

1520
"PETTICOAT RULE AT GREYFRIARS!" SPARKLING STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. **INSIDE.**

The GEM 2d



*A Thrilling
Incident from
"The Housemaster's
Bodyguard!"*

The HOUSEMASTERS



Mr. Railton swung round as he heard a stealthy step on the bridge. A burly man with a haggard face was almost upon him. "Munro, you again!" exclaimed the School House master. "The second time, and the last!" muttered the convict. Hidden in the bushes, Tom Merry & Co. tensed themselves ready for action.

CHAPTER 1. Extraordinary!

"**B**AI Jove! This is vewy sewious!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's did not address that remark to anyone in particular. He bestowed it upon the desert air, as it were.

He was standing on the steps of the School House, with an open newspaper in his hands, and his eyes had fallen upon a paragraph in the paper.

"Bai Jove!" repeated D'Arcy. "This is vewy sewious, indeed!"

Arthur Augustus' brow wrinkled over the paragraph, and his expression became anxious and concerned.

Four juniors, who were looking at him from the doorway of the School House, grinned as he extracted his famous eyeglass from his waistcoat pocket, jammed it into his eye, and read the paragraph over again.

"Bai Jove!" Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther and Talbot exchanged glances. Arthur Augustus was too engrossed in that mysterious paragraph to notice them.

"What's the matter with Gussy?" murmured Monty Lowther. "Is he looking for the winners?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy, old man!"

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"Hallo, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus did not even hear. He was simply buried in his newspaper.

Monty Lowther trod softly down the steps behind the swell of St. Jim's, and gently tilted his silk hat over his forehead. The silk hat toppled over on the newspaper, and rolled off on the steps, and bounced away into the quad.

"Great Scott! What—"

"Hallo! Have you woke up at last?" asked Lowther affably, as the startled swell of the Fourth swung round. "What do you mean by going to sleep standing up like a horse?"

"You uttah! I was not asleep! Where's my toppah?"

"Who's won?" asked Lowther.

"Eh? What are you talking about?" "And how much did you have on him?"

"I fail to compwehend you; Lowthah!"

"Weren't you looking at the racing results?" asked Lowther, in surprise.

Arthur Augustus glared.

"You frightful ass, Lowthah! You are perfectly aware that I take no interest whatever in wacin' results. But this is vewy sewious. I must see Waitton at once."

"Railton?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Arthur Augustus, carrying the paper in his hand, strode up the steps

in a great hurry, leaving his shining topper still reposing in the quad.

"You've forgotten your toppah!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Never mind that now. I must see Waitton!"

Arthur Augustus rushed into the House, leaving the Terrible Three and Talbot staring after him in astonishment. He rushed away towards the study of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's.

For Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, so "never mind" his silk hat was extraordinary—amazing! As a rule, a sacrilegious hand laid upon his toppah would excite Arthur Augustus' wrath to boiling point. Now he carelessly left that beautiful headgear lying in the dust, reckless of what might happen to it. It was astounding. The Terrible Three could only stare.

"Well, this takes the whole giddy biscuit!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "What on earth's the matter with Gussy?"

"Must be dotty!" said Manner dazedly. "He's forgotten his toppah."

"What does he want to see Railton for?" asked Tom Merry. "There can't be anything about our Housemaster in the newspaper, surely?" "Scarcely!" said Talbot.

"Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Lowther. "As he doesn't want his toppah, we may as well use it for a football. Look out, in goal!"

And Arthur Augustus' beautiful toppah sailed away from Lowther's foot, and flew into the doorway.

"Ow! You uttah ass!"

It was D'Arcy again. He was rushing back, and the sailing topper caught him with its rim on the bridge of his noble nose.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The toppah fell to the floor inside the doorway. Arthur Augustus did not

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**HERE IT IS—THE BEST SCHOOL YARN OF THE YEAR, AND PACKED WITH FUN
AND THRILLS!**

BODYGUARD!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

even glance at it, however. He rubbed his nose, and glared at the four Shell fellows.

"Waiton isn't in his study!" he exclaimed.

"I could have told you that," grinned Tom Merry. "He's gone out."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Gone out! How frightfully unfortunate! This is awfully serious! Do you fellows know which way he went?"

"Walked," said Lowther.

"I mean which way did he walk, fathad?"

"On his feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you— Where is he gone?"

"I forgot to ask him," said Tom Merry, laughing, "and he forgot to tell us when he went. But he went out of the gates."

"Bai Jove! I must go aftah him!"

Arthur Augustus, still hatless, ran down the steps, and raced across the quadrangle in the direction of the school gates.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Lowther.

"What the dickens—"

"What the deuce—"

Arthur Augustus vanished out of the school gates. The newspaper was clutched in his hand; its silk topper still reposed on the floor where it had fallen.

Jack Blake of the Fourth came downstairs, and picked up the topper in surprise.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Isn't this Gussy's?"

"Yes. He's joined the hatless brigade," said Lowther. "He's gone out without it."

"Wha-a-at!"

"He's gone dotty, I think. He wants to see Railton, and he won't be happy till he gets it. My hat, there's Railton!"

The athletic figure of Mr. Railton came into view. He had stepped out of the porter's lodge near the gates. The Terrible Three chuckled. The Housemaster had evidently come in from his walk, and stepped into Taggles' lodge to speak to the school porter. Arthur Augustus had passed the lodge, and rushed out of the gates in search of him. Mr. Railton came towards the School House. The juniors observed that the expression on his handsome face was very grave.

The Housemaster went to his study, and the juniors heard the door close. They wondered where Arthur Augustus was. About ten minutes later the hatless junior came in at the gates, looking round him as if in search. He came towards the School House with a worried look on his face.

"I can't see him anywhere!" he exclaimed. "There is nothin' whatever to gwin at, you duffahs! This is frightfully serious! Blake, deah boy, have you any ideah where Mr. Waiton is?—I simply must see him!"

"He's come in," chuckled Tom Merry. "He's gone to his study. But—"

"Oh, good!"

Arthur Augustus rushed towards the Housemaster's study. Blake made a rush at him, and caught him by the collar.

"What's the row?" he demanded.

"Welease me, you ass! This is awfully serious! Welease me—"

"But what the dickens—"

Blake did not finish. Arthur Augustus tore himself away, leaving his collar in Blake's grasp. Then he dashed off to the Housemaster's study.

Blake stared at the torn collar in his hand.

"Well, my hat!"

"He's dotty!"

"He's gone in without knocking!" yelled Manners.

Thus it was. Arthur Augustus simply hurled open the door of the Housemaster's study and rushed in. And the astounded juniors in the Hall heard the

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*Mr. Railton, the athletic School Housemaster of St. Jim's, would have scorned the idea of a bodyguard to protect him from the vengeance of a desperate enemy. But it is just as well for him that Tom Merry & Co. take a more serious view of his peril!*

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deep voice of the Housemaster in tones of surprise and anger.

"D'Arcy, what does this mean? How dare you rush into my study in that way—and in that state, too? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Railton's hit it!" murmured Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Waiton—"

"Leave my study at once. Go and put your collar on immediately."

"My collah! Nevah mind my collah, sir!"

"Take fifty lincs."

"Weally, sir, but I came to—"

"Never mind why you came. You should not enter my study that way. I am astonished at this impertinence, D'Arcy! Go at once!"

"But—"

Arthur Augustus ceased to expostulate as a strong hand was laid on his shoulder. He was jerked out of the study, and the door closed after him. And the swell of St. Jim's stood in the passage, in breathless dismay, and gasped:

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 2.

Danger Ahead!

TOM MERRY & CO. surrounded the swell of St. Jim's at once. Arthur Augustus had amazed them by his extraordinary proceedings, and they meant to have an explanation.

"Gussy—"

"Fathad—"

"What the deuce—"

"Pway don't bothan now, deah boys! I must speak to Waiton. He is in frightful dangah, and is unaware of it. I must speak to him!"

Arthur Augustus' hand was on the door-handle again. With one accord the five juniors seized him and dragged him away. D'Arcy struggled furiously in their grasp.

"Welease me, you asses! Hands off, you wottahs! Welease me at once, or I shall stwike you!"

"Bring him along!" said Blake. "If he goes in again Railton will lick him. Blessed if I don't keep a strait-jacket for him in the study after this!"

"Welease me!"

But Arthur Augustus, in spite of his frantic struggles, was rushed away, and the five juniors bore him bodily up the stairs to the Fourth Form passage.

By the time Arthur Augustus arrived there he certainly did not look like the best-dressed fellow at St. Jim's.

His clothes were rumpled, nearly all the buttons were gone from his waistcoat, and his jacket was slit up the back.

But five to one were enough to handle the swell of St. Jim's, infuriated as he was; and he was whirled along the passage in a most dishevelled state and rushed into Study No. 6.

Herries and Digby, who shared that famous apartment with D'Arcy and Blake, were there, and they jumped up in astonishment as D'Arcy was whirled in.

Plump!

The swell of St. Jim's was hurled into the armchair. He sat there gasping, in a state of complete breathlessness.

"Hallo!" said Herries. "What's the row?"

"What are you ragging Gussy for?" asked Digby in amazement.

"We're looking after him for his own good," Tom Merry explained. "It's a sudden fit of insanity, and we're his keepers!"

"You uttah ass! I am goin' to see Waiton!"

Blake took up a ruler from the study table.

"Now, you silly ass," he said,

"explain yourself! What's the little game? What are you playing the giddy ox for? Get it out, before I start on you!"

"Ow!"

"Are you going to explain?" roared Blake.

"There is no time to explain! Waiton's life is in dangah! I insist on goin' to him at once."

"You're jolly well not going out of this study," grinned Blake.

"I insist—"

"You can insist till you are as black as the ace of spades, but you're not going out of this study till you've explained."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced towards the door. But the Terrible Three and Talbot were before it, and there was evidently no escape that way.

"Pile in!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "If Railton's life is in danger we'll see about it at once. I don't quite see where the danger comes in, but I'm willing to learn. I know you'd be in

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danger if you bolted into Railton's study again after he chucked you out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"But Jove, every moment is precious! But as you insist upon my wastin' time, pawgaphs I had bettah explain."

"Perhaps you had!" grinned Blake. "You're jolly well not leaving this study till you've done it, anyway!"

"Mr. Waitton is in dangah while you are playin' the giddy ol' like this. It's in the papah. That man Munwo—you wemebah! See it for yourselves, you silly asses!"

"Murro!" said Blake. "I remember that name—"
"Look!"

Arthur Augustus brandished the newspaper at the juniors. Blake jerked it away, and the juniors gathered round to read.

"There is the pawgaph," said Arthur Augustus, pointing it out.
"Phew!"

Blake's face became suddenly serious as he read aloud:

"The escape is reported of a convict named Munro from Portmoo Prison. The man has obtained by violence the clothes of a shepherd in a lonely district in Sussex, and is still at large. The police are searching for him, and his arrest is expected immediately."

"That was all. But it was enough to make Tom Merry & Co. look very grave."

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "That is serious!"

"If it's the same man," said Digby. "It's the same man, right enough!" said Blake. "No doubt on that point!"
"Yaas, wathah!"

That brief paragraph, tucked away at the end of a column in the newspaper, was full of serious import to the St. Jim's juniors.

It was some time since the occurrence, but they had not forgotten it.

The man Munro was a desperate character. A long time before, Mr. Railton had been a witness against him at his trial for robbery with violence, and he had been sent to prison. He had escaped, and had come to St. Jim's, and made an attack on the Housemaster, whom he regarded as the chief cause of his downfall.

On that occasion the juniors had come into contact with him, and he had given them the impression of being not quite right in his head. At all events, he was a desperate and determined man, and his hatred of the School House master amounted to a mania. If that man was free again there was undoubtedly danger for Mr. Railton.

The excitement of the swell of St. Jim's when he had read that paragraph was easily comprehended now.

"You can see yourselves that it is serious now, you duffahs!" said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes; if the man should come here!"

"The pawgaph says that he has been seen in Sussex already."

"Looks as if he means to come here," said Digby. "He seems to hate poor old Railton."

