back to the circus. Herries came in with Towser—on a chain again now.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon his chum with a severe expression.

"I twust, Hewwies, that you will see the advisability now of havin' that howwid beast shot," he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

But Towser's master only grunted, and led the bulldog away. Wally followed him in with Pongo, also on a chain.

"I twust, Wally—" began D'Arcy.

Wally sniffed.

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

"Weally, Wally, I must insist upon beginnin'! I wegard it as a duty. I twust, deah boy, that you will see the advisability of havin' that howwid mongwel shot."

"Oh, rats!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—I mean, I decline to

allow you to say wats to your majah, Wally. As for Pongo—

Wally snorted, and passed on:
"Weally, Wally, I insist upon your stayin' and heavin' my wemarks."

But Wally was gone.
Arthur Augustus looked after him, and then looked seriously at Blake.

"Do you think I ought to give him a feafuhl thwashin', Blake, and teach him pwopah respect for his eldahs," he said.

Jack Blake grinned.
"No—come and feed instead."
And they went.

CHAPTER 7.

D'Arcy Wants to Ride!

WHEN the circus arrived upon the spot selected for its pitch, there was a goodly crowd of St. Jim's boys gathered there, ready to assist with either help or advice—especially advice.

Arthur Augustus would willingly have taken over the whole management of the affair, and turned Signor Tomsonio's job into a sinecure—only the signor did not quite see it. Arthur Augustus, with his monocle jammed into his eye, watched the proceedings not wholly with approval.

"I am afraid that tent won't be weally quite safe, you know, Tom Mewwy," he remarked. "I weally wish the signor had allowed me to give some diirections. You wemembah how we put up the tent when we were campin' out as Wed Indians?"

"I remember how it came down," said Tom Merry.
"Yaas, but—"

"It's barely possible that the signor knows his business almost as well as you could show it to him," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Wats! I suppose a little intelligence on this occasion is always usefuhl. Howevah, I shall give no more advice on the subject."

"Well, that's a mercy, at any rate."

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah! I have been thinkin'—"

"What with?" asked Lowther, with an air of great interest.

"I twust, Lowthah, that you will not dwive me to givin' you a thick yah, to put an end to these unseemly intewuptions," said D'Arcy. "I have been thinkin', Tom Mewwy, that when I grow up I shall pwobably become a circus widah, if the House of Lords is weally abolished."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, it would be a more active life," he remarked.

"Better stick to the House of Lords, Gussy," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "It's a quiet, restfuhl place, and would suit your intellect admirably—almost as well as a padded cell."

"You know that I wide wathah well," went on D'Arcy, unheeding. "As a mattah of fact, I have always wathah fancied myself as a circus widah. I should like awfuhlly to give a turn in the wing."

"A what?" demanded Tom Merry and Lowther together.

"A turn in the wing."

"On an aeroplane, do you mean?"

"Certainly not—on a horse!"

"But horses don't have wings, unless you're referring to Pegasus."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "He means in the ring."

"Oh, I see! Jolly good! I should like to see you in the ring," grinned Tom Merry. "I can just imagine you jumping through hoops! But what price your silk toppers?"

"Three-and-nine," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, I know you can ride, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "But I don't know how you'd manage in the ring, and perhaps you wouldn't be quite up to form."

"Wats! I could wide any norse they've got here, Tom Mewwy. I've looked at most of them. That is a wippin' horse Miss Clotilde has—a black Arab. Do you know that it is worth two hundwed guineas, at least?"

"By Jove!"

"It's about the best horse in the show," said D'Arcy, who had a keen eye for horseflesh. "I wondah what Signor Tomsonio would say if I offahed to do a turn this aftahnoon in the wing?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I know what the Head would say if you did it!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Look at that beautiful cweatuah!"

(Continued on next page.)



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S. HOPE, The Cottages, Stone Street, Petham, Near Canterbury, Kent.

* * *

JACK IN THE BOX!

Tom: "I put a penny in this stamp machine, and two stamps came out!"
Jim: "That's nothing. I put a button in a cigarette machine, and the tobacconist came out!"
S. SHARP, 1, Albert Street, Slough, Bucks.

* * *

A SORRY SPECTACLE!

Mike: "What's the matter, Pat?"
Pat: "Sure and I've lost me spectacles, and I can't see to look for them until I find them!"
R. WOOSTER, 17, West End Road, Southall.

* * *

HE KNEW HOW!

Teacher: "Why is it, Tommy, that you draw circles so well?"
Tommy: "Please, teacher, I score for our cricket team!"
HAROLD OAKLEY, Killing Beck Sanatorium, York Road, Leeds.

* * *

ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS!

Doctor: "You look much better."
Patient: "Yes; I followed the instructions on the medicine bottle you gave me."
Doctor: "What did it say?"
Patient: "Keep the bottle tightly corked!"
L. NOTHER, 29, Bridge Road, Woolston, Southampton.

* * *

NOT THAT WAY!

Passenger (to captain of ship): "How soon do we start?"
Captain: "As soon as the fog lifts."
Passenger: "Why, I can see the sky above, already!"
Captain: "Yes; but we are not going that way—unless the boilers burst!"
B. J. HEATH, 85, Middle Way, Watford, Herts.

* * *

DONE AGAIN!

Father (reading bad school report): "When George Washington was your age, James, he was top of his form."
James: "And when he was your age, father, he was President of the United States!"
N. P. ENGLISH, 24, Cemetery Road, Whittlesey, Peterborough.

* * *

THE WHOLE TRUTH!

Agent: "What do you think of this house as a whole?"
Client: "As a hole, it's splendid; but as a house, it's rotten!"
G. BRAND, 27, Highfield Drive, Standhill Road, Nottingham.

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The chums of the Shell looked round, expecting to see some member of the gentler sex, from D'Arcy's exclamation. But it was a horse which Arthur Augustus had turned his eyeglass upon.

It was indeed a fine animal—with clean limbs, every line in its body full of grace, and a well-shaped head. But the gleam of white in the eyes, and the way the ears turned back, showed that it was a vicious brute when in a temper, as well as the fact that two grooms had charge of it, and were extremely careful not to get too near its hoofs.

They were taking it to the canvas stables of the circus, and Arthur Augustus walked over towards it to get a better look at the animal.

The horse snuffed and put its ears further back, and one of the grooms called out to Arthur Augustus:

"Don't come too close, sir!"

The swell of St. Jim's did not appear to hear. The beauty and grace of that horse seemed to enwrap him.

Jim Carson, the acrobat—the "Handsome Man"—came striding up.

"Stand back!" he said roughly.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Carson.

"Did you address me?" he asked, in tones that might have sent an extra chill through an iceberg.

"Yes, I did! Keep farther back! I don't want my horse to hurt you! Not that it would matter, except for the fuss!" said Carson, angrily.

"Oh, is that your horse?"

"Yes."

"It is a fine animal."

"What do you know about horses?" said Carson gruffly.

"I wathah fancy myself for my knowledge of horse-flesh, deah boy. I can see that this is a wemarkably fine animal, and he has been badly tweated."

Carson flushed red.

"And how do you know that he has been badly tweated?" he sneered.

"Because of his tempah. He doesn't like anybody to go neah him, and I am pwetty sure that he has been licked a gweat deal to make him like that."

"He is a vicious brute!"

"Any animal would be vicious if he wasn't tweated decently."

Carson gritted his teeth.

"You young puppy! Do you mean to accuse me of ill-treating my horse?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with perfect coolness.

Jack Blake came up and gave his elegant chum a dig in the ribs.

"Chuck it, Gussy!" he said. "What are you rowing about?"

"I am not wowing, Blake, and I wefuse to chuck it! Any ass could see that that horse has not been tweated with kindness," said Arthur Augustus. "And a man who is cwuel to animals is a cad, who ought to be suffocated, and especially a man who is cwuel to a horse!"

Carson's face went crimson. A good many of the circus hands, and of the boys of St. Jim's, heard D'Arcy's remarks, and there was a general chuckle. Carson would have been glad to lay his riding-whip round the junior's shoulders, but that was not a step he could venture upon.

"Have you anything more to say on the subject, you young puppy?" he said, with a sneer.

"I wefuse to be called a young puppy!"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wing off, Blake! I depwecate vevy much intahfewin' between a man and his horse—I weward it as bein' in vevy bad taste, as a wule. But when I find that an animal has not been tweated with kindness, I weward it as a duty to expwess an opinion on the subject."

The Handsome Man laughed.

"It is not a laughin' mattah!" said Arthur Augustus. "As you are, in a mannah of speakin', a guest here, I will not tell you pwecisely what I think of you."

He made a movement towards the horse. The animal shied back, and its look and movement very plainly showed the way it regarded its master.

D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his monocle.

"You see that, deah boys?" he remarked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "It's rotten!"

"It's a wippin' animal, too!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "Bai Jove, I should like to wide him wound the field!"

Carson turned towards him again quickly.

"Would you?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Can you ride?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can take him round the field, if you like."

"Weally, deah boy——"

Carson grinned.

The two grooms with the horse looked startled and scared, but there was a gleam of savage mischief in the Handsome Man's eyes.

"I warn you that he's vicious," he said.

"Oh, that's nothin'!"

"You might get hurt."

Arthur Augustus smiled serenely.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that!"

"Well, if you'd like to take him round, there he is."

Tom Merry and Blake caught hold of the swell of St. Jim's at the same moment. Their faces were very anxious.

"Gussy! Chuck it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Stop it, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"The horse is a savage brute, whatever's the cause of it," said Tom Merry. "You will be hurt, old son. Let it alone."

"Wats!"

"You may get your neck broken!"

"Wubbish!"

"Look here——"

"Weally, deah boy, you know I can wide."

"Yes, I know, but——"

"I shall be all right!"

"You can't, and you shan't!" said Blake, gripping his arm. "We're not going to have you limping about the School House with a blessed broken leg, or a damaged fin."

"Pwaw—wefuse me, deah boys!"

"Bosh!"

"Well, are you going to ride him?" asked the Handsome Man, with a sneer. "Or has your courage petered out, as I expected it would?"

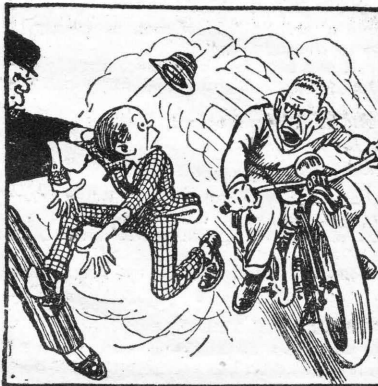
D'Arcy's eyes flashed.

"You heah that, Blake? Wefuse me at once!"

"But, I say, old chap——"

"I would wide the horse now if it killed me!" said Arthur Augustus.

Potts, the Office Boy!



"You young duffer!" whispered Tom Merry. "Can't you see that that rotter made the offer because he hopes the horse will hurt you, because you've got his rag out?"
 "I don't care a wap, deah boy!"
 "But—"
 "Welease me!"
 Arthur Augustus jerked himself away, and strode towards the horse. But at that moment an active figure ran up, and a sharp voice called out:
 "Stop!"

CHAPTER 8.

An Unrehearsed Bareback Act!

JACK TALBOT ran between Arthur Augustus and the horse and waved the junior back.
 D'Arcy stopped, putting up his eyeglass, and Jack turned his glance fiercely upon the Handsome Man.

"Carson! You—"
 "Well, what are you interfering for?" said Carson, coolly. "I suppose I can lend my own horse to anybody I like?"
 "You—"
 "Our young friend wants to ride Demon, and I'm willing to lend him," said Carson. "What business is it of yours, Talbot?"

Jack Talbot's eyes blazed.
 "You know that Demon isn't safe to ride!"
 The Handsome Man shrugged his shoulders.
 "I told the boy that he's vicious."
 "You haven't told him that he's vicious, and has been badly treated till he's a perfect demon, and has already half killed a groom!" exclaimed Talbot.
 "Yaas, I could see that he had been badly tweated," said Arthur Augustus. "But I can manage him, deah boy."

"He's a dangerous brute!"
 "It's all wight!"
 "I tell you there's not a man in the circus can ride him!" explained Talbot. "Carson is trying to sell him for half his value because he's no good for riding!"

"Bai Jove! I wish my pocket-money would wun to buyin' him," said Arthur Augustus. "I will wite to my guv'nah about it. He's been awfully close lately, but if this is a bargain it ought to be picked up."

"You'll want picking up after you've ridden him!" said Lowther. "Better leave the brute alone, Gussy!"

"Wats, deah boy!"
 "You will be mad to touch him!" exclaimed Jack Talbot. "I tell you he is dangerous, and no one here can ride him!"

