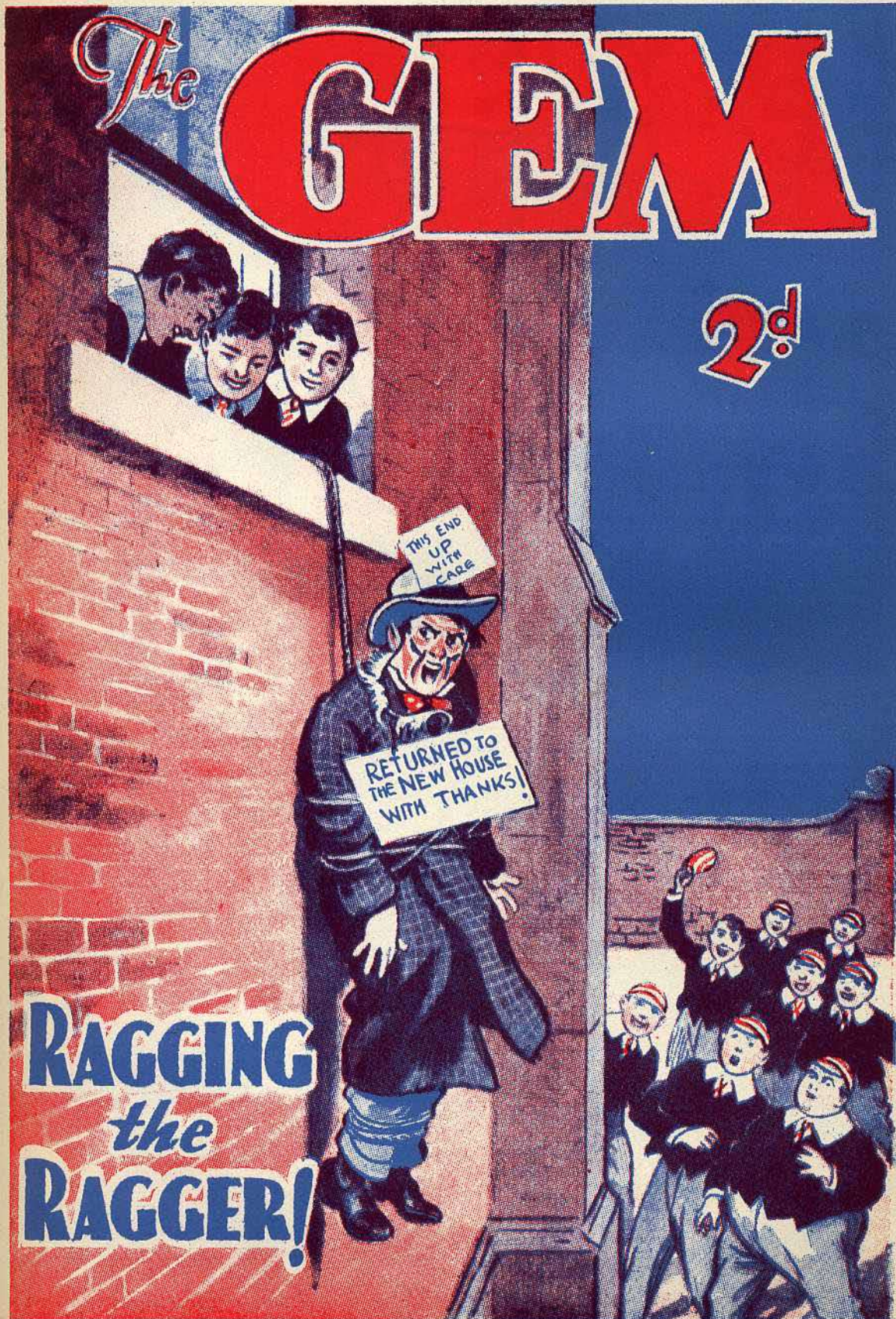


"D'ARCY THE 'TEG!" FULL-OF-LAUGHS, LIVELY LONG YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S **INSIDE.**

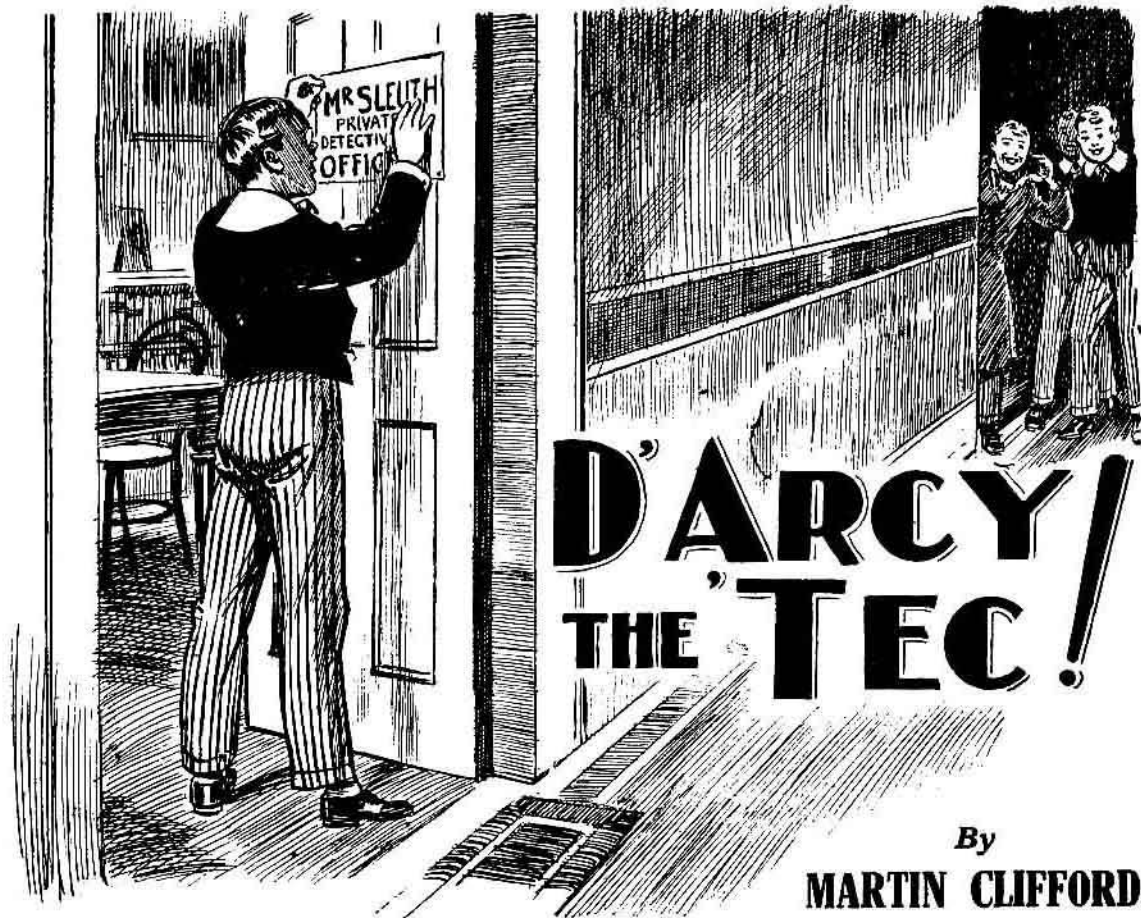
The **GEM**

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RAGGING
the
RAGGER!



THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE WHOSE FIRST CASE WAS ALSO HIS LAST!



By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Arthur Augustus proudly pinned up the notice announcing that his study was the office of Mr. Sleuth, the detective. Had he looked down the passage his suspicions might have been aroused by three juniors, one of whom was putting on false whiskers!

CHAPTER I. Stony Broke!

"**S**TONY!"
"Busted!"
"Broke!"
Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked at one another lugubriously. The Terrible Three of St. Jim's were in their study in the Shell passage in the School House.

It was a Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a bright, keen, wintry afternoon. The chums of the Shell had planned a little excursion for that afternoon. They were almost ready to start when they made the painful discovery that they were "broke."

Tom Merry ran his hands through his pockets.

"Nothing there," he said, after a vain search. "I was relying on you chaps this afternoon; my new footer cleared me right out."

"And I was relying on you two," grinned Monty Lowther. "I've been stony for two days already."

"And I was relying on you two," said Manners. "My last three bob went for films this morning."

Monty Lowther snorted.
"Just like you, you ass, to blue the last available funds in rotten films for
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your rotten camera," he remarked. "Fathead!"

"Well, how was I to know?" argued Manners.

"Poof! But I'll tell you what," said Lowther, struck by a sudden thought. "You can sell them to Levison of the Fourth. He does photography, and he will give you half-price for them."

"Half-price for a roll of new films, you ass!"

"Well, eightpence is better than nothing," said Lowther.

"It isn't better than a roll of films," said Manners. "Besides, I'm going to take my camera out. What's the good of a camera without films?"

"What's the good of a camera, anyway?" retorted Lowther.

"Look here, you fathead—"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Peace, my children—peace," said Tom Merry, waving his hands. "This isn't the way to raise the wind. The question is—what's going to be done?"

"We're going to be done, I think," growled Monty Lowther. "I'm not even expecting a remittance—and the post doesn't come in till three, anyway."

"Same here," said Manners. "I shan't have anything till Saturday. Look here, Lowther, I heard Croke offer you half-a-crown for your knife with three blades the other day."

"Yes, I know he did; it cost me nine-and-six."

"Well, half-a-crown is better than nothing—"

"Eh?"

"You sell Croke your knife, and we'll say nothing more about the films," said Manners.

"Well," said Lowther in measured tones, "of all the silly asses—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Cheese it!" he said. "Let's get along to Study No. 6. Gussy is generally rolling in quids; and Blake, or Herries, or Dig may have something. If they're stony we'll go over to the New House and try Figgins & Co. Come on!"

"But about those films—"

Lowther.

"About that knife—"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" bawled Tom Merry. "Shut up! And come on, or those bounders will be gone out for the afternoon!"

Tom Merry hurried down the passage, and Manners and Lowther, with a mutual snort, followed him. Tom Merry kicked open the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. The sound of voices told him that Blake & Co. were at home.

Jack Blake's voice could be heard as he came down the passage.

"I suppose we shall have to wait till three. It's rotten!"

—FOLLOW THE TRAIL OF THE SEXTON BLAKE OF ST. JIM'S AND ENJOY A LAUGH!

"Yaas, wathah!" replied the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It will be all wight then. Hallo! What do you Shell boundahs want?"

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, the chums of the Fourth Form, were all at home. It was a little singular, too. It was not like them to be shut up in a study on a fine afternoon.

Tom Merry guessed that they had been having a discussion similar to that in their own study, and his hopes fell.

"You fellows rolling in quids?" he asked. "If you are, you can hand out a loan—till Saturday. I get a remittance then."

Blake grinned. "I've got three-halfpence," he said. "Dig has got a ha'penny, and Herries a French penny; Gussy's got nothing. The silly ass has blued all his tin on a rotten toppah!"

"It isn't a wotten toppah," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "It is a wippin' new toppah, quite the latest thing. I sat on a toppah in the passage the othah day, owin' to Tom Mewwy, Mannahs, and Lowthah biffin' into me, and I was bound to have a new one. And I only paid twenty-seven-and-six for it."

"Nuff to keep the study in funds for weeks!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We were going out this afternoon," growled Blake, "and we've found that we're all stony."

Tom Merry grinned. "Same here," he said. "We came along to borrow a quid."

"We were going to come to you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry looked inquiringly at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Sure you haven't got a quid you've forgotten?" he suggested. "You might have one in another pocket, you know."

"I haven't a single quid left, deah boy," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "But it will be all wight at three o'clock."

"Remittance coming?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Much?"

"Fivah."

"Oh, good! You'll be able to ladle out a quid then?"

"A pound, deah boy, with pleasah!"

"But is it sure to come, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry. "We don't want to be kept hanging about till three o'clock on false pretences, you know. Is it a dead cert?"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely on it, Tom Mewwy. I wote to my governah on Monday, and explained to him that I was wathah short. I said it was infva dig for a chap like me to be in wegulah wisk of wunnin' short of money. I said it would be a good ideah to make a new awwangement entirely about my pocket-money."

"H'm!" said Blake doubtfully. "But will your governor play up?"

"Oh, yaas," said D'Arcy confidently. "I've put it to him wely plainly. In fact, I have insisted upon his makin' a new awwangement. There will be a fivah at least in his lettah, and I specially asked him to post it not later than this mornin', so that I should get it this aftahnoon without fail. It will be all wight—and a fivah will see us all through till we get our wegulah cash on Saturday."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "How long is that blessed postman going to be?"

"Quarter of an hour at least!" growled Blake.

"Patience, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Ewevythin' comes to him who waits, you know."

"But we're going over to Wayland for the matinee at the Theatre Royal," said Monty Lowther, "and we don't want to be late. Let's go down and wait for the postman."

"Good!"

The juniors proceeded downstairs. They left the School House, and strolled down to the school gates, and watched the road for the postman.

Crooke of the Shell was standing there, probably waiting for the postman, too. He gave the chums of the School House a glare of disfavour. The cad of the Shell was on the worst possible terms with Tom Merry & Co.

Manners nudged Monty Lowther, "Chance for you with the knife," he whispered.

"Oh, rats!"

"Half-a-crown, you know—"

"Rot!"

"Here comes the postman!" exclaimed Herries. "He's early. Buck up, Blagg, old man!"

Blagg, the Rylcombe postman, halted in the gateway with a cheery smile.

|||||

When Gussy, the 'tec, takes to the trail, it's the jagers—not the crooks—who sit up and take notice!

|||||

It was not an unusual experience for Blagg to be met by juniors anxious for remittances.

"Arternoon, young gentlemen!" said Blagg.

"Lettah for me, Blagg, deah boy?"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"Oh, good!"

"Letter for me, too?" said Crooke.

"Yes, Master Crooke."

"Well, hand mine over—that Fourth Form kid can wait!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his famous monocle into his eye, and took a severe glance at the cad of the Shell.

"Weally, Cwooke—" he said.

"Take your letter, ass!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Are you going to keep Blagg holding it out all the afternoon?" demanded Digby.

"Bai Jove! Sowwy, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus turned back to the postman, and took the letter Blagg was holding out. Then Blagg sorted out Crooke's letter.

D'Arcy glanced at the crest on his envelope, and smiled with satisfaction.

"It's all wight, deah boys; it's ffrom the patah."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Blake.

"Open it," said Digby.

Crooke had received a registered letter, and was signing for it with an air of great importance. Crooke had had a remittance, at all events, whatever Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was getting.

D'Arcy felt in his waistcoat pocket for a penknife, and slit the envelope with great deliberation. If Arthur Augustus had been famishing, and a remittance had arrived at the last moment, he would probably not have opened his letter with his thumb. He cut the envelope open quite carefully

and slowly, while the exasperated juniors stood round and glared at him like wolves.

"Buck up, you ass!" said Jack Blake sulphurously.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hurry up!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, don't talk to him!" groaned Digby. "It will only make him longer. It's all right if there's a remittance. If there isn't, we'll bump him till he sees stars!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be bumped, Dig, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, pausing in opening the letter. "I should wegard—"

"Open that letter, you fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead!"

Arthur Augustus drew a letter out of the envelope—the other fellows restraining their remarks with great difficulty.

D'Arcy unfolded the letter, and looked puzzled. Then he jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and peered into the envelope. Then he looked round him.

"What are you looking for?" roared Blake.

"Did I dwop a fivah?"

"No, you didn't!"

"Bai Jove! It's vewy wemarkable. There doesn't seem to be one in the lettah!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Howevah, I will wead the lettah!"

He read it.

"Well?" howled the juniors.

"Bai Jove! Look at that, deah boys! I wegard the governah as havin' failed uttably to play the game!"

The juniors looked at the letter. It was short, if not sweet, and very much to the point:

"Dear Arthur,—I have decided to adopt your suggestion, and make an entirely new arrangement about your allowance. As you are very careless with money, I shall try the experiment of not sending you any allowance at all for a few weeks, in order that you may realise the value of it. I think this is an excellent idea, and I should be glad to have your opinion about this new arrangement.—Your affectionate Father."

The juniors looked at D'Arcy, and D'Arcy looked at the juniors.

"So this is what we've stayed in till three o'clock for, is it?" said Jack Blake, in measured tones.

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally, deah boys— Ow! Oh! Yah! Leggo! Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy descended upon the earth with a bumping sound.

Tom Merry & Co. walked back into the quadrangle, leaving the swell of St. Jim's sitting in the gateway, looking very much surprised and gasping for breath.

CHAPTER 2.

A Raid on Rivals!

TOM MERRY looked out of his study window thoughtfully. The wind was whirling the fallen leaves about the old quadrangle. Afar on the playing fields the footballers could be seen. The match was nearly finished.

Behind Tom Merry in the study, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,447.

Manners and Lowther were engaged in a heated argument. It was too late for the matinee at Wayland now; but another pressing question was troubling the Terrible Three.

The cupboard in Tom Merry's study was in the same state as that of the celebrated Mother Hubbard. The Shell fellows, of course, could have tea in Hall, at the common table. But that was not what they wanted. On a keen winter afternoon, what they wanted was a cosy little tea in the study, with a good fire going, and plenty of hot buttered toast.

Manners was of the opinion that if Lowther sold his knife to Crooke, the half-crown resulting from the sale would stand a very good tea in the study.

Monty Lowther, on the other hand, was of the opinion that if Manners sold his films to Levison for one-and-sixpence, the tea could be stood quite comfortably for eightpence.

Tom Merry did not take part in the discussion. He was thinking out the problem. It was a problem that knocked any of Euclid into a cocked hat.

It was only Wednesday; and nobody expected any romances until Saturday. How were the chums to live on nothing for four days? How were they, in the first place, to put anything on the tea-table that afternoon?

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought. He was still thinking it out, when a voice floated up from below in the quadrangle. Two juniors had stopped quite near Tom Merry's study window, and their voices came quite distinctly to his ears.

He glanced down. The two juniors were Figgins and Fatty Wynn of the New House—both Fourth Formers.

Figgins & Co. were the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co., and it was rather unusual for them to have stopped so near the School House to discuss their plans.

But Tom Merry understood as he heard what they said.

"We'll have it in the old chapel," said Figgins.

"Right-ho!" said Fatty Wynn. "Pratt and Thompson have both got their eyes open, and we don't want a crowd. There will be just enough for three, and we don't want them walking into the study to take their whack."

"Good!"

"I'll get it now," said Fatty Wynn. "Mrs. Taggles told me the pies would be ready at four, and it's turned four now. You and Kerr get the things ready in the chapel."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

"Then I'm off! Mind Pratt doesn't see what you're up to; we shall have a crowd of them round if they know it's steak-and-kidney pies."

"I'll be careful!"

Fatty Wynn rolled away to the tuck-shop, and Figgins scudded off towards the New House.

Tom Merry chuckled silently, and turned back into the study. Warfare was always raging between the two Houses at St. Jim's—at least, so far as the juniors of both Houses were concerned. And Tom Merry thought he saw now where tea was coming from.

Monty Lowther and Manners were still arguing, and they were growing quite excited.

"Peace!" said Tom Merry. "No need to sell the knife or the films. We're going to sell Figgins & Co.!"

"What!"

"I know where tea is coming from!" grinned Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. are going to have steak-and-kidney pies in the ruined chapel."

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"My hat!"

"And we're going to be there—what?"

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "It will be one up against the New House, and a jolly good feed in the bargain. Dame Taggles' steak-and-kidney pies are simply ripping! We could have bought one if Manners had sold his silly films to Levison."

"If you'd sold your old knife—"

"Shut up," exclaimed Tom Merry, "and come on! We'd better take Blake & Co., as there will be three of the New House bouders. We don't want a battle, but a feed this time."

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

The Terrible Three hurried out of the study. They met Blake & Co. downstairs, just about to go into the dining-room, and stopped them.

"Where are you going?" asked Tom Merry.

"Tea in Hall!" grunted Blake. "Nothing in the study. These are hard times, and no mistake. Gussy's spent our tea for a month on his new topper!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh scat!"

"I refuse to scat—"

"Come with us!" said Tom Merry.

"We're going to stand a feed!"

"Oh good! Have you raised the wind, then?"

"No; it's a New House raid."

"Bai Jove, that's a good deal! We'll make Figgins & Co. grand our tea!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"That's the wheeze! They're having steak-and-kidney pies. They're going to feed in the ruined chapel, and we're going to drop in on them."

"What are they going to feed them for?" asked Blake, in surprise. "Jolly cold weather for a picnic, I must say!"

"Fatty Wynn's afraid of company in the study," grinned Tom Merry. "He thinks the steak-and-kidney pies will be safer in the old ruin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a little mistake of his; they won't be so safe, as it happens."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kangaroo, old chap, come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, catching the Cornstalk junior in the Hall. "You, too, Glyn. The more the merrier!"

"What's the row?" asked Kangaroo.

"House raid."