"But the paper says that his arrest is expected immediately," said Talbot.

"They always say that," said Blake sagely. "He's got a change of clothes, and he's a deep beast. It won't be so jolly easy to capture him."

"Mr. Railton ought to know about this, so that he can be on his guard," Lowther remarked.

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"I was goin' to show him the pawgaph—"

"No hurry, fathead! You don't think an escaped convict could come here in broad daylight, do you, to pile on to Railton? But we'll show Railton the paper; he ought to know."

"I am goin' to take it to him, if you silly asses will allow me to pass!" said Arthur Augustus witheringly.

Blake sniffed.

"Yes; you're in a ripping state to go and see a Housemaster," he said. "You'd better go and get yourself tidy, I should think. You look like a scare-crowd."

"That is your fault, you ass!"

"I'll take this to Railton!" said Blake.

"Right-ho!"

Blake left Study No. 6. There was no doubt that Mr. Railton ought to see the paragraph, and take warning of his probable danger, for it was quite within the bounds of possibility that the ruffian would make another attempt to injure him.

Blake proceeded a little more sedately than Arthur Augustus had done. He tapped at the door of the Housemaster's study, and Mr. Railton bade him enter.

The Housemaster looked inquiringly at him.

"Well, what is it, Blake?"

"If you please, sir, D'Arcy found this in the paper, and we think you ought to see it, sir," said Blake respectfully.

"Thank you, Blake," he said. "I have already seen it in an evening paper yesterday."

"Oh!" murmured Blake.

"I am very sorry that it has come to the knowledge of the boys," said Mr. Railton, his frown deepening. "It is very disagreeable to me to have this matter made the subject of chatter among the juniors."

"Oh!" said Blake again.

"It is, in fact, annoying," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose it cannot be helped, and I am obliged to you, Blake. Was this the reason why D'Arcy rushed into my study in that ridiculous manner a short time ago?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Very well; as D'Arcy probably imagined that he was doing me a service, you may tell him that he need not do the lines imposed."

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Railton was very much annoyed. For his personal affairs to become a common topic among the juniors was distinctly exasperating, as Blake began to understand.

"But—you'll take care now, sir," faltered Blake.

Mr. Railton made an impatient gesture.

"Yes, yes; of course! But there is nothing to be alarmed about. This man will be recaptured at once; there is hardly any doubt about that. I may tell you that I have spoken to Inspector Skeat on the subject, and have warned 'Taggles to be careful. That is all that is necessary. I suppose it is no use asking you and D'Arcy not to let this become a topic for general discussion," said Mr. Railton irritably.

Blake flushed.

"If you don't want it talked about, sir, we won't show this to anybody."

"Have you not done so already?"

"Only the fellows in my study, sir, and Tom Merry and Manners, and Lowther and Talbot."

"Eight already!" said Mr. Railton,

with a slight smile. "I am afraid that it will be impossible to prevent it from becoming common gossip now."

Blake looked, as he felt, hurt. Mr. Railton could not help seeing his thoughts in his face. His expression relaxed, and he spoke in a kinder tone.

"I am grateful to you and your friends, Blake, for your concern in this matter. I know that you mean well. But it is very annoying and disconcerting to me to have my affairs made a subject of gossip and discussion. In this case the danger is, I am sure, imaginary. Now, I know you and your friends very well, and I have reliance upon you. May I ask you not to talk about it? Keep it to yourselves, and let there be no gossip."

"We won't say a word about it, sir. Of course, some of the other fellows might see it in the paper."

"It is not likely, I think. Very few of the boys see the newspapers, and the paragraph is quite inconspicuous. Please leave the paper here, and tell your friends that it is my desire that they should say nothing whatever about the matter."

"Very well, sir."

Blake left the study, feeling very much as if he had received a douche of cold water. The chums of the School House had been prepared to rally enthusiastically round their Housemaster, for his defence; but Mr. Railton's view of the matter was a complete damper to anything like enthusiasm. Jack Blake took his way slowly and thoughtfully back to Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 3.

The Garde du Corps!

JACK BLAKE'S crestfallen look as he entered Study No. 6 attracted the attention of the juniors at once. Tom Merry & Co. gazed at him inquiringly.

Arthur Augustus turned round from the looking-glass, where he was putting on a new collar and tie.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "what did Railton say?"

Blake grunted, and explained what had happened.

"And he was quite ratty—not exactly with us—but at our knowing anything about it, and concerning ourselves with his business," concluded Blake. "He's made me promise, for all of you, to keep it quiet, and not tell the other fellows a word about it."

"My hat!"

"I trust you did not make that promise, Blake?"

"Yes, I did, ass!"

"Then it was vewy wash—"

"I suppose I couldn't say no to Railton, could I, you idiot?" growled Blake.

"I wufuse to be called an idiot, Blake. I weward that promise as vewy wash. I had intended to call a meetin' of all our friends, and suggest measures for lookin' aftah Mr. Waitton. I was thinkin' of formin' a committee of defence and askin' Figgins & Co. of the New House to join in it."

"Not a bad idea," said Tom Merry. "This is a time for all of us to rally round old Railton."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, he doesn't want to be rallied round," said Blake, rather sorely. "He's annoyed and ratty about it, and I've given my word for all of you."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Of course, if Railton wants us to say nothing about the matter, we'll say

nothing," he said. "I understand it will be unpleasant for him to have his name jawed up and down the school by all the fags. And if a set of kids started looking after him it would make him feel an ass, I suppose."

"Weally, Tom Mewwoy—"

"All the same, we're jolly well going to look after him," added Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I feel inclined to bother my head about him!" growled Blake.

"If he catches us looking after him, he'll give us lines, or a licking—I know that."

"Bai Jove! That would be wathah wuff!"

"He'll do it," said Blake. "He simply wants no notice to be taken of the matter. He thinks the police can look after this man Munro."

"They can't!" said Digby.

"No feah! It's up to us!"

And the juniors all nodded very gravely. They had great doubts about the reliability of the Police Force in that serious matter; but they were not troubled with any doubts as to their own abilities.

"It's up to us!" said Tom Merry. "Railton's got plenty of pluck, and he doesn't care for the danger. But he's not going to run his head into danger if we can help it. Gentlemen, we are going to keep this dark, because Railton wants it kept dark; but we're going to look after him, whether he wants it or not!"

"Good egg!" said Digby. "My idea is that we should form a gardy kaw."

Robert Arthur Digby of the Fourth Form was very keen on French. He was a great French scholar, in fact, and he often graded his conversation with observations in that language.

But it was a slight drawback that Dig's French was, as a rule, comprehensible only to himself.

His remark caused his comrades to stare at him in amazement. They had not the remotest idea what a "gardy kaw" might be.

"A—a—a what?" asked Blake.

"A gardy kaw," said Digby emphatically.

"But what is it?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Dig sniffed.

"Don't you learn French in the Shell?" he asked.

"Ahem! Yes. Is that French?"

"Of course it is, ass!"

"And what does it mean?"

"It means a bodyguard, of course. Blessed if you oughtn't to go to Mossoo for some extra tooth in French!"

"A—a bodyguard! Oh, a garde du corps!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We're to form a garde du corps."

"Yes, a gardy kaw!" said Dig, who evidently preferred his own pronunciation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! If the eight of us form a gardy kaw for old Railton, that villain won't be able to get at him!" said Dig.

"Well, the idea's all right, if the French isn't," said Monty Lowther, chuckling. "We'll form a gardy kaw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a knock at the door, and Reilly of the Fourth put his head in. A sudden silence fell upon the chums of the School House. By Mr. Railton's wish, the matter was not to be talked about. They would willingly have taken the Belfast junior into the bodyguard; but in the circumstances, it was necessary to keep the existence of the garde du corps a secret.

"Faith, I want your Latin die,



As Arthur Augustus swung round on the stairs a stream of red ink from the squirt caught him full in the face, making him redder than a Red Indian. "Gwoogh! Ow!" he gasped. "You awful wotthah, Glyn! Gewowowow!"

Blake, said Reilly. "Phwat are you all standing and looking like boiled owls for?"

"Ahem!"

"What's on?" asked Reilly, perplexed.

"Sowwy we can't tell you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, it's a secret!"

"Shurrup!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I am not goin' to tell Weilly anythin' about the garde du corps—"

"Ring off!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwoy—"

"So you've got a secret, have you?" said Reilly. "And phwat's the secret intirely?"

"I'm afwaid we can't explain, deah boy. You see, Mr. Wailton objects to—"

Blake rushed at Arthur Augustus and hurled him into the armchair.

"You thumping ass! Another word, and I'll sit on your head!"

"Gwoogh! I uttaly wufuse to allow you to sit on my head, you duffah! I was not goin' to tell Weilly a word about that man Mun—"

"Yawwooh! Gewwoff, you idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looks to me as if you're all off your rockers!" said Reilly, in astonishment.

"What is it about Railton? And what on earth does Gussy mean by a garde du corps?"

"Ahem!"

"Gwoogh—woof! Gewwoff!"

"Here's the die, Reilly," said Herries, handing it to the Irish junior. "Buzz off!"

"Gewwoff, Blake, or I shall stwiko you!"

Reilly grinned and quitted the study. Tom Merry closed the door after him.

Then Jack Blake removed himself from all standing and looking like boiled ovals from the armchair.

"Gwoogh! You uttah ass—"

"Jolly nearly let it out!" said Blake.

"I stopped you in time, though. But Reilly knows there's a secret now, and he'll be inquisitive."

"I have a great mind to give you a feahful thrashin'! You silly duffah!"

gaspd Arthur Augustus. "I was not goin' to say a word to put Weilly on the twack. If anythin' should twanspire, it will be your fault. You fellows cannot keep a secret!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I wogard that as a wicidulous wemark, Blake—"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "the bodyguard is now formed. The chief rule of the bodyguard will be to jump on Gussy whenever he begins to talk!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I wrotest!"

"And I suggest that, as it is tea-time, we adjourn to my study to tea, and discuss the plan of campaign. I may mention that I have received a hamper from Miss Fawcett, and that the supplies are ample."

"Hear, hear!" said the bodyguard, more enthusiastically than before.

And the garde du corps followed Tom Merry as one man.

CHAPTER 4.

On the Alert!

MR. RAILTON was an object of uncommon interest to eight pairs of eyes for the rest of that day.

Tom Merry & Co. had always liked their Housemaster. Mr. Railton was THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,522.

very popular in his House, and also in the other House at St. Jim's. He compared very favourably with Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, as even Figgins & Co. were willing to admit.

And the idea that Mr. Railton was in danger roused the enthusiasm of the Co., and they were ready and willing to rally in his defence. It was rather hard on the bodyguard that their devoted defence had to be conducted in secret, without the knowledge of the master who was to benefit by it; for Mr. Railton would certainly have been exasperated if he had known that the eight juniors had taken his business in hand for him.

But that made no difference to the Co. They had wisely decided that the Housemaster, in his contempt for his enemy, was likely to run unnecessary risks, and that it was up to them to see that no harm came to him.

Mr. Railton certainly did not show any signs of being in a state of uneasiness. He went about his usual avocations in a perfectly ordinary manner. No one but the eight could have suspected that anything was amiss at all.

The juniors admired his nerve and respected his courage; but it made them all the more determined that he should not lack their fatherly care.

If he would not look after himself, he required to be looked after—that was certain; and they were the fellows who were going to do it.

It was unfortunate that, by the Housemaster's wish, the juniors had to keep the matter to themselves. They would willingly have taken Reilly, Lumley-Lumley, Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn into the bodyguard. They would gladly have enlisted the aid of Figgins & Co., their old rivals in the New House. And the larger the bodyguard, of course, the safer it would have been for the threatened Housemaster.

But Mr. Railton's wish on that subject was law, and the devoted eight kept the matter to themselves.

But they meant to be very much on the alert. A little problem as to who should be captain of the guard had cropped up. Arthur Augustus claimed the leadership, as the fellow who had discovered the existence of the danger, and also of a fellow of tact and judgment, especially designed by Nature to be a leader. But six fellows were unanimous in declining to accept him as a leader. Dig had a claim, as the originator of the idea of the gardy kaw, as he called it, but Dig was told to go and eat coke.