"All the more fun for me to twy, then."
 Talbot made a gesture of impatience. The slim, elegant swell of St. Jim's did not impress a casual observer as being a good horseman. He had sometimes surprised his own chums by his powers in this line, but when they looked at the vicious horse they had strong doubts as to his powers of tackling Demon with success.

But it was evident that Arthur Augustus had made up his mind—and when he had made up his mind, it was useless to argue with him.

"Well, if you're determined, I cannot stop you," said Jack Talbot. "But I warn you you will be in great

danger, and that Carson has only made the offer because it will amuse him to see you get hurt."

"Vewy pwob; but I shall not get hurt."
 Jack Talbot stepped aside.
 "Have your own way, then."
 "Yaas, watah!"

There was a thronging of the crowd round as D'Arcy walked towards the horse. Blake and Tom Merry looked round in the hope of seeing a prefect who would stop the swell of St. Jim's. But the crowd on the circus field were nearly all juniors.

Arthur Augustus was fated to have his own way.
 "Pway give me the bwidle, deah boys!"

One of the grooms handed it to him, and slipped back quickly. The Handsome Man looked surprised at the ease with which D'Arcy bridled the horse. Demon did not object—that was a strange circumstance, too.

Arthur Augustus stood at the horse's head, and signed to the grooms to fall back.

"Aren't you going to saddle him, sir?"
 D'Arcy shook his head.
 "No, that's all wight."

The Handsome Man laughed.
 The crowd thronged back to give Demon plenty of room, as D'Arcy, with a light leap, vaulted upon his back.

Demon had seemed too taken by surprise to raise any objection to D'Arcy's proceedings so far. But as soon as the junior was on his back, everyone knew that the fun would begin.

And it did!
 Demon stood stockstill for an instant, while D'Arcy's knees gripped his sides, and then he gave a spring forward like a stone from a catapult.

Nine riders out of ten would have rolled off Demon then, like hailstones from glass, but D'Arcy was the tenth!

He sat the horse as if, like the fabled Centaur of old, he were a part of the beast. Demon came down with a crash of hoofs upon the grass, and D'Arcy was still sitting on his back with perfect coolness. He had an iron grip on the reins with his hands, a grip on the horse with his knees; and his silk hat was on the back of his head, his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord.

"Bravo!" yelled Blake; and the crowd gave a cheer.
 "It's fool's luck!" said the Handsome Man, with a muttered oath. "He'll be down in a minute!"

And really it looked like it.
 Demon had had no one on his back for some time, and he did not like the change, and he was trying by every means in his power to get rid of the incubus.

He leaped into the air, coming down on all four feet together with a jar that would have unseated many riders. Then he came down on his forefeet, pretending that he was going to turn a somersault—and then he rose into the air, as if to fall over backwards.

And all the time D'Arcy clung to his back like a limpet on a rock.

The crowd of circus folk and schoolboys watched the scene breathlessly. It was thrilling and almost terrifying.

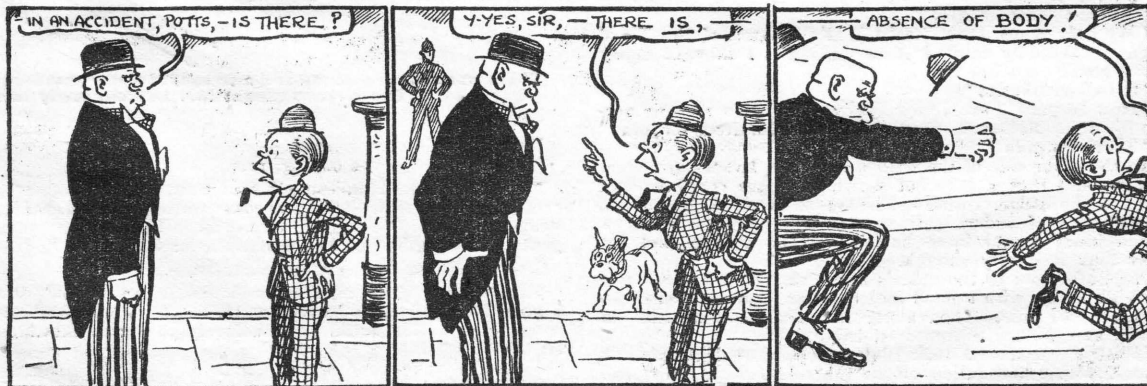
D'Arcy did not see the crowd—he saw nothing but the horse, and the work in hand.

He was thoroughly enjoying the contest, and he knew that the horse would give in when he had found his master—and D'Arcy meant that Demon should acknowledge him master before the contest ended.

The thud, thud, thud, clatter, clatter, clatter of the hoofs, and the exclamations of the onlookers, brought an increase



NOT ALL THERE!



of numbers to the crowd, till it seemed as if two-thirds of St. Jim's were gathered in the circus field.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school, came up, and stared at the youthful horse-tamer blankly.

"Is—that D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Blake. "Isn't he a corker?"

"The young ass! He will be killed!"

Blake shook his head. He was full of confidence now.

"No, he won't, Kildare. If he is going to be killed, he'd have been killed before now. Good old Gussy!"

"Go it, Gussy!" was the shout.

But D'Arcy did not reply. All his attention was wrapped up in his horse. Kildare held back from interference. It was impossible to interfere now. If D'Arcy had tried to dismount with Demon still untamed, it would have meant disaster. The advantage then would have been on the side of the savage horse.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Jack Talbot, with hearty admiration. "Splendid!"

Jungle Jack was a good rider himself, and he would willingly have undertaken to ride Demon, and take his chance, but he had never cared to ask it of the Handsome Man. But there was no trace of jealousy in the circus lad's nature. He frankly admired the splendid horsemanship of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And it certainly was splendid.

The swell of St. Jim's was not even in riding-clothes, and he had no saddle. Yet he stuck to the horse's back like a limpet. Nothing that Demon could do came anywhere near upsetting the swell of the School House.

"By George!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with wide-open eyes. "It's ripping! Gussy takes the bun, and no mistake! Hallo!"

"He's off!"

It was Demon that was off—not D'Arcy. The horse, finding that he could not unseat his rider, had suddenly bolted. With a thud of hoofs he dashed away, and Arthur Augustus gave him his head, and he went like lightning.

There was a shout of alarm.

Demon was bolting directly towards the wall which bounded the field on the side of the school—a high brick wall which no horse could ever leap. The animal seemed to be mad, and in a few seconds he must dash himself and his rider to death against the bricks.

Blake turned white.

"Good heavens! Old Gus—"

He closed his eyes for a second.

CHAPTER 9.

Demon's Master!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was the only one whose face did not grow pale at that terrible moment. But the swell of St. Jim's did not turn a hair, so to speak.

Straight on the maddened horse dashed—and it seemed certain that he must dash into the high, solid wall, hurling the junior to a fearful death.

But within six paces of the wall an iron grip on his rein dragged him round.

Round went Demon with a whirl, and on again, almost brushing upon the bricks, so close was he—and D'Arcy, for a second, had to lift one leg over his back.

Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"Thank Heaven!"

Blake had closed his eyes in horror for a second—when he opened them, the horse was dashing away along the field, D'Arcy sitting tight.

"Oh, thank goodness! He's safe!"

"Safe as houses!"

"My hat—how he flies!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form. "My only sainted Aunt Janette! I thought Gussy was a goner that time!"

"It looked like it!"

"How he goes!" exclaimed Wally. "What a ripping gee-gee for a steeplechase! Gussy could win hundreds on him!"

"There he goes!"

On the other side of the field was a high hawthorn hedge, and beyond that a lane, of which glimpses could be had through the hedge. Inside the hedge was a wide, deep ditch, flowing full of water. It was an obstacle that many a steeplechaser would have balked at, but Demon and his rider took it lightly enough.

The horse rose to the rider's hand, cleared the ditch and the high hedge with a good foot to spare, and crashed down on the other side. Then along the lane he went like an arrow, and D'Arcy disappeared from sight.

"Phew!" ejaculated Jack Blake, picking up D'Arcy's silk topper, which had fallen off in the tussle with the horse.

"Phew! I wonder if we shall ever see Gussy again?"

"What a giddy Mazepa!" said Manners. "I never

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thought Gussy had it in him—though he rode that beast Badger in Rylcombe."

"Your friend is a splendid rider!" exclaimed Jack Talbot.

"I am sure he will bring the horse back safe!"

"He had better!" said Jack Carson. "It will cost somebody fifty guineas, else!"

Tom Merry turned on him.

"It will cost nobody a penny, except yourself!" he exclaimed hotly. "You know the risk when you let him mount the horse, though you expected only D'Arcy to be hurt!"

The Handsome Man scowled.

"You've got a long tongue for a kid!" he said. "Perhaps a cuff on the head will help you to keep it between your teeth!"



There was a sizzling sound and a stream of water shot from Oliver. The stream caught Mr. Lathom fairly in the face.

Tom Merry's eyes glistened.

"Go ahead with the cuffing, then," he said.

"None of that, Handsome!" said stout Signor Tomsonio, coming up, in silk hat, gorgeous waistcoat, and riding-whip, as usual. "None of your games here! The young gent's quite right—you're responsible for the horse!"

The Handsome Man gritted his teeth.

"The young gentleman rides like an angel," said Signor Tomsonio, at a loss for a simile. "I wish I had him in my circus. He would make a lovely pair with Clotilde—eh, Jackie?"

Jack Talbot laughed and nodded.

"Quite right, signor."

"He'll bring the boss back all right," said the signor. "I've been watching him all the time, and I can tell you

my heart was in my mouth at first. You may not know me, young gents. I am Signor Tomsonio."

"The Italian gentleman," grinned Blake.

"Jolly glad to meet you, sir!" said Tom Merry.

The signor raised his topper.

"The pleasure is on my side, gentlemen," he said gracefully. "As for the Italian part of the business, there's nothing dago about Dick Thompson but the name. But Signor Ricardo Tomsonio sounds better on a circus poster than plain Dick Thompson. 'Cause why—the public will run arter foreign names.

"There's nothing a foreigner can do that an Englishman can't do better, but the B.P.—the British public—is an ass,



unk as if from a garden hose. "Ow—ow—ouch! Oooch!"
m off his feet, and he went staggering back.

gents: The B.P. treats me very well, but I maintain that the B.P. is an ass. Look at the singers, for instance. Who crowds round a gallery door for twelve hours to hear an English tenor? No; they don't do that till plain Bill Smith because Guillaume Smizzio. Then the blessed public will walk on all fours for a dozen miles to hear him, whether he can sing in tune or not. The British public is an ass!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Very likely, sir."

"They have their redeeming points, though," said the signor magnanimously. "They support circuses well. They say the Roman populace in olden times used to demand bread and circuses. Well, that shows their sense. I should like some cheese with the bread myself; but they were all right to ask for the circus. Things have improved

since those days, though. A bareback riding act, or the acrobatic turn of Handsome here, is better than gladiators sticking one another in the ribs with swords and daggers."

"Much better, and much more pleasant for the performers," said Blake.

Thud, thud, thud!

All looked round as Demon's hoofbeats came to their ears again.

Arthur Augustus, riding easily, with Demon now under perfect control, leaped the gate at the end of the field, and cantered up to the circus pitch.

He drew Demon to a quiet halt without an effort.

"Bravo!" shouted the signor.

D'Arcy slid to the ground, and patted Demon's head.

"You'll find the cwittah all wight now," he remarked. "I should like to keep him now. How much do you want for him, sir?"

"Fifty guineas," said the Handsome Man, with a sneer.

"Bai Jove! I shall w'ite to my govannah about it!"

Demon, very quiet now, was led away, and D'Arcy rejoined his friends.

Blake held his hand behind him, and the topper in it.

There was an anxious expression upon D'Arcy's face, and Blake knew what was the cause of it.

"Has anybody seen my toppah?" he asked.

"Topper!" said Blake thoughtfully.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You must have dropped it."

"Weally, Blake, a chap needn't be as cute as Sherlock Holmes to guess that," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, I dropped it. I twust nothin' has happened to it. My twousahs are bad enough."

"What's the matter with your bags?"

"They are feahfully wumped. Howevah, it was a wippin' wide, and I don't mind. But I should be sowwy to lose my toppah. It was one of those I purchased in Pawis, you know."

"Better look round for it."

D'Arcy looked round, and up and down. Blake kept the hat behind him, and his face towards D'Arcy all the time. The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass in every direction in vain.

"Bai Jove! It's gone!"

"Too bad!"

"Nevah mind. It was pwobably damaged by fallin'," said D'Arcy, in a thoughtful way. "It's all wight."

"Aren't you going to look for it any more?"

"No. I weally do not see what you chaps are grinnin' at."