"Oh good! I'm on!"

And nine juniors hurried out of the School House together. There were certainly enough of them to deal with Figgins & Co., but Tom Merry knew it was possible that the New House trio might have somebody with them, and he did not wish to run the least risk of one of them scuttling off with the feed while a struggle was in progress.

The steak-and-kidney pie, or pies, were destined for the School House.

The School House juniors skirted the building and hurried through the leafless elms towards the ruined chapel.

The old chapel was one of the most ancient parts of St. Jim's, and dated from its monastic days. It was little more than a mass of tumbledown masonry, with here and there a shattered doorway or casement. But there was plenty of cover for an ambush. There was no sign of Figgins & Co. when the Terrible Three and their allies arrived in the ruin.

Near the entrance to the old crypt there was a clear space of level flagstones, where picnic parties often gathered in the summer.

Tom Merry & Co. took cover among the masses of old brickwork, and waited.

Five minutes passed.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah cold here!" Arthur Augustus murmured.

"Feet cold?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Put them in your hat!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Shut up!" said Kangaroo. "I can hear somebody!"

"They must be awful asses to feed in the open air on a day like this," murmured Arthur Augustus. "Are you quite sure they're comin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, ass!"

"But how do you know, deah boy?"

"I heard them say so. Figgins and Fatty Wynn stopped under my window to jaw."

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps they were pulling your leg, deah boy."

"Eh?"

"Might have been spoofin' you, you know—"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"Bai Jove! No!"

"Then don't you hint that a New House waster could spoof me! They're coming right enough!" said Tom Merry severely. "By Jove! There they are! Quiet!"

Through an opening in the old masonry, Figgins & Co. could be seen entering the ruins.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn came in together. There was nobody else with them.

Fatty Wynn was carrying a pie in both hands, evidently with the greatest care. Figgins was speaking, and his voice came to the ears of the ambushed juniors.

"Careful with that pie, Fatty!"

"Right-ho, Figgy!"

"If you drop it, you'll crack the dish!"

"I'm not going to drop it, you ass! Do you think I'd risk wasting the gravy?" Fatty Wynn asked indignantly.

Tom Merry gave D'Arcy a triumphant glance.

"Well, isn't that all right?" he demanded, in a whisper.

"By Jove! Yaas!"

"Wait till they get close," murmured Blake. "Let Fatty Wynn put the pie down before we go for them! We don't want to risk breaking the dish and losing the gravy!"

The juniors chuckled silently.

Figgins & Co. came on, and stopped within six paces of the ambushed School House fellows, and Fatty Wynn laid down the pie on a flat piece of masonry. A slight steam was rising from the pie, and the sight of it made the School House fellows' mouths water.

It was a keen day, and they had not had their tea, and the sight of that tempting pie made them feel quite famished.

"There!" said Fatty Wynn. "Now—Hallo—"

There was a sudden rush of feet.

"Collar them!" roared Tom Merry.

"Look out!" yelled Figgins.

But the School House fellows were upon them with a rush.

Figgins & Co. went rolling over in the grasp of five or six fellows, and Tom Merry caught up the pie.

"Rescue!" roared Figgins. "Rescue, New House!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry.

And, leaving Figgins & Co. sprawling breathlessly upon the old flags, Tom Merry & Co. dashed away with the captured pie. They did not mean to eat it in the ruins, and give the New House fellows time to turn the tables on them. They rushed the prize away at once to the School House.

The raiders were gone in a moment, their footsteps and laughter dying away in the distance.

Figgins & Co. sat up, and looked at one another. They did not seem wrathful. Figgins grinned, and Kerr laughed, and Fatty Wynn chuckled a fat chuckle.

"Gentlemen," said Figgins, "this is where we smile!"
And they smiled loudly.

CHAPTER 3.

With Kind Regards!

TOM MERRY & CO. rushed the prize into the School House.

Figgins' yell for rescue had not been answered, but if it had been, the New House fellows would have had to be very quick to intercept the raiders.

They dashed breathlessly into the School House, Tom Merry with the captured pie, wrapped in the cloth, safe in his grasp.

"Bal Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We've done the boundabs!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, meeting the juniors as they swarmed in. "What's the excitement about?"

"N-nothing!" stammered Tom Merry. "Wo—we've been running."

The captain of St. Jim's glanced at the wrapped-up pie.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"Steak-and-kidney pie for tea!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh!" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Will you come and have some, Kildare?" asked Tom Merry hospitably. "It's a ripping pie, and there's simply

heaps of it. I've never had such a big one before. And we got it cheap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Kildare shook his head.

"Thanks all the same, I've had my tea," he said. "I hope you'll enjoy your pie. Don't drop it on the stairs!"

"No fear! We're not going to risk losing the gravy!" grinned Blake.

"Wathah not!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors carried the pie carefully upstairs, leaving Kildare looking after them rather suspiciously.

Cutts of the Fifth stopped them on the landing.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Pie!"

"Good!" said Cutts. "I haven't had my tea!"

"Come and have some with us, then," said Tom Merry. "It's simply a ripping pie, and it's a jolly big one! There won't be anything else but pie, but there will be plenty of pie. It's steak-and-kidney!"

"Good egg!" said Cutts. "I'll come!"

"Right-ho, come along!"

The juniors proceeded to Tom Merry's study, accompanied by the Fifth Former.

Tom Merry deposited the great pie on the table.

The juniors surrounded the table in great glee. The steam was still rising from the crust of the enormous pie. The crust was beautifully browned, and gave promise of the excellent things within.

"Plates!" said Tom Merry. "We shan't want any cups or saucers, because it won't run to tea. We've got some bread, and there's plenty of salt and pepper. But you chaps will have to fetch your own plates and knives and forks."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

The juniors proceeded in search of cutlery, while Tom Merry laid the cloth upon the table, and Monty Lowther furnished salt and pepper.

Cutts of the Fifth reposed himself in the armchair the while. It was an honour to the juniors for a Fifth Former to come to tea with them; at all events, so Cutts regarded it, and he wished to make the fact clearly understood.

"Here you are!" said Blake, coming in with a plate under each arm, and a couple of knives and forks in either hand.

The others followed him in with a further supply.

Tom Merry took up a knife and presided over the pie.

"If we had any lemonade, we'd drink it to the founder of the feast," he remarked. "We really ought to give Figgins & Co. a cheer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You got that from Figgins?" asked Cutts.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Fifth Former chuckled.

"Well, hand it out," he said.

Tom Merry stuck the blade of the knife through the crust for a beginning. He expected a jet of luscious steam to rise through the opening. But it didn't. The knife went in a couple of inches very easily, and then stopped. It had struck something hard.

"Cut away!" said Manners.

Tom Merry looked bewildered.

"I can't," he said. "The knife's stuck in something. My hat! The steak Mrs. Taggles used must have been frightfully tough."

He dragged the knife out again with an effort, and pushed it through the crust in another place.

There was the same result.

"Queer there's no steam," said Blake.

"Looks as though there's no gravy!"



"Wait till they get close," murmured Blake. "Let Fatty Wynn put the pie down before we go for them!" Figgins & Co. came into the ruins, and Fatty Wynn laid down the large pie. The New House juniors were apparently unaware that they had walked right into their rivals' ambush!

"Pewwaps Tom Mewwy spilt it bwingin' it here—"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry politely.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Loosen the crust round, and take it off in a piece," said Lowther.

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry slid the knife round the edge of the pie-dish.

The crust should have come up quite easily. But it didn't.

"Looks as if it's glued down!" said Blake.

"Or gummed!" grinned Digby.

"Oh, buck up with that pie!" said Cutts, yawning. "Don't keep a fellow waiting all night!"

Tom Merry slashed a gap in the crust, and turned the piece out. Then he looked into the pie. Then a very queer expression came over his face.

He slashed at the crust again, and removed a larger portion.

Then all the juniors could see into the interior of the pie-dish.

There was a yell.

"Great Scott!"

"What is it?"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Spoofed!" yelled Kangaroo.

Tom Merry gazed speechlessly into the pie. Concealed by the luscious crust, but revealed now that the crust was removed, was an ancient boot!

There was nothing else in the pie-dish, excepting some torn up leaves of an old exercise book, evidently put in for packing.

The ancient boot was very dirty and muddy, and looked as if it had been picked off a dust-heap after reposing there for some weeks exposed to wind and rain.

Tom Merry gazed at it like a fellow in a dream. Was this the pie that Figgins & Co. had been so anxious to keep to themselves that they had taken it to the ruined chapel instead of to their own study in the New House?

"Spoofed!" roared Blake.

"B-but—" stammered Tom Merry.

"Spoofed!"

"Dished!"

"Done!"

"I—I—I c-can't understand it!" gasped Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. were going to eat that pie—"

"I hope they'd have enjoyed it, if they had," said Cutts of the Fifth sarcastically. "Of all the silly jossers that ever jossed, I think you chaps are about the jossiest. Poof!"

And Cutts of the Fifth stalked indignantly from the study.

Tom Merry stared at the pie, and the other fellows glared at Tom Merry.

They hardly noticed the indignant departure of Cutts.

He was nothing to them now. They were thinking of the pie, and the elaborate jape Figgins & Co. had worked on them.

"Oh, you burbling jabberwock!" said Jack Blake. "You awful, terrifico noodle!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You frightful chump!" said Kangaroo.

"You unspeakable duffer!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Yaas; I warned you that Figgins & Co. were spooing you, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, solemnly wagging his forefinger at the unhappy captain of the Shell. "Of course, they saw you at the study window, and spoke for you to hear, and you fell into the twap like a silly ass. Bai Jove!"

"B-but—" gasped Tom Merry.

"B-but!" mimicked Blake sarcastically. "Do you think you can butt the

old boot away, and butt in a steak-and-kidney pie instead?"

"B-b-but—"

"Listen to him!" said Herries. "Like a giddy gramophone that won't stop!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Tom Mewwy as an ass!"

"B-but—"

"Oh, go on!" said Blake. "Pile it on! B-b-but—it's a pleasure to listen to you. Better than eating pie!"

"B-b-but Figgins was going to eat that pie," said Tom Merry. "Figgins has been spooed himself over that pie! That's what it is!"

"Yes, very likely," said Monty Lowther, loyally backing up his chum. "Perhaps Figgins raided it from Rodfern—"

"Perhaps he raided Redfern's grandmother!" roared Blake. "Look at that!"

He jerked out the boot. Underneath it in the pie-dish, a card lay, and upon the card, in the well-known handwriting of Figgins, were written the words:

"WITH KIND REGARDS FROM FIGGINS & CO.!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Well, you ass—"

"Oh!"

"He's left off saying 'b-b-but,' and started saying 'oh!'" said Blake. "Blessed if I'm going to stay here and listen to him; I'm off!"

And the Fourth Formers departed wrathfully from the study. Arthur

THE RETURN OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS!

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Augustus D'Arcy turned in the doorway to fix his eyeglass severely upon Tom Merry, and wagged a forefinger at him. "Tom Mewwy," he said, "I wegard you as an ass!"

And then the swell of St. Jim's followed his chums.

Kangaroo and Glyn went out of the study laughing. The Terrible Three were left alone, looking at the pie, and at one another.

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, at last.

"Oh!" grunted Lowther. "I endorse D'Arcy's remark. You're an ass! I'm goin' down to tea in Hall. You can eat the old boot if you like! I don't care; you can have my whack, and welcome!"

And Monty Lowther stamped out.

Manners followed him.

Tom Merry snorted.

There was a terrific crash as he hurled the pie-dish into the grate, and then he followed his chums downstairs to tea in Hall.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy's Decision!

"I'M goin' to earn my livin'!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that startling announcement in Study No. 6.

The four chums were in the study after tea. They had had tea in Hall, a tea that Blake had described as doorsteps washed down by ditch-water.

That description was not complimentary, and was hardly just to the tea

provided by the authorities of St. Jim's. But the juniors were exasperated at missing the usual brew in the study.

Hardupness seemed to be the general state now. Many of the juniors ran through their weekly pocket-money long before Saturday. Some of the fellows, like D'Arcy, depended upon tips from kind relations to keep the wolf from the door. But there was a dearth of tips about this time.

Crooke, certainly, had had a handsome remittance that afternoon. But the chums of the Fourth would not have borrowed off the cad of the Shell, even if he would have lent to them—which was extremely doubtful.

Levison, too, was in funds; but it was equally impossible to borrow off Levison.

Bernard Glyn of the Shell was the son of a millionaire, whom they generally depended upon for a loan. But he had spent all his available funds on a new supply of dry batteries for a wonderful telephone he was making. Whether the telephone would be of any use, and whether the dry batteries would be of any use after he had finished with them, were deep questions nobody cared to solve.

The gist of the matter was that the schoolboy inventor was as hard up as everybody else. Kangaroo was stony, owing to the delay of a remittance from Australia; and Reilly of the Fourth had borrowed all that Page of the Fourth had left, so neither of them were available now.

It was, as Blake said, a most disgusting state of affairs, and there seemed no rift in the cloud.

The chums of the School House would have to live from hand-to-mouth till Saturday. Blake seemed to be rather doubtful, really, whether they would survive it. True, the fare provided for St. Jim's fellows was hearty and wholesome, and there was plenty of it. But a stranger hearing the juniors discussing the situation might have come to the conclusion that they were just on the verge of a serious famine.

It was in these circumstances that D'Arcy's great announcement was made, and it caused Blake, Herries, and Digby to sit bolt upright and stare at him.

They had been discussing the matter at endless length. They had turned over every possible way of getting cash. They had, they thought, thrashed the matter thoroughly out, and come to the conclusion that there was nothing to be done. It was reserved for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to think of that startling novel method of getting money—earning it!

"Better put that in the 'Weekly,'" said Blake, after a pause. "You can head it—'Funny Sayings of a Funny Ass.'"

"Weally, Blake—"

"The question is," said Herries, "whether we can raise the wind. I actually haven't enough biscuits to last Towser till Saturday."

"Horrid!" said Blake.

"Yes, isn't it? I can't feed Towser on odds-and-ends, either; he's jolly particular what he eats. Now—"

"I made a remark, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I have thought this mattah ovah, and I have made up my mind. I wegard it as wotten to be dependant for pocket-money upon my governah. Ever since the last Budget my patah has been vevy particular about fivahs. He says he can't afford them. That's why I've thought of this ideah. If it works all wight, I shall suggest it to my patah."

"Oh crumbs!"
 "I can imagine the noble earl earning his living," grinned Digby. "My dear chap, noble earls are a drug in the market. I suppose he's never learned a trade."

"No," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully; "that's wathah a disadvantage of bein' born in the uppah ten, you know. A chap doesn't learn a trade. But that's not the question now. The trouble is, that we are out of tin, and my governah has wefused to play the game. He wewards me as a useless ass!"

"No!" said Blake, with a look of astonishment.

"Yaas, it's a fact!"
 "Well, I always said your pater was a chap of judgment," said Blake judiciously.

"You uttah ass!"
 "The question is," said Herries thoughtfully, "whether Towser will eat the kind of biscuits young Wally gets in for Pongo. If he would—"

"I am goin' to show my governah that I am not a useless ass," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "and I am goin' to write to him, and tell him that, in the cires. I wefuse to accept any more pocket-money."

"Phew!"
 "I am wesevled upon it, deah boys. I am goin' to earn my livin'."

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another. Arthur Augustus made the statement with a seriousness that almost made them shrick. But they retained their gravity by dint of great effort.

"Good wheeze!" said Blake. "Young Brooke earns his living, doesn't he? Of course, he's only a day boy."

"I suppose a D'Arcy can do what a Bwooke can do, deah boy."

"I don't know. He must keep at it pretty hard," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "You know what the poet said on that subject?"

"I am unaware that any poet has said anythin' about Bwooke of the Fourth."

"Oh, yes, Tennyson," said Blake cheerfully. "Don't you remember? He says: 'Men may come, and men may go! But I go on for ever.'"

"You uttah ass, that was a little bwook, not Bwooke of the Fourth!"

"My mistake!" said Blake blandly.

"I wondered how Tennyson came to know Brooke. Tennyson wasn't a St. Jim's fellow. But what trade are you going to take up?"

"I haven't decided that yet. Of course, there are lots of twades. I think I should like to be a big City financier," said D'Arcy modestly. "They have lots of money, and that's a great advantage in any twade. I pwefer a job where there isn't much to do, and lots of pay."

"Go hon! I believe jobs like that are rather popular."

"But you see, I shall win it while I am at school, same as Bwooke does, so I'm afraid bein' a City man is out of the question."

"It would require capital, too," said Blake gravely.

"Yes; City men live in the capital, you know," said Digby.

"A capital idea!" said Blake.

"Pway don't make wotten puns, deah boys, at a sewious moment. We get enough of that from Lowthah. I am goin' to earn my livin', and, if you like, I'll put you chaps in the way of doin' the same. The question is, what line can a fellow earn money at while he's at school. Bwooke is a day boy, and he does his work at home. I should have to do mine in the study, here."

"Then it couldn't be shipbuilding, or anything of that sort," said Blake gravely.

"Pway don't be an ass!"
 "What about hiring yourself out as a scarecrow to the farmers in the neighbourhood?" asked Digby enthusiastically, as if struck by a brilliant idea. "You would get about twopence an hour. And you wouldn't need to make up for the part."

"Weally, you uttah ass!"

"Or you could become a railway director," remarked Blake thoughtfully. "They get splendid salaries, and ride about in special trains sometimes."

"What about a banker?" asked Digby. "I don't know that you need any experience."

"You uttah zhump!"

"What about becoming an artist?" suggested Blake. "You could borrow some colours from that chap, Tadpole, at the Grammar School, or mix 'em up yourself. I've heard that all the old masters used to mix their own colours. You'll be a young master, of course; but there's no harm in borrowing a good dodge. And no practice is necessary. You just shove the colours on, and if nobody can make out what the picture's meant for you're a futurist. If they can make out part of it you're only an ordinary impressionist. Squeeze out all the tubes together on the canvas, and get a dog to walk over it, and you'll be jolly certain of making a name."

"Or Gussy might be an opera singer," suggested Digby. "He can sing tenor solos, you know. The y wouldn't pay him to sing, but they might pay him to leave off."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. He jammed his famous monocle into his eye and took a scornful survey of the three grinning juniors.

"I weward you as uttah asses!" he said. "I wefuse to discuss the mattah with you any further. I will go and see Tom Mewwy about it. I weward you as silly chumps!"

And Arthur Augustus walked out of Study No. 6 and closed the door behind him with a slam that could be heard the length of the Fourth Form passage. And Blake, Herries, and Digby chuckled and fell to discussing the great problem again—how to raise the wind before Saturday.

Apparently they had no faith whatever in the ability of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to raise cash by

the extremely novel and extraordinary method of working for it.

CHAPTER 5.

A Little "Leg-Pull"!

TOM MERRY brought his fist down upon the study table with a thump that made the pens dance on the inkstand, and the ink in the well.

"Cheese it!" he exclaimed. "There's no cheese," said Monty Lowther, "any more than there is anything else."

"I'm fed up!"
 "More than I am. I feel as if I'd been missing meals for a week."

"I thought it was a real pie."

"Well, never mind the pie," said Monty Lowther magnanimously; "we'll let you off the pie if you'll only think of some way of raising the wind. Are we going to have tea in Hall for the rest of the week and avoid the tuckshop as if it were a lecture hall?"

"The only thing I can think of," said

(Continued on next page.)

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Manners, "is for Lowther to sell his old knife to Crook?"

"The only thing I can think of," said Lowther, "is for Manners to sell his rotten films to the other silly photographing ass!"

"Look here, you fathead!"

"Look here, you clump!"

Tom Merry thumped the table again emphatically.

"Do stop jawing!" he exclaimed. "We've got to think this out! There never was such a dearth of cash. Every fellow seems to have blued all his own and all everybody else's. How on earth are we going to raise funds? We haven't paid the printer for the last number of the 'Weekly' yet, and we all owe our accounts at the tuckshop. I don't like writing to Miss Fawcett for money, but, really, it begins to look like the only possible thing to do."

"There's my giddy uncle!" growled Lowther. "He's got piles of money, but he never hands it out. He says I'm extravagant. Me!"

"I've just stung my people for a new daylight developing tank," said Manners thoughtfully. "Otherwise—"

Monty Lowther snorted.

"Just like you, you ass! Beastly photography again! Now, if it had been chest developers there would have been some sense in it. Though, to tell the truth," he added thoughtfully, "there were some scents in your old developer."

"Oh, bosh!" said Manners. "Don't make puns now. Let's think what's to be done. No good leaving it to Tom Merry. We can't eat old boots."

"Look here," began Tom Merry wrathfully, "let that subject drop. If you—"

"There's nothing like leather," said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Look here, you chaps—"

There was a tap at the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in.

Tom Merry sat down again. The Terrible Three turned hopefully to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Got a fiver?" asked three voices in unison.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Got any cash at all?"

"No, deah boys. I've got a wippin' ideah, though."