Jack Blake modestly suggested himself as an appropriate leader, being the head of the top study in the School House—Study No. 6. To which the

four Shell juniors replied that Blake was a duffer, and Study No. 6 a home for duffers. It was evident that there would never be a complete agreement upon the point, and so the bodyguard was all on their own, captainless, as in the days when there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Opinion as to exactly what should be done differed, too. Arthur Augustus' idea was that Mr. Railton should be kept under constant observation, especially when he went out of gates. Blake snorted at the suggestion, and asked the swell of St. Jim's what old Railton was likely to say—and do—if he found eight juniors dogging his footsteps whenever he took his little walks abroad.

"Of course, we could not all go at once, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. The chap with most bwoins ought to be appointed shadower."

"He would get ratty if we started following him about, I know that," said Herries.

Arthur Augustus smiled superior. "My deah Hewwies, I should do it skilfully, of course. A shadower's bizney is not to let himself be seen by the person he is shadowing."

"Ass!" said Digby. "I wufuse to wreply to that wemark, Dig. I am certainly goin' to shadow Mr. Railton when he goes out."

Wufuse to allow my Housemaster to be set upon by a despewate chwactach when I can save him by exabiscin' a little tact and judgment."

"What could you do?" roared Blake. "That chap Munro is a big fellow, and as strong as a horse. If you came upon him he would very likely wring your neck."

"I should uttahnly wufuse to allow him to w'ing my neck!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I am goin' to pwactise a special uppah-cut with the punchin'-ball. When come upon the villain I shall stwike him one stummin' blow, and then make him a pwisonah before he can wecovah."

"Yes, I can see him letting you do it—I don't think!"

"I've got a wathah good upper-cut," said Arthur Augustus, sparring into the air to show his unbelieving chums how it was done. "As that wottah Munro is much tallah than I am, I might not be able to give him a wight-handah between the eyes. But a tewwihah uppah-cut on the point of the chin would knock him wight out. Then I should secure him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' wound Wayland lookin' for some handcuffs, too. A pair of second-hand handcuffs would come in very useful when I have knocked him out. I know a shop

ass!" He clasped his chin and glared at Arthur Augustus.

"I was only shadowin' you what I should do to that wuffian, deah boy."

"Then I'll show you what he would do in return!" yelled Blake. "He would rush at you—like this!"

"Wefully—Ow!"

"And give you a dot in the eye—like this!"

"Yawwooh!"

"And then a dab on the nose—like that!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"And then bump you over—like that!"

Crash!

And Blake walked out of the study, grinning, leaving Arthur Augustus gasping on the floor.

"Ow! Bai Jove! You wuff ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus, sitting up breathlessly. "Where is that wottah? There is nothin' to cackle at, Hewwies. Dig, you silly ass, I fail to see any cause for idiotic laughin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up and dusted down his clothes wrathfully.

"I wugged you as silly, cacklin' asses," he said witheringly, "and I am goin' to shadow Mr. Railton wvery carefully, and if I meet that wuffian Munro, you will see what will happen!"

Arthur Augustus stalked out of Study No. 6, rubbing his eye, and went downstairs. He did not go all the way down. Mr. Railton was in his study, and Arthur Augustus took up his post on the stairs, where he could watch the Housemaster's door through the banisters. If Mr. Railton went out, Arthur Augustus intended to go out, too, and keep a careful eye upon the endangered Housemaster.

Mr. Railton was, however, busy with examination papers in his study, and had no intention whatever of going out, so the swell of St. Jim's was booked for a long vigil.

By the time he had been sitting on the stairs watching the Housemaster's door for a quarter of an hour Arthur Augustus had attracted a good deal of attention.

Gore of the Shell nearly fell over him coming down the stairs, and he said things that were not at all complimentary, to which D'Arcy did not take the trouble to reply. Skimpole, who was short-sighted, quite fell over him some afterwards, and there was a dismal howl from Skimpole as he rolled downstairs.

D'Arcy glanced after him. "Sowwy, Skimmy, deah boy!" he said.

"Oh dear!" gasped Skimpole, blinking up at D'Arcy through his spectacles. "I am hurt!" My dear D'Arcy, what are you sitting on the stairs for? It is really a most extraordinary place for you to sit!"

"I have my weasons, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus mysteriously.

"Deah me! What are your reasons, D'Arcy?"

"I am afraid I cannot explain that, Skimmy. It is a secret."

Skimpole blinked harder than ever at the swell of St. Jim's. For a junior to sit on the stairs for secret reasons that he could not explain was so extraordinary that Skimpole had some doubts as to D'Arcy's sanity.

But Skimpole's surprise did not matter to Arthur Augustus. He had his eyes fixed on Mr. Railton's door again, and had no attention to waste on Skimpole.

Several juniors gathered in the Lower

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I can get them, I think. It doesn't matter if they're a little bit wussy, so long as they are stwong enough. That's the great point."

"Bow-wow!"

"My ideah is to go for him like this, p u r s u e d Arthur Augustus, sparring at Blake. "I come on him—like this! And I land out—like that!"

"Wow!" roared Blake. "You silly

hall, and looked up the stairs at the immovable figure of the swell of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus took no notice of them. They asked him what was the little game, and whether he was off his rooker, and other questions like that, to which Arthur Augustus did not deign to reply.

When Blake came along and spotted him, he stopped and glared.

"What are you doing there, you image?"

"Sittin' down, deah boy," said D'Arcy calmly.

"I mean, what are you sitting down there for?"

"Because it would be wathah exhaustin' to stand for hours and hours."

"So you are going to stay there for hours and hours?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yaas, if ness."

"What for?" howled Blake.

"Hush! I'm shadowin' Waitlon."

"You—you—you're what?" yelled Blake.

"Don't give it away, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "I'm keepin' a wavy eye on Waitlon's door, wedy to shadow him when he comes out."

"You—you feathad!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Get off!"

"I wufuse to get off. I am goin' to weamin at my post."

"You've got your prep to do!" shrieked Blake.

"At such a time as this I cannot give my mind to pwep."

"What about Lathom in the morning?"

"Nevah mind Lathom. If Mr. Lathom knew the cires he would undahstand."

"But he doesn't know, and he'll go for you if you don't do your prep."

"I shall wish that."

"You'll risk something else if you stay there!" said Blake, breathing hard.

"You silly chump, fellows will think you're dotty!"

"I am uttably indifferent to what the fellows think, so long as I am doin' my duty," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"You—you—you—" gasped Blake.

"Pway wun away, Blake! You are attvactin' attention, and a shadowah's work should be done in secwet, if poss."

"In secret, with all the House staring at you, you image!"

"They are stawin' at you, Blake, because you are actin' like an excited ass. I should be vevy much obliged if you would wethah."

"Will you shift?"

"Certainly no!"

"Then I'll jolly well shift you!" roared Blake.

"I wufuse to be shifted, and if you act like a wuff beast, Blake, you'll dwaw genewal attention to the fact that Mr. Waitlon is bein' shadowed."

That was very true, and Blake restrained himself with an effort and went upstairs. Arthur Augustus settled down again victoriously to watch.

In the Fourth Form passage Blake consulted with the rest of the bodyguard. They looked down at Arthur Augustus from the landing. He was immovable. There were a dozen fellows staring at him from the lower passage now, laughing and talking, and wondering what was the little game.

"He's got to be shifted!" said Blake wildly. "He ought to be boiled in oil, and scalped, and slaughtered. What are we going to do? The chump is giving the whole show away."

"Of all the silly idiots," remarked



Monty Lowther, "Gussy is about the silliest. He's got to be shifted."

"Gussy!" called out Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"Pway wun away, deah boy! You are attvactin' attention!"

"Come and do your prep!"

"Wats!"

"Come and sing us a tenor solo, Gussy!" said Manners heroically.

"I have no time for tenah solos now, Mannahs!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats! I am lookin' the othah way!"

And Arthur Augustus looked firmly the other way, keeping his eyeglass glued, as it were, upon Mr. Railton's study door. And Tom Merry & Co. stared at him in helpless wrath from the landing.

CHAPTER 5.

Keeping It Dark!

HARRY NOBLE, known as Kangaroo at St. Jim's, came upstairs with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn.

The three Shell fellows were bound for the end study to do their preparation. They stared at Arthur Augustus in passing, but Arthur Augustus took no notice of them. When they reached the landing they stared at Tom Merry & Co. inquiringly.

"What's the little game?" asked Kangaroo, in wonder. "What is Gussy sitting on the stairs for, like Patience on a monument?"

"Mad!" said Blake.

"Must be, I should think," grinned the Cornstalk.

"Is it a jape?" asked Glyn.

"He's getting a crowd round," remarked Clifton Dane. "If it's a jape, what does it mean, and whom are you japing?"

"Gussy's only dotty!"

"Gussy, old man, come and do your prep!" called out Digby.

"Wats!"

"You can't stay there, you know."

"Wubbish!"

"Well, this beats the band," said Kangaroo. "I suppose it's a joke, but I don't see where the joke comes in myself."

"He's got to be shifted!" said Blake despairingly.

"Well, why don't you shift him?" said Glyn. "Take him by the neck and carry him away."

But the chums of the School House could not explain. If they carried Arthur Augustus away forcibly he was certain to resist, and something would come out. They were only too well aware of Arthur Augustus' way of keeping a secret.

"He'll have a prefect down on him soon if he sets a crowd round him like that," said Glyn. "I'll shift him, if you like. I'll get my squirt."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good idea!"

Bernard Glyn walked away to the end study. He came back with a large squirt in his hand, and a large bottle of red ink. The juniors grinned gleefully.

"Good egg!" murmured Tom Merry. "Go it, Glyn!"

"You bet!"

Glyn filled the squirt from the bottle and took aim at the back of Arthur Augustus' noble neck.

Squizzz!

Arthur Augustus gave a sudden yell and a jump, and his hand went up to his neck. He spun round on the stairs, and as he did so a second stream from the squirt caught him under the chin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoogh! Bai Jove! What's that? Gweat Scott!"

Squizzz!

Another stream landed on D'Arcy's aristocratic nose and splashed over his face, making him suddenly redder than the reddest of Red Indians. He staggered back and caught hold of the banisters.

"Gwowowowowowow! Ow! You awful wotah! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's not here, Gussy!"

"Gwoogh! You feathal beast! How am I to shadow Mr. Waitlon in this state?" shrieked Arthur Augustus furiously.

"Shadow Mr. Railton!" gasped Kangaroo. "Is that what the silly idiot is doing? What is he shadowing Railton for? Here, look out, Glyn!"

Arthur Augustus came charging furiously up the stairs. With his face and collar deeply stained with red ink, it was evident that he could not shadow Mr. Railton, even if the Housemaster came out of his study. And to have had all his trouble for nothing was extremely exasperating to the amateur shadower. He charged up the stairs to take immediate and deadly vengeance upon the humorous junior who had spoiled the little game.

"Run for your life!" yelled the Kangaroo.

Glyn chuckled and ran.

After him went Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, streaming with ink and gasping with rage. Glyn dodged into the end study, and Arthur Augustus rushed in after him. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane followed him in, grinning. Tom Merry & Co. were doubled up in the passage.

Kangaroo slammed the study door and locked it. Arthur Augustus was chasing Bernard Glyn round the study table.

"Stop, you wotah! I am goin' to give you a feathal thwashin'! Stop, you feightful beast! Yow-ow! Hands off, you wotahs!"

Kangaroo and Dane seized the excited swell of St. Jim's and bowled him over. Arthur Augustus descended on the carpet with a bump and a gasp. Noble proceeded to sit on his chest and keep him there. Arthur Augustus wriggled under the weight of the Cornstalk junior, but he could not escape.

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"My hat!" gasped Glyn. "He's quite ferocious! Hold him!"

"I've got him!" grinned Kangaroo. "Now, you blessed idiot, you're going to explain what you've been sitting on the stairs for."

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort." "What's the little game?" demanded the chums of the end study together.

"Wats!"