"Given it up as a bad job?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Can I have it if I find it?"

"Oh, certainly, deah boy!"

"Good!" said Blake again, bringing the hat out to view. "I wanted a new topper, and I can make this fit me by shoving some blotting-paper under the band inside. Thank you very much!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle first upon Blake, and then upon the hat.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you had it in your hand all the time, you wottah!" "Well, I suppose a chap can hold his own hat in his hand if he wants to?" said Blake.

"His—his own hat!"

"Certainly! This is my hat now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's rather a nice one, too," said Blake, turning the hat over in his hands. "How much did you give for it, Gussy?"

"Two guineas, deah boy."

"Good! I shall keep it for best."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus beamed again.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"You ass!" roared Blake. "There's your blessed topper!"

"Well, I weally thought you were only wottin'," he said. "I wogard you as an ass, but you can have the hat if you like."

"My dear chap, I wouldn't be found dead in it."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Gentlemen, excuse me—"

It was Joey Pye the mirth-merchant. He bowed gracefully as he came forward. He was in his professional attire, baggy trousers and paper hat complete, with his face adorned with chalk and red paint.

"Hallo, deah boy!"

"Will you allow me to look into the hat, sir?" said Joey.

"I think there is some of my property in it, sir, if you don't mind."

And the original Mr. Pye took the hat from the hand of the amazed swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10.

Strange Discoveries!

JOEY PYE turned the hat over in his hands, while Arthur Augustus looked at him in great surprise, which was shared by the other fellows.

There was a peculiar twinkle in the eyes of Mr. Pye, however, which warned the keener observers that the clown of Tomsonio's World-Famous Circus was in a humorous mood.

Joey Pye looked into the hat, and then glanced at D'Arcy. "You have no objection, sir?" he asked, with great deference.

"Weally——"

"Just a few articles——"

"But how——"

"Ah! You would ask how they could have got into your hat?" said Mr. Pye, with a shake of the head. "Perhaps this young gentleman put them in?"

"Not a bit of it," grinned Blake.

"Then how——"

"Perhaps they have been in all the time, and you never noticed it, Master D'Arcy," suggested Mr. Pye. "Do you think you would notice it, if you had a few things like forks and spoons and white rabbits in your hat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Do you think you would, Gussy?"

"Imposs!"

"They seem to be there."

"Imposs, deah boy!"

"Well, I'll take them out."

Mr. Pye plunged his hand into the hat, and drew forth a white rabbit. The rabbit blinked at the juniors, and the juniors stared at the rabbit.

Arthur Augustus was overcome with amazement.

"Gweat Scott!" he ejaculated.

"Anything else?" asked Lowther.

"Yes. Hold the rabbit, please. Here's a few things. Perhaps Master D'Arcy carries them in his hat to have a change when he needs them."

D'Arcy coloured a little.

"As a mattah of fact," he said, "I do sometimes cawwy an extwa pair of gloves in my toppah, in case of accidents."

"Good! And a change of linen, too, I suppose?" grinned Figgins.

"Certainly not," said D'Arcy indignantly.

"What's there, Mr. Pye?" asked Blake. "Shove 'em out!"

"With pleasure, sir."

Mr. Pye plunged his hand into the hat again. He dragged out a set of silken pyjamas, and the gay colours gleamed in the sun.

There was a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Gussy!"

"They nevah were in my hat!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Blake must have put them in for a joke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't honour bright!" gasped Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Gussy!"

"I tell you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I insist——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tom Merry. "Anything else, Mr. Pye?"

"Yes. What's this?"

Half a dozen silk handkerchiefs came out next, and then a pair of gaudy socks. Then came soft slippers, and a tooth-pick. Then a shaving-brush and a stick of soap, at which the juniors shrieked again.

D'Arcy's face was blank with amazement.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped again and again. "Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard this as we remarkable. Of course, none of these things belong to me. Is there anythin' more in the hat, deah boy?"

Mr. Pye turned out a toasting-fork and a box of tooth-powder.

"Gussy must have been preparing for a week-end," said Tom Merry.

"I tell you, Tom Mewwy——"

"Jolly good idea to carry the things for a week-end in one's hat," said Blake. "Now I know why Gussy always insists on going about in a topper."

"Weally, Blake——"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Pye brought out a couple of cigars, and there was a shriek.

"Oh, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

A photograph of a famous actress followed, and the juniors yelled.

"Oh, oh, oh, Gussy! Oh, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I have nevah seen it befoah!" said D'Arcy, with a gasp. "I wefuse to allow this howwid, wibald laughtah—it offends my good taste!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of asses!"

"Oh, my hat! Pictures of actresses, too! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've nevah cawwid anythin' of the sort in my life!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's this, I wonder?" exclaimed Mr. Pye, pretending to see something poking out of D'Arcy's pocket; and he jerked into view a picture postcard, which represented a famous dancer, crawling upon the floor like a tortoise.

"Gussy!"

D'Arcy staggered back.

"I—I've never seen it before!"

"Oh, tell us another!"

"Draw it mild, old chap!"

"I shouldn't wonder if he's got hundreds of them about him!" gasped Figgins. "Oh, Gussy! Wally, Wally! Why don't you look after your major?"

"I never knew anything about this," said Wally, shaking his head. "Gussy is a bit of a duffer, I know, and very trying at times, but I always believed he was respectable."

"Weally, Wally——"

"It's a sad disappointment to me," said Wally solemnly. "I can see that I shall have to be more strict with him."

"You young wascal!"

"Better go through his pockets, and turn out the rest," said Tom Merry severely. "This is simply shocking."

"I don't know whether I ought to remain on the spot, being so young and innocent," remarked Harry Noble.

"Will you hold my hand, Glyn, and we will support each other in this trying position?"

"Certainly. I was about to suggest it," said Bernard Glyn.

And they held hands firmly. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them with a withering look.

"You uttah wottahs——"

"Don't descend to abuse, now that your true character is being revealed," said Clifton Dane loftily.

"Weally, Dane——"

"I wonder what horrors a further search would bring to light," said Blake. "I am very much ashamed of you, Gussy; but I think we had better hush up the rest."

"I wefuse to have it hushed up! It is a twick! Somebody has put those wotten things in my pockets for a wotten joke!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a set of gwinnin' asses! Anybody is welcome to search my pockets!"

"Got it, Mr. Pye! As a disinterested stranger, Mr. Pye is the man," said Lowther, who had, of course, guessed before this that the clown was also a conjuror.

"I am quite weady——"

"Very well, to oblige you, gentlemen," said Mr. Pye blandly; and he proceeded to search D'Arcy's pockets, and his discoveries were truly amazing.

He turned out a cigar-case full of cigars, a cigarette-holder, and a packet of cigarettes, a matchbox with a music-hall star's face upon it, and a packet of letters tied up with a pink ribbon.

Arthur Augustus nearly fell down when he saw them.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated faintly.

Mr. Pye went on, the fellows watching him eagerly. The next discovery was a copy of a sporting paper of a pink colour, and there was a yell.

"Oh, Gussy! What price the winner?"

"Weally, you know——"

Next a black pipe, half-full of tobacco, and still warm; then a pocket-flask, with a smell of brandy in it.

D'Arcy gazed at it in horror.

There was a sudden sharp exclamation.

"What—what do I see? What? Good heavens! What base depravity in one so young! D'Arcy, follow me instantly!"

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Ratcliff is Simply Horrified!

THE juniors whirled round towards the speaker. It was Mr. Ratcliff, the Form master of the Fifth and Housemaster of the New House at St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff was a gentleman of a very uncertain temper

—generally bad. He did not like boys, as a rule; neither was he beloved by them.

Suspicious and distrustful, he generally succeeded in seeing harm where no one else could see any, and he never waited for explanations. The slightest evidence was sufficient to make him jump to a conclusion, and he was far too obstinate to change an opinion once formed.

He had a certain narrow and hard sense of duty, which really made him more unpleasant than if he had been remiss. Mr. Ratcliff was one of those persons who always carefully perform the duties which make other people uncomfortable.

He was gazing now in undisguised horror at the pipe, the cigars, and the brandy-flask. He seemed hardly able to speak for a moment. Then he burst out:

"Wretched boy! Guilty wretch! So this—this was the true character that was hidden beneath a flimsy pretence of affectation! This! Good heavens!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Please—" began Joey Pye, alarmed at the result of his little joke on the swell of St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff waved him back.

"I desire to hear nothing. The evidence of my eyes is good enough for me. D'Arcy, follow me to the Head instantly!"

"But—"

"If you please, sir—"

"Let me explain that—"

"Not a word more!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "D'Arcy, come!"

And he stalked away, deaf to remonstrance and explanation. Arthur Augustus had no choice but to follow him. Although, strictly speaking, he was only amenable to the authority of his own Housemaster, it was impossible to disobey the order of a man in Mr. Ratcliff's position.

The juniors stared after him blankly, and Mr. Pye gave a gasp.

"My only pyjama hat!" he ejaculated.

"It's all right!" gasped Tom Merry. "Of course, we could all see it was conjuring tricks, all except Gussy—and he would have seen it soon. Any master but Ratty would have seen it; but he was only too glad to catch one of us."

"Yes, rather!"

"But—but will he get into a row?" said Joey Pye.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"You'll have to explain to the Head."

Mr. Pye looked rather uneasy. Although the clown of Tomsonio's Circus had nerve enough for anything, as a rule, he felt some awe of the grave and reverend Head of St. Jim's, whom he had seen from a distance.

"Must go!" grinned Blake. "Come on, we'll show you the way!"

"Oh, all—right!" said Mr. Pye.

"The Head's a brick!" said Tom Merry, reassuringly. "It will be an awful bloomer for Ratty, too. You'll owe us a debt of gratitude, Figgy."

"What-ho!" said Figgins, who was not proud of his House master.

Meanwhile Mr. Ratcliff, a wrathful figure in rustling gown, was stalking into the quad, followed by D'Arcy, who was still in a state of amazement. Mr. Ratcliff had snatched the flask and the pipe from Mr. Pye's hands, and he was carrying them before him as he stalked.

He marched straight on to the School House and entered it, with Arthur Augustus at his heels. He turned round at the doorway.

"Keep with me, D'Arcy."

"I am keepin' with you, sir."

"You need not attempt to run away to avoid punishment of your enormous conduct," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Yes, sir, enormous is the word. What you have been guilty of is an enormity, sir, and nothing less."

"Weally, Mr. Watchliff—"

"Follow me!"

"Yaas, but—"

"Not a word, sir!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "Follow me!"

And he strode away to the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes was in his study when the Housemaster entered, with the swell of St. Jim's at his heels. The Head looked up and did not look at all pleased at being interrupted.

"Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Yes, sir!"

"And D'Arcy! Dear me! Is anything wrong?"

"I'm sorry to say, sir, that there is something very much wrong," said Mr. Ratcliff. "The true character of this boy has been revealed to me by accident."

"Dear me!"

"I find, sir, that far from being the careless, somewhat foolish youth I have always supposed—"

"Weally, Mr. Watchliff—"

"Don't interrupt me, D'Arcy!"

"I am bound to intewupt you, sir, with all respect, when you apply oppobwious epithets to me," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I stwongly object to bein' chawactewised as a foolish youth!"

"You must not interrupt Mr. Ratcliff, D'Arcy! Go on, sir!"

"Far from being what has been generally supposed, sir, he uses this outward pretence as a cloak for the vilest debauchery—"

"Weally, sir—"

"Mr. Ratcliff, you must be mistaken!" exclaimed the Head sharply. "Please weigh your words. What you suggest is absolutely impossible!"

"Then what do you think of that, sir?"

And the New House master crashed the flask down upon the desk before Dr. Holmes, and crashed the pipe down beside it with such force that it broke in two.

The Head gave a jump.

"Wh-what is this?"

"That, sir, is a flask. The odour, sir, attached to it will inform you that it has been used, and is still used, to contain brandy."

"I can see that, Mr. Ratcliff. I was not asking you to explain the nature and use of this object, which I can see perfectly well for myself," said Dr. Holmes, somewhat acidly. "But what has this to do with D'Arcy, or with me?"

"It is his, sir!"

"What?"

"Weally, sir—"

"Silence, D'Arcy, until Mr. Ratcliff has finished! Now, Mr. Ratcliff, you say that this flask belongs to D'Arcy?"

"I assert it, sir."

"Your reasons?"

"It was taken from his pocket."

"Surely not!"

"I saw it so taken, sir, along with the pipe and other disgraceful articles, such as cigars and cigarettes. It was done in the presence of a crowd of boys, who can testify to the facts, if necessary. I am sorry to say that they greeted the discovery with laughter, apparently regarding it as a joke.