The Terrible Three snorted. It was very plain that they did not consider D'Arcy's ripping ideas at all equal to cash in value.

"It's a wathah wemarkable ideah," said Arthur Augustus. "I have pwounded it to Blake and the othahs, and they have weceived it like a set of silly asses, so I have brought it to you fellows. I want you to back me up, and entah into the thing with me, and we shall have plenty of money all wound!"

"Plenty of money!" repeated the Terrible Three.

"Yaas—heaps!"

"How on earth are you going to get plenty of money?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Are you thinking of putting your gold watch up the spout?"

"Certainly not. I should decline to do anythin' of the sort, and I wegard it as wathah wotten to call a pawnbwokah's establishment a spout, deah boy. How-ehah, I am not thinkin' of pawnin' my tickah. There are othah ways of waisin' the wind. Now, just turn it owah in your mind, how to waise money, and it will occur to you."

The Shell fellows knitted their brows in thought.

"Borrow?" said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Beg?"

"No, deah boy."

"Steal?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, there's the three well-known methods," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I dare say there are other ways—or sub-divisions. Chap can make money now by going into parliament."

"I'm not thinkin' of that!"

"Well, I give it up. Ask me another?"

"What's the answer to that one?" asked Lowther.

"Work!"

"Eh?"

"Work!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly.

"Work?" said the Terrible Three again, in unison.

"Yaas."

"My hat!"

"I was thinkin' the mattah owah, deah boys, and it flashed into my bwin all of a sudden," said Arthur Augustus, with justifiable pride. "Of course, I know it's a wathah wemarkable ideah. But there are heaps of chaps who make money by working for it—waylay portahs, and gwocer's boys, like that chap Gwimes in Wylcombe, and—and schoolmastahs, you know—and genewals in the Army, and—and stokahs on ships, you know."

"What a beautiful assortment," remarked Monty Lowther. "Which are you thinking of starting as—a general in the Army, or a stoker on a ship? I should prefer the general's job myself; the stoker has to work harder for less pay—and a stoker's job is risky, too."

"Bway don't be an ass, deah boy! I'm goin' to work to earn my livin'; Bwooke does it, and why shouldn't I?"

"Echo answers why!" said Tom Merry.

"Does it?" said Monty Lowther, in surprise. "Then there's something queer in the acoustics of this study. Echo ought to answer 'I' to that remark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now if you fellows can make any sensible suggestions as to the line of business it would be advisable for me to take up, I should be vewy glad to heah you," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bricklayin'!" suggested Lowther. "Great demand for such men."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Harvesting, making hay and things," said Tom Merry.

"But they don't do harvestin' in Novembah, deah boy."

"N-no, that's a drawback. But they could put it off till next summer."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I know!" exclaimed Lowther. "You shall work for us."

"What!"

"We want a man-of-all-work in the study!" Monty Lowther explained blandly. "We'll pay you regular wages. You don't want any more money from your pater. When it comes, you hand it over to us, and we'll pay it to you in the form of wages. You can find a lot of work to do here—sweeping up the study, washing the crocks, cleaning footer boots—"

"You fwrightful ass—"

"Well, I'm trying to be helpful," said Lowther.

"There is only one pwactical ideah that has occurred to me," said D'Arcy.

"You chaps wemembah that I was wathah a dab at amateur detective bisney?"

"Oh!" said the Terrible Three, with a gasp.

"When Fewwers Locke, the detective, was here, lookin' aftah that ewacksman who turned out to be Mellish's cousin, I had the honah of helpin' him—"

"Yes; you opened the window or something, didn't you?" Lowther remarked.

"I had the honah of helpin' Fewwers Locke," said D'Arcy, unheeding. "I have often thought that if I evah had to take to work, I should turn detective. With my powahs of makin' deductions and things—"

"Runs in the family, doesn't it?" asked Lowther.



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"I don't know, Lowthah. Why?"
 "I mean, your pater makes deductions. He has been making deductions from your allowance," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You ass; when I say deductions, I do not mean deductions, I mean deductions," D'Arcy explained lucidly. "The infinitive form of the verb is deduce, not deduct. There are deductions and deductions. I mean deductions!"

"Clear as mud!" said Lowther.
 "Unfortunately there is no detective work to be done in a school," said Arthur Augustus despondently. "I can't win a detective bisney from Study No. 6. I shouldn't be allowed to miss classes to take up the cases."

"No; very likely you wouldn't," said Tom Merry gravely. "Masters are very unreasonable beasts sometimes. If they caught you deducting—"

"Deducin', deah boy."
 "If they caught you deducting when you ought to be grinding Latin verses, they would very likely get waxy. Of course, you could explain to the Head that you're taking up a private detective business, and would very likely have to be called away from lessons every now and then."

Arthur Augustus looked sharply at Tom Merry.

The Shell fellow's face was quite grave and serious. D'Arcy coughed.

"How do you think the Head would be likely to take that?" he asked.

"Try him!" said Lowther. "Leave the door open when you begin, and put on your running shoes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "If you uttah asses cannot be sewious—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "D'Arcy, the detective! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You burbling asses—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stalked out of the Shell study and slammed the door with a more vigorous slam than he had bestowed upon the door of Study No. 6.

It was evident that he was not going to be taken seriously in Tom Merry's study, and that the Terrible Three did not believe in work as a method of obtaining cash.

But the aristocratic face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was resolute.

"I'll jolly well show the boundahs that I'm not such an ass!" he murmured. "I'll jolly well pprove to them that I can earn my livin'! Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy set all his wits to work on the subject, and when he went to bed that night he was still thinking of it, and he dreamed of it; and he dreamed that he was a detective, chasing a stoker and a general in the Army over a hayfield—from which mixed vision of the night he awoke in the morning with the great problem still unsolved.

CHAPTER 6.

Looking for a Job!

"**B**OY wanted—"
 "Eh?"
 "Light work with horse and van—"
 "What?"
 "Respectable woman seeks daily work—"
 "What the—"
 "Lady seeks employment at charwing—"

"Mad!" said Monty Lowther compassionately. "Quite potty! Poor old Gussy! I knew he was getting a little potty when he began to talk about work last night. It's a hopeless sign when a fellow like Gussy begins to talk about work. Poor old Gussy!"

"Mother's help wanted, thirteen in family; wages, ten shillings—"

Arthur Augustus looked up at last. Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and the juniors had come upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, seated on one of the oaken benches under the old elms in the quadrangle. D'Arcy had the local paper, the "Rylcombe Gazette," open on his knees; but he was not looking for St. Jim's footer reports or the description of local matches. He was reading down the advertisement columns, and Tom Merry & Co. simply stood and stared at him.

Reading newspapers at all was not much in their line, but they thought they could have found something a little more interesting, even in the local "rag," than a list of charladies who wanted situations and a list of situations that wanted charladies.

"Pway don't interwupt me, deah boys!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "Bai Jove! I wathah think that will suit me!"

"What will suit you?" asked Blake. "This advertisement. Listen, deah boys! 'Boy wanted—'"

"Oh, my only winter bonnet!"

"To cawwy wound medicines. Apply after twelve and before two at Mr. Pyson, Chemist, Wylcombe." I suppose I could cawwy wound medicines?"

"My hat!" roared Blake. "Are you looking for a job?"

"Yaas!"
 "Oh, my Aunt Maria!"

The juniors stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They had chuckled, the previous evening, over the idea of raising money by earning it. It was such an extraordinary idea that they felt they were entitled to chuckle. But to find that he still had the same idea the next day, and that he was in deadly earnest about it, was a great surprise.

"I think I can see him carrying round medicines!" gasped Digby. "Oh, you chump! You'd better stick to the private detective idea!"

"But how am I to get any pwivate detective work at school, Dig?"

"Advertise for it," said Digby, winking the eye that was farthest from Arthur Augustus. "Put an ad. in this paper: 'Private detective work undertaken at the shortest notice. Desperate criminals run down on the spot. Clues found or manufactured in any number. Handwriting proved to be anybody's you like, on the best expert system. Finger-prints and footprints a speciality.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You uttah ass, Dig!"

"By Jove, it's not a bad idea!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "The paper comes out to-morrow, and if you like to shove the advertisement in to-day, Gussy, it'll be in print to-morrow. You can use an assumed name, of course. Call yourself Sexton Blake junior, or Nipper the Second, or Ferrers Locke minor—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I am goin' to apply for this situation as ewwand-boy," said Arthur Augustus, rising with dignity and folding the paper. "I shall ask Mr. Pyson to allow me to take the medicine wound in my spare time out of class hours. I

(Continued on the next page.)



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Author: "What did you think of my work, 'The Secret'?"

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Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Broach, 281, Crystal Palace Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22.

MONEY'S WORTH.

Monty Lowther: "I say, Gore, do you know that 1934 pennies are worth eight pounds one shilling and twopence?"

Gore: "Oh, yeah? Well, I've got a 1934 penny. Will you give me eight pounds one and twopence for it?"

Monty Lowther: "But I never said that 1934 pennies are worth eight pounds one and twopence each. I said one thousand nine hundred and thirty-four pennies are worth that sum! Work it out for yourself!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Last, 63, Great Titchfield Street, Oxford Circus, London, W.1.

THE SWINDLER SWINDLED!

Two hawkers were having a cup of tea at a coffee-stall.

"Do you know," said one, "this world is too full of swindlers to let an honest man live."

"How do you make that out?" asked the other.

"Well, I spent two hours painting a sparrow to look like a canary, then a man comes along and gives me a dud half-crown for it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss J. Thorne, 53, Union Street, Barnet, Herts.

A HINGE FOR HIS HUTCH!

Small Boy: "Pennyworth of steak, please!"

Butcher: "A pennyworth? Sure that's all you want, sonny?"

Small Boy: "Yes; I only want it for a hinge for my rabbit-hutch!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Kingsland, 30, Warboys Crescent, Highams Park, London, E.4.

IN A FIX.

The absent-minded professor was strap-hanging in a tramcar. In his other arm he clasped several parcels. He swayed to and fro as he tried to get out his fare.

"Can I help you, sir?" asked the conductor.

"Yes," said the professor, with relief. "Hold on to this strap while I get my fare out!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Annesley, 8, Colin Street, N. Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,447.

don't know what the salawy will be; but if it's only a pound a week, it will keep me in pocket-money."

"Pound a week!" roared Blake. "Two bob, you mean!"

"I should wefuse to work for two shillings! Howevah—"

"Try the advertisement, Gussy!" pleaded Tom Merry. "You know you were born to be a giddy detective. Very likely Sexton Blake or Ferrers Locke may see it, and if they happen to have difficult cases on hand, they'll come and consult you."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Put it in, Gussy!" said Blake.

And the juniors all chimed in with the same advice.

They could see that Arthur Augustus was determined to carry out his idea of raising money by working for it, and they did not want him to make a round of Rylcombe asking for jobs at the shops. They could foresee the kind of reception the elegant youth would meet with when he went after a situation as a half-timer in a chemist's shop.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hesitated. He looked suspiciously at his chums.

Blake and Digby were taken with a sudden fit of coughing, but the others were quite grave.

"I haven't any tin to pay for the advertisement, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"That's all right; Mr. Tiper knows you," said Tom Merry. "He prints the 'Weekly' for us, doesn't he, and we owe him a bill already. Couldn't be a better recommendation than that."

"Bai Jove, it's a good ideah. There may be some mystewy in Wylcombe that wequahs to be solved," said D'Arcy, his eye gleaming behind his eyeglass. "If it is a small case, like somebody wobbun' a till, that's a beginnin'. Fewwers Locke did not become famous all at once, I suppose."

"No; he may have started by robbing tills," said Lowther. "I mean by tracking down chaps who rob tills. Draw up the advertisement. Assume a striking name—something like Sleuth—or Blughound!"

"Sleuth will do!" said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove!" He dotted down with a pencil on the margin of the paper, "SLEUTH, PRIVATE DETECTIVE, care of Study 6, School House, St. Jim's. Cases of all kinds undertaken. Missing relatives, missing jewels, missing property of all kinds, recovered at the promptest notice."

"Put in umbrellas," said Monty Lowther.

"Umbrellas, deah boy?"

"Yes; people often lose umbrellas," said Lowther; "and even when they don't lose them, you know, people like their umbrellas re-covered."

"You fwithfultuffah!"

"Shut up, Lowther!" said Tom Merry warningly. "This is a serious matter. If D'Arcy gets two or three hundred guineas a case, we shall make him share out. In fact, he can take us on as his assistants—like Nipper and Tinker, you know. I should not object in the least to anyone handing me fifty quid for finding a murderer or an umbrella."

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily. "It's understood that if we back Gussy up in this, he takes us all on as Nippers and Tinkers when he gets the bisney fairly going!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus unspiciouly. "I'll buzz down to Wylcombe on my bike now, deah boys, and take the advertisement in, and then it will be out to-morrow. I may get my first case to-morrow. Bai Jove!"

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It would be wippin' to be able to show my governah a cheque for a hundved or a couple of hundved guineas for discovewin' the missin' jewels or the lost will, you know!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed away for his bicycle, and was soon pedalling at a great rate towards the village of Rylcombe, to be in time to get that important advertisement inserted in the current week's issue of the local paper.

And when he was gone the juniors collapsed on the bench and yelled.

They yelled and roared till the tears ran down their cheeks.

Figgins & Co. of the New House came strolling by, and they halted at the sight of the immoderate mirth of the School House fellows.

"Still tickled over that pic?" asked Figgins genially.

And Kerr and Wynn chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"What's happened?"

"Gussy has! Ha, ha, ha!"

And in the exuberance of their mirth the School House fellows forgot all about the outrage of the pic, and between their sobs they confided the whole story to Figgins & Co. And Figgins & Co. collapsed upon the ground and shrieked.

CHAPTER 7.

Gordon Gay Gets an Idea!

"HALT!"

"Stand and deliver!"

Three youths lined up across the lane as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, mounted upon his handsome "jigger," was riding into Rylcombe.

Arthur Augustus put the brake on and slowed down.

The trio were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Wootton major, of Rylcombe Grammar School. They looked as if they meant mischief.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped off his bike.

"Pax, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

Gordon Gay shook his head.

"Pax is off!" he said. "We haven't ragged any of you St. Jim's bounders for a long time. We were just looking for some of you. You have come like the flowers in May—like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. Collar him, kids!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

Arthur Augustus was promptly colored by the humorous Grammarians.

"Now, shall we slay him outright, or put him to the torture first?" asked Gordon Gay, with a meditative look.

"Pway don't be an ass, deah boy!" remonstrated Arthur Augustus. "I have said pax, and I mean pax. I'm in a fearful hawwy!"

"Shall we put him on the bike backwards and tie his feet to the pedals?" suggested Frank Monk, in a thoughtful way.

"Weally, deah boys, I twust that you will make it pax when I have said pax," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I've got to get to the office of the 'Wylcombe Gazette' before the staff go out to dinuah. They both go at one o'clock."

"What's the little game?" asked Gordon Gay. "New edition of the 'Weekly'?"

"No. Somethin' more important than that."

"Advertisement for a lost dog?"

"No, you ass! I don't mind tellin' you fellows about it," said Arthur Augustus. "You can walk down to the pwinthahs with me, if you like."

Gordon Gay bowed to the ground.

"Thanks, great lord! Come on, you chaps. I suppose we must let him off. We'll go round and look for Tom Merry instead. Now, what's on, Gussy?"

And the Grammarians, quite amicable in spite of their ferocious remarks of a few minutes earlier, walked along with D'Arcy as he wheeled his bicycle into the village.

Arthur Augustus was not at all loath to explain. He was very full of his latest idea. Besides, the Grammarians would probably see the advertisement in the local paper, anyway.

"I'm goin' to put an advertisement in the Wylcombe papah," Arthur Augustus explained. "I'm goin' to take on detective work."

The Grammarians fairly jumped. If Arthur Augustus had declared that he was going to take on Petersen for a dozen rounds they would not have been more surprised.

"You're going to what?" gasped Gordon Gay.

"You're going to which?" demanded Monk.

"I suppose it's wathah a surprise to you," said Arthur Augustus, rather pleased with the effect of his announcement upon the Grammarians. "The fact is, we are all fwithgittly hard-up at St. Jim's. All the fellows are stony, and I've wefused to take any more pocket money fwom my patah. I had to think of some way of waisin' money, and all of a sudden it flashed into my bwain that a splendid ideah would be to earn some."

"Earn it!" gasped Monk.

"Yaas."

"My only sainted grandmother!"

"Good egg!" said Gordon Gay heartily. "There are lots of things D'Arcy could do—regular job as a tailor's dummy, for instance. Or a job in a freak collection—"

"Weally, Gay—"

"Think how he'd look outside Mr. Wiggs' shop, in a reach-me-down suit, with a label: 'For pier and prom—three guineas!' said Gordon Gay enthusiastically.

"You uttah ass!" said D'Arcy.

"Pway don't wot! This is a weally sewious matiah. I dare say you fellows heard about a cwacksmah comin' to St. Jim's, and Fewwers Locke, the detective, comin' to collah him? He collahed him all wight, and I helped him. Fewwers Locke accepted my offah of assistance."

"Humorist, I suppose?" suggested Monk.

D'Arcy did not reply to that remark.

"That was weally what put it into my head," he explained. "Fewwers Locke can fix his own fees. Of course, I shan't get hundveds of guineas at the start."

"No; probably not," grinned Gordon Gay.

"But even a fivah is not to be despised," said Arthur Augustus, with a wise shake of the head. "Fivahs are jolly useful, I can tell you. There's a chap at our school, a day boy, who earns his own living, you know. I've always felt a vewy gweat admwiniw for that chap. It nevah occurred to me to do it before, somehow, but I'm goin' to do it now. There is a vewy gweat satisfaction in havin' lots of money and earnin' it oneself. 'Somethin' attempted, somethin' done, you know, to earn a night's wepose."

The Grammarians seemed in danger of suffocating.

"There's nothin' whatevah to laugh at, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"I have a gift for detective work, and I'm goin' to turn in a few guineas a week, that way. Of course, I shall do it undah an assumed name. The Head might waise objection othahwise."

"Oh, great Scott! He might!"

"That's the advertisement," said D'Arcy, displaying it. "I wathah think that's likely to bwing in some waplies, don't you?"

The three Grammarians read the advertisement.

"My only Uncle Peter!" murmured Gordon Gay. "Are you really going to shove that in the local paper?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And—and take up cases?"

"Yaas."

"And run down giddy criminals and things?"

"Certainly!"

"Oh erutabls!"

"Hero we are, deah boys," said D'Arcy, as they arrived outside the

"Because I'm jolly well going to send him one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We haven't done any amateur theatricals lately," said Gordon Gay. "This looks to me like a gorgeous opportunity."

The Grammarians burst into a roar.

"Not a word!" said Gordon Gay.

"Come on! Gussy musn't see us again. We don't want him to smell a mouse."

And the three Grammarians, chuckling with glee, went their way.

Five minutes later Arthur Augustus came out of the "Gazette" office, and found them gone. He mounted his bicycle and rode back to St. Jim's in a satisfied mood.

He was just in time for dinner. Tom Merry & Co. met him as he came into the dining-room in the School House, and D'Arcy nodded to them cheerfully.

"In time?" asked Tom Merry.

great deal of difference between a trusty revolver and a rusty revolver—more than it sounds."

"If you persist in playin' the giddy ox, Lowthah—"

"You will want a licence," remarked Kangaroo. "Of course, Herries could lend you his dog licence."

"You uttah ass—"

"Well, people are fined for carrying revolvers—either trusty or rusty—without a licence. But I forgot—you're a poet, Gussy. I remember your poem on 'Spring is Humming—'"

"Spwing is Comin'," you silly fathead!"

"My mistake," said Kangaroo. "I meant 'Spring is Coming.' Well, as you're a poet, it will be all right; you can use your poet's licence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose and walked into the dining-room.



Tom Merry jerked away the whiskers of Colonel Pipkin, and the grinning face of Figgins was revealed. Arthur Augustus stared blankly. "Great Scott!" he gasped. "Bai Jove, you awful wotah! You fweightful spooah!"

Detective D'Arcy's first client was none other than a japer!

office of the "Rylcombe Gazette."

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and good luck!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy leaned his machine against the office, and went in. Gordon Gay & Co. stared at one another, and chuckled gleefully.

"Well, of all the wheezes—" said Wootton major

"Do you think he'll get any answers to that ad?" asked Monk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sluth, the detective! Blinghounnd, the giddy man-hunter!" chortled Wootton major. "Oh, my hat! If that doesn't take the whole giddy biscuit factory—"

"But he will get an answer," said Gordon Gay.

"Eh? Rot!"

"But he will."