"There's something on," said Kangaroo. "I can see that. Those bounders outside know what it is, and they're keeping us out of it."

"This champion idiot has started out to watch Raitlon for some reason. He's going to explain himself. They can't keep secrets from this study. Hallo! Who's there?" The door-handle had been turned from the outside, but as the door was securely locked it did not open.

"Hallo!" called out Tom Merry's voice. "Let us in, Kangy!"

"Busy!" replied Kangaroo.

"Well, let Gussy out, then."

"Not till he's explained what he's been playing the giddy goat for."

"Ahem! It—it's a secret," said Tom Merry. "Sorry we can't let you fellows into it, but it's a secret. Don't say a word, Gussy!"

"I have no intention of sayin' a word, Tom Mewwy; but if you keep on talkin' you will probably let out the secret!"

"Gussy's going to let out the secret," said Kangaroo cheerfully. "We can't have you kids playing the giddy goat like this. Now, Gussy—"

"I wufuse to say a word!"

"What were you watching Raitlon's study for?"

"Find out!"

"That's what we're going to do!" grinned the Cornstalk. "If you won't give up the deadly secret, we're going to put you to torture. Is your electric battery working, Glyn?"

"Yes," chuckled Glyn.

"Then give him a shock."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn was a great dabbler in electricity and electric contrivances. His study was quite a museum of batteries,

wet and dry, of wires and coils, and all kinds of weird and wonderful paraphernalia. Arthur Augustus wriggled apprehensively as Glyn brought two handles, attached to wires, towards him.

"You uttah wottah! Keep off!"

"Are you going to tell us?"

"Certainly not!"

"Hold out his hands," said Glyn.

The handles were tied to Arthur Augustus' hands and the current switched on.

"You feahful wottahs—gwoogh—wooh—wooh! Leave off!"

Arthur Augustus wriggled wildly at the electric contact. The current from the battery filled him full of pins and needles.

"Woo-oooh!"

Glyn shut off the current.

"Now, are you going to talk?"

"Yow—ow! No!"

"Give him another shock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Gussy—"

"I wufuse to say a word!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "And I will give all you wotten beasts 'a feahful twashin'!"

"Bare bang, bang!" came at the door. The bodyguard were all outside, in an extremely anxious state of mind.

"Let us in, you bounders!" howled Blake.

"Rats!"

"Don't give it away, Gussy!"

"I ain not goin' to give it away, Blake. I wufuse to say a word about why we are watchin' Wailton."

"Oh, you're all in it, are you?" said Kangaroo, with a whistle. "The whole giddy family! We can't allow this sort of thing. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Gussy. It's shocking—more shocking than Glyn's battery!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass! We are doing it for his own good!" gasped D'Arcy. "I trust you do not think I am capable of spyin' on people, like that wottah Mellish. We are takin' care of Mr. Wailton because he is in dangah, you ass!"

"Oh, he's in danger, is he?" said Kangaroo. "In that case, you'd better

tell us all about it, and we'll look after him!"

"It is impos, you ass! That duffah Blake has pwomised Mr. Wailton that nothin' should be said about it."

"About what?"

"Shut up, Gussy!" howled Blake through the keyhole.

"It's all wright, Blake! I'm not goin' to say a word about Munwo!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake. "The silly ass has done it now!"

"Munro!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"What's that about Munro? I remember that name. Wasn't Munro the name of the rotter who went for old Raitlon some time ago?"

"That's it!" said Glyn. "We're getting at it! But the chap is 'in prison now; he can't do anything to old Raitlon. What do you mean, Gussy?"

"I wufuse to say another word."

"Give him another shock."

"Gwooooh!"

"Now, Gussy—what is this about Raitlon and Munro? Is there any more trouble with that chap? Have you heard anything about him? Has he got away?"

"It's all out now!" came Tom Merry's voice from the passage. "May as well tell him now! Oh, Gussy, you ass!"

"Then he has got away!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove! It is utterly wotten of you, Tom Mewwy, to let out about Munwo escapin' from pwison aftah pwomisin' Mr. Wailton—"

"Munro escaped from prison!" exclaimed Glyn.

"Tom Mewwy, you uttah ass—"

"Let us in, Kangy!" growled Tom Merry. "It was to be kept a secret, but that silly chump has given it away now."

"I have got given it away. Tom Mewwy, you have betrayed the secret in the most stupid mannah—"

Kangaroo grinned and unlocked the door. Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet, panting.

The bodyguard crowded into the study, looking daggers at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Chump!"

"You silly asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "I have not uttached a word! You have given it away, and I wogard you—"

"Oh, bump him!" said Blake.

"Bump him hard!"

"I—wufuse! I—I wogard—I—Yawwooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Now give him the rest of the ink!"

But Arthur Augustus had had enough of the ink. He tore himself away, and fled from the study.

"So that's the little game, is it?" said Kangaroo. "Munro has escaped from prison, and you fellows were keeping it dark."

"Raitlon wants it kept dark," growled Blake. "He doesn't want to be jawed about. He made me promise that nothing should be said. Now that awful ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows know now," said Tom Merry. "But don't let it go any further. Raitlon will think we've broken our word—or Blake's word—if it becomes the talk of the House."

"Right-ho!"

"They'd better join the gardy kaw now they know," said Digby.

"The—the what?"

"The gardy kaw."

"What on earth's that?" asked the

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chums of the end study together, in amazement.

"The bodyguard," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've constituted ourselves into a bodyguard to take care of Railton. You fellows can join it now. The chief bizney of the bodyguard is to keep Gussy's head shut somehow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Kangaroo & Co. became members of the bodyguard to carry out the difficult task of watching over the safety of Mr. Railton, and the still more difficult task of keeping Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's head shut.

It was an hour later when Arthur Augustus—still showing traces of red ink—came into Study No. 6 to do his preparation. He was met by three separate and distinct glares from Blake, Herries, and Digby. He gave them a withering look in reply.

"Finished sitting on the stairs, you silly ass?" growled Blake.

"Orwin' to your silly conduct, Blake, it is imposser for me to keep watch on Mr. Wailton's door. You have attracted the attention of the whole House on the matiah. I shall have to think of some other way. And I weally want to impress upon you fellows to be more careful in keepin' the secret. It doesn't weally matiah about Kangy knowin', as he will help us. But if you should be careless again, and let others into it—"

"Us!"

"Well, Tom Mewwy was more to blame than you, but you were vewy careless. And I want to impress upon you—"

But Blake, Herries, and Digby did not wait to have anything impressed upon them. They rose in their wrath and bumped Arthur Augustus on the study carpet till the dust rose in clouds.

After that there were strained relations in Study No. 6 for the rest of the evening, and Arthur Augustus did not deign to speak another word. For which relief his studymates were duly thankful.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Track!

TOM MERRY & CO. did not sleep soundly that night.

They could not help thinking of the escaped convict, who had once made a desperate attempt upon the School House master, and might be expected to repeat it now that he was at liberty. The police might be keeping their eyes open in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's; but the juniors had no great faith in P.-e. Crump, of Rycombe, and very little more in Inspector Skeat.

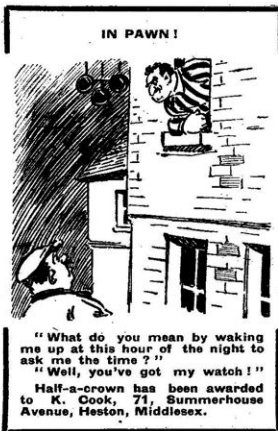
It would not be easy for the rascal to enter the School House; and, even if he did so, he could not possibly know which was Mr. Railton's room; and probably the Housemaster would keep his door locked. The danger, therefore, was not really pressing.

But as the shades of night darkened over the old school the juniors were very uneasy. They recalled the man's great strength and desperate character, and the impression he had given them that he was not quite in his right senses. Such a man was capable of anything; and the juniors were disquieted at the idea of what the night might bring forth.

Yet to stop up on the watch was manifestly impossible.

The juniors had to go to bed at half-past nine, and a prefect saw the lights-out in the dormitory.

To come down afterwards to keep



watch was hardly feasible. Certainly the chums of the School House had set themselves a very difficult task. But they had no thought of abandoning it.

Arthur Augustus had a suggestion to make at bed-time. He proposed that the members of the bodyguard should take it in turns to watch over the House at night, and offered to start that night himself. But the other members of the garde du corps sniffed at that suggestion.

"You'll be spotted out of the dorm," said Tom Merry.

"That must be wisked."

"You'll be caught out of the House."

"Another wisk; but if we're goin' to think of the wisk, we may as well chuck up the whole business, deah boy."

"And you'd go to sleep, anyway," said Manners.

"Wubbish!"

"You'd go to sleep in the Form-room to-morrow morning if you don't get any sleep to-night!" growled Blake.

"Can't be helped, Blake."

"It's a rotten idea!" decided Tom Merry.

"If the man comes here, he can't get into the House, anyway. It's when Mr. Railton is out of doors that he's in danger. Besides, nothing may happen for weeks; and we can't stay up at night for weeks on end."

"I think the wuffian will come here as soon as he can to knock poor old Wailton on the head. P'robably to-night."

"Tangles ought to be told to turn his mastiff loose," said Blake. "That would keep the rotter from getting near the House."

"But he hasn't been told, deah boy; and he wouldn't do it if we told him. And old Wailton doesn't realise his dangal."

"After all," remarked Talbot, "Railton's the person most concerned. Perhaps we're making rather too much of it."

"Wats!"

"I could fix up an electric burglar-alarm all right," Bernard Glyn observed thoughtfully. "But Railton would spot it, and—"

"And he'd make you take it down again and give you lines!" growled Manners. "That's no good!"

"I'm goin' to stay up and keep watch," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"I wegard it as my duty."

"Oh rats!" The juniors went to bed, but in an uneasy frame of mind. Arthur Augustus, however, was not uneasy. He knew what he was going to do, and how he was going to do it.

After Kilere of the Sixth had put lights out in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House, Arthur Augustus sat up in bed.

He intended to keep awake till about eleven o'clock, when the masters would be going to bed. After that, when all his Form-fellows were asleep, Arthur Augustus intended to quit the dormitory quietly and begin his vigil.

He leaned back against the head of the bed, determined to keep sitting up in order not to drop off to sleep. But it was far easier to arrange to keep awake early in the evening than to keep his eyes open in the late hours of the night.

Sleep descended upon Arthur Augustus, and long before ten o'clock had rung out from the old clock tower he was nodding. By a quarter past ten he was deep in slumber.

The rest of the Fourth were all asleep by that time.

Arthur Augustus would probably have slept soundly until the morning but for the fact that he was sitting up in bed. It was close on midnight when he slipped from the pillows piled up behind him, and knocked his head on the bedpost, and awoke with a yelp.

"Ow! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus sat up again, rubbing his head.

He blinked sleepily round the dormitory. There was a glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows, and it shone on the row of white beds and the sleeping juniors. Twelve o'clock boomed out dully in the distance.

"Bai Jove, I believe I've been asleep!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

He whipped out of bed.

Taking great care not to awaken his comrades, the swell of St. Jim's dressed himself quickly in the gloom. He was late to take up his vigil, and he feared that he might be too late. If the ruffian was coming that night he might have come before twelve o'clock.

Arthur Augustus mounted to a window and looked out into the quadrangle.

All was silent and still there. The last light had been extinguished in the School House. Only the moonlight glimmered in the quadrangle. In the distance the mass of the New House showed up blackly.

The shadows of the elms lay back in the moonlight, moving fantastically as the wind stirred the branches and the foliage.

Arthur Augustus watched the moving shadows with an anxious eye. To his excited and uneasy mind, every lurking shadow was that of the ruffian Munro, bent upon vengeance upon the School House master.

Suddenly the swell of St. Jim's uttered a low exclamation.

Across a wide patch of moonlight, between the elms and the House, a black shadow had darted.

It passed out of view in the shadow of the building so quickly that Arthur Augustus could not possibly see what it was, and the light was too dim for him to observe clearly, even if the passing object had not been so rapid in its movements.