(Continued on page 19.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,330.



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HALLO, chums! Isn't the Aero-car just splendid? I'm sure you will agree with me that it is the finest Free Gift that ever was. In the "box" on this page you will find full instructions for assembling the car, and next week every copy of the GEM will contain the driving mechanism, propeller, and wheel axles, so if you haven't already ordered your copy for next week, go and do so right away before it is too late! Next week, when you have the Aero-car working, just think what fun you will be able to have with it! You can race yours against your pals' cars, and that will test your skill in building the model, for the better built it is the faster it will go. When putting the model together, don't hurry too much, and give every part plenty of time for the glue to dry—it will pay you in the end. Next week I will give you one or two hints about how to get the best out of your Aero-car when assembling the driving mechanism.

Talking of next week reminds me the GEM will contain another special long complete yarn by Martin Clifford, called

"GUSSY'S STAR TURN!"

in which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, becomes a circus rider! Then there is our great new serial,

"ST. FRANK'S versus FOOCHOW!"

featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. of St. Frank's. This ripping yarn tells of the thrilling adventures of the school-boys in China, and I can promise you it is a real tip-top story.

Potts, the irrepressible office boy, will be on parade again, and there will be another column of readers' jokes, for each of which I pay half-a-crown.

DETERMINATION.

Edgar Owens is a very determined young man. To every rider who covers a lap of Brooklands on a motor-cycle at 100 miles an hour a Gold Star is presented, and Edgar was determined to get one of these stars. On Whit Monday, while racing in the Midlands, he crashed and fractured his skull, but after a week or two in hospital he left, and returned to his home, where he was in bed for several weeks. His doctor told him that he must not ride again this year, but three days after he got out of bed he went to Brooklands in search of a Gold Star—and he got it, too! He did a lap at 101.23 miles an hour.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,330.

"PRESS!"

Wonderful things can be done these days by merely pressing a button, and here is the latest button-pressing device, used by Rochdale Fire Brigade. One press of the button switches on all lights and rings alarm bells in all rooms, calls firemen by ringing bells in their houses, and switches on landing lights, opens the doors of the fire station—and starts up the fire-engines! How's that for a single button?

QUEER WAYS OF EARNING A LIVING!

Here are a couple of really strange ways of earning a living. If you care to try them you may—but I think you will have to go to America to do it. Slim Jones was trying to break the world's record for being buried alive, at Washington, while at the same time Ray Richards was trying to do the same at Denver—and they each had a telephone buried with them so that they could talk to each other and tell one another how they were getting along. Jones told Richards that he was buried in the bed of a dried-up stream, and that owing to heavy rain he was afraid of getting washed out, while Richards replied by saying that bandits had tried to steal the day's gate-money and had dropped lighted matches down his air-pipe! After this exchange of pleasantries they rang off!

Here is the other strange method of money-making, employed by two Australians. W. Coleman lies

down with his back resting on a pillow of nails, while L. Appo, who is pretty handy with an axe, chops a log in half—he stands on the log, which is in a cradle resting on Coleman's chest! I reckon Coleman's back must be harder than nails!

OVER THE WIRE!

You have no doubt read stories in which shots, or screams, or whatnot are heard by telephone operators coming over the wire, and read how the operator has informed the police. Well, here is a true story of that sort of thing. An operator put through an early morning call to a doctor, but she could get no reply. Just as she was about to give it up as a bad job she heard weird groaning noises coming over the wire. She immediately informed the police, who rushed round to the doctor's house and broke in. They found the telephone overturned by the side of the bed—and the doctor peacefully snoring into the transmitter!

A TALL STORY.

This story comes from California. A man was fishing in a stream a year ago and dropped his watch into the stream. The other day he was again fishing in the stream and he caught a trout, and inside it he found his watch, still going, and having lost only three minutes! The man thinks that the movement of the fish's gills kept the watch wound. I think it's a tall story!

ODDS AND ENDS.

A boy found a wallet in Cardiff containing two hundred and fifty pounds. He returned it to its owner. He was rewarded—with sixpence!

In the town of Segir, Turkey, no one has died for twenty years!

A woman went into a Denver hotel and said she had come to return the tablecloth. Asked what tablecloth it was, she produced one and said she had stolen it from the hotel thirty-three years before!

Fifty pounds reward was offered for a handkerchief lost on a San Francisco golf links. It had a diamond ring tied into one corner!

YOUR EDITOR.

HOW TO MAKE UP YOUR AERO-CAR!

Firstly, cut out all the parts, and mount the wheels on stout cardboard to stiffen them, leaving them to set.

Take the coach part and carefully score all the lines to be bent, using a ruler and some fairly-sharp instrument to go over the lines. This has the effect of making the bends neat and clean. The bending lines are A, B, C, F, G, H, K, the two lines where the sides of the coach meet the white roof, and the two white lines on top of the bonnet. Lastly, cut the two oblong slits which are to take the tabs E of the windscreen.

Now bend the two lines where the sides of the coach meet the white roof and the bonnet white lines, so that the two top portions of the latter meet. Bend entirely inwards the two flanges at the lines B and glue securely together. Next bend in the radiator front at lines K and turn in to meet each other, and finally bend right in the two flanges at lines C and join well with glue, so that they are inside and leave a clean radiator front. Finally bend all tabs G down and secure the sides of the coach to the roof at the end.

Next take the part marked CHASSIS and, having first bent down the large tabs at outside edges, glue it well to the coach by fixing the tabs all along on the inside of the blue running-boards. Then secure the tabs F to the floor of the chassis.

Take the part with the tabs E, score at the dotted line, and glue it into place on the tabs A at the front of the coach, passing tabs E through the two oblong slits you have made.

Finally, to finish the coach, take the long piece to be rolled up, and, having glued it into a circle, as shown, by fixing the end to the dotted line, well coat with glue and pass into the rear end of the coach, where it should be allowed to set well.

This completes the work of the first part of your Aero-Car. Directions for fitting the wheels will appear next week, when the axles, propeller, elastic, etc., will be given away.

CHUMS OF THE CIRCUS!

(Continued from page 17.)

I am far from regarding such a discovery as a joke, and I think you will take my view, sir."

"Most decidedly, Mr. Ratcliff! But——"

"It points to secret habits of drinking and smoking—vile enough in anyone, but in a boy of D'Arcy's age——"

"I cannot help thinking that there must be some mistake. Dear me, there is someone at the door! Come in!"

The door opened, and Joey Pye was pushed in by Blake and Tom Merry, who shut the door after him so that he could not escape.

Dr. Holmes started to his feet in blank astonishment. He had received all sorts and conditions of visitors in his time, but it is safe to say that a circus clown had never entered the sacred precincts of his study before.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "What is this?"

Joey Pye doffed his paper hat.

"If you please, sir——" he began meekly.

"Who—what are you?"

"The original Joey Pye, sir," said the mirth merchant, recovering himself a little. "The mirth-provoking wheeze merchant, the chestnut wangler of Tomsonio's World Famous Circus, sir!"

"Oh, oh! You belong to the circus?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I—I understand! But—you should not come here, especially in that—attire! You should really—er—not——"

"Beg pardon, sir! I've come to clear up this little matter." And Mr. Pye pointed to the incriminating articles on the desk.

"Ah! You can throw light on the matter—the possession of these—these dreadful implements by this junior?"

"What—ho—I mean, yes, sir!"

"This is a trick," said Mr. Ratcliff, frowning.

"Exactly, sir," said Joey Pye, smiling broadly. "It was a conjuring trick, sir."

Arthur Augustus gave a sigh of relief.

"Bai Jove! Now I undahstand!"

CHAPTER 12.

Joey Pye Explains!

DR. HOLMES looked at Joey Pye, and then he adjusted his glasses and looked again.

Mr. Ratcliff was silent, in sheer surprise.

"I—I do not quite understand you," said Dr. Holmes at last. "You say it was a conjuring trick. What was a conjuring trick, my good man?"

"Finding them articles on Master D'Arcy, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

"It was a little joke, sir," explained Mr. Pye, with a grin. "It was a joke, and also done as an advert, sir."

"An advert?"

"Advertisement, sir—advert for short. If you can make people laugh they will always come and see your show—you're always safe in betting on that," explained Mr. Pye, "and the young gents was laughing—this gentleman will testify to that!"

He looked at Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master did not speak. His complexion seemed to be changing to a yellow hue.

"Bless you, sir," went on Mr. Pye, encouraged by the relieved expression upon the Head of St. Jim's face. "I'd taken a white rabbit out of the lad's hat, sir! I took them things out of his pockets."

"Impossible!" said Mr. Ratcliff sourly. "This is an—an invention, sir, got up to screen D'Arcy from the penalty of his misdeeds."

"Weally, Mr. Watchiff——"

"I do not think so," said the Head, rather coldly. "I certainly hope that the statement is true, at all events. I suppose you will give me some—er—well, some proof, Mr.—er——"

"Pye, sir—Joey Pye—the original Joey Pye. Yes, sir, there's heaps of proof—tons of it," said Mr. Pye cheerily. "In the first place, there's Herr Biberach's name on that flask—it belongs to him—Bibby, o' the circus, sir."

Dr. Holmes glanced at the metal rim of the flask.

"It is true."

"Then that pipe belongs to me, and anybody in the circus will recognise it. I want to know who's going to pay for it."

The Head smiled slightly.

"I have no doubt that Mr. Ratcliff will recompense you for the pipe, as he has inadvertently damaged it," he said.

"Very good, sir."

"I think we may take the matter as settled," said Dr. Holmes. "D'Arcy has been the victim of an absurd conjuring trick, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hardly believe it, sir," said the New House master. "This person was brought here by Blake and Merry, two close friends of D'Arcy's. I cannot suspect otherwise than that it is a plot to clear him."

"Ahem! I——"

"We have no proof, in fact, that this man is a conjurer at all."

"Ahem! Well——"

Joey Pye chuckled.

"I'll jolly soon prove that, sir!" he exclaimed, coming nearer to the Head. "Would you like me to produce yards of ribbon from your ears, sir?"

The Head started back.

"N-n-no, thank you!" he exclaimed hastily.

"Shall I pull threepenny-bits out of your eyebrows, then?"

"Oh, no—no!"

"Perhaps this gent would rather put it to the test himself, as he seems a rather suspicious sort of gent," said Mr. Pye, turning towards the New House master. "You don't believe I'm a conjurer, sir?"

"I do not!" said Mr. Ratcliff sternly.

"Good!"

"Pray keep your distance——"

"Allow me, sir!"

Mr. Pye put his hand up to the breast of Mr. Ratcliff's coat and drew out a cigar, and then another, and another.

The Head gazed at them in astonishment, for the moment not realising the trick, so cleverly was it done by Joey Pye.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Why, I always thought you were a non-smoker, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"So I am, sir—so I am!" exclaimed the New House master furiously. "This is a trick. Keep your hands off me, fellow!"

"But I wanted to prove——"

"Hands off, I say!"

"Dear me!" said the Head. "Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff. It is only fair that the man should prove that he is a conjurer, as you've doubted his statement."

"You're a gentleman, sir," said Joey Pye; "but I needn't touch our touchy friend, sir. Look here!"

And the mirth-merchant of Tomsonio's World Famous Circus proceeded to draw yards and yards of coloured ribbon from the ink-well in the Head's desk.

"Bless my soul!"

Joey Pye went on to swallow the ribbon, which he apparently did by the yard—at all events, it disappeared, and it certainly seemed as if it went by way of Mr. Pye's capacious gullet.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in great admiration. "I wergad that as weally vewy clevah, you know! I couldn't do that!"

Mr. Pye grinned at the Head.

"Satisfied, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, yes! Quite satisfied!"

"This young gent is as innocent as you are yourself, sir," Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I am quite convinced of that now," he said; "and I am greatly obliged to you for coming here and explaining. Otherwise, D'Arcy might have been the victim of a great injustice."

"Quite welcome, sir! I hope we shall see you at the show this afternoon, sir?"

"Ahem!"

"The signor will be glad to sell you a box, sir, if you would care to bring the missus and the little chicks!" said Joey Pye cheerfully.

The Head gasped.

"Er—thank you—but——"

"Not at all, sir! We shall be proud to have you! Very thrilling and improving entertainment, sir. There's the sword-swallowing of old Puggles——"

"Yes, yes——"

"And Jungle Jack, the Boy Tiger Tamer——"

"Bless my soul!"

"And Miss Clotilde's bareback act——"

"Yes, yes!"

"And the Handsome Man——"

"Yes, but——"

"Then there's the signor himself, sir, whose waistcoat alone is worth the money, to say nothing of the top-hat."