"How on earth do you know?" demanded Frank Monk, staring at the Cornstalk junior.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"You've got the advertisement in?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" grinned Blake. "The answers will come pouring in tomorrow. You'd better get ready for business. You will need a revolver and some handcuffs."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"No good catching criminals if you don't handcuff them," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Sexton Blake always does, and then hands 'em over to the police. Click! and it's done. It's quite easy—in a book, at any rate. And then the revolver—you will want a trusty revolver. When you order it, specify that it must be a trusty one."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And mind you write the order plainly," said Lowther seriously. "If they missed the 't,' they might send you a rusty one, you know. There's a

Tom Merry & Co. followed him, chuckling.

CHAPTER 8.

The First Client!

TOM MERRY & CO. found themselves the next day still in hard times, but at tea-time things looked up.

Monty Lowther and Manners had settled the burning question whether the films or the pocket-knife should be sold to raise funds. Monty Lowther was determined not to sell his pocket-knife, and Manners was equally determined not to sell his films. But they settled the matter quite satisfactorily: Manners sold Lowther's pocket-knife for half-a-crown without consulting Lowther, and Lowther disposed of Manners' films to Levison for eightpence without consulting Manners. And so at tea-time on Friday there was

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an unexpected rush of funds in Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry had gone through the pockets of several old garments, in the hope of discovering some overlooked coin there. He discovered nothing but some moths.

He went down to his study in a hopeless frame of mind; but he found Manners and Lowther there, both of them looking quite cheerful.

"Tea-time!" remarked Lowther.

Tom Merry grunted.

"It will have to be tea in Hall again," he said. "I've hunted high and low. Blessed if I ever knew such a famine in cash! We're like the giddy seed in the parable—we've fallen on stony places, and no mistake."

"It's all right—"

"Yes, it's all right," said Manners.

Another grunt from Tom Merry.

"Well, you may think it all right," he said. "I don't. I think it rotten!"

"I've got some cash," said Lowther.

"Cash!"

"Yes."

Tom Merry rushed at his chum and hugged him.

"Come to my arms!" he gasped. "I've almost forgotten what cash looks like! How much have you got?"

"One-and-six."

"Hurrah!"

"We'll have a ripping spread, and make up for lost time," said Manners.

"Well, I don't know that it will be very ripping on eightpence," said Lowther, "but we'll do the best we can."

"Oh, I can put some to that!" said Manners.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is it raining money? How much have you raised?"

"Half-a-crown."

"Bravo! That's four bob altogether! We'll have the kids from Study No. 6 to tea; it's only cricket, as Gussy is going to stand us something handsome out of his first fees as a private detective."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But where did you get that tin?" asked Tom Merry curiously. "I've been trying to borrow right and left, and high and low, but everybody is stony."

"Sold something," said Manners carelessly.

"How odd!" said Lowther.

"What's odd about it?" asked Manners.

"Why, I've sold something, too."

"What did you sell?"

"Oh, something that wasn't much good!" said Lowther very carelessly.

"What did you sell, Manners?"

"Only some old rubbish. Let's get down to the tuckshop."

"Come on!" said Tom.

"Hold on a minute!" said Manners, a sudden suspicion coming into his mind, and he went to the table drawer. "Has anybody seen my films?"

"Films?" said Monty Lowther innocently.

"Yes, I left a roll of films here. I was going to use them to-morrow afternoon, when I take my camera out."

"Well, if you don't want them till to-morrow afternoon, look for them to-morrow," said Monty Lowther affably. "Let's get tea now."

"I want to know where those films are!"

"Oh, blow the films!" said Tom Merry. "I'm hungry!"

"You say you sold something for eightpence, Lowther?"

"Yes—one-and-six."

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"Have you sold my films?" roared Manners.

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Eightpence! Ha, ha, ha! Never mind, Manners, old man; you can't eat films, you know."

"Have you sold my films?" yelled Manners.

"Well, what was I to do?" argued Lowther. "You'd have sold my pocket-knife. You can buy new films any time. Blow your films! Come and have tea."

"You—you burglar!"

"My dear chap—"

"My films—"

"Oh rats!"

"You—I'll— Oh, I—"

"Never mind! We'll sell Monty's pocket-knife to-morrow, Manners, old man," said Tom Merry consolingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners. "We shan't sell it to-morrow; I've sold it to-day!"

"What!" shouted Lowther.

"You left it on the table, you silly ass, and I've sold it to Crooke, you fat-head—for half-a-crown, you jesser!" roared Manners.

"You've sold my pocket-knife?"

"Yes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you cheeky ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

"Your pocket-knife can keep company with my films. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Tom Merry stepped between his two chums.

"Peace, my infants, peace!" he said soothingly. "Anyway, we're going to have tea. It's just as good as if you sold the rotten things yourself, you know."

"My pocket-knife—"

"My films—"

"Oh, come down to the tuckshop and shut up! It's done now."

And Manners and Lowther, realising that it was no use complaining over spilt milk, allowed the matter to drop.

Each of them had the consolation for his own loss of knowing that he had sold the other's property, however.

And, after all, four shillings were four shillings, and they had escaped tea in Hall for once.

Tom Merry led the way down the passage, and stopped to look in at Study No. 6.

"You fellows coming to tea?" he asked.

Blake jumped up.

"Yes, rather!" he said. "Any tea going?"

"Yes; we've got four bob!"

"Hurrah!"

"Sowwy, deah boys, I can't come," said Arthur Augustus, in a stately way.

"Business hours, you know."

"What!" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

"Business hours. You see, I'm expectin' some answers to my advertisement; the papah was out this mornin'. I'm twyin' to persuade Blake to act as my office clerk, but the silly ass won't!"

"No fear!" grinned Blake.

"I shall want a clerk, if I am goin' to do any business," said D'Arcy. "I'm willin' to pay good wages—when the fees come in, of course. My ideal is that Blake ought to wait at the door to take down the names of callahs. It's a good ideal to keep up appearances in any business. Fellows bring you more business if they think you've got a good business goin' already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better come and have tea," suggested Tom Merry. "I think very likely there won't be any callers this afternoon."

"I trust there will be. Thank you, deah boy, but I think I had better woman on the pwmisses, in case of business lookin' up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. went on their way, and Arthur Augustus was left alone in the study. The swell of St. Jim's was not displeased to see his chums depart. He felt that a private detective needed an office all to himself, and that it would look unbusinesslike to have three Fourth Form fellows sprawling about the office.

As soon as Blake and the rest were gone, Arthur Augustus put the study very tidy. He placed pen and ink on the table ready for use, and a couple of large notebooks, and several old envelopes, and threw some crumpled letters on the floor. Then he was ready for the rush of custom.

Was the rush coming? The good folk of Rylecombe had had time to read the advertisement; to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. If any of them had lost cash, dogs, umbrellas, or relatives, surely they would realise the great advantage of calling in the aid of Sleuth, the detective, to find the article.

Arthur Augustus had inserted in his advertisement a note to the effect that business hours were from five to half-past six. It would not do, he felt, to have clients calling when he was in the class-room.

As he sat waiting at the study table he wrote out a notice to pin on the study door:

"MR. SLEUTH, PRIVATE
DETECTIVE—OFFICE."

He opened the study door and pinned up the notice. Had Arthur Augustus looked down the passage his suspicions would have been aroused by three grinning juniors at the corner. But D'Arcy shut the door again and resumed his waiting.

He had not long to wait, for two minutes later footsteps came along the passage.

They stopped at the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus' heart beat hard.

Of course, probably it was only some junior coming to see him; but—

Tap!

"Come in!" said D'Arcy.

The study door opened. A figure in a motor-coat, with a soft hat, and a youthful face with grey whiskers, stood in the doorway.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, his heart thumping. The man in the motor-coat was evidently a stranger at St. Jim's. Why had he come to Study No. 6, if not—

There was no doubt about it! It was the first client!

"Pway come in!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Excuse me," said the stranger, in a deep, hoarse voice, as if he had a cold, "is this the office of Mr. Sleuth?"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway walk in!"

The client walked in.

CHAPTER 9.

A Business Interview!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS did his best to conceal his excitement and his satisfaction.

He knew that it was not business-like to show either. A client must not be allowed to suppose that he is the first client who has ever entered an office. People only want to do business with those who have done business

before; which is certainly a little hard on beginners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would gladly have assumed the airs of Ferrers Locke or Sexton Blake. He felt keenly the need of a big bloodhound lying on the rug, or of a Tinker before whom his client could speak quite freely. But, of course, the famous Sexton Blake had to start in life without a bloodhound or assistant.

He placed a chair for his client, and begged him to be seated. Arthur Augustus knew so little of business that he actually allowed his visitor to sit with his back to the light, and sat facing it himself. One does not learn business all at once!

The visitor sat down, without removing his coat. He coughed very hard.

"I trust you have not a cold, my dear sir," said D'Arcy.

"Huh-huh!" said his client.

"Vewy twochowous weathah," said D'Arcy wisely.

"Yes. Huh! Yes," said the client hoarsely.

"Pway how can I be of service to you, my dear sir?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Huh!" coughed the visitor. "I have called to see Mr. Sleuth."

"I am Mr. Sleuth!"

"Huh! Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah! That is my professional name," D'Arcy explained. "I—I think you did not send up your name by my—my clerk, sir?"

"Huh! I did not see your clerk!"

"Ahem! I suppose he is gone ovah to the tuckshop—ahem!—I—I mean, he is probably engaged on that little mattah of the missin' bonds," said Arthur Augustus.

"You may call me Colonel Pipkin!"

"Bai Jove! I mean, vewy good, deah boy—that is to say, deah sir!"

Arthur Augustus made a note on his cuff. He had heard that professional detectives do that; and it did not occur to him that there was a risk of valuable clues being lost in the laundry.

The swell of St. Jim's was feeling elated. His first client was a colonel, and a colonel was impressive enough to begin with.

Generals and ambassadors would come later.

"I am vewy pleased to meet you, Colonel Pipkin!" said D'Arcy, carefully disguising the fact that he had never heard the name before. "A violation of the Huntingdonshire Pipkins, I pwesume?"

"Not that I am aware of," said the client, in his hoarse voice. "I have seen your advertisement in the 'Rylcombe Gazette,' Mr. Slop—"

"Sleuth, my deah sir!"

"Yes, I mean Sleuth. I want to know whether you can take up my case?"

"Pway allow me to look over my engagement-book, my deah sir!" said Mr. Sleuth, taking up an enormous notebook, and turning over several blank pages in a professional way. "Ahem! The affair of the missin' bonds can stand ovah, and I shall not need to look into the mattah of the missin' diamonds just now!" He was musing aloud. "Yaas, Colonel Pipkin, I am quite at liberty, as it happens, to take up your case now!"

"May I ask you what your fee is, Mr. Sleuth?"

D'Arcy waved his hand in quite the Sexton Blake manner.

"I pwefer not to discuss such details, sir," he said. "I nevah take a case unless I am personally interested in it,

JUST MY FUN



Monty Lowther Calling!

Hallo, everybody! Asked to give two kinds of snakes, young Gibson gave adders and boa-subtractors.

Weather note: The snowfall to date in Wayland has been three inches of rain.

Then there was the crook who pleaded he only took the money because he had been told he would get on if he helped himself more.

Late rising has a harmful effect. It certainly shortens one's days.

A lady typist flew with the air mail. Tired of "taking down" letters, she "took them up."

A new handbook for hikers has appeared. But most hikers worry about their feet. Quickly, now: Which is the most-travelled fish? The goldfish—it goes "round the globe" many times by itself! Third Form "howler": Dick Turpin was the first man to ride to New York.

Then there was the hiker who thought he would make a "hit" in a

and the fee is a minah considewation. Howevah, I may say fifty guineas!"

"Fifty which—I mean what?"

"Guineas, sir!"

"Are you sure you can do it at that price?" asked the bewliskered gentleman anxiously. "I do not desire you to work too cheaply, Mr. Sleuth!"

"Vewy well. If the case is weally difficult, we will say a hundwed guineas," said D'Arcy, feeling that he was getting on. "Howevah, that, as I have wemarked, is a minah considewation. What is the case? You can speak quite freely."

Arthur Augustus dipped his pen into the ink.

"Ahem! Before we go into details, sir, perhaps you could give me some example of your powers of deduction?" suggested the colonel. "I understood that that was always done by modern detectives."

"Quite simple, my deah sir!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at his visitor through his famous monocle. "You came here from the village in a vehicle of some sort, and it was in a vewy dusty condish inside. I deduce that it was a motor-car. If you will allow me to go into personal mattahs, I—"

"Certainly—certainly—"

"Vewy well. Then I must wemark that you are a bachelor. I also observe that you had lunch coming down, and dwank beeah with your lunch!"

The client appeared astounded.

"Marvellous!" he exclaimed. D'Arcy waved his hand.

"Nothin' at all, my deah sir, to a twained intellect," he replied.

"But may I ask how you make these marvellous deductions, Mr. Sleuth?"

"I am quite willin' to explain," said D'Arcy, in his Sexton Blake manner. "In the first place, the lane is muddy, owing to recent wain; but there is no sign of mud on your boots or trowsahs,

red shirt. He did—he caught a "bull's eye"!"

Skimpole says he always gets cold feet after bathing. Some fellows get cold feet before!

In the winter, it's nice to look back on last summer, we read. But it's nicer to look forward to next!

Even in the Middle Ages people had their worries, we hear. Ah, those sleepless "knights"!

"Big Shipbuilding Loan," reads a headline. To be "floated," of course.

'Nother headline: "Footballer Fetches £10,000." A player to "bank" on.

How's this: "Don't Wash Yourself. Let Us Do It!" advertises a Wayland laundry. Intending customers should remember they may get shrunk.

A plumber claims descent from a Saxon king. Ethelred the Unready?

Said the car salesman: "This is the radiator, and this is the fan." "Oh!" exclaimed the lady purchaser. "So it's an all-weather car?"

Inventors are fond of fishing, they say. And fishermen of inventing.

"No boy is perfect," says an authority. If one is, no schoolmaster has noticed him.

"I'm thinking of becoming a debt collector," said Crooke. "Good idea!" said Mollish. "You lend me a quid, and you can start right away!"

Good "fortune," chaps!

so I deduced a vehicle from the village."

"Wonderful!"

"As you are weavin' a motor-coat, sir, I deduce a motor-car."

"Amazing!"

"There is a gweat deal of dust on your coat, and so I deduce a vehicle that was in a dusty condish inside."

"Marvellous! But what about the lunch?"

"There are spots of gwease on the front of the coat, and signs of beeah bein' spilt there. That shows that you were weavin' the coat while you lunched, and so it was on your journey down."

"Extraordinary!"

"And I deduce that you are a bachelor, sir, because a mawwied man would not be allowed to go into a dusty coat or a dusty car," said D'Arcy. "His wife would see that it was dusted. Am I wight?"

"Yes, certainly I am a bachelor," said the colonel. "I have never been married, not once in my life. It is a thing I do not go in for at all!"

"Ahem! And now to bisney—I mean, business."

"You are willing to take up a dangerous case, Mr. Sleuth?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"To risk your life?"

"A D'Arcy—I—I mean, a Sleuth is always weady to wun wisks. Pway let me have a few details, Colonel Pipkin!"

"Vewy good! My wife has disappeared," said the colonel, in an awe-inspiring tone.

D'Arcy jumped.

"Your—your wife?" he asked.

"Yes, my d-d-dear wife!" said the client, with a sob.

"B-but I undahstood you to say that you were a bachelor," said Arthur Augustus, in bewilderment.

The colonel paused. It was indeed
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little difficult to reconcile his various statements, and he needed to collect his thoughts.

"Pray excuse me," he said, after a pause. "I—I am so fearfully upset by my loss that I have scarcely command of myself!"

"Pway take time to wecovah yourself, my deah colonel," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sympathetically.

"It is not my wife. I—I was really alluding to my mother," said the colonel, in explanation. "The mistake was due to my agitation. My mother has disappeared."

"I am vevy sowwy to heah it!"

"Without leaving a trace behind," said the colonel. "It is terrible! Yes, sir, while I was in France, fighting in the Great War, my mother was stolen away by a gang of kidnappers!"

"Bai Jove! That was wathah a long time ago, wasn't it?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Time does not check the flow of filial grief," said the colonel, with a husky voice. "My mother has disappeared. The police are useless. You must be aware of that if you have perused detective novels to any extent. They are always useless, and nothing is ever discovered, excepting by an amateur detective."

"Yaas."

"But at last," said the colonel, lowering his voice, and looking round fearfully, "at last a clue has been received. Are we alone here?"

"Quite alone, my deah sir."

"There is no danger of eavesdroppers?"

"None whatevah."

"Then I will speak. Hear me," said the colonel. "An anonymous letter reached me this morning. It ran: 'Your wife—I mean, your mother—is kept a prisoner in the crypt under the ruined chapel in a famous school in Sussex. I can tell you no more. My life is in danger! The name of the school begins with a "J."—AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.'"

"Bai Jove! Have you the lettah now?"

"It is destroyed."

"Ah, that is vevy unfortunate."

"Yes, no doubt you could have deduced from the handwriting in what part of Sussex to look for the school in question," said the colonel.

D'Arcy gave his client a sharp look, but Colonel Pipkin was quite serious.

The swell of St. Jim's coughed slightly.

"I have no doubt that I should have been able to make some discoverwy fwom it," he said. "But without that I twust I shall succeed."

"What, can you divine already where this mysterious school may be?"

"I think I have got a vevy cleah ideal already!"

"Marvellous!"

"The twained intellect works vevy quickly, my deah sir. I have no doubt that I can lay my fingah upon the vevy spot!"

"Wonderful!" cried Colonel Pipkin.

"Wonderful to the untwained mind, perhaps," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "Your stowy is weally vevy remarkable, my deah sir, and I am extremely intewested in it. Of course, it is imposs that your mother has been kept all the time in the cwypt at St. Jim's—at the school referred to, I mean. Doubtless, she has been wemoved there fwom anothah hiding-place. But we shall find her—"

"Wonderful!"

"In fact, I think I may pwomise to explore the cwypt in question this vevy

afternoon, and find the missin' lady, if she is there."

"You will venture into the crypt?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You will go armed, of course?"

"Pewwaps I had bettah take my twusty wevolvah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might go off at the wrong moment—"

"Twusty, my deah sir—I said twusty."

"Ah, my mistako! And you will rescue my dear wife—"

"Your mothah, you mean."

"Yes, yes—that is to say, my mother! Oh, my—"

He was interrupted.

A kick from the passage sent the study door flying suddenly open, and a crowd of juniors appeared in the passage.

Arthur Augustus started to his feet.

Tom Merry and Blake walked in, each of them carrying a plate, upon which were rounds of hot, buttered toast.

Digby followed with a tin of sardines, and Lowther with jam. The other fellows looked in from the passage.

Arthur Augustus turned crimson.

The interruption was utterly ridiculous, just as an important business interview was proceeding. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and simply glared at the visitors.

The colonel retreated into the shadiest corner of the study, and seemed strangely uneasy.

"Weally, deah boys," exclaimed D'Arcy, "this is too bad! Pway wun off! You must not come into my office in business hours!"

"As the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet's come to the mountain," Blake explained. "We've brought you some tea. If you are going to stick here playing the giddy ox, you're not going without your tea!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Well, I call that ungrateful!" said Tom Merry.

"Hallo! I didn't know you had a visitor!" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment.

"Pway wetiah, deah boys," said D'Arcy, in an agonised whisper. "This is my first client."

"Your first wh-what?"

"Client you ass! Chap's lost his mother and come to me to find her. I'm to have a hundwed guineas," whispered D'Arcy. "Buzz off, and don't intewwupt!"

His whispered announcement did not have the expected effect. Instead of being properly impressed by the sad circumstances of a missing mother and the tremendous prospect of a hundred guineas, the juniors stared blankly at D'Arcy for a moment, and then burst into a terrific yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wetiah fwom this study—I mean, this office—at once, you uttah wottahs!" exclaimed the amateur detective indignantly. "I'm disgusted with you! Go away at once!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not go away. Instead of that,

Tom Merry signed to all the fellows to crowd in, and closed the door.

"Tom Mewwy, I insist upon your weliwin'—"

"We're jolly well goin' to know who this merchant is first!" said Tom Merry. And the other fellows chimed in emphatically:

"What-ho!"

CHAPTER 10.

Japing the Japer!

TOM MERRY made a stride towards the gentleman in coat and whiskers.

Arthur Augustus interposed excitedly:

"Wetiah, you ass!" he exclaimed. "How dare you intahfere with my client?"

"Your client?"

"Colonel Pipkin is my client," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Colonel which?"

"Pipkin, you ass!"

"Well, we're jolly well going to have a closer look at Colonel Popcorn before we leave this study!" said Tom Merry.

"We are!" said Blake. "We is!"

"It is not Popcorn, you ass! It is Pipkin—Colonel Pipkin! Pway excuse these young wascals, my deah colonel. They do not know any bettah, and I



Mr. Jones gave a sudden start and pointed into the trees. "enemy!" D'Arcy caught a glimpse of a dark, swarthy

shall chastise them all presently for their impertinence."