D'Arcy's heart beat with a thump. Whatever it was, it was something living. The shadow of a branch could not have detached itself from the mass.

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of shadows and darted towards the School House in that manner.

"Bai Jove, it's that wottah!"

D'Arcy hesitated.

There was no further movement below; no sound from the stillness. Had his eyes deceived him in the uncertain light of the moon? Should he call his comrades, or ascertain first whether his suspicions were well-founded? It was a critical moment, for if the ruffian was in the quadrangle the help of all the garde du corps would be required to secure him.

Arthur Augustus decided to go alone. He reflected sorrowfully that Blake and the rest had no faith in his tact and judgment, and instead of getting up and following him to the attack, they would more likely collar him and throw him back in bed, and keep him there by main force. They would not think it necessary to go forth in pursuit of a whisking shadow, but they would very probably think it necessary to keep Arthur Augustus from risking getting into serious trouble by breaking bounds at night.

"I shall have to wely on myself," murmured Arthur Augustus. "Aftah all, if it is that wuffian I shall spot him, and then I can call the othahs. And even if I fall foul of the wottah I can disable him with my special uppahcut."

And Arthur Augustus tiptoed out of the dormitory, closing the door softly behind him. He went down the dark passage on tiptoe, and reached the lower box-room and opened the window cautiously. Five minutes later he was on the ground and skirting cautiously round the House.

He was very careful to keep under cover as he came round the School House, and he kept in the shadow of the wall as he neared the spot where he had seen the whisking shadow.

There was no sound in the quad—no sign that a desperate ruffian was seeking to obtain entrance into the House. But the very silence was fraught with meaning to Arthur Augustus. The ruffian, of course, would take care not to make a sound; the silence itself was, from one point of view, a very suspicious circumstance.

Arthur Augustus crept on, listening intently.

Suddenly he started.

There was a sound—a slight sound—from the dark porch of the School House. Exactly what sound it was he could not tell, but it was a movement of some sort, there was no doubt whatever about that.

Arthur Augustus thrilled from head to foot.

It was on the track, and he regretted at that moment that he had neglected to bring a cricket stump or an Indian club with him.

"Bai Jove, I've spotted him!"

He listened with all his ears. The sound was not repeated. What was the man doing? Was he striving to effect an entrance by means of the Hall window? In that case some sound should have been audible.

It was necessary to know; and Arthur Augustus crept on towards the House, with his teeth set, and his eyes gleaming.

Keeping as much under cover as he could, he peered into the shadowy porch. There was a movement again, and Arthur Augustus caught a glimpse of two bright and fiery eyes turning upon him in the darkness.

The next moment there was a savage growl, and a large dog leaped towards

the startled junior, with flaming eyes and snapping jaws.

Arthur Augustus gave one surprised yell and fled.

"Bai Jove, it's Taggles' mastiff! Oh cwumbs!"

And Arthur Augustus ran for his life.

CHAPTER 7.

The Amateur Cracksmen!

There was a horrible growl from the mastiff as he dashed in pursuit of the unfortunate junior.

Arthur Augustus was not thinking of keeping in cover now. He was only thinking of getting away from those savage jaws.

He realised too late what it was that had been tracking down.

Taggles' mastiff was a fierce brute, and was generally kept securely on his chain. But this night he was loose in the quadrangle.

Apparently Mr. Railton was not so indifferent to his safety as the juniors had supposed. Taggles must have had orders to let the mastiff loose after the Houses were closed up for the night. With Cesar loose in the quad, there was little danger of any intruder obtaining an entrance to the House. Cesar would have taken care of that.

Unfortunately, it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of whom Cesar was taking care now. Cesar's temper was not to be relied upon, excepting when he was on the chain. Cesar was there to look out for intruders, and he was looking out.

The growl of the mastiff close behind him sent a cold chill like a trickle of ice down Arthur Augustus' spine. He ran as he had seldom run before.

"Oh, bai Jove! Oh cwumbs!"

Snap!

Arthur Augustus knew that the jaws behind him just missed him.

He was close to the School House, and he made a wild, scrambling leap upon the window-sill of the Fourth Form Room.

It was a wide, deep sill, about five feet from the ground. Arthur Augustus scrambled nimbly upon it. He hardly knew how he got his knees on it, but he did get them on, and the mastiff pranced below, growling and barking furiously.

Arthur Augustus' head knocked against the window, fortunately without breaking the glass.

He scrambled round on the window-sill to keep his eyes on the mastiff, who was leaping up at him furiously.

"Bai Jove, what a fivghtfully narrow escape!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Gr-r-r-r!

"The howwible, fewcious beast! Some of those silly asses ought to have found out that the wotten dog was loose. Oh deah!"

Fortunately, the mastiff could not reach Arthur Augustus. There was no doubt that he would have sampled the noble youth's lower limbs if he had been able to get at them. Arthur Augustus was glad to be beyond reach of Cesar's jaws. But he was in a very awkward predicament.

He could not descend from the window-sill without encountering the mastiff, and that was not to be thought of.

On the other hand, he could not remain there he was until the morning.

To call for help would be to betray the fact that he was out of his House after midnight, and that also was certainly not to be thought of.

What was to be done was a mystery. Arthur Augustus could not penetrate. Cesar ceased to leap and bark at last, but he settled down to watch the junior. Evidently he did not mean to give him a chance of escaping.

Arthur Augustus tried the effect of blandishments on the mastiff, in vain.

"Good old Cesar! Nice doggy! Good dog!"

Cesar only growled. Even the endearing epithets did not soften his hard heart. In the daytime he would probably have been more reasonable, but Cesar did not know anything about Arthur Augustus' good motives for being in his present situation, and Cesar was not taking risks. He was set on guard, and he was doing his duty. If he recognised Arthur Augustus at all, he probably regarded the peculiar circumstances as justifying him in looking on the junior as an enemy.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus in distress. "Whatevah am I goin' to do? I cannot possibly remain here until the mornin', and if I did, there would be a feahful wow when they discovered that I had been out all night. It is simply howwid. I wondah if that beastly dog is asleep!"

He waddled one leg from the sill, and speedily discovered that the beastly dog was not asleep. Cesar made a jump, and D'Arcy withdrew his leg in hot haste.

"Bai Jove! I'm up a twee—fairly bunkahed!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "And that wotten dog's barkin' may have awakened somebody, too! It's uttaly wotten! Howvah am I to get out of this feahful pvedicament?"

There was evidently only one way out, and that was by opening the window, and getting into the Form-room behind him.

If he could do that, he could easily return to the dormitory; but the difficulty was to get into the Form-room.

The window was fastened inside with a strong catch, and Arthur Augustus was quite inexperienced in the manner of custom-made burglars.

He examined the window very carefully, and made the joyful discovery that the sashes were not very tight, and that it would be possible to pass the blade of a pocket-knife between them.

"Bai Jove, it makes me feel like a wotten burghlah!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "But it is the only way. Blow that wotten dog!"

Cesar had settled down to watch again. But whenever Arthur Augustus made a movement, Cesar opened one eye, and the swell of St. Jim's could not venture to descend from his perch. He fumbled in his pocket for his knife, and found it and opened it, and essayed to pass the blade between the sashes.

He succeeded in doing so, and then he tried to force back the catch inside.

Snap!

"Oh cwumbs!"

The blade of the knife had broken off short.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. He opened the second blade of the pocket-knife, and jammed it between the sashes.

This time he was more careful.

With slow and cautious care he forced back the catch; and when there came a snap again, it was the catch springing back.

The window was unfastened, Arthur Augustus gave a little chirrup of glee.

"Saved, bai Jove!"

His next task was to prise up the lower sash, which was not easy from outside; but he succeeded in raising it at last.

The sash rose slowly with a creaking sound that sent Arthur Augustus' heart into his mouth.

But it rose, and there was room for Arthur Augustus to pass inside. Caesar awoke to attention as soon as he saw the swell of St. Jim's disappearing in at the window.

Bow-wow-wow-wow!

The mastiff's barking rang through the quadrangle.

"Gwreat Scott! The beast will wake the whole House!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Quiet, Caesar! Quiet, old dog! Oh, you wotten beast! Good dog—good dog! It's all wright, old boy! Oh, you beastly, wotten bwute!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled into the room, and cautiously lowered the sash behind him.

He stood in the darkness, and the mastiff's barking still resounded outside. Caesar was disappointed at the escape of his victim, and probably he knew that something was amiss when the House was entered at that hour in that manner.

Bow-wow-wow-wow-woof!

"The wotten beast! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus refastened the window, and trod lightly across the Form-room towards the door. There was no doubt that the mastiff's barking

would awaken a good many people in the House, and D'Arcy was anxious to get back to bed before anyone came down.

He reached the Form-room door, and turned the handle.

The door came open, and Arthur Augustus stepped through into the darkness of the passage outside.

Inside the House was almost pitchy darkness, and D'Arcy could not see a step before him. But he knew his way about the House blindfolded, and he would soon have reached his dormitory—if he had not been interrupted.

Barely had he taken a step outside the Form-room when there was a sudden hurried sound of footsteps in the passage, and two pairs of hands were laid upon the swell of St. Jim's in the darkness.

"Got him!" gasped a voice.

And Arthur Augustus, before he could speak a word, or make a movement, was dragged to the floor.

CHAPTER 8.

"Got Him!"

TOM MERRY sat up in bed as Caesar's barking sounded through the night.

The captain of the Shell had been sleeping very uneasily, with the thought of Mr. Railton's danger in his mind even while he slumbered.

He awoke at the furious barking from the quadrangle, and sat up, with every sense on the alert.

"That's Caesar!"

"Yes, rather!" came a voice from Lowther's bed. "Up with you!"

"Wake up, Manners!"

"I'm awake!"

"So am I," said Talbot. "Something's up!"

Tom Merry leaped from his bed, and jumped into his trousers, tying his braces hastily round his waist. Then he ran for the dormitory door.

Lowther and Manners and Talbot followed him fast.

"It must be somebody trying to get in!" panted Tom Merry. "Caesar wouldn't make all that noise for nothing!"

"Yes; come on!"

The juniors ran downstairs, making little sound with their slippers feet.

In the Lower Hall they paused, listening. That someone was attempting to enter the House they felt certain; but there were some hundreds of windows in the School House, and it was not easy to tell in which direction to seek for the intruder.

"He's barking outside one of the Form-rooms," said Lowther, listening.

"You can hear where it comes from!"

"This way!"

They hurried into the Form-room

passage.

A sound from the Fourth Form-room



"Bai Jove, I am fairly bunkahed!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as Caesar tried to reach him on the window-sill. "And that wotten dog's barkin' may have awakened somebody! Movevah am I to get out of this feathal pwedmentment?"

caught their ears—the sound of a stealthy footstep within!

"He's here!" breathed Tom Merry.
"Shush!"

"He's got in at the window, then!" muttered Talbot. "He'll be coming out of the Form-room in a tick! Stand ready to collar him—and quiet!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I've got my electric flash-lamp," murmured Manners. "I put it in my trousers pocket in case it should be wanted. I'll turn it on when you've got him; but—"

"Not yet; don't give the alarm. Let's nab him first. We don't want him to bunk!"

"Right!"

"Shush!" murmured Tom Merry.

The faint sound of the stealthy footstep was close to the door now. The juniors stood silent, almost breathless, in the darkness outside the door. They heard the door swing open—they heard, but did not see, the form that stepped out.

The next instant, Tom Merry and Lowther had their grasp upon the unseen form, and it was borne to the floor.

"Got him!"

"Gwoogh!"

"Hold the scoundrel! Sit on him! Don't let him get up!"

"E've got him!"

The unseen villain was well secured. Tom Merry was sprawling over him, Lowther had an arm jammed round his neck, and Talbot secured a grip round the back of his collar, and ground his knuckles into the neck inside the collar. Certainly there was not much chance of the enemy either resisting or getting away.

The unknown was gasping and gurgling, but he could not speak. The arm round his neck, and the iron grip on his collar shut off his voice, and very nearly his breath.

"Got him!" panted Tom Merry.
"Show a light, Manners!"