"Yes, indeed, but——"

"And the monkeys——"

"I'm sorry. I shall be too busy this afternoon to visit

your doubtless very agreeable and improving entertainment, sir."

"It's the chance of a lifetime, sir," said Mr. Pye; "but have your own way. Modesty has prevented me from mentioning the greatest attraction. However, I hope you will change your mind and come, sir."

And Joey Pye bowed himself out, taking the flask with him, and leaving the broken pipe on the Head's desk.

"D'Arcy, you may go," said Dr. Holmes. "There is no stain on your reputation. I am sorry you were ever placed in such a painful position for a moment."

"Vevy good, sir, thank you!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy you should have been twoubled ovah such a widiculous mattah, sir."

"Yes, yes," said the Head hurriedly, as Mr. Ratcliff's complexion began to turn from yellow to green. "As I said, you may go."

"I should like, sir, to speak a word to Mr. Watcliff before I go, with your kind permish," said the junior.

"Really, D'Arcy—"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the master of the New House.

"This is not the first time, sir, that Mr. Watcliff has been impertinent—"

Mr. Ratcliff jumped, and the Head gasped.

"D'Arcy!"

"What!"

D'Arcy did not budge.

"I wepeat, sir, that this is not the first time Mr. Watcliff has been impertinent, but I twust it will be the last."

"Boy!"

"To accuse a decent chap of havin' habits of secwet dwinkin' is the wankest impertinence, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "I wepudiate the accusation, and I cannot help wegardin' Mr. Watcliff's conduct as impertinent in the extweme. I twust there will be no more of it."

And before either of the amazed masters could speak, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the study.

There was silence in the room for a full minute. The Head rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

Mr. Ratcliff burst out at last.

"Dr. Holmes, I presume that this—this unheard of insolence on the part of a Fourth Form junior will be punished?"

The Head shifted uneasily.

"If it is allowed to pass, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff excitedly, "I think there is an end to all respect and discipline in the school."

"I cannot agree with you," said the Head, somewhat tartly. "You have placed both yourself and me in a very awkward position. I grant that you could not very well guess that the clown person was playing conjuring tricks, yet you should have been very slow to believe that a junior who had hitherto borne a good character was addicted to the vile habit of drinking spirits in secret. Scarcely any evidence could have made me believe D'Arcy guilty of anything of the sort, yet you appear to have jumped to the conclusion without examining the evidence at all. Naturally D'Arcy thinks you were actuated by some personal dislike of himself as much as by your sense of duty as a master."

"He had a right to be heard in his defence, and you should really have investigated the matter a little before bringing it to my notice."

"I concluded—"

"You concluded too quickly, I am afraid, and very injudiciously," said the Head dryly. "The best thing that can be done now is to let the matter rest absolutely, and take no further notice of it whatever."

The Head turned to his desk again, as a hint that the matter was settled and the interview at an end. And Mr. Ratcliff bowed himself out—not in a good temper.

CHAPTER 13.

The Circus!

TOM MERRY & CO. had good seats in the circus tent, and they were enjoying the performance keenly.

The tent was crowded to the last seat almost.

Nearly all St. Jim's was there, including several of the masters, and there were hosts of country people and lads from the village of Rylcombe.

Although it was an afternoon performance, generally less

well attended than the evening show, the tent was almost as full as it could be, and the fat face of Signor Tomsonio was beaming, in consequence.

The bareback act, in which Clotilde was assisted by Jack Talbot, who had added to his business of tiger-taming that of equestrianism, elicited loud applause, as much due to the sweet beauty and grace of Clotilde as to the act itself.

Clotilde's act was drawing to a close when Arthur Augustus, having taken some considerable time to dress for the occasion, entered the tent. The swell of St. Jim's put up his eyeglass and looked round for a place.

Jack Blake waved frantically to him over the heads of a dozen rows of people.

"This way, Gussy!"

"It's all wight, Blake. As I am late I shall have to take a back seat, you know. It's wathah wotten, but it's only fair."

"Rats! I've kept a place for you!"

"Bai Jove! That was weally thoughtful of you, deah boy!"

"Come on, duffer!"

Arthur Augustus made his way down to the front row, garbed in his nobbiest attire, where he sank into a seat between Blake and Tom Merry. The rest of the St. Jim's juniors were in the same row. They had "steepchased" over the seats for the front row immediately the tent was open to the public, and they had bagged their places in fine style.

Arthur Augustus sat down in great content, and a voice behind him, very discontented, proceeded to make remarks.

"Can't you take your 'at off?"

Arthur Augustus turned his head.

"Weally, my deah sir—"

A red-faced man glared at him.

"Do you expect me to see through your 'at?" he demanded.

"There is no harm in askin' a chap politely to wemove his toppah," said D'Arcy, with stately dignity, "but a wequest pweferred in a wude and wotten mannah is bound to be wefused. A chap owes that to his personal dig."

"Are you goin' to take your 'at off?"

"Certainly not, undah the circs."

"Then I'll knock it off!"

"I should pwobably lose my tempah if you did, and stwike you severely!"

"My heye!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the ring again. The next moment his silk hat was jerked off; but, as a matter of fact, it was Digby who jerked it off, reaching round behind Tom Merry to do it. Dig wanted to avoid a row in the circus tent; but the result of his effort was most unfortunate. For D'Arcy turned, flaming, upon the red-faced man.

"You uttah wastah—"

"What!"

"Take that!"

Biff!

The red-faced man roared as D'Arcy's fist clamped upon his fat, red nose. That nose had already been swollen to more than natural proportions by the excessive use of strong liquor. Arthur Augustus' blow made it a little fatter and a little redder.

"Ow! Oh! Oh!"

"I pwesume—"

"I'll squash him!" said the red-faced man, getting up.

"I'll—"

"Hold on!"

"Sit down!" yelled a dozen voices behind. "Down there!"

"I'll squash him!"

"I have punished you for touchin' my toppah!" said D'Arcy, with dignity, as the red-faced man was forced into his seat by indignant hands behind. "I wegard you as a wottah! Now pway westore me my toppah, or I shall have no wresource but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"You—you—you—"

"My toppah—"

"Oh, you ass!" gurgled Dig. "I took your silly topper. Here it is!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's face was a study. He mechanically took the silk hat, while the juniors roared.

The red-faced man was on the point of explosion apparently.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I weally beg your pardon. I am awfully sowwy! I wegard you as bein' the ass who wemoved my hat."

"You—you—"

"I have apologised, and a fellow can't do more," said D'Arcy.

"Sit down!" yelled a dozen voices.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the protesters.

"I am apologisin' to this gentleman—"

"Sit down!"



"I twust, sir, that you accept my sincere wegwets. I will certainly keep the hat off now, although pweviously I should have wefused to do so!"

"Oh, sit down!" grunted the red-faced man.

"Certainly, my deah sir!"

And Arthur Augustus sat down.

"I weally fail to perceive what all you chaps are gwimmin' at," he remarked. "I suppose the gentleman was entitled to an apology."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Blake, clapping his hands as Miss Clotilde cantered out of the ring at last. "Bravo!"

"Bravo!" yelled the audience.

The next turn was that of the Handsome Man.

The juniors, and all the audience, in fact, watched with keen interest as the lithe, active acrobat swung himself up to the trapeze, and then went through his performance there.

It was certainly a clever and a daring performance, and was well cheered, but the St. Jim's chums did not cheer as loudly as for Clotilde.

They did not like the Handsome Man.

"The chap doesn't tweek his horse decently," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "And a chap who can't be kind to animals is a beast, and I'm not goin' to cheeah him whatevah he does."

And he did not.

On the other hand, he had loud hurrahs for the original Joey Pye, and gave a full meed of praise to every item in the programme except the Handsome Man's trapeze turn.

It was really an excellent entertainment from beginning to end, and it fully deserved the applause it received.

But an unrehearsed effect caused more excitement probably than any of the turns specified in the programme.

Oliver Cromwell, the elephant, came in, and Joey Pye climbed his trunk and sat down on his neck, and piloted him round the ring.

He stopped opposite the juniors of St. Jim's, and grinned

at them. The juniors gave Oliver Cromwell a cheer, remembering his exploits in the School House.

"Any young gentleman like to feed the buliphant with a bun?" asked Joey Pye cheerfully.

"Bai Jove, I should awfully like to feed the elephant!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah fond of elephants. But I haven't a bun."

"Here's one."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. Joey Pye extracted a bun from some recess of his flowing garments.

"Step down into the tan," he said.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

D'Arcy jumped the low barrier of the ring.

Joey Pye tossed the bun to him, and Arthur Augustus caught it as if it had been a cricket ball. There was a lurking twinkle in the eyes of the original Mr. Pye.

"Pat him on the trunk before you feed him," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus gave Oliver Cromwell a tap upon the trunk.

In a second the elephant's trunk curled round the swell of St. Jim's, and he was whirled off his feet into the air.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

Joey Pye, grinning, gave the elephant a touch on the neck, and Oliver Cromwell proceeded to march bravely round the circus, carrying the elegant junior in his trunk.

CHAPTER 14.

D'Arcy's Unexpected Act!

"BAI JOVE! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

And the audience fairly yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy was startled and amazed, but he was not being hurt. Oliver Cromwell was as gentle as a kitten. But the aspect of the swell of St. Jim's was decidedly the reverse of stately or dignified.

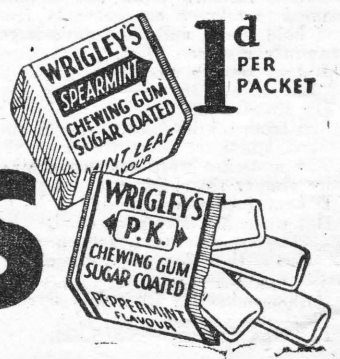
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His silk hat had fallen off, and he had grasped it in one hand. His eyeglass was flying on its cord, and his jacket was rumpled up round his shoulders. The elephant's trunk was curled round his chest, under the armpits, and his slim legs thrashed wildly about as he was borne along.

The audience shrieked.

"Oh, my hat!" roared Blake. "This is too good! That rascal Pye made the beast do it on purpose! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The tears were running down Tom Merry's cheeks. The juniors were almost in hysterics. The unrehearsed turn was sending the audience almost into convulsions.

But Arthur Augustus wasn't enjoying it.

He struggled in the trunk of the elephant, but he might as well have struggled in the grip of a steel vice. His resistance made no difference whatever to Oliver Cromwell.

Slowly and steadily the elephant paced round the ring, with the wriggling swell of St. Jim's in his trunk.

"Help! Yow! Wow! My clothes will be ruined! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Signor Tomsonio. "Oh dear, this is too funny! What? Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my ribs! What?"

Right round the ring, till the elephant and his rider were opposite the juniors again; then Oliver Cromwell raised his trunk, and lifted D'Arcy over the barrier, and set him down in his seat—breathless and gasping, but unhurt.

"B-b-bai Jove!" panted D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oliver Cromwell remained still, his trunk extended over the barrier towards the swell of St. Jim's, as if expectant of something.

"Get away, you bwute! Shush!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take the howwid bwute away!"

"He wants his bun," gurgled Blake. "Oh, my hat! He's waiting for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't you going to feed the elephant, sir?" asked Joey Pye, with perfect gravity.

The bun was still unconsciously gripped in D'Arcy's hand. He felt for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and looked very curiously at the original Mr. Pye.

"Not going to feed the elephant, sir?" asked Joey Pye, in dulcet tones.

Arthur Augustus swallowed his wrath.

"Yaas, wathah!" he said.

And he handed the bun to Oliver Cromwell, who took it in his trunk, and transferred it to his mouth. Then he extended his trunk again, and waited for more.

"Shoo!" said D'Arcy, waving his hand. "That's all, you howwid beast! Pway go away!"

"Won't you give him another bun, sir?"

"I haven't anothah bun."

Joey Pye shook his finger at Arthur Augustus.

"I'm sure you'd find another bun, sir, if you looked for it."

"I weward you as an uttah ass! Do you think I am in the habit of cawyin' buns about with me?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly.

"Well," chuckled Blake, "considering the things that are found upon you sometimes, I don't see why there shouldn't be some buns among them."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Just one more, sir," said Mr. Pye.

"I weward you as an ass, sir!"

"Well, that little currant cake, then."

"I wepeat that I have neithah buns nor cake with me, and I wefuse to continue this widiculous discush!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"But that one under your arm," said Mr. Pye; and, reaching forward from the elephant's neck, he took—or seemed to take—a currant cake from under D'Arcy's arm, and held it up, and then gave it to Oliver Cromwell, who promptly disposed of it.

D'Arcy gave a gasp.

"Bai Jove! How—"

He stood quite helpless while Mr. Pye deftly extracted a bun from the back of his neck, and a roll from his watch-pocket, and gave them to the elephant.