The colonel nodded. He seemed to have lost his voice. "Pway wetiah, deah boys—"

"Can't you introduce us to Colonel Pompon?" demanded Monty Lowther. "We're your assistants in the giddy bisney, aren't we? He can speak freely before us."

"You fwightful ass!"

"Can't you see you're being spoofed, Gussy?" roared Tom Merry. "You howling ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm going to have a look at Colonel Popcorn without those giddy whiskers on his chivvyogonomy!" said Tom Merry. "Take 'em off, colonel!"

"You impertinent wottah!"

"Take off those whiskers, colonel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The colonel did not reply. He had made a sudden rush for the door. So sudden and so swift was the rush that he broke through the crowd of juniors and reached the door before they could stop him. But before he could get the door open, Tom Merry & Co. recovered from their surprise, and they simply piled on the colonel. He was grasped and swung back from the door, and hurled into the armchair. He sat in the chair violently and gasped.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Gweat Scott!"

He gazed at the gasping colonel in profound amazement. He could not help suspecting now that all was not as it should be. If the colonel was a genuine client, why had he made that sudden and determined effort to escape? "Now we'll have the whiskers off," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"What-ho!" said Blake.

The colonel started to his feet. Tom Merry jerked away the whiskers. The well-known face of Figgins of the New House was revealed, grinning sheepishly.

Arthur Augustus stared at him blankly. The sudden change of Colonel Pipkin into Figgins of the Fourth took the amateur detective's breath away.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped D'Arcy. "Gweat Chwistopher Columbus! Figgins! Bai Jove, you awful wottah! You fwightful spoofah!"

Figgins threw off the motor-coat, and retreated to the corner of the study and put himself into a defensive attitude. The big coat had concealed his Elons.

Tom Merry looked at the coat.

"That belongs to the Head's chauffeur," he said. "And the whiskers, I suppose, belong to Kerr's make-up box."

Figgins grinned.

"Well, we saw Gussy's advertisement in the 'Rylcombe Gazette,' and we thought it was only fair to give him a start," he said. "I believe in helping beginners. If you silly asses hadn't come in he was going to search for my wife in the old crypt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we were going to shut him up there," said Figgins regretfully. "You've spoiled a good jape. We wanted to see Sleuth the detective searching in the old crypt—searching for a way out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus' face was a study.

The juniors, as they looked at him, roared again.

D'Arcy looked as if all the blood in his body had been pumped into his face.

"Woll, it was a good jape," said Tom Merry. "But we can't have you New House kids japing the School House. You've got to be properly respectful towards the Cock House of St. Jim's."

"Rats!" said Figgins cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus began to remove his elegant Elon jacket.

"Pway take your jacket off, Figgins," he said.

"Thanks, it's all right on," said Figgins affably. "Cold without a jacket in November."

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin', you wottah!"

"Order!" said Jack Blake. "Order! Fearful thrashings are barred."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Figgy came here to jape the School House. The School House is going to

jape Figgy. One good turn deserves another."

"Hear, hear!"

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Figgins, I call upon you to surrender."

"I call upon you to go and eat coke!" replied Figgins.

"Collar him!"

"Mind, I shall hit—oh—ah—oop!"

With a rush the School House juniors brought Figgins to the floor. Three or four of them sat upon him to keep him there.

Tom Merry opened the window.

"I expect Kerr and Wynn are hanging about to see how Figgy gets on," he remarked. "Yes, there they are, under the trees. Hallo!"

"New House, ahoy!" shouted Blake.

Kerr and Wynn looked up. They were lounging under the elms with apparent carelessness, but they did not look careless now. They understood from the hail from the window of Study No. 6 that all was discovered.

"Waiting for Figgins?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Figgins!" said Kerr innocently.

"Where's Figgins?"

"We'll send him out to you."

"Is he there?" asked Fatty Wynn with elaborate simplicity.

"Well, a relation of his, one Colonel Popcorn, is here," said Tom Merry, laughing. "If you wait we'll send him out." He turned back from the window. "Lock the door in case the bounders should try to rush the House."

Blake turned the key in the lock.

"Now stand up, Figgy! There's a cord here; tie his hands in case he should wriggle. It's bad for boys to wriggle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme go!" roared Figgins.

"Yes, when we've done with you," said Tom Merry agreeably. "Shove that coat on him again, and the whiskers, and his hat. He is going out again in all his war-paint—with some more added. Give me your colour-box, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha! Here you are!"

Figgins struggled desperately. But he was jammed into the motor-coat, and his hands were tied down to his sides and his ankles shackled together. Then the whiskers were fastened upon his face again and his hat jammed on his head. Then Tom Merry painted his nose a brilliant red and painted red and blue streaks on his face.

The aspect of Figgins was decidedly striking by this time. Next, two notices were fixed on him, one on his hat reading "This End Up With Care," and the other, tied to his coat, with the inscription "Returned to the New House With Thanks."

"Doesn't he look a bute?" said Monty Lowther admiringly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's wrathful face broke into a smile.

"Bai Jove! He does look wippin'!" he remarked.

"Lemme go!" gurgled Figgins. "Ow!"

"Yes, we're going to send you back to the New House, this end up with care," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"My hat! He can't be sent out of the House in that style!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "He'll have all the House round him before he's down the stairs."

"He's not going out by the door. There's a window here."

"Phew! Do you want to break his neck?"

"We've got a rope."

"Good egg!" said Blake. "We'll



"Look!" he whispered, in terror-stricken tones. "The... and then the lurker disappeared. 'Bai Jove!' he... ured."

lower him down." He leaned out of the window. "Kerr, old man, stand ready! Look out in goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Blake uncoiled the rope. It was fastened securely to Figgins round the body under his armpits, and then he was lifted on to the window-sill.

All the juniors held on to the rope, so there was no danger of Figgins falling. But he gasped as he was pushed out of the window:

"Oh, you rotters! Oh!"
"Now, are you going to jape the School House any more?" asked Blake affectionately, as Figgins was lowered beneath the window-sill and stopped there.

"Yes!" roared Figgins.
Blake squeezed buttered toast down Figgins' neck. The unfortunate hero of the New House wriggled wildly, and his heels beat a tattoo against the old stone wall.

Kerr and Wynn, too far below to help their chum, glared up in rage.

A crowd was gathering to look at the peculiar sight, and roars of laughter greeted the appearance of Figgins.

"Lower away!" roared Gore from the quadrangle. "Ha, ha, ha! What is it?"

"Figgins, by George!" ejaculated Clifton Dane. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Lemme down, you silly asses!" roared Figgins.

"No hurry," said Blake serenely. "Now, we all admit that Gussy is a silly ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"
"But we're not going to see him japed. If Gussy likes to play the giddy ox, Gussy is going to play the giddy ox ad lib."

"Hear, hear!"
"You feahful ass, Blake——"

"Therefore," said Blake calmly, "he is not going to be japed by the New House wasters. Figgins, old man, are you going to jape Gussy any more over his detective bisney?"

"Yes!" roared Figgins.
"Give him the jam, Lowther!"

"Ow!" roared Figgins. "No!"
"Honour bright?"

"Yes, hang you!"
"Good! Gussy, you will now be able to play the giddy ox without any more clients from the New House——"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!"
"Lower away!" roared the fellows in the quadrangle

The rope was paid out. Figgins slid down the wall slowly, his heels rattling against the stones.

Kerr and Wynn made a clutch at him as soon as he came within reach and began to untie him.

The crowd roared.
"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry from the window, "this is a New House duffer who came over to jape the School House! He came for wool, and is returning shorn!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yaas, wathah! Of course, I wasn't weally taken in. I had a stwong auspich——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, you fellows——"

Figgins was released, and Fatty Wynn and Kerr hurried him away across the quadrangle amid yells of laughter from the fellows.

The chums of the School House watched the weird figure till it disappeared.

"Now you may as well come and have tea, if you haven't any more clients to see, Gussy," said Tom Merry blandly.

And Arthur Augustus thought, "he might as well.

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CHAPTER 11.

Missing Property I.

THERE was much chuckling in the Junior Common-room in the School House that evening.

The subject, of course, was the new departure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the amateur detective, and the visit of his client from the New House at St. Jim's. One fellow had cut the famous advertisement out of the "Rylcombe Gazette" and pinned it up on the wall of the Common-room where all the world could run and read. Fellows came up to D'Arcy with serious faces and told him that their grandmothers were missing and would he undertake to find them.

The swell of St. Jim's was fed-up with the subject long before bed-time, and he retired to Study No. 6 to escape.

But even there he was not safe. There came a tap at the door as Arthur Augustus sat reading a story of Sexton Blake, and his minor, Wally of the Third, looked in, with Joe Frayne grinning over his shoulder.

D'Arcy looked up, and turned his monole upon the fag.

"Got a remittance from home yet, Gussy?" asked Wally.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, Wally I have wefused to weceive any more wemittances fwom home."

"What are you going to do for tin, then?" he inquired.

"Earn it, deah boy!"

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Is that what you've started the detective bisney for?" asked Wally with a grin.

"Yaas."

"How much have you made so far?"

"Pway don't be an impertinent young ass!"

"Well, I'm going to write to the pater for some tin," said Wally, "and I'll put a word in for you. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, and we must raise the wind. Are you still keeping up the business of Sexton-Blake Ltd.?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I'll give you some tips in the deducing line," said Wally affably.

"I can tell by the fact that you've got no money thaat you are stony broke."

"Weally, you young ass——"

"That's where you say 'Wonderful!'!" said Wally.

Joe Frayne chuckled.

Arthur Augustus looked round for something to throw at his humorous minor. Wally held the door open with one hand and proceeded with his deductions.

"The fact that your feet are not bare reveals to the trained intellect that you've got your boots on," pursued Wally, cocking his head thoughtfully on one side; "and the striking circumstance, on the other hand, that your head is bare shows that you don't wear your hat indoors."

"You uttah young ass, cleah out at once!" shouted the exasperated major.

"Ha! When you raise your voice, it is louder," said Wally. "Did you notice it, Frayne?"

"Yes," chuckled Frayne.

"Very good," said Wally approvingly. "You are coming on, Tinker—I mean, Frayne. On the other hand, now that Gussy is not speaking, he is silent. You notice that?"

"Wonderful!" said Joe Frayne.

"Elementary, Tinker, elementary!" said Wally modestly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up and seized a cricket bat.

The two fags slammed the door and fled, and their chuckles died away down the passage.

The amateur detective, looking very flushed, sat down again, but he was not left in peace for long. He looked round irritably as Reilly of the Fourth looked into the study. But the Irish junior's face was so serious that D'Arcy was disarmed.

"What evah is the matter, Weilly?" he asked

Reilly groaned.

"Sure, and I want ye to help me, D'Arcy darling."

"I am quite at your service, deah boy. Do you mean in a pprofessional way?"

"Faith, and I do."

"Pway state the case, deah boy."

"My toffee's disappeared," said Reilly mysteriously. "It's a most remarkable disappearance. It was a good-sized chunk of toffee, and the last I saw of it was in my hand. Then it vanished."

"Weally, I can hardly take notice of such a twivial mattah as the disappearance of a chunk of toffee," said D'Arcy, with a sniff. "Illovevah, in ordah to show my powahs as detective, Weilly, I am willin' to find your toffee for you."

"Do you think you can do it?" asked the Belfast boy doubtfully.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway let me have a few details. Where were you at the time?"

"In my study, next to this."

"Anybody with you?"

"Yes, Kerruish, my study-mate."

"Did he touch the toffee?"

"No; he was on the other side of the table."

"You say you had it in your hand?"

"Faith, and I had!"

"And it disappeared?"

"Intirely," said Reilly mournfully.

"My ilegant toffee."

"Did you lay it down somewhere?"

"No!"

"Did somebody take it fwom you?"

"Nobody."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, looking deeply interested, in spite of the triviality of the article at stake.

"This is a vewy intwestin' pwoblem. It is certainly a mystewy what became of the toffee in those circa. You are sure you did nothin' with it?"

"Nothing but put it into my mouth," said Reilly.

"Eh?"

"Then it disappeared, and I haven't seen it since."

Arthur Augustus made a spring towards the cricket bat, and Reilly sprang towards the door.

The door slammed behind Reilly, and the cricket bat banged on the door. There was a yell of laughter from the passage, and Arthur Augustus, flushed and furious, returned to his seat.

It was ten minutes before he was disturbed again. Then Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, put his head into the study.

Arthur Augustus glared at him.

"If you have come here to vot, Glyn——" he began.

"I want to ask you a question," said Glyn cheerfully. "I suppose you can explain it, being a professional detective. If I missed something in my study, would that show that there was a thief in the school?"

"Have you missed anything?"

"Yes."

(Continued on page 18.)



Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! As I told you last week, Owen Conquest is very busy just now on a great new Rookwood series. I am now able to add that the first story will appear in two weeks' time. I have recently read this yarn and the one following, and it was very refreshing to read once again about the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. The Rookwood chums are just the same cheery crowd of schoolboys; but, believe me, you'll enjoy their latest escapades far more than any others you have ever read about them.

Owen Conquest promised to make this series the best he has ever written, and, judging by the first two yarns, he's succeeding far above my expectations. The theme is really a novel one, and combines school fun and adventure with the exciting mystery of a series of sensational events at Rookwood. You'll simply revel in these wonderful stories, chums. Don't forget the first yarn appears the week after next. Give the word to your pals.

"THE NEW BOY'S SECRET!"

This is the title of next Wednesday's gripping and amusing St. Jim's yarn. The story tells of a newcomer to the school—Edgar Denton—whose cheerful and lively nature makes him a favourite with Tom Merry & Co. But with the advent of Denton, two suspicious characters appear in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's. What their object is soon becomes known to Ernest Levison, the cad of the Fourth Form, for his help is enlisted in carrying out a scoundrelly scheme against Denton. Little do the chums of St. Jim's or Levison know that the new boy in their midst holds a secret worth a large fortune.

Here's a powerful story that will grip and hold your interest throughout. Don't miss it.

"THE BLACK HAND AT ST. FRANK'S!"

Then there is the final nerve-tingling chapters of our great serial. The long

battle between the boys of St. Frank's and Zangari & Co. ends in a blaze of thrills, with Nipper and his chums gaining all the glory for finally rounding up the Italian conspirators.

Lastly, the GEM Jester and Monty Lowther provide you with more hearty laughs. Look out for the next grand number, chums.

SOUND FAKING!

When you have heard the crack of a revolver off-stage in a film or the roaring of an aero-engine, have you ever wondered how these noises are produced? Perhaps not, for probably it has never occurred to you that they are faked. But it will surprise you to know that the sound of a pistol fired off-stage is made by smacking a box with a cane; while the noise of an aero-engine can be faked by holding a vacuum cleaner in operation close to the "mike"! Then if the sound of water rippling from the bows of a boat is called for, it is done by rattling one match in a box!

But why, you will ask, are sounds faked when sometimes the real thing could be recorded? Well, very often the real sound when recorded at a distance doesn't sound a bit real when reproduced. Then, again, if an indoor "shot" is being made, for instance, and the sound of an aero-engine has to be added, to get a plane in such a position that the noise of its engine is faithfully recorded would entail too much trouble and expense.

NOISES TO ORDER!

The "sound" experts can produce, at a moment's notice, any noise required. Every film studio has a library, where the expert can quickly find out how to produce a sound, from

the whining of the wind in the trees to the beating of breakers on a beach.

Not all sounds, however, are faked like this, and there are people employed by the film studios to imitate other various noises. One man, Eddie Delmar, earns his living by imitating the cry of a baby! If a hearty female scream is required, the sound people look no farther than Claire Vincent, who is noted for her screams. Others specialise in being able to moo like a cow, or neigh like a horse, or sing like a bird. There is no sound the film studio cannot fake.

SAVED BY A BARROW!

A sugar-box on wheels is a common enough sight in this country, and small boys get no little fun out of playing with them. But a barrow of this sort seems quite out of place in the African jungle. Yet there is one Zulu tribe which has one, and they regard it now as their god.

How it came into possession of the tribal chieftain is a mystery; but he thought a lot of it, and took it with him on his hunting trips. Once, however, he was confronted by a lion, and had to run for his life. But did he leave his barrow behind? Not he—and it was just as well for him that he didn't. The lion gave chase, and was fast overhauling its intended victim when the fleeing chief came to a hill. Pausing a moment, he set down his barrow, jumped into it, and went careering away down the hill, leaving the baffled lion well behind. So it was that he escaped, and that's how the barrow became the tribe's god.

HOTTING UP THE HIGHWAY!

The recent invention of a Detroit man is unique, to say the least. He decided that something ought to be done about the disorganisation of traffic by heavy snowfalls. So he set to work, and has evolved a scheme which, if it is put into operation, will solve all America's snow troubles. His idea is to lay steel just beneath the road's surface and connect up the steel to power stations. When the snow falls and settles, all that is then necessary is to switch on the "juice," heat up the steel beneath the highway, and the snow melts. The idea is quite sound, but the inventor has not solved who's going to pay the cost of taking up all the roads, laying down the steel, and paying for the electricity.

TAILPIECE.

Unseen by the ref, the all-in wrestler bit his opponent.

"You're biting!" cried the victim.

"What of it?" gasped his adversary. "D'you expect me to swallow you whole?"

THE EDITOR.

George Butler, 21, Quinn Buildings, London, N.; wants a pen pal in the Bowery, New York.

G. L. Brown, 8, Vestris Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23; age 17-20.

Lynn Thomas, 17a, High Street, Colliers Wood, London, S.W.19; age 14-16; films, radio; Los Angeles, Sydney, Shanghai, New York.

Miss J. Passmore, 49, Walnut Tree Road, Heston, Middlesex; girl correspondents; age 14-16; sports.

Miss L. Huskinson, 48, Bodney Road, Hackney Downs, London, E.8; girl correspondents; age 16-19.

Alex Fleming, 144, Boundary Road, Walthamstow, London, E.17; United States; age 16-17; films, sport.

Robert Clark, 43, Brooklands Road, Romford, Essex; age 11-13; India.

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A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Alan Shaw, 32, Wolley Avenue, New Farnley, near Leeds, Yorks, desires correspondents.

Geoffrey Griffiths, 83, Stanley Road, Gloucester; age 18-22; correspondents in France, Australia; dance music.

George W. Fitt, 35, River House, Mill Row, London, N.1; members wanted for the International Correspondence Club.

PEN PALS COUPON

9-11-35

"Not a jape, you ass?" asked D'Arcy suspiciously.

Arthur Augustus might be excused for growing suspicious by this time.

"Honour bright!" said Glyn.

"All sewene! What have you missed?"

"First, a clock."

"Anythin' else?"

"Yes; a vase. Then a picture."

"Bai Jove! And you don't know who's taken them?"

"I didn't say anybody had taken them," said Glyn. "I simply said that I missed them. That's all I know. What I think is not evidence. What I know is, that I've missed them."

"But if you've missed them, and you didn't give anybody permish to take them away, they must be stolen!" said D'Arcy. "Have you missed anythin' else?"

"Yes, several things. But the clock, the vase, and the picture I've missed this evening."

"Bai Jove, I must look into this! Can you give me some details?"

"I think I've given you the lot; I missed the articles this evening, that's all I know," said Bernard Glyn. "If you can solve the mystery, go ahead."

He opened the door of the study and then looked back from the doorway. "By the way, there's another detail I ought to mention—"

"What is that, deah boy?"

"I've been practising with an air-gun in the study."

"What diffidence does that make, Glyn?"

"None at all, I'm not a good shot yet, and that's how I came to miss the clock, the vase, and the picture," explained Glyn cheerfully. "I dare say I shall hit them when I've had a little more practice."

He closed the study door just in time. Arthur Augustus was making a rush at him. The Shall fellow retreated down the passage, chuckling. He had been using the verb to miss in another sense, and he did not mean that the articles were missing.

Arthur Augustus did not sit down again. He remained standing, with his cuffs pushed back, ready for the next joker who came into Study No. 6.

He did not have to wait long. The door was thrown open, and Jack Blake strode in.

"Come on, Gussy!" he exclaimed cheerfully. "We—oh—why— What—yaroooh! Help! He's gone mad! Yaroooh!"

Blake pranced round the study with Arthur Augustus clinging wildly to him, and pommelling him for all his worth.

"Take that, you silly chump! Bai Jove! And that! You fwithful chump! And that! You burbling jabberwock! And that—"

Herries and Digby rushed into the study and dragged the excited swell of St. Jim's off his victim. Blake clung to the table and gasped, and glared at Arthur Augustus.

"You dangerous lunatic!" he roared. "What did you do that for?"

"Because I'm fed up with your wotten jokes!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Jokes, you chump! Where's the joke in coming to tell you that it's bedtime?" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! Did you—"

"You—you—you—" Blake caressed his nose and dabbed it with his handkerchief. "You—you unspeakable chump—"

"Weally, deah boy, I thought it was another wotten japh!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I trust I have not hurt you? I apologise!"

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"Can you apologise my nose straight again?" yelled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You—you—you—"

"Fwom one gentleman to another an apology is quite suffish," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "Pway say no more about it."