Manners had his electric lamp in his hand all ready. He turned on the light. A sudden gleam fell upon the three Shell fellows and their prisoner.

There was a gasp from the heroic captors:

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gwoogh!" came faintly from the unfortunate prisoner, as the hold on his neck relaxed. "Ow—gwoogh—leggo! You are suffocatin' me, you fidgetal asses! Gwoogh!"

"You—your silly chump!"

"Gwoogh! Gewwoff!"

There was a sound of a door opening above. Others had been alarmed by the barking of the mastiff, as well as the Shell fellows. A light gleamed from the direction of the stairs.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet. He was gasping for breath, being very nearly in a state of asphyxiation.

"Ow! Ow! Oh, you uttah asses! Ow!"

"You thumping idiot, what were you doing down here?" hissed Tom Merry.
"So it was you all the time? Oh, you idiot!"

"Gwoo-hoo-hoo!"

"Was it you made Caesar bark, you thumping idiot?"

"Gwoogh! Yaas! I didn't know the beast was—gwoogh—loose!"

"Shush! There'll be a row now!" groaned Manners, shutting off the light.
"They're coming down! I can hear Raitlon, I think!"

"Cut back to the dorm—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,522.

"Too late! There's a light on the stairs!"

The Shell fellows looked daggers at Arthur Augustus. They knew now what he had been down for. The man Munro had not come, but Arthur Augustus had succeeded in causing an alarm and waking the House.

And they knew very well how Mr. Raitlon would take it, if he found out that the midnight alarm had been caused by a member of Tom Merry's bodyguard looking after his safety.

"Who is there?" called out Mr. Raitlon's voice from the direction of the stairs.

"We've got to face it out," murmured Lowther. "Drag that idiot's things off, and make him look as if he's just come out of bed!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Quick!"

The light was descending the stairs. Lowther ran towards it.

"It's all right, sir!"

"Lowther!"

"We heard the dog barking, sir, and came down to see if anything was the matter," said Lowther.

"You should not have done so, Lowther. You should have left that to your elders," said Mr. Raitlon sternly.

"Sorry, sir! I—I thought per-

haps—"

"Have you seen anyone?"

"Only Merry and Talbot and Manners, sir, and D'Arcy. They're here," said Monty Lowther glibly.

"They should not have come down! Go back to your beds at once, and leave this matter to me," said the House-master.

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Raitlon came along the passage, with a poker in one hand, and an electric lamp in the other. Tom Merry, Manners, and Talbot took turn off D'Arcy's jacket and collar and waistcoat, and the swell of St. Jim's looked as if he had partly dressed himself to descend in haste like the other fellows. Fortunately Mr. Raitlon did not suspect that anything else was the case.

"You should not have come down," he said sternly. "If there had been a burglar, you would have been in danger. Go back to your beds at once, and do not come down again."

"Yaas, sir—but—"

"Go at once," said Mr. Raitlon, frowning.

Kildara and Darrell and two or three more of the Sixth had come out of their rooms, and they, with Mr. Raitlon, proceeded to make a search of the House.

Cesar had ceased barking now, but the House-master felt that he had not barked so furiously without cause. While the House-master and the prefects were making a round of the House, Tom Merry & Co. returned upstairs.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as they reached the dormitory passage. "Raitlon seemed to think that I had come down like you fellows—"

"Lucky for you," growled Tom Merry. "If Lowther hadn't thought of that, you'd have got a licking, and serve you jolly well right."

"You have torn my collah—"

"Blow your collah!"

"And wumpled my jacket—"

"Jolly good mind to rumple you, as well as your jacket," said Tom Merry.
"What have you been playing the giddy ox for, in the middle of the night?"

"I have been watchin' ovah Waitlon's safety—"

"Better go and tell him so, and see how he takes it!" snorted Manners.

Arthur Augustus did not think that would be advisable. It was only too probable that the House-master would have rewarded D'Arcy's fatherly care with a severe caning.

The Shell fellows went back to bed, and Arthur Augustus proceeded to the Fourth Form dormitory. He found most of the Fourth Formers awake, and they had already discovered that Arthur Augustus' bed was empty.

"Well, you thumping ass, where have you been?" asked Blake, in withering tones.

"Doin' my duty, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Bai Jove! Waitlon is goin' woun'd the House, and he may find the box-room window is unfastened."

And Arthur Augustus, as that thought struck him, fairly scudded away to the box-room, and fastened the window, fortunately getting back to the dormitory unscen, the searchers being occupied downstairs. The swell of St. Jim's undressed and tumbled into bed with a sigh of relief.

"That was wathah a nawwow escape, deah boys! If Waitlon knew—"

"What have you been up to?" asked Levidon. "Breaking bounds at night—what?"

"Wats!"

"Been down to the Green Man?"

chuckled Mellish.

Arthur Augustus sat up in bed again.

"I should be sowwy to make a disturbance at this time of night, Mellish, but if you insinuate that I have broken bounds for any wotten reason, I shall considah it my duty to get up and give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, go to sleep!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, what have you been out for?" asked Korruish.

"That is a secwet, deah boy."

"Will you shut up, you burbling idiot?" demanded Blake, in sulphurous tones.

"I wufuse to be called a burblin' idiot, Blake. Howevah; I am too sleepy to talk now, so I will tell you what I think of you to-morrow."

And Arthur Augustus laid his aristocratic head on the pillow, and was soon in the land of dreams.

Meanwhile, Mr. Raitlon had found nothing wrong downstairs, and, much puzzled by the alarm Cesar had apparently given without cause, he returned to bed. But if the House-master had known the facts, certainly Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's excellent intentions would not have saved him from an exceedingly painful interview in Mr. Raitlon's study.

CHAPTER 9.

Ditched!

TOM MERRY & CO. were very eager to see the newspaper on the following morning.

They wanted to know whether there was any further news of the man who had escaped from Portnook Prison.

The bodyguard, however, had to control their impatience. Newspapers were not supplied for the use of the juniors, and they had to look for a chance of seeing a master's paper after he had read it.

And so it was not till after morning lessons that a copy of the "Daily Telegraph" came into their hands, and they were all able to scan its columns for some news of the man Munro.

"Here it is," said Tom Merry, turning over a page. "A couple of lines at the bottom of a column, same as before. The convict Munro is still at large, but he has been seen again near a village in Sussex, and his capture is expected hourly."

"Still in Sussex!" remarked Talbot. "Doesn't say which village. Rylcoombe is a village. Must be close at hand."

"Very likely hanging round on the chance of getting at poor old Railton, the same as he did before," agreed Kangaroo. "He can't get at old Railton here, though. He wouldn't venture into the school in the daylight—and with the mastiff loose at night, he couldn't possibly break into the place. Only Gussy could do that."

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"My idea is that he will hang about, and look for a chance of getting at old Railton when he goes out," he said.

"Yaas, wathah; and powwaps you will agwee now that old Wailton has got to be shadowed whenever he goes out."

"Railton will be awfully ratty if he catches us doing it," said Bernard Glyn.

"Leave it to me, deah boys. You know I am wathah deep. I will undah-take to shadow old Wailton without his smellin' a wat."

To which the whole of the bodyguard replied, with wonderful unanimity:

"Rats!"

The devoted juniors kept an eye—in fact, a good many eyes, upon the master of the School House that day. He did not go out, however, and Arthur Augustus' powers as a shadower were not called into action.

After dinner Mr. Railton strolled into the quad, and two or three of the bodyguard strolled after him. But he only went to the Head's garden, where he chatted with Dr. Holmes till nearly time for afternoon lessons.

In the afternoon Mr. Railton took the Sixth Form, and the bodyguard were comforted by the knowledge that he would be safely occupied till they were out of classes, and able to look after him.

But that evening, Tom Merry knew. Mr. Railton was sure to go out. It was his regular evening for going down to Glyn House to play chess with Mr. Glyn—the father of Glyn of the Shell, who lived near the school. The Housemaster would go in the daylight, but he would return after dark through a lonely lane. And Tom Merry's mind was much exercised on the subject.

"No need to see Railton to Glyn House," he remarked; "but when he comes back—there's the rub!—he might run into that rotter Munro."

"We've got to see that nothing happens to him," said Blake.

"Leave it to me, deah boys."

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wing off. I am goin' to look aftah old Wailton. I weward it as my duty."

And when Mr. Railton walked out of the School House that evening, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was on his track.

Mr. Railton stopped in the quadrangle to speak a few words to Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, and Arthur Augustus affected to be busily occupied near at hand in studying the old elms.

But when Mr. Railton walked out of the gates, Arthur Augustus sauntered after him, and dogged him down the lane.

Mr. Railton glanced back, and his eyes fell upon the swell of St. Jim's. He frowned slightly, and retraced his steps.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir?"

"Have you a pass out of gates?"

"No—no, sir."

"Then go back immediately!"

Mr. Railton stood in the lane, watching him as he went back. He had to go back; there was no help for that. But when a bend of the lane hid him

(Continued on the next page.)

SCIENCE INVENTED AEROMANCY...



Aeromancy—or weather forecasting—is a branch of meteorology. The picture shows how sunshine is recorded. The recorder is a glass sphere, which brings the sun's rays to a focus on a card mounted in a metal box. The movement of the lens is opposite to that of the sun. (Reproduced from the Meteorological Observer's Handbook by permission of the Controller, H.M. Stationery Office.)

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from the Housemaster's sight, Arthur Augustus paused.

"I can't help it if he is watty," he murmured. "I am bound to look aftah him. I'll take jolly good care that he doesn't see me again!"

And Arthur Augustus dodged through the hedge, and went on the trail once more.

Keeping on the inner side of the hedge, he retraced his steps towards the spot where he had left Mr. Railton.

He reached that spot, with the hedge between him and the lane, and stopped and listened. He could hear footsteps dying away in the direction of Glyn House. Mr. Railton had gone on his way again.

A side lane led from the road up to the gates of Glyn House. Arthur Augustus cut across the fields and reached the lane, and looked out through a gap in the hedge.

The athletic figure of the Housemaster appeared in sight, striding on towards Glyn House. Arthur Augustus smiled serenely. There was a wide, deep ditch between the field and the lane at this point, and it was nearly full of water. A plank was laid across the ditch, giving access to a gap in the hedge—and the lane beyond. Arthur Augustus stood on the plank, peering out cautiously through the gap. Mr. Railton was in full view, walking with out looking to right or left.

But as he came nearly abreast of the spot where Arthur Augustus lurked in cover, he caught a glitter among the twigs of the hedge, and paused to see what it was.

It was the glitter of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's silk hat shining in the sun.

The Housemaster frowned, and strode directly towards the gap in the hedge, with a stern brow.

"D'Arcy!" he shouted.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

He spun round on the plank, and his foot slipped, and the next moment Arthur Augustus was in the ditch.

Splash!

The swell of St. Jim's had disappeared for a moment in the muddy water, but he came up quickly.

But when he came up there was a remarkable change in his appearance.

His silk topper was floating on the muddy water, and Arthur Augustus came up with streaming face and dripping hair, gasping and puffing and blowing.

"Gwoogh-hooh-hooh-wooh!"

"D'Arcy!"

"D'Arcy! Gwoogh! Wesene!"

Arthur Augustus floundered wildly in the water, and caught hold of the plank. He clung on to the plank, and gasped and blinked at the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton's stern face relaxed as he looked down upon the miserable object in the ditch. It would have been difficult to be angry with Arthur Augustus at that moment.

"D'Arcy! What are you doing here?"

"Gwoogh!"

"Get out of the ditch!"

"I—I— I can't!" gasped D'Arcy, struggling in vain to pull his feet out of the thick bed of mud into which they had sunk. "I'm in beastly mud up to my knees! Gwoogh!"

Mr. Railton smiled, and came through the gap in the hedge. He leaned over and caught the swell of St. Jim's by his wet collar.

He exerted his strength, and dragged the unfortunate junior bodily out of the

ditch. Arthur Augustus came up, streaming with water and mud. Mr. Railton landed him like a fish, pitching him into the grass, where Arthur Augustus sprawled and squelched.

"Gewwoogh!"