The audience were craning their necks to see, and they were simply shrieking with laughter.

D'Arcy face was a study.

But when Mr. Pye proceeded to turn out biscuits from his pockets, one after another, it dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's that the mirth-merchant was at his conjuring tricks again.

He backed away from Mr. Pye as far as the seat would allow him.

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"Pway cease this silly wot!" he exclaimed. "I weward you as an ass! You can play your wotten conjuwin' twicks on somebody else!"

Mr. Pye thoughtfully drew a cake from Tom Merry's collar, and nodded.

"Very well, sir; Oliver's had his feed."

And the elephant lumbered away.

The audience cheered Mr. Pye loudly. His conjuring was really very good, and its unexpectedness just then made it a greater success. The only person who was not pleased was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He did not seem amused at all, though it was certainly very funny.

But D'Arcy was never cross for long. Before the performance was over the good-humoured expression habitual to it had returned to his face.

When the last turn was over, and the band started playing the audience out, the St. Jim's chums rose, greatly pleased with the entertainment.

"Jolly good show!" said Blake. "I'm jolly well going to see this again! That's the best of a circus—you can keep on seeing it without getting tired, as you do of plays and things. I hear they are making their next stop for a week somewhere near here—over at Wayland, I think—and I'm going if they're there next half-holiday."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry. "We'll make up a party to go. Nothing like sticking to old friends. It's a ripping show!"

"I say, deah boys—"

"We'll take Gussy, if he'll promise to be a nice boy, and leave his brandy-flask at home. We can't have any beastly intoxication!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And he will have to confine himself to cigarettes, and chuck pipes, while he's with me," said Digby.

"I wefuse to discuss that widiculous mattah, Dig! I am vewy glad that my Cousin Ethel wasn't there to see me in that absurd posish," said Arthur Augustus. "But to come to business, I have invited some friends to tea after the performance."

"Like your cheek!" said Blake cheerfully. "You know jolly well I am going to do some carpentry in the study. I suppose your friends can have tea while I'm hammering, though, can't they?"

"Certainly not! I trust you will not be so wude as to hammah while a lady is havin' her tea," said Arthur Augustus, with great distinctness.

The chums stopped outside the tent and surrounded Gussy, and stared at him.

"Now, then," said Blake, "what does this piffle mean? Cousin Ethel hasn't come."

"No, deah boy."

"I suppose any of the Cliff House girls haven't come this way, by any chance?"

"No."

"Or anybody from Cousin Ethel's school?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Is it Miss Fawcett—Tom Merry's governess?"

"Certainly not!"

"Or the draper's young lady from Rylcombe?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or Lily, the housemaid?"

"Blake—"

"Or the charlady?"

"I wefuse to continue a widiculous discush, Blake. The young lady who is comin' to tea is Miss Clotilde, of the circus."

"Phew!"

"Mr. Talbot is bwingin' her."

Blake gave his elegant chum a slap on the shoulder.

"Ripping! Gussy, you're a genius! I thought of it, too; but then the circus drove it out of my head! Have they agreed to come?"

"Yaas, wathah—with Mr. Wailton's permish! I am goin' to call for them."

"But the feed—that will want seeing to."

"Fatty Wynn has awwanged ewevythin', while we've been to the show."

"Oh, that's why he didn't come in!" said Figgins. "I thought he was getting a feed somewhere on the Q.T."

"Yaas, wathah! I am goin' to call for my fwiends."

"Good! And we'll get the study ready!"

"Tom Mewwy and Lowthah and Mannahs will come, of course—and Figgins and Kerr. I think we might have young Wally, too."

"What-ho!" said young Wally, with emphasis.

"I wathah considah that it will considewably impwove the wuffness of Wally's mannahs, associatin' as much as poss with a charmin' young lady."

"Oh, come off, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Buzz off and fetch your friends, my son, while I go and

change my collar," said Wally. "Young Gibson squirted some ink over this one, and I think it is soiled."

"I am vewy glad to see you showin' some slight wegard at last for your personal appeawance, deah boy."

"More rats!" said Wally cheerfully; and he hurried off to change his collar, while Arthur Augustus went to call for Miss Clotilde, and the rest of the juniors went into the School House, to do their best to make Study No. 6 presentable for the visitors.

CHAPTER 15.
Mellish's Jape!

GORE of the Shell was standing on the School House steps, with his hands deep in his pockets, and a gloomy expression upon his face.

He was looking out into the quadrangle. Tom Merry & Co. had just passed him, going in, and Tom had given him a cheery nod. Gore glanced after the chums, with a shade on his face. He was deep in gloomy thought, and he started suddenly as Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, tapped him on the shoulder.

Mellish was grinning gleefully.
"I say, Gore, did you know—"

"Know what?" said Gore abruptly. His manner was not encouraging. Gore was different in these days from the Gore who had always been Mellish's chum, and had entered with relish into every caddish scheme that the keener but less spirited cad of the Fourth had devised.

"About D'Arcy's visitors?"
"Is he having visitors?"

"Yes, rather! There's a regular beanfeast in Study No. 6. Of course, they haven't asked you?"

Gore scowled.

"Why should they ask me?" he growled. "I don't chum with them. What are you getting at?"

"Oh, I thought they might, as you've been sucking up to them lately," said Mellish. "I suppose they'll take all the sucking up, but when it comes to chumming with you, they draw the line."

Gore winced.

"But I was going to tell you something," said Mellish. "Fatty Wynn has been getting the feed ready, and D'Arcy has gone to fetch the visitors. There's going to be a high old time in Study No. 6, I assure you. Guess who the visitors are?"

"I don't know, and I don't care!"

"It's the people from the circus!"

"Oh!"

"Jack Talbot and Miss Clotilde."

"Well, what about it?" said Gore abruptly.

"Hallo! Here they are!"

Arthur Augustus was coming in, with Talbot and Clotilde. They passed into the School House, and up the stairs to the Fourth Form passage. Gore and Mellish looked after them till the bend of the great staircase hid them from sight.

"Stunning girl, isn't she?" said Mellish.

"Yes."

"You'd like to join the party—eh?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, it's all right! I'd like to be there myself. No

(Continued on the next page.)

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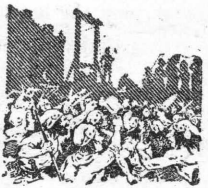


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chance for either of us, though. The next best thing to going is to make them sorry they didn't ask us."

"How?"

"By mucking up the party."

Gore started.

"How can you muck it up? What do you mean? You'll get a jolly good licking if you go and make a row at Study No. 6."

"I jolly well shan't make a row," he said. "I know what I know."

"And what do you know?"

"You'll keep it dark?" said Mellish eagerly.

Gore looked at him. The cad of the Fourth had evidently been playing some trick, and was simply bursting to confide his cleverness to somebody. And Mellish never could understand that Gore was really trying to turn over a new leaf. In spite of many rebuffs, he still believed that Gore was only playing a game to deceive the chums of the School House, with the intention of somehow injuring them later on.

"Oh, go ahead!" said Gore.

"Mind, you'll keep it dark?"

"As a rule, a promise cost Gore little. He would keep it or not, as suited him best. But now he felt some repugnance making a promise he would not keep. It was the working of the better spirit in his breast.

"No," he said, after a pause. "If you're playing any cowardly trick on Study No. 6 while they've got a lady visitor, I won't keep it dark."

Mellish gritted his teeth.

"Still keeping up the humbug?" he sneered. "I don't see why you want to try to spoof me, as well as Tom Merry. You can't expect me to take it in."

"You worm!"

"Well, if you can't keep a secret, you jolly well won't know it!" said Mellish.

He was turning away, when Gore's grasp fell heavily upon his shoulder, and he was swung back.

"Stop a minute!"

Mellish wriggled.

"I'm going! I—"

"You're not going just yet. You're playing some trick on Study No. 6."

"Well, suppose I am?" said Mellish sullenly.

"If it's only a jape—"

"That's all it is—just a jape!"

"I don't know," said Gore dubiously. "You're such a worm. You can tell me what it is, and I'll see."

"I jolly well won't, unless you promise to keep it dark!"

"Tell me!"

"Shan't!"

Gore's grasp tightened.

"Come along, then!"

"Eh? What do you mean? Come along where?"

"To Study No. 6!" said Gore grimly. "You can explain to Blake if you won't explain to me."

The cad of the Fourth changed colour.

"I—I— Hold on, you fool! I'll tell you!"

"Quick, then!"

"It's—it's only a jape. If you spoil it, I'll be even with you some day!" said Mellish, between his teeth.

Gore shook him fiercely.

"What is it, you worm? Tell me!"

"Well, I had some fireworks," said Mellish sullenly, "and I've shoved them into a bundle and lowered them down the chimney on a string," he chuckled. "You see the dodge? They've got to light a fire to boil the water for tea. As soon as the string gets charred by the heat it will break, and the bundle of fireworks will drop into the fire. Then—"

"You young fool!"

"It's a jolly good wheeze, I think. They'll explode all at once, and frighten them out of their wits, and there won't be a clue left," grinned Mellish. "I shall be somewhere with the other chaps, to have an alibi ready proved in case they suspect me."

"You mad young idiot! You might blow the fire all over the room, and set it all alight."

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"They'll put it out, I suppose."

"You idiot!" gasped Gore, who realised the seriousness of the matter more than Mellish did. "You might injure them—blind somebody for life, perhaps, if the explosion is powerful enough."

"Oh, that's all rot!"

Gore gripped Mellish till he cried out with pain.

"Listen! Go and pull that string up, do you hear? Get the fireworks away, or I'll tell Mr. Raitton the whole matter. You know what that would mean?"

"Sneak!"

"Go and do it—at once! You mad young idiot, the girl

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might be injured! You don't know what might happen! Go!"

Mellish, a little frightened by Gore's uneasiness, ran.

Gore hurried away towards Study No. 6. There was a sound of merry voices proceeding from it as the one-time cad of the Shell neared the door. He tapped at the door, and without waiting for an answer, entered hastily.

CHAPTER 16.

Bravo, Gore!

TOM MERRY & CO. were all there. Fatty Wynn was beaming like a full moon with complete satisfaction. He had expended two pounds, the amount given to him by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to pay for the expenses, and he had certainly made a splendid show for the sum.

The table—increased in length by a box stood on end and covered with a borrowed cloth—looked decidedly inviting. It simply groaned under the weight of the good things.

Fatty Wynn had arranged everything with a master hand. Fatty had had a great deal of experience in that line.

Chairs and forms were ranged round the table, and the guests had taken their places on either side of Arthur Augustus, who had naturally placed himself at the head of affairs.

Such of the juniors as could not find room at the head of the table disposed of themselves elsewhere. They sat on boxes, or on the window-sill or on the coal-locker. But Miss Clotilde and the other visitors were quite comfortably disposed, and this, their first experience of a study feed, was a pleasant one.

If they had eaten a twentieth part of what the juniors would have liked to see them eat, they would have beaten Falstaff at his best. It was a very merry party, and Clotilde's face was very bright.

"Bai Jove, I wish my Cousin Ethel were heah to meet you, you know," Arthur Augustus said, more than once. "You would like her immensely."

"What-ho!" said Blake.

"Another cup of tea, Miss Clotilde?"

"Thank you!"

"Pway fill Miss Clotilde's cup, Tom Mewwy."

"Certainly."

"A little cake—"

"Oh, no, thank you; no more cake."

"Then a biscuit?"

"Yes, just one, thank you."

"I say, Talbot, let me help you to the seedy cake," said Wally. "I can recommend this seedy-cake. I might have selected it myself."

"Thank you!" said Talbot, laughing. "I like it very much."

"The sultana cake isn't bad, either," said Wally confidentially. "Altogether, this isn't a bad feed for my major. He can stand things of this sort all right. The only trouble with Gus is that he sometimes sings tenor solos afterwards."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Now, you know you do, Gus."

"You are an unmusical young wottah," said D'Arcy. "Pway excuse me usin' that expwession, Miss Clotilde. I am sowwy to say that my minah nevah undahstands the respect weally due to an eldah bwothah."

"Oh, come off!" said Wally.

"Sorry about the fire, Miss Clotilde," said Kangaroo, who was seated near the circus girl. "But we had to light it to boil the water."

"I am very comfortable, thank you," said Clotilde.

"Hallo! What's that?"

The door burst open, and Gore ran in, looking very excited.

He glanced at the blazing wood. At any moment the fireworks might drop into the blaze, and then would come the explosion.

The juniors stared at the Shell fellow.