Arthur Augustus walked away to the Fourth Form dormitory, leaving Blake dabbing his nose, and Herries and Digby shrieking like a pair of hyenas.

CHAPTER 12.

An Important Letter!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS closed his eyes immediately he was in bed that night, and either fell asleep or pretended to do so.

Apparently he did not hear the remarks that passed from bed to bed in the Fourth Form dormitory. The talk of the juniors ran entirely upon detectives, professional and amateurs, and they made deductions and discussed clues all for the benefit of the swell of St. Jim's.

Bishop deduced from the fact that he was not snoring, that he was not really asleep, whereupon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy began to snore, and the whole dormitory chuckled. But the swell of

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St. Jim's refused to be drawn, and the juniors dropped off to sleep at last, leaving Arthur Augustus to go to sleep, too, and dream about finger-prints and footprints.

The next morning Arthur Augustus was first up in the Fourth Form. He went down early to escape personal remarks about private detectives and New House colonels. As he looked out of the School House, he discovered Taggles, the porter, in talk with Kildare of the Sixth, with a letter in his horny hand.

Taggles was evidently explaining. D'Arcy was near enough to hear him, and his heart bounded as he heard.

"There ain't no sich name 'ere, as I says to Blagg, the postman," said Taggles. "Mr. Sloosh, that's the name, care of Study No. 6, Master Kildare, but there ain't a Sloosh that I knows of. It's a mistake, I says, but Blagg says the letter is for 'ere, so I took it in."

"Let's see it," said the captain of St. Jim's.

Taggles held up the letter. It was in a shining, square envelope, sealed with a big red daub of sealing-wax. It was addressed: "Mr. Sloosh, care of Study No. 6, School House, St. Jim's."

Kildare looked very puzzled.

"Some jape of those young rascals, I expect," he said. "Hallo, D'Arcy! Do you know anything about this letter?"

D'Arcy came down the steps.

"Yaas, wathah!" he replied.

"There ain't no Master Sloosh at this 'ere college," said Taggles, with a shake of the head,

"It's for me," said D'Arcy.

"But your name ain't Sloosh, Master D'Arcy."

"That is my pprofessional name, Taggles," said D'Arcy, with becoming dignity.

Taggles seemed as if he was going to fall over.

Kildare stared hard at D'Arcy as he took the sealed letter from the nerveless hand of the porter.

"Your professional name, did you say, D'Arcy?" asked Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you mind explaining what you mean, if you are not talking out of the back of your neck?" said Kildare politely.

"Yaas. You remember when Fewwers Locke was here, I helped him in his case against the cwaoksmen?" said D'Arcy.

Kildare grinned.

"Yes," he said. "What about it?"

"Well, I'm startin' as an amatuah in Fewwers Locke's business."

"What!"

"Of course, I'm not goin' to take any of Fewwers Locke's clients away," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "I trust you do not think I am the kind of chap to go nosin' atah another chap's job."

Kildare roared.

"I am simply goin' to pick up a few hundred guineas as a pprivate detective," explained D'Arcy. "I have adopted the name of Sleuth, as soundin' more pprofessional. What's the mattah, Kildare? Aro you ill?"

Kildare certainly looked ill—something like convulsions, or sudden hysteria. He staggered away without replying, leaving D'Arcy looking after him in astonishment.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah with the skipph, Taggy?" said D'Arcy, turning round to the school porter.

But Taggles was staggering away in another direction, apparently seized by sudden convulsions in the same way as Kildare.

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled. However, the letter claimed his attention, and he retired to a bench under the old elms to read it.

He turned the letter over in his hands, and regarded it carefully through his eyeglass. As it was addressed to him in his professional name, it must, of course, be from a client.

It flashed into D'Arcy's mind that it might be from another client like Colonel Pipkin, but he dismissed the suspicion.

Figgins had promised that there should be no more japing of D'Arcy on the score of his detective business by New House fellows, and Figgins' word was his bond. Besides, the postmark on the letter was from Wayland, the market town some distance from St. Jim's.

"It's a client," murmured D'Arcy. "The advertisement is bringin' forth fwuit—ware and wefweshin' fwuit, as some poet says."

He slit the envelope after carefully scrutinising the outside.

D'Arcy was not yet sufficiently advanced in science to tell whom the letter was from by simply looking at the postmark, or by the angle at which the stamp was placed on the envelope.

Neither could he, so far, tell from the shape of the envelope whether the writer had grey whiskers or a bald head. All that would come in time, when he had sufficiently studied the methods of Sexton Blake. At present he was driven to the common-or-garden resource of opening the letter and looking inside.

He unfolded the letter. He jammed his monocle a little more tightly into his eye, and scanned the letter eagerly. His heart gave a great jump. For this is how the letter ran:

"Dear Mr. Sleuth,—If you are disengaged at the present time, may I engage your professional services? The matter is extremely delicate—so delicate that I do not care to enter into details in writing. If you can take up my case, please meet me to-day at three o'clock at the stile in Rylcombe Lane. I shall be there to wait for you. Yours truly,

"JOHN JONES."

"P.S.—Bring your revolver."

"Bai Jovel!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It's a weal case at last!" There could be no doubt about it. The letter had been posted in Wayland, miles away, the previous night. True, a fellow might have cycled over to post it, for the sake of the post-mark; but then, had not Figgins undertaken that there should be no more japes? It was not a St. Jim's jape—that was certain. It might be a member of the general public with humorous tendencies, certainly. But D'Arcy thought he could read earnest genuineness in every line of the letter. John Jones, too, was a steady and reassuring name.

The letter was all right. It was a client. And there was danger. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not mind danger. His only regret was that want of funds had compelled him to start in the detective business without either a bloodhound or a trusty revolver.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and put the letter into his pocket. He strolled into the School House, and met the juniors crowding out.

Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Had a remittance, old son?" he asked.

"No, deah boy."

"But you've had a letter," said Blake.

"Yaas; I've had a lettah."

"You don't mean to say your governor has had the nerve to write again without sending a remittance?" said Blake indignantly.

"The lettah is not fwom my governah, deah boy."

"Aunt Adelina, then?"

"No; it is not fwom a wrelation at all."

"Spare his blushes," grinned Monty Lowther. "Can't you guess that it's a billet doux? I deduce from the pink colour in Gussy's cheek that the letter is from Miss Bunn, in Rylcombe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Lowthah—"

"Then who's the lady?" demanded Tom Merry.

"As a mattah of fact," said Arthur Augustus, drawing himself up to his full height, "the lettah is a business lettah, and deals with p'vofessional mattahs, othahwise, I should be vevy pleased to show it to you."

And Arthur Augustus walked away. The juniors stared after him for a moment, and then Blake gasped weakly:

"Another giddy jape!"

And Tom Merry & Co. roared:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 13.

Several Things Needful!

M R. LATHOM, the master of the Fourth Form, found Arthur Augustus somewhat trying in class that morning.

The swell of St. Jim's was thinking of John Jones and his letter, and the meeting in Rylcombe Lane in the afternoon. The disappointment over the case of Colonel Pipkin made the amateur detective all the more eager to get on to a real case; if only to prove to the unbelieving scoffers of the School House that his business was a real business, and that he could earn money by his own efforts just as if he had been born to do so.

What was the matter with the private affairs of John Jones he did not know, but, whatever it was, he was determined to set it right.

If Mrs. Jones was missing he would find her; if any of the little Jones had been abducted he would recover them. If John Jones had lost a hundred thousand pounds' worth of bonds, he would recapture them; if his near and dear relatives had been murdered, one by one, by unknown assassins, D'Arcy would hunt them down without mercy and bring them to their richly merited doom.

The amateur detective was thinking of these deep matters instead of his lessons, and Mr. Lathom, who did not know that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a detective at all, was very much surprised and exasperated.

But when Arthur Augustus informed him, at last, that Rome was founded by John Jones—in a moment of absent-mindedness, of course—Mr. Lathom lost his patience.

"What did you say, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"I bog your pardon, sir; I should have said Sexton Blake," said Arthur Augustus, in a flutter.

"What?"

There was a chuckle from the Fourth. They knew what Arthur Augustus was

thinking of, though Mr. Lathom did not.

"Sowwy, sir," said D'Arcy, reddening. "I mean Womulus and Wemus, sir."

"D'Arcy!"

"Ya-as, sir!"

"You are not thinking of your lessons!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And if you do not pay more attention, D'Arcy, I shall detain you this afternoon," said the Fourth Form master severely.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy almost shuddered. Detention that afternoon would mean missing the appointment with John Jones and losing the first great case that had come his way. He made a tremendous effort to appear interested in the early days of the Roman Republic, but he had never felt so bored in his life with the virtuous Tullius and the wicked Tarquin.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's body was in the Form-room, but Mr. Sleuth's mind was keeping the appointment with John Jones.

Fortunately, everything comes to an end, and morning lessons were over at last on that eventful Saturday.

Arthur Augustus hardly ate his dinner. Dinner was a trivial thing in comparison with the great case of John Jones. The amateur detective was a little worried in his mind about the necessity of taking a revolver. He had not one of these useful articles. Indeed, if he had had one, it would have been much more dangerous to himself and John Jones than to anyone else.

But he felt keenly the need of a trusty revolver, without which a detective is not complete. But the only weapon he could take was a cane. Handcuffs, too, were wanting; and if D'Arcy effected a capture it would be a little difficult to dispose of the criminal without handcuffing him. If, like the famous Sexton Blake, he had had a large-sized bloodhound to watch his prisoners, he could have dispensed with the handcuffs, but the bloodhound was wanting, as well as the other appurtenances of a well-equipped detective.

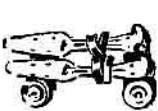
Arthur Augustus thought the matter over. Revolvers and handcuffs were out of the question till business looked up a little. But he did not see why a bulldog would not answer the purpose as well as a bloodhound. After dinner he simply astounded Herries by asking to be allowed to take Towser out for a walk that afternoon.

Herries stared at him blankly, hardly able to believe his ears.

D'Arcy was certainly fond of dogs, but he was not fond of close quarters with Towser. Towser, as Arthur

(Continued on the next page.)

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Augustus always maintained, had no respect whatever for a fellow's trousers.

"You want to take Towser out?" repeated Herries blankly.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"What for?"

"For a walk."

"Well, I'm glad to see you're coming round at last," said Herries, with a sniff. "You never liked taking Towser out."

"I should like to this afternoon, deah boy."

"Well, I don't know," said Herries thoughtfully. "You're such a careless ass, you know, and you might let him bite somebody. I don't want to run any risk of Towser getting blood-poisoning, or anything of that sort."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I'll tell you what," said Herries. "I'll come with you, and we'll both take Towser."

"Imposs, deah boy!"

"Why is it impossible, ass?"

"I'm going to keep an appointment."

"Oh, rot! I suppose you don't want to take a bulldog with you to see Miss Bunn!" exclaimed Herries crossly.

Arthur Augustus turned pink.

"You uttah ass, Hewwies!" he exclaimed. "I am not going to see Miss Bunn. I have too much respect for that young lady to think of meetin' her in a suwwepitious way. As a matter of fact, it is a case."

"Eh?"

"I'm goin' to see a case!"

"What kind of a case?" asked Herries, staring. "Do you mean a packing-case?"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Or a watch-case? Or a hospital case?"

"I am goin' to look into a case—a case for a detective, you ass!"

"Oh!" Herries seemed interested at last. "And you want Towser to track somebody down? Good! You know what a splendid tracker Towser is. You remember how he tracked down the chaps who—"

"I don't want to do any twackin'." Weally, Hewwies—

"Well, I'll bring him if you like," said Herries. "You can treat me as Tinker, you know, same as Sexton Blake."

"You ass—"

"Well, I can't trust you out with Towser alone," said Herries. "He might bite some tramp, and injure his health."

"I werged you as an ass, Hewwies. I cannot take you with me, because the case is a vevy confidential one—too delicate to be witten down, in fact!"

"Some rotten jape, I expect!" snorted Herries.

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus turned away. Herries called after him.

"Ask your minor to lend you Pongo, Gussy!"

Gussy sniffed. He was not likely to take Wally's wretched little mongrel with him. Towser was an imposing bulldog, and would have filled the place of the regulation bloodhound; but Pongo would have been absurd.

But Herries would not allow Towser out of his sight. So the amateur detective had to make up his mind to proceed to take up the case in a dogless state, as well as handcuffless and revolverless.

Tom Merry clapped D'Arcy on the shoulder as, with a cane under his arm, he came out of the School House at three o'clock.

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"Coming down to the footer, Gussy?" asked the Shell fellow.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Sowwy, deah boy; you'll have to excuse me this aftahnoon."

"But we're playing the New House," said Tom Merry. "My dear kid, don't you want to have a hand in beating Figgins & Co.?"

"Sowwy! Play Weilly instead.

He's a good man!"

"Oh, yes, Reilly will play, and he'll be quite as good!" agreed Tom Merry.

"But you didn't tell me you were missing the footer this afternoon. Is that the right way to treat your skipper, Gussy?"

"I'm sowwy, Tom Mewwy. I apologise," said D'Arcy gracefully. "As a mattah of fact, I have been vevy much taken up with an important case—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, you ass—"

Tom Merry staggered against the stone balustrade of the steps and yelled.

Arthur Augustus gave him a disdainful glare, and walked on.

Tom Merry gasped.

Monty Lowther and Manners came out of the House. They looked after the retreating figure of Arthur Augustus, and then looked inquiringly at Tom Merry.

"What's the matter?" demanded Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is it, you ass?" asked Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha! Gussy!" sobbed Tom Merry. "He can't play footer this afternoon—ha, ha, ha!—because he's taken up—ha, ha, ha!—an important case!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.

Arthur Augustus heard the laughter as he went, but he did not deign to look back. He marched out of the gates of St. Jim's with his nose very high in the air, and his eye gleaming behind his eyeglass.

"Silly asses!" murmured D'Arcy. "He laughs best who laughs last," the proverb says. Wait till I have wecovahed the stolen bonds—or the missin' wife, whichever it is—then we shall see what we shall see!"

Which was indubitably true.

CHAPTER 14.

Dangerous Enemies!

"BAI JOVE! There he is!"

D'Arcy caught sight of him as he came down Rylcombe Lane towards the stile.

He was a little man—about the same height as D'Arcy himself. He had ginger-coloured whiskers and thick eyebrows of the same colour.

He was dressed in a black overcoat and grey trousers, and wore a silk topper and a pair of spectacles. He looked a decidedly respectable gentleman of middle age. He was walking up and down, apparently to keep himself warm, close by the stile, and Arthur Augustus had no doubt that this was his unknown correspondent.

D'Arcy halted, and raised his silk topper in his best style.

"Mr. Jones, I pwesume?" he said.

The elderly gentleman blinked at him through his spectacles.

"Yes," he said, in a wheezy voice.

"Are you Mr. Sleuth?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The elderly gent held out his hand, and D'Arcy shook hands with him warmly.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Sleuth," said the elderly gentleman.

"I understand from your arriving here, that you are able to take up my case."

"Yaas, Mr. Jones," said Arthur Augustus. "I happen to be at liberty at the pwesent moment. I am puttin' off the case of the marquiss' diamonds for a bit."

Mr. Jones looked up and down the lane.

"You have not been followed?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! I think not!"

"My enemies are near!" said Mr. Jones, in a deep and thrilling whisper.

"They have dogged me from Wayland."

"Bai Jove!"

"I trust you have not forgotten your revolver?"

"You may wely upon me to do all that is required, my dear sir," said D'Arcy, evading that awkward question.

"Pway let me have some details. You can speak quite freely before my—

ahom!—I mean, you can speak quite freely."

"I am dogged by enemies!" whispered Mr. Jones.

"Gweat Scott!"

"There are some of them in the wood now, and I fear I shall not reach Wayland alive!"

"Wely upon me!"

"Let us get out of sight, then," said Mr. Jones nervously. "Come into the wood."

Arthur Augustus followed him over the stile. They went down the footpath, under the leafless trees. Autumn winds had swept the wood of leaves, and it was possible to see a great distance among the trees and bushes. Mr. Jones gave a sudden start, and pointed into the wood.

"Look!" he whispered, in terror-stricken tones.

"Bai Jove! What is it?"

"The enemy!"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass a little tighter, and looked. There was undoubtedly a lurking form among the trees—D'Arcy caught a glimpse of a dark, swarthy face. Then the lurker disappeared.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

If he had wanted proof of the genuineness of the case, he had it then. John Jones was evidently being dogged by a dark, foreign-looking rascal, who was lurking in the wood, perhaps with some deadly weapon just ready for use.

D'Arcy thought of gleaming stilettees and exploding bombs, and shuddered. He regretted the trusty revolver and the bloodhound more than ever. But the blood of all the D'Arcys flowed in his veins, and his courage did not fail him.

"You saw him?" whispered Mr. Jones.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Would you know him again?"

"Yaas, I think so."

"There is another of them," muttered Mr. Jones. "If you could track them down and arrest them, Mr. Sleuth, I should feel safe."

"Bai Jove!"

"I trust you have not forgotten the handcuffs?"

"Ahem! We'll make sure of them all wight, if we once avwest them," said Arthur Augustus. "Am I to understand that your life is thwreatened, Mr. Jones?"

"You see for yourself, my dear sir. I decline to subscribe a million pounds towards the funds of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones—you have heard of it? A very dangerous organisation. Unless I subscribe I am a dead man—and these



There was a rustle in the bushes, and two swarthy fellows bounded out. D'Arcy was seized and borne to the ground. "Aha! The detective!" they yelled. "Cospetto, likewise carambo! Blay him!"

two members of the Brotherhood are sent to slay me."

"Gweat Scott!"

"The police can do nothing," said Mr. Jones pathetically. "If I were to go to Scotland Yard, and tell them the story I have told you, they would laugh at me." Which was very probable.

"I reply upon you, Mr. Blake—I mean Mr. Sleuth," said Mr. John Jones, tapping Arthur Augustus on the chest as he spoke. He did not appear to be at all surprised at finding Mr. Sleuth, the detective, so extremely youthful; perhaps he thought it was some skillful disguise—perhaps! "I rely upon you absolutely. I think you will be able to track down those two villains and arrest them in the wood, and then I shall be safe. Then you will be able to obtain certain information from them, and break up the society of Blood and Bones."

Arthur Augustus looked rather serious. Hunting down two armed villains in a wood was rather a steep task for a junior of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. But he had undertaken the case now, and there was no retreat.

"Look!" exclaimed Mr. Jones suddenly. "The other!"

A dark and swarthy face with black moustache looked for a moment out of the trees, and then vanished.

Arthur Augustus thrilled.

"Bai Jove! This is gettin' excitin'!" he murmured.

"Hunt them down!" gasped Mr. Jones. "Hunt them down, or I am a dead man! You shall have a cheque for any amount you care to name—but arrest them!"

"Yaas, but—"

"I will wait for you here," said Mr. Jones. "If you do not return in a quarter of an hour, I shall know that you have been murdered, and I will engage another detective."

D'Arcy shivered.

It was all very well for Mr. Jones to

say so coolly that he would engage another detective if D'Arcy was murdered—but that arrangement would not be so satisfactory to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as to Mr. Jones.

"Hunt them down!" exclaimed Mr. Jones. "Look—I will hide in this thicket while you are on the track. Bring them back prisoners, and you shall have a fee of ten thousand pounds."

"Vewy well, my dear sir."

"Hurry! Every minute is precious!" Mr. Jones concealed himself in the thicket, and D'Arcy set off into the bushes to search for the lurking enemy. He held his thick cane ready for use, but he could not help wondering what he would do if he met them. He regretted now that he had not allowed Herries to come with Towser. Fortunately, he did not meet the enemy. He tramped in the wood for a couple of hours, but there was neither sign nor sound of the two swarthy members of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at his watch.

If he did not return in a quarter of an hour, Mr. Jones was going to assume that he had been murdered. Fortunately, he had not been murdered, so he thought he had better return and reassure Mr. Jones.

He made his way back to the footpath, and looked into the thicket where Mr. Jones had concealed himself. He did not see him.

"It's all wright, Mr. Jones," he said.

No reply.

"Mr. Jones! Are you there?" called out D'Arcy, in terror that something dreadful might have happened to his client while he was absent.

There was a deep groan from the thicket.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's very hair stood on end.

"Mr. Jones! Bai Jove—my dear sir—"

Groan!

Arthur Augustus plunged wildly into the thicket. He almost stumbled over a body stretched at his feet in the brambles and fallen leaves.

It was the body of John Jones.

He lay upon his back, and there were dreadful red stains upon his white collar, upon his ginger whiskers, and upon his cheeks. The crimson stains told their own story.

D'Arcy dropped upon his knees beside the fallen man.

"Mr. Jones! Good heavens! Gweat Scott! My deah sir—"

Silence!

"Mr. Jones! Pway speak—"

But Mr. Jones was still and silent.