"You utterly ridiculous boy!" said Mr. Railton.

"Weally, sir—"

"You are in a most disgusting state!"

"Gwoogh! I feel wathah disgustin'!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "That mud smells howwid—we ally howwid! Those beastly ditches ought to be kept cleanah! Gwoogh!"

"You have been following me, D'Arcy!"

"Gwoogh!"

"I think I know your reason, D'Arcy, or I should punish you severely for dogging my footsteps in this impertinent manner. As it is, you will take fifty lines."

"Gwoogh!"

"Now you will go back to school at once, and if you leave gates again this evening, I shall cane you! Go!"

"Gwoogh!"

Arthur Augustus picked himself up, squelching out mud and water, and accidentally limped away across the field, leaving a wet trail behind him. Mr. Railton watched him out of sight, and then, with a smile, turned and walked on towards Glyn House. But Arthur Augustus did not think of going on the trail again. He was only thinking of getting a bath and a change of clothes. He simply tore away towards the school.

"My only hat!" yelled Blake, as Arthur Augustus came in at the gates.

"Here's Gussy! Look at him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's happened, Gussy?"

"Been mud collecting?"

"Gwoogh! I have been shadowin' Waiton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses! There is nothin' to cackle at. I have lost my toppah. I am howbidly wet and muddy, and my clothes are wuined!"

Arthur Augustus snorted and tramped on wearily towards the School House.

For the next hour or so he was busy in a bath-room. Meanwhile, the garde du corps were holding a council of war—without the valuable assistance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 10.

In Peril of His Life!

DARK clouds veiled the moon and the lane was very shadowy as Mr. Railton came out of Glyn House and set out for St. Jim's.

It was nearly eleven o'clock.

The Housemaster strode along in the shadows, apparently quite without any nervous apprehension as to what those shadows might hide.

But he kept his eyes well about him. Cool and courageous as he was, he was not reckless, and he knew that the escape of his old enemy from prison meant danger to him.

The man Mansro nourished an almost insane hatred for the man whose evidence against him had been the chief cause of his sentence. Mr. Railton had no regrets on that subject. The man



"Got him!" panted Tom Merry. "Show a light, Man fell upon their prisoner. There was a sk

had been guilty of crime, and had more than deserved his sentence. And the Housemaster had no fears for himself; but he was on his guard.

He turned into Rylcombe Lane and strode on towards St. Jim's.

A slight sound in the hedge caught his ears, and he looked round, but no one appeared in sight, and he strode on.

Again there was a sound in the hedge—a rustle as of a moving body—and Mr. Railton even thought that he caught a quick-drawn breath.

He stopped in the middle of the lane, his grasp closing more tightly upon his stick. He was not nervous, but he did not wish to give an enemy—if an enemy were there—a chance of attacking him from behind in the gloom.

But deep silence followed.

"Pooh! I am getting nervous!" the Housemaster murmured. And he strode on towards the school with an impatient gesture, without turning his head.

He reached the walls of St. Jim's. The school gates were locked, but Mr. Railton had a key to the private gate. He paused there, slipping his stick under his arm, and he felt in his pocket for the key.

As he did so, a dark shadow detached itself from the wall, where the shadows of the trees inside fell thickly.

Mr. Railton stepped back.

A powerful form loomed up before him in the dark. A glimmer of light came through a rift in the clouds; the moon was emerging.

The light fell upon a hard white face and two shining eyes. Mr. Railton's stick slid into his hand again, and his fingers closed on it. For he knew the powerfully built ruffian who, clad in rough and soil-stained clothes, with thick, muddy boots, and a rag of a cap, stood before him. It was the man who had escaped from Portmoor Prison!

They had met at last!



"Manners switched on the electric lamp, and the beam
 shone upon the captives: 'D'Arcy!'"

"Munro!" said Mr. Railton quietly.

"You!"

"So you have come here?"

Munro showed his teeth in a savage grin.

"I've come here to see you, my friend. I did not expect to have the luck to meet you like this—outside the walls and alone."

"Perhaps it is not so lucky as you imagine," said Mr. Railton. "The police will now have exact information where to look for you, my man."

"They will get no information from you!" said Munro, between his teeth, and with a wild light gleaming in his eyes. "You will give them none, my friend. I have come here to settle with you the old, long account. I owe you years in prison!"

"You owe that to your crime," said the Housemaster coldly. "You were guilty of a brutal robbery, and I helped to bring you to justice. I would do the same again. And now that you have shown yourself, I shall see that you do not escape. I call upon you to give yourself up, otherwise I shall seize you!"

The man laughed.

"I mean what I say!" said the Housemaster, advancing upon him. "Resist, and I shall use force."

Munro did not reply, but he made a sudden spring.

The Housemaster's stick swept through the air and descended upon the convict's head with a crash, and Munro reeled back with a cry.

Mr. Railton dropped the stick and sprang upon him, and bore him backwards to the ground.

The convict crashed down heavily, and the strong knee of the Housemaster was set upon his chest.

He struggled fiercely, but the heavy knee pinned him down, and his head

was whirling from the blow he had received.

"You had better give in," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I do not desire to hurt you any further; but I am determined to make you a prisoner."

Munro made a further effort.

His powerful form heaved up beneath the Housemaster, and Mr. Railton reeled a little. The convict's grasp was on him now like iron.

Mr. Railton set his teeth and struggled hard.

He had not calculated upon the enormous strength of the man, and he realised now that he had abandoned his weapon too soon.

Munro seemed to have the strength of two men.

With gritting teeth and panting breath they struggled, and suddenly Mr. Railton went sideways, and the ruffian rolled upon him. Munro had the upper hand now.

His knee was planted on the Housemaster, and his fierce eyes were gleaming down upon him.

"My turn!" he snarled.

"Help!"

Munro laughed savagely. "Who is there to hear you here?"

The Housemaster's heart sank. Who was there, indeed, to hear him on that lonely road? Taggles, perhaps, in his lodge. But even if he heard and unlocked the gates and came out, he would be too late. And a single blow from this powerful ruffian would have felled the old porter.

There was no help, and Mr. Railton felt his strength giving way as he struggled with the herculean ruffian.

"Help!" he panted again.

"My turn now, Railton—my turn!" The ruffian broke off suddenly.

There was a sound of running footsteps on the road.

The moon was veiled with clouds again, and the gloom was thick in the road. Like two dim shadows the men struggled on the ground, and the runner who was approaching could not be seen.

Munro glared savagely round.

Crash!

A cricket stump swept through the air, and almost broke from the force with which it crashed against the head of the convict.

Munro uttered a yell of agony, and reeled to one side.

Crash!

Down came the stump again, this time across the man's shoulder. He was half stunned, but his wits did not forsake him. He made a desperate leap towards the roadside, and vanished among the trees.

He was gone in a twinkling, his heavy footsteps dying away in the underwoods. Mr. Railton panted and sat up.

A dim shadow flitted before his eyes for a moment. It would be his rescuer. But at once, and without a word, his rescuer was gone!

The shadow vanished.

Mr. Railton staggered to his feet, breathing hard. He had had a fearfully narrow escape. He realised that the convict had meant murder. But who had saved him? Who had dashed

up so opportunely from the darkness and struck that timely blow?

"Who are you," called out the Housemaster—"you who helped me? Come here!"

There was no answer from the darkness. The Housemaster was utterly amazed.

Someone had helped him—probably saved his life—and that someone refused to show himself—refused to appear and receive his thanks. It was amazing.

"Where are you?"

Only the echo of his voice answered. Twice again he called, and the echo came dully back from the woods. But that was all.

"Extraordinary!" muttered the Housemaster. "Who could it be? Perhaps—"

He started.

He remembered the juniors who knew of his danger. He remembered how Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had followed him that evening, evidently with the intention—Mr. Railton smiled at the thought—of watching over his safety.

Was it one of the juniors—D'Arcy, perhaps—who had come up in the nick of time and struck that doughty blow?

That would explain his keeping out of sight—fear of punishment for being out of bounds at that hour of the night.

Mr. Railton frowned at the thought now. He had been rescued, but the idea of the juniors venturing to break bounds at night for the purpose of looking after him was not agreeable.

He unlocked the gate and entered, locking the gate carefully behind him. He hurried to the School House, and a few minutes later he was looking into the Fourth Form dormitory. He turned on the electric light. Every bed was occupied. The face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in repose, was lying on his pillow. Mr. Railton turned off the light again, and closed the door softly. Certainly it was not Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who had been outside the walls of St. Jim's that night.

He made his way quietly to the Shell dormitory. He opened the door and switched on the light, and glanced along the row of beds. In every one of them he could detect the outline of a sleeper.

None of the juniors opened an eye, and Mr. Railton, glad that he had not awakened them, extinguished the light and retired.

But he was greatly puzzled.

Satisfied now that it was not a St. Jim's junior who had helped him, he was utterly mystified. He went to his study at once, and rang up the police station at Weyland, to give information of Munro's visit to the school.

CHAPTER 11.

The Rescuers!

TOM MERRY chuckled softly. The captain of the Shell stepped out of the dark mass of bushes where he had taken cover by the roadside.

He had heard the click of the gate as Mr. Railton closed it behind him, and he knew that the coast was clear. Standing in the lane, Tom Merry whistled softly.

There was patter of running feet, and Monty Lowther came along in the darkness. A couple of minutes later Talbot and Manners joined him breathlessly.

"Come in?" asked Manners.

"Yes."

"Anything happened?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I thought I heard something," said Lowther, "but I wasn't sure, and we agreed that a whistle was to be the signal."

"It was all right," said Tom. "I'd have whistled if I'd needed you. He's got away."

"Who's got away—Railton?"

"No, ass! Munro!"

"Munro!" exclaimed the three Shell fellows together.

"He's been here?"

"Yes; and he had old Railton down when I clumped him on the head with this stump!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Then he cleared."

"My hat!"

"Jolly lucky we came out, after all!" remarked Talbot.

"Tom Merry nodded.

"I should say so! Railton got him down first, but you know what a strong back he is. He'll turn the tables on Railton, and I really believe he would have throttled him if I hadn't chipped in with this stump."

"Good egg! Railton saw you?"

"No jolly fear!" chuckled Tom Merry. "He called out to me, but I kept out of sight. It's all serene."

"Oh, good!"

The bodyguard had laid their plans very carefully for that night. They had been determined that Mr. Railton should be seen safe to the school after he left Glyn House. And at intervals along the lane the four juniors had been concealed in the hedge, waiting for him to pass.

Tom Merry had been posted near the school; and it was Tom Merry who had looked at the Housemaster's painting-cry for help and had rushed to the rescue.

It had been possible to secure Munro. Tom would have been willing to show himself; but as the ruffian had escaped Tom had promptly taken cover.

True, after the aid he had rendered, Mr. Railton could hardly have been angry with him for having broken bounds. But it was quite certain that the Housemaster would take care that he never did anything of the kind again.

And that would not have suited the plans of the garde du corps. They intended to keep watch and ward over their Housemaster until the convict was recaptured.

"Railton must have been awfully puzzled," Talbot remarked, with a grin.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"I fancy he was. But I was jolly careful not to let him see me. There wasn't a chance of capturing that villain, you see. And if he'd seen me—"

"Might have marched you into the Head!"

"Well, I don't know; but at least he'd have made me promise never to get out again at night to look after him," said Tom. "He wouldn't look at the matter as we do."

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

"Better to leave him in the dark. Now we're free to look after him as long as we like, so long as he doesn't bowl us out."

Monty Lowther was looking very thoughtful.

"He might suspect. Suppose he looks in the dorm?"

"Well, the dummies are rigged up in the beds, and he's not likely to examine them," said Tom, laughing. "The bizney now is to get back into the school without old Railton hearing us. It won't do to give it away now."

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"That blessed mastiff's loose by now," said Manners.

"I've been paying Caesar a lot of attention to-day," grinned Tom. "Feeding him, and petting the beast. Caesar won't hurt us!"

"Well, we've got to chance it."

The four Shell fellows climbed over the school wall, and dropped into the quad. As they crossed cautiously towards the School House there was a patter of feet, and the mastiff came trotting up, growling.