"Gore, what the—"

"Weally, Gore—"

"What the dickens—"

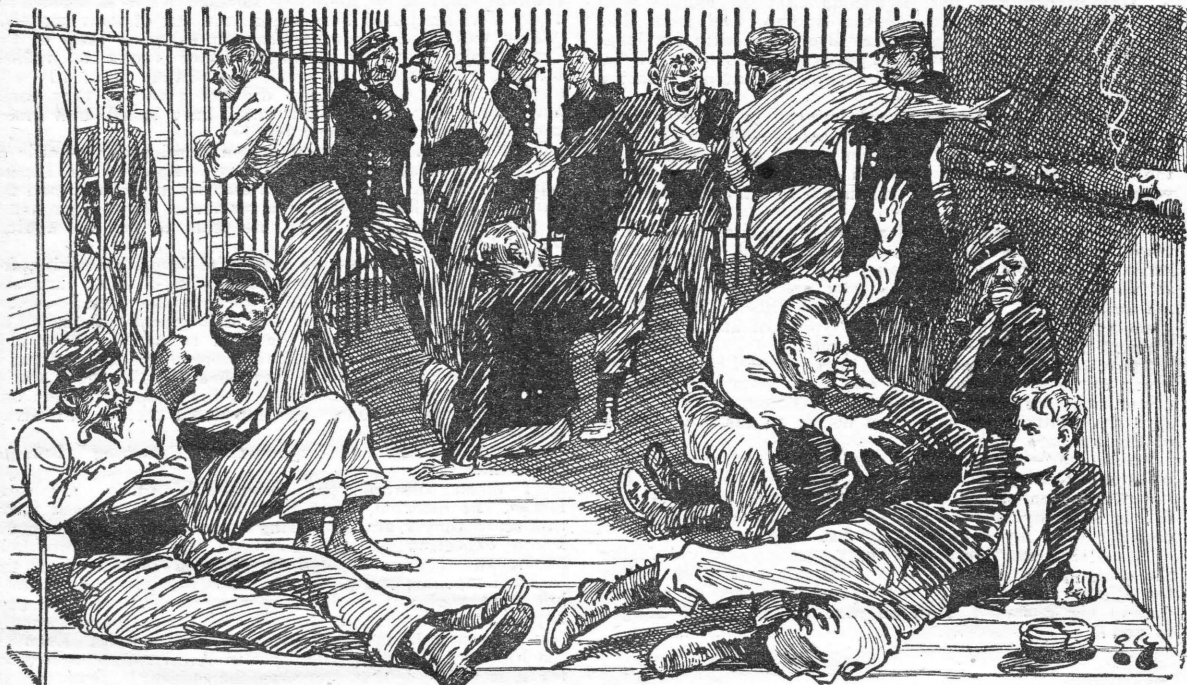
"I—I'm sorry!" exclaimed Gore, striding towards the fireplace, and placing himself between Clotilde and the glowing grate. "You see—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet.

(Continued on page 23.)

MORE THRILLS WITH THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION!

LOST IN THE LEGION!



By **WALTER EDWARDS.**

Terry Drake, down and out in Marseilles, has a fight with Sergeant Schomm of the Foreign Legion. Later he meets a legionnaire named Tod Browning, and after drinking with him he collapses. He wakes to find himself aboard a ship bound for Africa—to find himself a legionnaire carrying Tod Browning's identification papers! And he is in Sergeant Schomm's company! Arrived in Africa he again fights Schomm, and is taken before Colonel St. Just and sentenced to death. St. Just dismisses the sergeant and says: "Sit down, Drake, I want to talk to you!"

The Proposition!

TERRY was quite convinced that he was dreaming as the suave voice fell upon his ears, but his brain began to clear when the Butcher strolled round the table, and led him to a comfortable cane armchair. Going across to a cabinet, St. Just mixed two cool drinks, and he might have been in the smoke-room of his Paris club as he handed a beautiful crystal tumbler to the scarecrow figure in the chair.

Still a trifle dazed, Terry took the glass and poured the iced nectar down his parched throat.

"We will now get down to business, my boy," remarked the Butcher. "This private interview is somewhat irregular, as you will appreciate, so perhaps you will be kind enough to hear what I have to say without interruption. You may be surprised to hear that I knew your father very well many years ago; we were partners in a desert transport concern. It was an ambitious scheme, and we both dropped our capital. That is by the way, however. It was during this time that we were able to do a wealthy Arab sheikh a very great service, and he promised us a rich reward!"

"You mean Ben Armi!" almost blurted Terry, his eyes bright with excitement.

"Exactly." The Butcher nodded his sleek head. "Treasure worth perhaps a million pounds is cached somewhere in the North African desert, and I happen to know that Ben Armi gave your father the key to the whereabouts of the gold and jewels. He did this behind my back, did Ben Armi! And your father deliberately double-crossed me, Terry."

"I don't believe it!" flashed the youngster, colouring beneath his grime. "Dad was too straight to do a rotten thing like that!"

The Butcher shrugged the elegant shoulders of his perfectly tailored tunic, but the foxy gleam in his light eyes should have put Terry on his guard.

"We will not go into that," he said smoothly. "I have no doubt that your father gave you the key to the treasure

trove, and I am suggesting that we share the million. It is, to my way of thinking, the honourable course for you to take!"

"Just a moment!" begged Terry, running bewildered fingers through his tousled hair. This sudden and unexpected turn had happened with such suddenness that he did not know whether he was on his head or his heels. "Let me get this right, sir! Dad, on his deathbed, certainly told me a tall sort of yarn about a sheikh named Ben Armi and some hidden treasure; he also warned me against a Frenchman named Armand Rouel."

"My name," said the Butcher, with calm audacity, "was once Armand St. Just Rouel! I am Colonel St. Just in the Legion!"

Terry did some quick thinking before he ran on. Then:

"I didn't pay much credence to the story, even when he gave me particulars about the desert cache. Later, however, I thought there might be something in it, knowing that dad had spent much of his early life in North Africa, and with my last fifty pounds I decided to investigate matters. I got as far as Marseilles, where I was knocked on the head one night and robbed of every penny!"

"And later you met an amiable young legionnaire, who very neatly drugged you, and—er—presented you with a brand new identity!"

Starting, Terry stared at the hawk-faced soldier in wide-eyed amazement.

"Then—then you know all about that dirty business?" he stammered.

"Everything," nodded the Butcher. "I must take credit for the whole ingenious scheme. The idea of spending many years of my life in a filthy desert garrison makes no sort of appeal to a person of my fastidious and expensive tastes, and for a long time I have been planning to bring about this meeting with you.

"The idea of sharing a million intrigues me. I guessed that sooner or later you would be bitten by the urge to locate Ben Armi's treasure trove, and I had you followed

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from London to Paris, from Paris to Marseilles. Your faithful shadow was the admirable Tod Browning.

"In Paris, acting under my orders, he became a legionnaire, and a day or so later—thanks to my pulling the strings—he was on your trail again. The idea, my dear Drake, was to get you into the Legion, and chance favoured my plans in Marseilles.

"Having drugged you, Browning changed clothes with you and carried you aboard the trooper, and from that moment you became Legionnaire Browning, with ten long, weary, heartbreaking years to serve in the Legion of the Lost! And you would be lost; completely cut off from the outside world!"

Terry looked aghast as he sat forward in the cane arm-chair and stared into the cold, cynical eyes of the Butcher.

"Do you mean to say that you would go through with the dirty, blackguardly business and make me serve ten years with the Legion?" he demanded, in a tense, tremulous voice.

"There is nothing I would not do for half of Ben Armi's treasure, my dear Blake," confessed St. Just, with a quiet smile. "However, I am hoping you will listen to reason, in which case I will see that you are a free man in a matter of hours. But should you prove difficult," he ran on, glancing at his manicured nails, "you will find life in the Foreign Legion somewhat—er—trying!"

"A word to Sergeant Schomm, and you will be accused of every crime in the calendar, and I, as your commanding officer, will see that you get the maximum punishment! And that will go on until you decide to share the secret of the treasure with me!"

"You see"—the charming smile again in evidence—"I believe in putting my cards upon the table. You have had my proposition, and I am now prepared to hear that you fall in with my bright little idea. Taking everything into consideration, my dear fellow, what do you say?"

"Just this, sir," returned Terry, getting up and facing the confident, smiling St. Just. "If you think I'm falling for a dirty, blackmailing rotter like you, you've made a darned big mistake! Now do your worst, and be hanged to you!"

Whispers in the Night!

FOR reasons best known to Colonel Armand St. Just, Legionnaire "Browning" did not face a firing party at dawn. Instead, the death sentence was reduced to fourteen days' ordinary punishment, which sounds mild enough to those who know nothing about the disciplinary measures of the French Foreign Legion.

But to the poor devils who have to march round and round the sun-scorched barrack square for fourteen hours on end, with a full pack, a rifle, ammunition, and (should the N.C.O. in charge be in a vicious mood) a sack or so of sand strapped to the pack, the experience is a heart-breaking, muscle-tearing torture that sends many a victim to the verge of raving madness.

All too seldom are the defaulters allowed to rest. "Walk, march, run! Walk, march, run!" That is the order that is barked from the shade of a mud wall, where stands an N.C.O., safe to bully and threaten behind his stripes of authority. On, on, stumble the defaulters, through the sun-baked sand, their tongues parched, their eyes closed, their breath coming in great, sobbing gasps; automatons. Occasionally a man will fall down from sheer physical and mental exhaustion, to be kicked to his feet under a threat of further punishment. Or, maybe, a legionnaire gets a touch of the sun and threatens the N.C.O. with violence, in which case he is shot down like a mad dog.

Terry Drake was subjected to fourteen days of this inhuman torture, and a few minutes after his release from the guard-room he was taken before the Butcher.

"So you have changed your mind, perhaps?" suggested St. Just, as Terry swayed in front of him. Limp from exhaustion, his shoulders bowed, the youngster was pretty well all in, and there was a vacant expression in his dull eyes. "Maybe you are in a more reasonable frame of mind?" the smooth voice of the Butcher ran on.

Terry frowned hard in a desperate effort to concentrate, to pull his faded senses together. Slowly his jaw muscles knotted; he looked straight into the Butcher's hawk-like face, hated his expression of mocking amusement.

"What I said before," came in a husky whisper, "still stands! Do your worst, you blackmailing skunk, and be hanged to you!"

Taking Terry at his word, the Butcher proceeded to do his worst, and in the week that followed the youngster suffered all the fiendish tortures known to the devilish ingenuity of Sergeant Emil Schomm and his brother N.C.O.'s.

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Stripped to the skin, his limbs bound with wet rawhide, his feet drawn up behind him and lashed to his wrists, so that his straining body was shaped like a bow, he was left to roast in a broiling sun; and it was not long before he was covered with myriads of flies and insects—tiny vampires that covered his sweating features like a black, restless shadow. And the heat of the sun made the strips of wet rawhide contract in merciless fashion, until it seemed to Terry that his joints were being torn out of their sockets.

This was what Sergeant Schomm called a taste of the Crapillaude; also he practised other forms of refined torture, all designed to break the victim, physically, and mentally. But Terry Drake did not give in; they could not get his tail down. They would have to kill him first—and they were doing their best!

Then came news that Sheikh Ben Armi and his horde of savage tribesmen were getting active. Spies of the Legion reported that they contemplated making an attack upon the garrison at El Moukil within a matter of days. Ben Armi, it was whispered, had a private score to pay off against the Butcher.

The garrison was soon in a state of feverish activity, for Ben Armi was known to have a following of many thousand warriors, great fighters all, armed to the teeth. Extra ammunition was distributed, a double guard was posted at each look-out high up on the mud ramparts. Four outposts were manned at night, and about three hundred yards north of the garrison, some way ahead of the oasis, was a small sap—a hole in the sand just big enough to take one man and a machine-gun. The sap was a certain death-trap in case of attack.

Colonel St. Just had Legionnaire "Browning" brought before him.

"I much admire your indomitable spirit, my dear Drake," he drawled, when they were alone, "and it is on this score that I am conferring upon you a great honour. I am expecting an attack within the next twenty-four hours, and I have decided to put you in charge of the forward machine-gun post! Death is inevitable, of course; but what a glorious end! You are too young to die, perhaps, and the manner of your death will be hideous should you happen to be taken prisoner; but there it is! Even all the hidden treasure of Sheikh Ben Armi cannot save you, for it is my wish that you man the outpost! However, in certain circumstances I might change my mind. See me between now and sundown if you have anything to suggest!"

Stubborn, hard-eyed, Terry Drake had nothing to suggest, and purple shadows were creeping across the desert when he made his way from the garrison, skirted the oasis, and occupied the forward machine-gun post.

Not a sound broke the eerie stillness of the night; he seemed to have the universe to himself. Darkness settled upon the scene like a sable blanket, and a soothing feeling of peace and mental quietude overcame Terry Drake.