Evidently he had been struck down by the enemy, the remorseless emissaries of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones, and D'Arcy had returned only in time to hear his last groan!

CHAPTER 15.

Mr. Sleuth's Last Case!

D'ARCY knelt beside the murdered victim, his very blood freezing in his veins.

There were red stains on his fingers as he touched the unfortunate man.

"Bai Jove! Poor chap!" murmured D'Arcy huskily. "This is simply howwible!"

He remembered that in a similar case Sexton Blake would have placed his hand upon the fallen man's heart, to ascertain whether life was really extinct. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy proceeded to do as much for Mr. Jones.

To his surprise and joy, he found Mr. Jones' heart beating away quite cheerfully. If Mr. Jones was dead, he was gifted with a remarkably sound heart, for it was beating in a perfectly normal manner.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed D'Arcy, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,447.

in great relief. "He is not dead! I suppose he must have fainted from his fearful injuries."

"Groan!
"Mr. Jones, my dear sir—"
Mr. Jones' eyes opened feebly.
"Ha, villains!" he gasped. "Never! Slay me if you will—but never, never will I subscribe a single quid to the funds of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones!"

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "It is I!"
Mr. Jones blinked at him over the spectacles, which had fallen a little sideways.

"Ha! Sleuth!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
"They have slain me!" groaned Mr. Jones. "You are too late! But track them down—track them down to their doom!"

"Yaas, wathah! But let me see—"
Mr. Jones waved him back.
"Useless, Mr. Blake—I mean, Sleuth. I am a dead man! Do not waste time on me! Track them down!"
"But weally—"

"Vengeance!" murmured the dying man. "Track them down!"
There was a rustle in the bushes, and Arthur Augustus sprang to his feet.

Two swarthy fellows bounded out, and D'Arcy was seized and borne to the ground.

"Aha! The detective!"
"Slay him!"
"Bai Jove! You awful wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, struggling in the grasp of the two enemies.

"Slay him! Cospetto, likewise carambo!" roared one of the villains, in a voice, however, that sounded very English.

"Corpo di bacco!" yelled the other.

"Slay him!"

"Bai Jove! Rescue! I uttably wefuse—"

"Aha! My gleaming stiletto shall be dyed in your gore!"
"Oh, gwreat Scott!"
Arthur Augustus struggled desperately. The two villains were not big men—indeed, one of them was shorter than D'Arcy himself. Somewhat to his own surprise, Arthur Augustus succeeded in hurling them off, and sprang up.

The two swarthy ruffians seemed dazed by their fall. They lay gasping on the ground.

"Quick, the handcuffs!" cried Mr. Jones, with great energy, considering that he was on the point of death.

"Bai Jove, I haven't any—"
"Bind them, then!"
"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus pulled a cord from his pocket, and hurled himself upon the nearest desperado. The ruffian had evidently been dazed by his fall, for he did not resist. Arthur Augustus bound his hands in a twinkling. Then he turned to the other. The second ruffian struggled a little, but only a little. D'Arcy bound his wrists together, and then rose, gasping.

Both the dreadful ruffians, the remorseless emissaries of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones, lay gasping at his feet, prisoners!

"Captured, bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy triumphantly.
"Cospetto!" gasped one of the ruffians.

"Carambo!" yelled the other.

"Sapristi!"
Mr. Jones groaned deeply.
"You have captured them," he said faintly. "Take them to the police station!"

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"But you, my dear sir—"
"You can send a stretcher for me!"
"Yaas, I suppose that's the best thing to be done," said D'Arcy.

"Yes, yes. Hurry, lest they escape!"
"They jolly well won't escape, dear boy!" said D'Arcy. "I'll huwwy like anythin', Mr. Jones, and I hope you will wecovah all wight. Come along, you villains!"

"Cospetto!"
"Corpo di tabacco!"
"Huwwy up, or I shall touch you up with my cane, you awful scoundwels!"
"Corpo di carambo!"
"Sapristi!"

D'Arcy compelled the prisoners to rise, and marched them off through the wood. The two villains proceeded very slowly, but they had to go; and at length Arthur Augustus succeeded in getting them as far as the end of the footpath, where it entered Rylcombe Lane.

The two desperadoes declined to get over the stile, but D'Arcy brandished his cane; and they ejaculated "sapristi" again and climbed over.

"I'm goin' to take you to the station, you awful wottahs!" said D'Arcy. "Huwwy up!"

"Cospetto!"
"Carambo di sapristi!"

Arthur Augustus looked up and down the lane. He hoped to see somebody to help him with the prisoners, and he was not disappointed. Quite a little crowd of fellows in Rylcombe Grammar School caps came hurrying along the lane. D'Arcy recognised the Grammarians—Gordon Gay and Wootton minor, and Tadpole, Carboy, and Lane, and Gustave Blanc, and several more of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School. Never had the sight of the Grammarians been so welcome to the eyes of the swell of St. Jim's. And as it never rains but it pours—from the direction of St. Jim's half a dozen juniors appeared in sight—Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners, and Blake, Kangaroo, and Herries.

The two parties of juniors arrived almost at the same time.

They stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his prisoners blankly.

Gordon Gay & Co. were grinning. Tom Merry & Co. looked utterly amazed.

"What on earth—" said Blake.
"What the dickens—"

"Pway lend me a hand with these wascals, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Who are they?" roared Tom Merry.

"Murdr'wahs!"
"What?"

"They are members of the Bwotlah- hood of Blood and Bones."

"Oh, my hat!"
"I have captured them!"

"You frightful ass!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Can't you see that those moustaches they're wearing are false?" yelled Tom Merry.

"What?"

"We came out to look for you, Gussy!" grinned Monty Lowther. "I think it's just as well that we did!"

"We knew it was some jape."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Good old Gussy!" sighed Blake. "Always discovering mares' nests! Always digging up trouble! Who's the japer this time? Some of these Gram- marian bouncers, I suppose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay & Co.

D'Arcy frowned, and looked at his prisoners. Now that he examined them

closely, it was clear enough that the moustaches were artificial.

"They are in disguise," said D'Arcy. "Natuwally, they would be in disguise, when they came down here to commit a murdah!"

"A—a—what?"

"A murdah!" said D'Arcy firmly. "They have murdahed my client, Mr. Jones!"

"My hat! You seem to be a great deal of use to your client!" grinned Blake. "But perhaps he will turn out not to be murdered, after all!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gordon Gay.

And the Grammarians roared.

"He is covahed with blood!" said D'Arcy.

"What!"

"His collah and whiskahs are all wed- wed with blood!"

"Red ink, more likely!" grinned Herries. "It's a jape, you ass!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"They were red with something, cer- tainly," said Gordon Gay.

D'Arcy stared at him.

"How do you know, Gay?"

"Because I have got them here."

"What!"

"Here you are!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully.

The Grammarian junior drew a set of ginger-coloured whiskers from his pocket. D'Arcy's eyes almost started from his head. They were the ginger whiskers that Mr. Jones had worn, and they were stained with red; but D'Arcy could guess by this time that it was red ink, and not blood. It had dawned on him that he had been japed.

"Bai Jove! You—you iwightful wottah!"

The Grammarians roared. The St. Jim's fellows roared, too.

The expression upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face might have moved a stone image to merriment.

"Oh, my only Aunt Maria!" said Blake, with tears running down his cheeks. "Oh, my sainted Uncle Theophilus! Gussy, you will be the death of me!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus turned to his two prisoners. The two swarthy scoundrels were grinning now. Carboy had cut the cord with which D'Arcy had bound their hands, but they showed no inclination to escape.

"Who are you, you wottahs?" roared Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

He realised at last that, in the circumstances, they could not very well be really members of the Brotherhood of Blood and Bones.

"Cospetto!" said one of them.

"Corpi di tabacco!" said the other.

Arthur Augustus jerked at their black moustaches. They came off in his grasp. Then, in spite of the dark stains upon their skin, they were recognisable as Frank Monk and Wootton major of the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School.

There was a fresh roar of laughter. Arthur Augustus understood now how he had captured them so easily, single- handed.

The swell of St. Jim's looked at the two revealed juniors. Then he looked at Gordon Gay and the Gram- marians. Then he looked at Tom Merry & Co.

A terrific yell of laughter rose from them all. The fellows simply rocked with merriment.

Gordon Gay & Co. went up the lane, doubled up with mirth, and turning

(Continued on page 23.)

THE FIRE THAT CHEATED A FIRING SQUAD OF THEIR VICTIM!

The BLACK HAND at ST. FRANK'S!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

A Close Call!

FOR some time Nelson Lee, the schoolmaster-detective of St. Frank's, has been investigating the mystery of Gallows Mere, the residence of Dr. Zangari, an Italian, and at last he learns the nature of the sinister enterprise being carried on there. Zangari is making a big attempt to reorganise the Mafia, the dreaded secret society which was exterminated in Italy.

But it seems that Nelson Lee has learnt this information too late, for he has fallen into the hands of Zangari's gang, and is about to be shot!

Nipper & Co., juniors of St. Frank's, are also involved in the affair, and they have formed themselves into the "Fighting Eight," to combat Zangari and the members of his organisation. They discover that Lee has been captured, and four of them go to Gallows Mere to try to rescue him. They see the detective brought out at the rear of the house and put up against a wall, with a firing squad opposite.

It is a terrible moment for the juniors, for they are utterly helpless to save Lee from death. But in an attempt to delay the execution they set fire to a store-house full of petrol.

Dr. Zangari was about to drop his hand, as a signal to the firing-squad, when the dramatic burst of vivid fire illuminated the scene. Zangari spun round, startled.

"What is that?" he ejaculated harshly.

Carlo Mazzini was the first to realise the truth.

"The petrol, excellency!" he gasped. "The petrol in the old stable is on fire."

"Fools—fools!" screamed Zangari. "Who is responsible for this carelessness?"

A chorus of denials went up. The men of the firing squad, confused, had lowered their guns; they were all staring at the tremendous blaze. Flames

were now pouring in a great column through the roof of the old stable, and the ferocity of the fire was alarming. The courtyard and the entire rear of the old house were lit up by the great glare. The unexpectedness of the disaster, the obvious hopelessness of quelling the flames, almost paralysed the Italian conspirators. They stood helpless, staring stupidly. Dr. Zangari was the first to recover his presence of mind.

"Are you children, that you should stand idle?" he shouted. "See how the fire gains! Unless we check it, the flames will destroy all the outbuildings and then spread to the house!"

Not for a moment did Zangari suspect that the fire had been deliberately started in order to save Nelson Lee; he believed it was due to some carelessness. Whatever the cause, it had to be dealt with quickly.

"The prisoner, excellency?" asked Mazzini. "What of him?"

"We cannot risk killing him now," said Zangari. "Take Lee into the house and lock him in the cellar! Quick! By this time the flames may have been seen in Edgmore itself. Soon we shall have people here—farmers and villagers! Ten thousand curses!"

He dared not execute Nelson Lee now. At any moment people might arrive. The blaze was so terrific that half the countryside would soon be aroused. Boom! Suddenly a number of the sealed petrol cans exploded, and the concussion was so great that many of the windows of Gallows Mere were shattered. The flames leaped higher and higher, and with appalling rapidity the fire spread.

Nipper almost choked.

"It worked, you chaps—it worked!" he muttered thickly.

He was dizzy with relief. His desperate plan had succeeded. He, Handforth, Tommy Watson, and Archie Glen-thorne, during that first moment of confusion, had escaped unseen from the stables, and were now hidden in a dense clump of bushes which clustered

against the wall of the courtyard. These bushes reached higher than the wall's top, and Nipper, peering over, hidden by the foliage, had seen everything.

"What's happening?" whispered Handforth, scrambling up to the wall-top beside Nipper.

"They daron't kill him now," said Nipper, forcing himself to be calm. "Zangari can't risk it, though it's the early hours of the morning. People may arrive at any second. No, the gov'nor's safe for the time being, but the excitement's not over yet."

"Look!" breathed Handforth.

For a moment Nipper did not understand. Then he saw something which made him catch his breath. On the other side of the courtyard, which was now deserted—for those men who had not attended to Nelson Lee had rushed to fight the fire—and low down in the wall of the house a barred grating, previously dark, had suddenly become illuminated. Then, almost as suddenly, the grating was dark again. The courtyard was illuminated only by the ruddy glare from the fire.

A moment later a number of men came running out of the back doorway, and they dashed through the inner courtyard—to help the others in the fire fight. Nipper's eyes blazed with excitement.

"Clear as daylight!" he said. "That's the cellar they've taken the gov'nor to. Everybody has run out of the house, too; they're all fighting the flames. Now's our chance to rescue the gov'nor!"

The four St. Frank's boys thought nothing of the dangers. They only knew that a golden opportunity was within their grasp. It might never occur again. Nipper called recklessly to Watson and Archie, and the next moment he had jumped down into the courtyard. Handforth followed. Watson and Archie, scrambling up, dropped, too. They were now fully exposed, but they didn't care. They had brought

guns with them, and although they were not familiar with firearms, they were ready to use them.

Dashing openly across the courtyard, they entered the doorway, and were inside the house in a few moments. They had not been seen by the enemy—for the simple reason that the enemy were far too busy at the fire, which was increasing in intensity.

There was another mighty explosion, and flaming petrol was hurled in all directions. Madly Zangari and his men scattered.

During these tense minutes, Nipper and his gallant companions were very active. Once inside the house they switched on their electric torches. It was easy enough to find the passage which led to the cellar, for Nipper, at least, had taken his bearings. They found an old-fashioned door of solid oak, and, throwing it open, a flight of stone steps was revealed.

"This way!" muttered Nipper. "Be ready for anything!"

They dashed down—and there, at the bottom of the steps, stood a man in black. He had been left on guard. At first he had not been alarmed, thinking that some of his companions were coming down to join him. But at the sound of Nipper's voice he whipped his gun out.

"On him!" yelled Handforth.

And the leader of Study D did not wait to descend the cellar steps in the normal way; he projected himself through the air, and Nipper did the same thing a split-second later. The man tried to fire, but he was too late in levelling his revolver.

Crash!

Handforth and Nipper landed right on top of him, and all three went hurtling to the hard stone floor. The impact was terrific, and the Italian took the full brunt of the fall. His body saved the two boys from serious injury; they picked themselves up, bruised and breathless, but otherwise unharmed. A glance at the guard was sufficient. He was lying motionless, for the back of his head had come into violent contact with the floor.

"Good work, laddies!" chortled Archie Glenthorne. "Absolutely!"

Nipper seized the man's fallen gun.

"Look after this chap, Handy!" he said tensely.

He ran forward, his torch flashing.

"Guv'nor!" he called urgently.

"Guv'nor!"

"Here!" came Lee's voice. "In Heaven's name, Nipper, is that you?"

"You bet it's me, sir!" replied Nipper.

His voice was joyous. He had seen the heavy door of an inner cellar, and he rapidly shot back the bolts and swung the door open. Next moment he and Nelson Lee were face to face.

"Then it was you who fired—"

"Right first time, guv'nor," said Nipper, nodding.

"You saved my life."

"You're telling me!" said Nipper. "You're a fine one! You send us away so that we shall be out of danger—and then you go and get yourself in a mess! It's a jolly good thing your precious plan failed! Anyhow, we're here on the spot when we're needed."

Nelson Lee made no reply. He had caught sight of the other three boys crowding in the doorway. If caught, these four boys would be ruthlessly wiped out. The danger of his own position did not concern him in that tense second.

"Here's a gun, guv'nor," went on Nipper, thrusting the weapon into

Nelson Lee's hand. "You might need it. Come on! We've got to get out of here now!"

"Yes," said Nelson Lee. "Are there any more of you?"

"It only took four of us to dish those blighters, sir," said Handforth, with a sniff. "No need to worry. We can walk out just when we please. Zangari and all his crooks are too jolly busy trying to put the fire out."

For the first time Lee fully appreciated the situation. He realised just how the boys had been enabled to enter Gallows Mere unmolested.

"This man's hurt, by the look of it," he said, as he caught sight of the unconscious guard. "Better lock him in the cellar I have just vacated."

"Easy enough," said Nipper briskly.

He and two of the others dragged the man into the cellar, and the door was bolted.

But escape was not to be so easy! As Lee and the four boys made a move towards the stone stairs, voices became audible—Zangari's voice louder than the others.

"Put* out your lights!" hissed Lee urgently. "Back! This way! Don't utter a sound!"

They were in the nick of time. The door at the top of the stairs opened, and lights flashed down. A number of men came crowding on to the stairway.

"Remain here—and do not talk," Zangari was saying, in Italian. "Men from the neighbouring farms are coming already; they have been sighted. Half the village will follow. These countrymen may be fools, but if they see so many of you here they will wonder. You understand?"

"Si, si!" chorused the men.

Zangari closed the door and was gone. Nelson Lee admired his forethought. The people of the countryside would have been astonished, indeed, if they had found a large number of foreigners at Gallows Mere. True, they knew that Zangari was a foreigner, and that he kept a few servants, and assistants for his laboratory; people would be prepared to find such men—but not a crowd. Even in this acute situation, Dr. Zangari was keeping his head.

The men in black—they were no longer men in black now, for they had removed their sombre garb—crowded down the stone stairs, and collected in the dark at the bottom. They talked excitedly amongst themselves. Nelson Lee and the boys, meanwhile, had retreated to the very end of the cellar. But there was no escape for them; there was no other exit.

Suddenly the excitement became greater; the men talked more rapidly, and one of them, against orders, switched on a torchlight. They commenced searching about.

"Antonio, he was left here!" Lee heard one of the men say in Italian.

"But where is Antonio?"

"It matters not," said another. "The accused Lee cannot escape. See, the door is still bolted."

"Something has happened!" exclaimed the first man. "Look! A drop of blood on the floor! It is fresh! Carambo! There has been fighting!"

Without hesitation he pulled back the bolts on the door of the inner cellar. He thrust the door open, and flashed his light within. A great cry escaped him.

"The man Lee is not here!" he panted. "It is Antonio! By all the saints, Lee has escaped!"

There was an outcry from the others; they crowded in the doorway, almost a dozen of them.

Click, click, click!

Four torchlight switches were

operated, and four beams of light blazed on the backs of the Italians. Two or three of them stared round with sudden fear in their dark eyes. They could see nothing beyond the four points of light—nothing except shadowy figures. But, thrust forward into the light, were hands grasping wicked-looking automatics.

"Hands up!" commanded Nelson Lee, speaking in Italian. "Quickly, my friends! Put your hands up, and keep them up!"

The Italians, startled, reached rapidly for the ceiling.

"The Signor Lee!" breathed a voice. "The first man who raises his voice will be shot," continued Lee grimly. "Go forward into the inner cellar, and keep your hands above your heads. Quickly, now!"

There was nothing for it but to obey the order. The Italians obeyed it smartly, crowding against one another in their haste to get into the cellar. Nelson Lee had taken action at the right moment—just when all the men had been packed in the doorway.

The last of them vanished, and with a quick movement Handforth reached forward, pulled the door, and shot the bolts.

"Phew! That was pretty hot!" he panted.

"We'd better rush now," said Tommy Watson. "Those rotters will shout for help through the grating, and even now we might be trapped."

"The men aren't shout," said Nelson Lee. "Zangari ordered them to keep quiet, and they might give the game away if they shouted. There must be a lot of local people in the courtyard by now. Come on, boys, we'll get clear now."

Nelson Lee led the way, and when they arrived at the top of the cellar steps they found the passage empty. The back door stood wide open, and a glare of light was admitted. Lee crept forward, and peered round. He could see everything distinctly. The inner courtyard was empty, but, farther, through the opening, crowds of men were working frantically to quell the fire.

"Well, guv'nor?" whispered Nipper, when Lee returned.

"I think we're safe," said the detective calmly. "Everybody seems to be out there, at the back. This way. We'll go through the front hall and get out by the front door."

They were all ready to take instant action if they should meet any of the enemy. But the house was deserted, as they had expected.

They passed through the front hall, opened the great door, and a moment later were out on the drive. Here all was darkness, for the house itself prevented the glare from reaching the drive.

The boys followed Lee to the road. It was glorious to be free. They felt absolutely safe, too, for along the road, in both directions, people were coming—honest people—some walking, some on bicycles, others in cars.

"This way!" said Lee crisply.

He did not want to meet anybody. He broke through the hedge opposite Gallows Mere and the boys followed.

They crossed two meadows before Nelson Lee called a halt. The detective turned, and gazed across at the lurid glare in the distance.

By this time the conflagration had attracted dozens of people, and they were all converging on Gallows Mere. Dr. Zangari would have his hands full for some little time to come.

Preparing for Action!

NELSON LEE caught Nipper by the shoulder.

"I don't pretend to know how you boys discovered my plight; but it's evident enough that you were very much on the alert," he said quietly. "I thank you all for what you did. My position was about as hopeless as it could possibly be. Indeed, but for your intervention, I should certainly have been dead by now."