He was able to think clearly for the first time since waking up aboard the nightmare troopship, and he asked himself why he had not taken the line of least resistance and promised to share the sheikh's treasure with the Butcher. His flat refusal to listen to St. Just's proposition had brought him nothing but trouble—in chunks; and now he stood a hundred-to-one chance of meeting an early death, and a sticky one at that. Of course, it wasn't too late to creep back to the garrison and ask to see the Butcher; but he'd see the dirty blackmailer pickled in brine before he'd do that!

"I'm too young and beautiful to die yet," Terry told himself, with a fleeting grin. "I'm going to get out of this mess, and one day I'll square accounts with St. Just, Schomm & Company! I'll—"

"Hi-s-s-t!"

A soft, sibilant sound came to his quick ears, and his lean fingers were curled round the trigger of the machine-gun as he crouched forward and peered into the inky blackness ahead. He waited, making no move, no sound. But he could hear his heart hammering against his ribs.

Came a voice—low, clear, musical.

"I would have speech with thee, son of Richard Drake!" said the voice. "I come from Ben Armi! I have a fast horse waiting for thee! Follow thy servant! Come!"

A minute later the forward sap—a hole in the sand just big enough to take one man and a machine-gun—was empty.

Settling Accounts!

DAWN was breaking as Terry Drake was ushered into the tent of Sheikh Ben Armi. The youngster had been riding hard through the night, but he looked fresh enough as, bare-headed, he stood in the presence of the grey-bearded old man with the keen, bird-like eyes. Ben Armi, his aristocratic features expressionless, regarded his visitor for fully a minute; then—

"Be seated, son of Richard Drake," he said, in English,

"I am honoured to extend hospitality to the son of the very gallant gentleman who saved my life at the risk of his own! Refresh yourself!"

Sweetmeats, sweet cakes, baked meats, and a hot, mint-flavoured drink were placed before Terry, and it was with the best will in the world that he started to make short work of the feast. He was ravenous, and he didn't mind who knew it.

"You feel better, my son?" suggested Ben Armi at length.

"Fine, sir!" smiled Terry. "I needed that little snack! By the way," he went off at a tangent, "how did you know I was manning the forward outpost?"

"Nothing happens in the desert that is unknown to Ben Armi, my son," returned the old sheikh, gentle reproof in his tone. "The flying grains of sand whisper the secrets of the desert into my ears. I knew that you would come to claim your treasure; that you defied the Butcher proves that you are a true and worthy son of your revered father, Richard Drake! I loved him as a brother!" A shade of emotion passed across his haughty, finely chiselled countenance—and was gone. He continued: "The spirit of the desert is telling me something, my son! Before the sun sets this night, going down behind the rim of the world like a ball of flaming fire, the Butcher will become brave as a starving jackal, and attack this position! It will be a surprise attack!" The thought appeared to amuse the old warrior. "That is indeed droll, is it not, my son?"

Terry, who had fallen under the spell of his host, made a determined effort to pull himself together. He would have believed anything in the mysterious atmosphere of that tent; but he told himself that hard common sense must have a look in.

"Surely you don't know for certain that you are going to be attacked, sir!" he protested. "I mean—"

"I know what you mean, my son," murmured Ben Armi, with a wise, tolerant smile. "Come!"

He took his guest across to the door of the tent, and, with a slow, majestic gesture, pointed away to the south, where a faint cloud of white dust could be seen rising in the shimmering haze of the growing day.

"The Butcher!" he said simply. "He comes!"

Terry Drake nodded his fair head, but he did not pretend to understand the uncanny intuition that had warned the old warrior of the coming attack. Looking about him, he was surprised to find that the sheikh's retinue did not number more than about a score; but each man was obviously a picked fighter—a fine, upstanding figure in a white burnous.

Soft-footed and silent, the Arabs moved about with easy grace, and no one appeared to be paying the slightest heed to the approach of the legionnaires.

Faintly the blaring, discordant tune that is the marching song of the Legion came winging across the desert upon the parched breeze; and still Ben Armi and his men went about their business with an air of complete indifference that both puzzled and intrigued Terry Drake.

At midday less than a mile separated the marching soldiers and the tiny Arab camp. Well in advance of the legionnaires was the Butcher, and behind him rode an orderly bearing a white pennant—signal of peace or surrender. In the present case the fluttering scrap of bunting was obviously a symbol of peace.

On came the double file of legionnaires, enveloped in a dense cloud of white dust, and the Arabs were ranged on either side of Ben Armi when Colonel St. Just brought his company to a halt and rode forward to greet the sheikh with a smart salute.

"I come in peace, Excellency!" he cried, dismounting; and for a brief moment his sinister gaze rested upon Terry Drake, who was standing near the doorway of the tent.

"In peace I greet you," returned Ben Armi; "in peace will I speed you on your way!"

The Butcher flushed at the veiled insult in the words.

"I have reason to believe that you are harbouring a deserter from the French Foreign Legion," he announced formally, "and I must request you to surrender him into my custody!"

"I harbour no deserter, sir," said Ben Armi, calm and dignified, "but if you refer to Drake, the British youth, I can tell you that which you already know! Drake is not a member of the Foreign Legion, so I feel no call to hand him over to you!"

"You refuse to obey my order?" rasped the Butcher, a snarl in his tone.

"I refuse!" nodded Ben Armi.

Came a barked command from the Butcher, and the legionnaires, moving like clockwork figures, dropped to one knee and brought their rifles to the shoulder, each man ready for immediate action.

"Not a move!" snarled the Butcher, glowering round at the Arabs. "Show a sign of treachery, you mangy desert rats, and I'll wipe you out! I'll— Take it, you cur!"

Crack!

A tongue of orange flame spat from his revolver, and the tall warrior on Ben Armi's right gave a coughing grunt and dropped into a writhing heap. A moment later he lay still, staring up at the bright blue heavens with wide-open eyes that did not see.

The cold-blooded killing seemed to release all the pent-up fury of Hades, and the crack of the shot was still echoing across the desert wastes when a cataclysm of shrill, blood-curdling yells rang out, freezing the marrow in Terry Drake's bones. The screeching din, terrifying in its note of hate and fury, rose to a piercing crescendo, until the tortured air seemed to vibrate beneath the assault.

Ben Armi had made his camp upon a plateau, and from all sides there appeared swarthy, bearded faces, dark eyes flashing with ferocity, the gleam of bared teeth and naked steel. The sheikh's warriors had been hidden from sight in a deep fold in the sand, and the Butcher and his men had walked into the trap.

Crying aloud for vengeance, the Arab warriors swarmed over the edge of the plateau and flung themselves upon the legionnaires, and the scene of terror and carnage that followed made Terry Drake stare in wide-eyed horror. Once roused, the Arab fights to the death, and on this occasion the brutal murder of Ben Armi's half-brother was a crime that had to be wiped out in infidel blood.

Terry Drake's first feeling of horror passed in a flash, and he flung himself bodily at the knees of the Butcher just as that gallant officer was about to send a bullet into the heart of Sheikh Ben Armi. Bringing his man crashing to the sand with a tough Rugger tackle, Terry gripped the sinewy throat with one hand and grabbed for the revolver with the other. In a moment he was covering the Butcher.

The Butcher, his own gun jammed hard against his spine, was forced towards the gaudy tent of Sheikh Ben Armi, and his foxy face was grey and twitching as he looked over his shoulder and stared at Terry with crazy, hate-laden eyes.

"Kill me, can't you?" he raved, his thin voice cracking. "You can't hand me over to Ben Armi and his savages! It'll mean torture—torture! You don't understand! Save me, Drake! Spare me—mercy!" He flung his bony hands about his head in a paroxysm of stark terror. "It means torture, I tell you—torture!"

"I always knew you were a yellow rat," said Terry, jabbing him with the gun. "But you're going to take what's coming to you! Keep going!"

Passing within the cool, shady tent, the Butcher found the calm eyes of Ben Armi fixed upon him, and what he saw in their depths brought a shrill cry of terror from his grey lips. Twirling round, he snatched the revolver from Terry's grasp and blazed away at point-blank range, and it was in the swirl of arid smoke that the youngster pitched forward and sprawled across the rugs.

Came a swift flash of steel, like a streak of white light in a darkened room, and the sheikh's short sword severed the Butcher's hand from the wrist, and the detached hand, with its clawlike fingers, was still grasping the butt as the gun dropped softly into the sand.

Screaming with agony, the Butcher felt himself swung bodily off his feet, and the next moment he was held high above the noble head of Sheikh Ben Armi, who carried him out of the tent and flung him to the Arabs, who, snarling like ravenous jackals, fought and clawed and scrambled as they fell upon their prey.

It was a fortnight later when Sheikh Ben Armi and a score of picked warriors escorted Terry towards the coast. With them went many camels laden with brass-bound chests, and within the chests was treasure such as Aladdin never dreamed of. The gold coin and precious stones were a gift from Ben Armi to the son of the gallant gentleman who, in the distant past, had saved the sheikh's life—for Ben Armi was a man of his word.

"You will come back to the desert one day, my son?" asked Ben Armi, almost tenderly, on bidding farewell to his guest.

"I will come back, sir," promised Terry Drake; and he meant what he said, for he also was a man of his word.

THE END.

"St. Frank's versus Foo Chow!" A gripping yarn of thrilling schoolboy adventure in China, featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. of St. Frank's, starts in next week's GEM.

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CHUMS OF THE CIRCUS!

(Continued from page 24.)

"I see it is a feahful cheek for you to come in like this," he exclaimed. "You boundah—"
 "Hold on, Gussy; let a chap speak before you scalp him," exclaimed Tom Merry, who saw by Gore's expression that something was amiss. "Anything the matter, Gore?"
 "Yes," said Gore hurriedly. "A chap—I won't tell you his name—has shoved some fireworks in your chimney, and they may explode any minute."
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Crash!"
 "There they are!"

for he had stood in the full force of the explosions, and his skin was scorched, his eyebrows and hair singed.

"By George," exclaimed Talbot, grasping Gore's hand, "you're a plucky fellow, anyway. Clotilde, you're not hurt?"

"No," stammered the girl, "I am not hurt; but I should have been but for—"

"But for Gore!" stammered D'Arcy. "Amazing!"

"It's all right," said Gore awkwardly. "You see, I—"

"Your face wants looking after," said Tom Merry anxiously. "You're scorched. I say, you are a plucky chap, Gore; and you were quick, too. I'm so glad you weren't hurt, Miss Clotilde. It's too smoky to stay here, Blake; let's get into my study."

"Good!"

"We'll bring the food," said Fatty Wynn.

No one had been hurt except Gore. Blake led him away to have his face attended to, and the party adjourned to Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

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Something had fallen heavily into the fire from above. A myriad of sparks shot up, and there was a fizz, a buzz, then—

Crack, crack, crack! Bang, bang, bang! Fizz-z-z-z!
 There was a hubbub of exclamations at once.
 Talbot sprang towards Clotilde; his first thought was for her. But he collided with D'Arcy, and both fell over an overturned chair, and staggered away.

But there was someone to help her. It was Gore!
 Even as the crash in the fire came, he had torn off his jacket and had it wrapped round Clotilde's face in a twinkling, and held it there.

The girl made no movement, too dazed and bewildered to know what was happening.

The scene lasted only a minute.
 The last detonation rang out, and it ceased, and Blake dragged the window open for the smoke to clear, and the juniors gathered up the fragments to fling them back into the grate, for the carpet was catching alight in several places.

Tom Merry sprang towards Gore.
 Gore's shirt-sleeve was alight, and Tom Merry clapped his hands over it, careless of the pain, and squeezed it out.
 The Shell fellow's face, too, was blackened and bruised,

Ten minutes later Blake returned with Gore. Gore's face was almost hidden under bandages, placed there by the skilful hands of the House dame, and only one of his eyes was visible. He was grinning painfully through the bandages, and seemed very nervous about joining the party.

"I made him come," said Blake. "Modest hero! Wants to light his hide under a bushel—I mean, he wants to hide his light under a bushel. But here he is."

And when the feast was over, and the circus chums took their leave, Clotilde gave the one-time cad of the Shell her hand, with a sweet smile.

"Thank you so much!" she said. "It was very brave and very kind of you."

Gore turned crimson through the bandages.

"You're very good to say so," he stammered.

The juniors escorted the circus chums back to Signor Tomsonio's camp in great state, and took leave of them there.

But it was not the last time that Tom Merry & Co. were to meet the chums of the circus.

THE END.

(There's another ripping yarn of Tom Merry and Co. and the Circus in next week's GEM entitled: "Gussy's Star Turn!")



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