"No need to thank us, sir!" growled Handforth. "It was Nipper's stunt. We were practically at our wits' end when we saw you in front of that firing squad, and then, at the last minute, Nipper had a brain-wave. He set fire to the petrol."

"There was nothing else to be done,

this moment, and I must hasten to relieve his mind."

"Look here, guv'nor," said Nipper, "after what's just happened, I reckon we've earned the right to be in the game to the finish."

"Absolutely," said Archie Glen-thorne stoutly. "Old thing, I second the dashed motion!"

"Rather!" chorused Handforth and Tommy Watson.

"Well, that's perfectly true," admitted Nelson Lee. "You risked your lives to save mine, and I should be boorish indeed if I sent you away again. But I want you to relieve my mind; I want you to tell me what you have been doing, where you are hiding—"

"We've established ourselves in that old castle place on Willard's Island," said Nipper; and he rapidly explained

forth," said Lee. "Dr Zangari is a dangerous fanatic; by no means a madman, but every bit as dangerous as a madman! He thinks that while Italy is so busily engaged with the conflict in Abyssinia he can strike; and there is something in his viewpoint. But we're going to put a stop to it all. He has chosen England as the venue of his opening activities. You now understand, therefore, why these men are so dangerous. They are members of the Mafia, and they will stop at nothing."

While talking, they had been making progress across the fields, and they had now reached a point where Nelson Lee paused.

"You'll have to get busy pretty quickly, sir," said Nipper. "As soon as Zangari finds out that you've escaped, he'll bolt, won't he?"



As the juniors entered the cellar, a guard appeared at the bottom of the steps. In a moment the man whipped out a revolver. "On him!" yelled Handforth. And the leader of Study D projected himself through the air, followed immediately by Nipper.

guv'nor," said Nipper earnestly. "There were only four of us, and we couldn't possibly attack."

"But how is it that you came to be near this unsavoury house?" asked Lee.

"We saw you in the boat, sir—while you were being taken up the river," said Nipper. "We prepared an ambush, so that we could spring out and rescue you, but there were too many of the devils, because others came to meet the boat. What I can't understand is how you fell into their hands."

"That's easily answered," said Lee. "I went with Inspector Lennard and the police to the old prison, and it was while we were coming away that I was seized in the darkness. The enemy is getting very daring. Three or four men grabbed me from Inspector Lennard's very side, but owing to the wind and darkness he knew nothing. I dare say he's a very worried man at

what had happened since the boys had escaped from the enemy.

"A very good plan!" said Nelson Lee approvingly, at length. "Now, of course, I thoroughly understand. It was while you were on the watch, on the island, that you saw me in the boat. It seems almost providential that you should have chosen such a haven of refuge."

"You're going to start some action at once, aren't you, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly. "I mean, after what's happened to-night—"

"Yes," interrupted Lee, and his voice was grim. "You might as well know, boys, that this gang is the nucleus of a new Mafia—a Black Hand secret society."

"By George! Didn't I say so?" asked Handforth excitedly. "You chaps laughed at me!" "You were perfectly right, Hand-

"Yes, I think that will be his first impulse," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Thinking I was to die, he told me too much. But there may be a way. I can't stop to talk now, boys. I want you to promise me that you'll go straight back to your stronghold and stay there until four-thirty. It's nearly three o'clock now, and I must have time to prepare. Be ready at four-thirty; I will come for you."

"That's good enough for us, sir," said Handforth promptly. "All serene. We'll be ready."

Nelson Lee hurried off without another word and the four juniors, bubbling with excitement and anticipation, returned to Willard's Island.

Chief-Inspector Lennard, as Nelson Lee had said, was a very worried man. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,447.

"You're sure he's not in the school, Mr. Wilkes?" he asked, frowning with perplexity.

"His bed-room is empty, and he is certainly not in his study," said Old Wilkey, of the Ancient House. "This news of yours, Mr. Lennard, has alarmed me very much. I know that Mr. Lee has been investigating the recent murders, and I believe he has been in danger. The same applies to some of the boys."

"You don't know the half of it, sir," grunted the inspector; "and I can't tell you anything now. All I know is that Mr. Lee was with me earlier to-night, and suddenly he wasn't there. We were walking in the darkness, and I can only assume that he fell back for some reason, and was then seized."

Lennard had hesitated before going to St. Frank's and awakening the Housemaster of the Ancient House. But as Lee had not turned up, he had felt compelled to do so.

Mr. Wilkes had admitted him, and had promptly made a search. It was clear that Nelson Lee was not on the premises; he had not returned to the school, as Lennard had hoped.

"Do you think Mr. Lee is in any danger?" asked Old Wilkey, with concern.

"I know he's in danger!" grunted the inspector. "If he has fallen into the hands of the devils we're hunting—well, he's as good as dead. They stick at nothing. And, I tell you, I'm sick with worry."

"No need to be, Lennard," said a cool voice. "Sorry if I've—"

"By the Lord Harry! Lee himself!" yelled Lennard, spinning round. "I say, Lec, this is too bad! I've been thinking the most awful things—"

"With very good cause," interrupted Lee. "Scarcely half an hour ago I was within an inch of death. But I'll tell you about it later."

"You mean—the enemy got you?"

"Very much so."

"May I ask what all this means, Mr. Lee?" asked Old Wilkey. "It sounds dreadfully alarming. Mr. Lennard roused me out of bed some time ago—"

"Will you be a good fellow, Wilkes, and return to your bed?" asked Lee quietly. "I need only tell you that I have some exceedingly urgent business on hand, and there is not a second to lose. I will explain everything to-morrow."

"Certainly—certainly," said Mr. Wilkes, without hesitation.

There was such urgency in Nelson Lee's tone that he made himself scarce rapidly.

"Come to my study, Lennard!" said Lee.

A minute later they were in the schoolmaster-detective's study, and Lee closed the door and sat down at his desk. Briefly he told the inspector what had happened.

"So, after all your fears for the safety of the boys, it was the boys who rescued you from certain death," commented the inspector, at length.

"That's so, Lennard," replied Nelson Lee. "But what I want to tell you is this. To-night I established the fact that Zangari is the head of this organisation—and the organisation itself is a miniature Mafia. I have suspected it for some time; but Dr. Zangari, thinking I was to die, was very frank with me. I know, quite definitely, that Gallows Mere is the headquarters of the gang."

"Surely that's good enough, then, for us to take action?" said the inspector.

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"Why not a raid to-night? I have my men ready. You're proposing. I imagine, a big raid on Gallows Mere—before dawn?"

"No."

"No?" repeated Lennard, staring.

"Not to-night."

"But, man alive, why not?" demanded Lennard. "These infernal Italians are all at sixes and sevens to-night; that fire must still be raging. We can make a swoop, and—"

"And capture Dr. Zangari, the reputable astronomer, and his very small staff," interrupted Lee grimly. "By this time, no doubt, Zangari has discovered that I have escaped, and the one thing he will fear is a raid. We might even find all the birds flown. But I don't do that; I think Zangari is the kind of man to bluff it out. But, as I said, we should only get him; and where is our evidence?"

"There's your word and the boys', and—"

"My word is no better than Zangari's word! And if we raid the place to-night we stand the risk of failure," continued Nelson Lee. "No, we're not ready, Lennard. We have gained this information, and let us be satisfied with it—for the moment. I want you to go back to Bannington and call all your men in and send them home. And the best thing you can do, after that, is to go to bed."

"Well, I don't like it," grunted the inspector. "It seems we're missing a golden opportunity. And what about the danger? Give these fellows another few days, and they'll get you."

"They won't get me," declared Nelson Lee. "No, I'm going to lie low for some days. You know the ruins of the old abbey, not far from Edgmore?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going there—and I'm going to-night," replied Lee. "I shall take a blanket and some food, and I shall be fairly comfortable. Zangari won't find me; he and his men will be puzzled at my disappearance. They will be puzzled, too, by the complete inactivity of the police. In a few days time I'll get in touch with you, and then we'll make our plans. That's all, Lennard."

The inspector rose.

"Well, if you say so," he said grumblingly. "Honestly, I don't like it. I think we ought to go right into action. Well, good-night, Lec. I'll get straight back."

Outside, in the darkness of the night, hidden amongst the densest trees of the shrubbery, a man in black crouched. A box-like instrument was strapped to his chest, and it was equipped with ear-phones. Every word of the conversation between Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard had reached the spy's ears—conveyed to him by means of the little microphone which was concealed at the back of the detective's desk. The man also had a notebook and a pencil with a luminous point—an ingenious device which enabled him to write in the dark. He could see the word he was writing, but at three yards' distance, the tiny point of luminosity was almost invisible. The man wrote in Italian, setting down every point of the conversation.

So sensitive was the microphone that he even heard the opening of the door. He switched off then, and, like a shadow, stole from his place of concealment. The thunderstorms of the earlier part of the night had cleared away, leaving the sky heavily overcast. But there was no rain now, and a high wind was blowing. The man, a part of

the night itself, made his way across the lane and into the meadow opposite. For some distance he went, and then, at the foot of a pole which carried telephone wires, he halted. He connected up a little telephone instrument to a hidden wire, and a moment later he was talking to Carlo Mazzini, in Gallows Mere.

There had been much excitement at Gallows Mere.

The fire, to the relief of Dr. Zangari, had not spread seriously. The stable, fortunately, was a building with impossibly thick walls. Beyond the petrol there was nothing particularly inflammable in the building. The roof had gone during the first two or three minutes, and thereafter the flames had leapt straight skywards in a great column.

The good people of the neighbourhood, attracted to the scene, had done everything possible. The fire-fighters confined their attention to keeping the fire within bounds. Urged on by a sturdy farmer, they formed a human chain from the well to the stables, and buckets of water were passed along and flung, not over the flames, but over the adjoining stable. And so fairly rapidly the petrol burned itself out and the damage proved more or less trivial—merely the destruction of the end stable. But during all this time, Dr. Zangari had been on the spot, acting his part. Even now he did not know how the fire had started. He believed it to be the result of carelessness on the part of one of his men.

"So! At last!" he exclaimed, when he had showered his grateful thanks upon his unwelcome visitors, and they had gone. "Later, I shall look into this fire. At the moment there is more important work to be done."

Mazzini looked alarmed.

"You will not kill the man Lee to-night, excellency?" he asked.

"Yes; but not outside, as I first intended," replied Zangari. "It shall be done quietly—in the cellar. Come! While that man lives there is no safety for us!"

He went to the cellar, opened the door, and looked down.

"It is time," he said in Italian. "You may come up, my comrades."

But there was no reply.

"Is it possible they sleep?" asked Zangari, his temper rising. "Why do they not answer?"

He now heard a confused, muffled sound of voices. Suddenly alarmed, he ran down into the cellar, switching on an electric torch as he did so. Not one of his men was to be seen, but the door of the inner cellar, in which Nelson Lee had been placed, was still bolted. But the confused voices appeared to be coming from that inner cellar!

Zangari ran across, flung open the door, and a number of men reeled out. They had been closely confined, and they were cramped and perspiring.

"What is this?" shouted Zangari wildly. "Lee! Where is Lee?"

"Excellency, it was Lee who locked us in—Lee and some of his boys," panted one of the men. "They have gone—"

"Am I served by men, or by rabbits?" shouted Zangari, his fury terrible to see. "Fools! So you let Lee go? Lee, who knows all! For this your punishment shall be—"

"But, excellency," panted one man. "It was the boys who fired the petrol! They did so, is it not plain, to save Lee. Then they came here, surprised us—"

"And you allowed yourselves to be beaten by boys!" snarled Dr. Zangari, his eyes blazing. "So! This, then, is the end of my ambitions! Lee knows all. By this time Lee will have informed the police. He is perhaps on his way now, with a great attacking force. We must fly! We must get out of here at once, abandoning everything!"

He ran out of the cellar, unable to trust himself to speak further. He went to his study, intent upon selecting a few important documents and articles which he dared not leave behind. One thought was in his mind—flight! He almost expected to hear the purring of motors as the police, in lorries, came to raid Gallows Mere.

When he was half-way across the hall Mazzini ran out of the study.

"Excellency! A message from No. 69!" said the man. "Lee has escaped!"

"Dolt! You tell me that?" almost screamed Zangari. "Have I not just discovered it?"

"Lee is at St. Frank's—at the school."

"What? Then he has not yet prepared for a raid?"

"There will be no raid, excellency," said Mazzini urgently. "Listen! I have it here! No. 69 listened in; he heard every word of a conversation between Lee and Inspector Lennard. They have decided to take no action." Zangari breathed hard.

"Show me!" he said tensely.

They went into the study, and three minutes later Zangari was in possession of every point of that talk between Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard.

"So!" he said contemptuously. "Lee is to disappear, eh? He is going to the abbey ruins—to-night? Good! We'll have him yet, Mazzini. And the police are to do nothing. You see, is not my position strong? They dare not strike! Did I not tell you? Where is their evidence? Before the dawn breaks we will get Lee, and then, while the police suspect nothing, we will quietly vanish from the district and establish our headquarters elsewhere."

His confidence had returned, and, calling his men together, he gave them rapid, decisive orders.

The Double Trap!

"YOU don't seem satisfied, Lennard."

There was a mischievous smile on Nelson Lee's face as he made the remark. They had left the detective's study, walked along the passage, and were now in the lobby of the Ancient House.

"I am not satisfied," retorted the inspector bluntly. "For once, Lee, I think you're making a mistake."

"If I were to adopt the plan I suggested in my study, I agree," said Lee calmly.

"Eh? What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean, Lennard, that all that was just bluff."

"What?"

"Listen! I'll tell you something. Hidden at the back of my desk is a little microphone—"

"Great Scott!"

"And I believe that every word of our conversation was overheard by the enemy," continued Nelson Lee. "In short, the plans I discussed with you just now are not my real plans."

"Gosh! I'm beginning to get you now," said the inspector, opening his eyes. "This blighting spy, you mean, will have heard all we said, and will report to Zangari, eh? Zangari will think we're just a couple of mugs, and he'll believe there's no need to quit."

"Exactly! I was afraid our birds would fly," replied Lee. "As soon as Zangari finds I have escaped he'll be alarmed. His first inclination will be to bolt—he and all his men. Once they are scattered, we may never get them. And even if he has made plans to bolt, the spy will have reported by now, and Zangari will change his plans. He'll stay on at Gallows Mere."

"Ye gods and little fishes! And we're really going to raid the place?"

"To-night," said Lee crisply. "Within about an hour from now, if you can get your men together."

"I'll get them together."

"We shall have a second advantage, for it is practically certain that Zangari will send some of his men to the abbey ruins to get me," said Lee dryly. "Thus, the enemy will be divided. We'll make two raids—one on Gallows Mere, and one on the abbey ruins. With any luck, old man, we ought to bag the whole crowd."

"This is real talking!" said the inspector happily. "Zangari and his men won't be expecting any raid, so we'll catch them on the hop—eh?"

"Don't be too sure of that," warned Nelson Lee. "Now get off as quickly as you can. Get your men together, and take them by car to within a mile of Gallows Mere—on the Bannington side. You'll hear from me later."

"I'm on my way," said the inspector.

As Lennard drove to Bannington, he made his plans as he went. Arriving in the deserted town he went straight to the police station. Inspector Jameson, a tired man, was on duty. There had been no sleep for Jameson that night. In addition to extra police, there was a

considerable number of Scotland Yard men there, too.

Within five minutes of Lennard's arrival great activity was afoot.

Two motor-coaches and two lorries appeared as though from nowhere, and they rapidly filled with uniformed police and plain clothes men. Every man carried a gun and a gas mask; and some of them even took rifles. There was to be no mistake about this raid on the deadly Mafia!

Soon the motor-coaches and the lorries were off, and they purred quietly out of sleeping Bannington. Little did the inhabitants know of the stirring events which were shortly to take place within a few miles of the old town—events which would be remembered for years!

Dr. Zangari inspected the six men who stood before him in the hall at Gallows Mere. They were all dressed in black, and Zangari himself, for once, was wearing that grim garb. As yet, however, he had not donned the head-gear. He intended that there should be no mistake about this business; therefore, he was faking charge of it himself.

"Remember, act upon my orders—and act instantly!" he said. "It is possible that Lee will not have arrived. If so, all the better. We shall then take him without trouble. Come!"

"One moment, excellency!"

It was Mazzini, and he had appeared in the study doorway, looking startled.

"Well?"

"Lee, as you know, decided that there should be no raid on this house," said Mazzini, coming forward. "He told his colleague, Lennard, to go to bed—"

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D'ARCY THE 'TEC!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Well? Get to the point, man!"
 "No. 32 reports that large numbers of police and detectives have just left Bannington, in motor-coaches and lorries—taking this direction," said Mazzini. "It is serious, excellency! It can only mean that Inspector Lennard has decided to act—"

"I wonder!" snapped Zangari, a sudden suspicion leaping into his eyes. "Is it possible that Lee knows of the microphone in his study? Yes, yes! I have it! It was all done as a trick—to take us off our guard!"

"Then—then the danger is as acute as ever?"

"More so," said Zangari. "We must leave instantly. Lee is not at the abbey ruins. He is with the police!"

"But where can we go?" asked Mazzini, a trapped look in his eyes. "The police are everywhere. No matter which road we take—every road will be stopped!"

"Every road—yes; but not the river!" muttered Zangari. "We have boats. Yes, we will go by the river. But wait! Lee and the accursed police are coming here. Well, they shall have a reception they do not expect!"

His eyes were burning with a sudden demoniac fire. The realisation that he had nearly fallen into the trap infuriated him. But there was yet time.

"In my secret laboratories underground—the presence of which even Lee does not suspect—we have much explosive," said Zangari deliberately. "It was to have been used in the Cause! But now, my friends, it is too late. Shall we abandon that explosive, or shall we put it to a good use?"

"What are you suggesting, excellency?" asked Mazzini.

"Come! We have time!" cried Zangari. "Three of you are electricians. Stand forward! Take my orders! When Lee and his men break into this house, as they surely will, they will go to certain death! They will not even traverse half the distance of the drive, for as they approach the house they will walk through an invisible electrical beam, which will detonate enough explosive to blow Gallows Mere and every living being within half a mile into eternity!"

(Nothing, it seems, can prevent Nelson Lee and the police walking into Zangari's death-trap! Don't miss the final full-of-thrills chapters of this grand serial.)

round every now and then to wave their moustaches at D'Arcy.

D'Arcy stood petrified.

"Jolly lucky for those idiots that you didn't take your rusty revolver, Gussy," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose very high in the air, and walked away in the direction of St. Jim's. The juniors followed him, still chuckling. Blake tapped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder, but D'Arcy turned away.

"I wegard you as wottahs!" he said. "Pway leave me alone! I wufuse to wegard you fellows as fwients!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I wegarJ you as wank outsiders!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Pway don't talk to me!"

Blake exchanged a wink to the other juniors. Arthur Augustus was very much on his dignity, but there was an easy and certain method of bringing Arthur Augustus round at any time.

"Gentlemen" said Blake, "this is where we apologise! From one gentleman to another, an apology sets everything right!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Vewy well, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I accept your apology. And, weally, I am glad you came out for me, or those Gwamawian wottahs would have wagged me still more, vewy likely."

"And I've brought a letter for you that came soon after you went out," said Blake cheerfully. "If there's a remittance in it, I'll stand you a feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus took the letter.

"It's fwom my patah," he said.

"Yes; open it. Can't you see we're all on tenterhooks?" said Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy opened the letter. His face cleared very much as he read it:

"Dear Arthur,—I hear from Wally that you are very much in want of money. As I think you have had a sufficient lesson by this time, I shall resume sending your allowance as usual.

"Your affectionate
 "FATHER."

There was a crisp five-pound note in the letter. The rustle of the banknote was as music to the ears of the impecunious juniors. When one was in funds, all were in funds. The hard times had ended at last.

"Bai Jove! That's all wight. The governah puts it so nicely, that I weally think I shall ovahlook the whole occuwence, and treat him as if nothin' had happened," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"I should," said Blake solemnly.

"Aftah all, a chap must allow his patah a little wun for his money," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously. "I shall treat the patah just as if nothing has happened. I shall allow him to send my allowance."

"Hear, hear!"

"If he makes you an allowance, you'll make allowance for him?" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And upon the whole, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, in a burst of confidence, "I think I shall give up this detective bisney. It's watah difficult to win a detective bisney and work in the Fourth Form as well. I shan't need to waise money by extwaordinary means now, so I shall give up earnin' it. So long as the patah plays the game I shall be all wight."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake heartily. "And as you remittance has come first, Gussy, I vote that we proceed forthwith to blue it. We'll ask Figgins & Co., and everybody, and have a really stunning feed."

"Yaas, watah!"

And they did. And there was a tremendous celebration in Study No. 6 to celebrate the end of D'Arcy's career as a private detective, and the close of the distressful period of hard times.

(Next Wednesday: "THE NEW BOY'S SECRET!"—a great yarn of Tom Merry & Co., featuring a newcomer to St. Jim's who held a secret worth a fortune! Look out for this story.)

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