"Caesar!" whispered Tom Merry. "Good doggy! You know me, Caesar, old chap?"

Caesar had not forgotten the blandishments Tom Merry had expended on him that day. He rubbed his head against Tom's leg in quite an affectionate manner.

Tom Merry patted him, and the Shell fellows went on.

A light was gleaming in the window of Mr. Railton's study.

"Not gone to bed yet," murmured Tom Merry. "Careful, you chaps!"

Five minutes later they had clambered into the box-room window, and closed and fastened it behind them.

From the box-room they trod cautiously on their way to the Shell dormitory. The four juniors breathed more freely when they were safe inside the dormitory, with the door closed behind them. They undressed quickly in the darkness.

"That you fellows?" came Kangaroo's voice.

"Yes."

"Railton's been here?"

"He turned the light on."

"He turned the light on," chuckled Bernard Glyn. "But he was satisfied with looking round the dorm. Lucky he didn't examine your beds."

"Jolly lucky!"

"Anything happened?" asked Dane. Tom Merry quickly explained. Only Kangaroo, Glyn, and Clifton Dane were awake in the dormitory; they had remained awake for the return of their chums.

"My hat!" said Glyn. "It's lucky you were there, Tommy. All the same, Railton would be ratty if he knew that you'd been out. He would call it running into danger, and he would be more anxious about you than you are about him."

"He's jolly well not going to know!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"But you were in danger, as a matter of fact," said Dane. "That villain might have turned on you, and—"

"Well, the other chaps would have chipped in, and we'd have caught him," said Tom. "And Railton would have been on to him again if he'd stopped another minute. I wish he had. As it is, we've got to keep it dark, or Railton will take jolly good care that we don't get out again to look after him. And we're going to what?"

"Yes, rather!"

And the members of the bodyguard, feeling that they had done very well indeed, turned in, and were soon fast asleep. They did not awaken till the rising-bell clanged out in the morning.

When Tom Merry & Co. came down in the morning they found Study No. 6 down already, and waiting anxiously for news.

"Railton came into our dorm last night," said Blake. "I was awake, though you can bet I didn't make a sound. Has he spotted you? What happened?"

The story had to be told again.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy. "It was vewy fortunate you were upon the spot, Tom Mewwy; but this proves what I have remarked to you before, that it would have been much wiser to leave the mattah in my hands. It was weally vewy much against my bettah judgment that I consented to remain in and let you fellows go out. Vewy much indeed. You see how it has turned out!"

"Why, you silly ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "I think that we've done vewy well!"

"Yass; but if I had been there, deah boy, the wascal would have been captahed, you see, and the twouble woud all have been at an end," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, rats!"

"I had the whole plan cut and dwied. All that was necessary was for me to meet the wottah; and I should have met him if I had been there," said Arthur Augustus regretfully. "I weally feel inclined to kick myself for weally you go without me! If I had only been on the spot—"

"Well, what would you have done?" demanded Tom Merry, breathing hard through his nose.

"Oh, I had it all cut and dwied! I should have dealt him a tewwific uppahcut, and then—"

"You silly fathead—"

"I wewus to be called a silly fathead. Do not blame you for not catching the wottah. Tom Mewwy was a job wath-inn your weight. But I certainly ought to have been there. Weally, I could kick myself!"

"Oh, if that's all that's necessary, it's all right!" said Monty Lowther. "We'll kick you!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—yawwooh! —you howwid beasts—yow-ow!"

And Arthur Augustus fled incontinently as the whole exasperated bodyguard started operations with their boots upon his aristocratic person. And the members of the garde du corps who had so distinguished themselves overnight were relieved from any further criticisms from the swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 12.

A Suspicious Character!

MR. RAILTON looked none the worse in the morning for his perilous adventure of the previous night. Perhaps he was feeling a little irritated, but that was all.

Now that the ruffian had appeared near the school, and had actually attacked the Housemaster, the matter could not very well be kept a secret much longer.

It had been necessary to inform the police of the occurrence, of course; and it was certain to creep into the papers, and probably into the local Rylcombe paper.

In a day or two, at the most, all St. Jim's would be buzzing with the news that Mr. Railton's old enemy, the convict Munro, had escaped from prison, and was lurking about the school. The Housemaster would be the cynosure of all eyes, the object of attention from everybody at St. Jim's—the most annoying position for him. He hoped fervently to hear of the capture of the escaped rascal during the day.

But Munro seemed to have good luck. He was being searched for now along the countryside round the school; and Inspector Skeat had promised to ring up St. Jim's as soon as he was run

down. But the day wore on without that welcome telephone message arriving.

Somewhere in the wide, deep woods the convict was lurking, hidden—waiting, in all probability, for another opportunity of coming to close quarters with the man he hated with so insane a hatred.

Mr. Railton was very much puzzled, too, by the strange incident of his rescue. In all probability, he owed his life to the unseen rescuer who had dashed up in the darkness and struck down the savage ruffian. And he could imagine no reason why the rescuer should have vanished without a word or a sign.

He gave Tom Merry & Co. some sharp looks that morning, with a lingering suspicion that he might have owed his rescue to some of the juniors. But the bodyguard looked as innocent and unconscious as little lambs; and Mr. Railton, of course, had not the faintest knowledge of the existence of the garde du corps.

So he had to give it up as a puzzle. But the news of Munro's attack, as he feared, was not long in getting out.

On Friday, Figgins of the New House rushed up to Tom Merry excitedly in the quadrangle, flourishing a copy of the "Rylcombe Times."

"See that?" demanded Figgins.

Tom Merry glanced at it carelessly. "Never read the local rag, old man," he said, with a yawn. "What is it—report of one of our matches?"

"No, fathead! That fellow Munro is out of prison—"

"Go on!"

"And he's come back here—"

"Really?"

"And gone for your Housemaster!"

exclaimed Figgins, brimming with excitement. "What do you think of that?"

"My dear chap, I've done thinking about that—it's ancient history," said Tom Merry loftily. "The New House is behind the times, my son!"

Figgins stared.

"You—you knew?" he ejaculated.

"Knew it for dog's ages," yawned Tom Merry. "We don't want local papers to give us our news. We get on to things on the spot—in the School House! Your blessed old House is miles behind the times."

And Tom Merry strolled away, leaving Figgins simply glaring.

"What do you think that cheeky young rotter says?" exclaimed Figgins, joining Kerr and Wynn, his two devoted chums. "Says he knew it all the time! Gammon!"

"I don't know," said Kerr thoughtfully. "The paper says Mr. Railton was attacked, and assisted by someone who did not make himself known. I thought that was very queer."

"Phew! You don't think it was—"

"One of those School House bounders," said Fatty Wynn, with a nod. "I shouldn't wonder. If they knew of this before they may have been on the watch or something."

"But we didn't know—"

"We didn't happen to see it in some paper or other," said Kerr. "They may have Munro has been out of prison a week or more now, and it must have been in the papers. Of course, they found it out by chance, if they found it out at all. It didn't require any brains, or they couldn't have done it."

"By gum!" said Figgins. "If it was one of those duffers— Look here,

chaps, this is up to us, Railton isn't our Housemaster, but he's a good sort, and I vote that we take a hand in the game. What price scouting after that villain and collaring him?"

Kerr grinned.

"Not an easy job," he remarked. "There must be a good many police on his track by this time, and they haven't found him."

"They haven't had any training as Boy Scouts," replied Figgins. "We have."

"Ahem!"

"It would be a jolly big score over the School House bounders if we captured the rotter," said Figgins eagerly.

"I don't see much chance of it, but—"

"Let's try it, anyway. We can keep our eyes open for suspicious characters hanging round the school. If we could drop on the villain and seize him we'd soon put a stop to those School House cads crowding."

And the Co. agreed that they would. Meanwhile, other fellows were talking over the news. The members of the bodyguard grinned as they heard it discussed up and down the House as something new.

Mr. Railton, as he had expected, came in for much curious attention. The fellows wanted to know how he took it. So far as could be seen, Mr. Railton took it quite calmly. His manner was perfectly ordinary, and he never made the slightest or most distant reference to the subject.

Many of the fellows were greatly disappointed. A man in such circumstances might have been expected to show signs of perturbation, at least. If it had been Mr. Ratcliff, for instance,

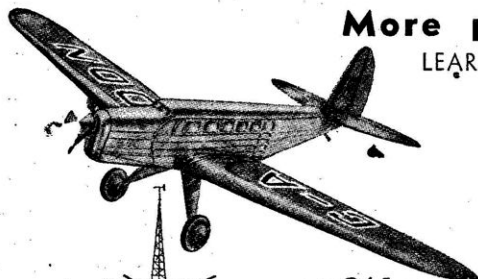
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he would have had a guard of policemen to look after him. If it had been Selby he would have been on tenter-hooks. And here was Mr. Railton acting just as if nothing was happening, and not even a single solitary hobby to be seen anywhere near St. Jim's.

"There ought to be some sort of watch on the place, you know," Tom Merry remarked to his chums. "The police don't know anything about us." "They wouldn't be likely to guess that we've formed a gardy kav," agreed Digby.

"They wouldn't be likely to guess that we called it a gardy kav, anyway," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "I say, the bobbies don't know that we're looking after Railton; and that villain may go for him any minute, so really it is up to them to keep a bit of a watch over the school. That man Munro is dotty; not dotty enough for an asylum, but I'm sure he's not quite level in the upper crust. Well, then, he might think nothing of rushing into the place at any risk, and there ought to be a peeler somewhere about."

"I dare say Railton has told them not to bother," said Blake. "This fuss gets on his nerves; it's easy to see that." "Yaas, it is wathah negliffic of the police, wethahh Waiton wants a man on the watch or not," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Fortunately we are here." "Very fortunate you're here, Gussy!" said Blake sarcastically. "If anybody's required to track down a watchdog, you can do it, of course."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or to burgle a Form-room—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"The man might get himself up in a different rig, too," said Tom Merry. "He might come here disguised, and nobody would know him till he'd done his damage."

"I think I should know him in any wig," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I have a wathah keen eye for faces, and in any wig—"

"He wouldn't have a wig or his face," said Lowther.

"You uttah ass! When I say 'wig,' I mean wig, not wig!"

"Go hon! Gussy gets more lucid as he gets older. Perhaps you mean a rig, though," said Lowther, as if it had just occurred to him.

"I said 'wig,' and I mean wig, not wig, you duffah! And wathahvahl kind of wig-out the wottah had, I am sure I should spot him," said Arthur Augustus. "I am keepin' my eyes open, I assuah you. It's a great pity I wasn't on the scene that time—"

There was a threatening motion of several boots, and Arthur Augustus sniffed and walked away.

Arthur Augustus had long suspected that the convict would attempt to penetrate into St. Jim's in some disguise. Exactly where a hunted fugitive was to obtain a disguise from was not clear, but the man was cunning enough for anything. And the swell of St. Jim's spent most of his time keeping his noble eyes wide open for suspicious characters lurking about the school.

More than once in the last day or two tramps who had stopped to rest under the trees in the lane had been startled to find themselves fixed by a glittering eyeglass. The swell of St. Jim's had wandered round them, inspecting them suspiciously, and they had lost no time in clearing off under the impression that the elegantly dressed junior was not quite right in his head.

After school on Friday, Arthur Augustus sauntered down to the gates to have another "look woad," as he described it. In the sunny road outside there was nothing of a suspicious nature to be seen, but Arthur Augustus had studied modern detective literature, and so he knew that when there was nothing of a suspicious nature to be seen, that was in itself a very suspicious circumstance.

A haycart rumbled by, and Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass keenly upon the sleepy driver, not at all satisfied that he wasn't the escaped convict in disguise. The haycart rumbled away, and D'Arcy shook his head in a far from satisfied way.

There was a chuckle from the gateway, and D'Arcy glanced round and observed Figgins & Co. adorning the old gateposts with their persons. They smiled at him cheerfully.

"Keeping watch—eh?" said Figgins. "I am afraid I cannot wepny to your question, Figgins. We are keepin' the existence of the garde du corps a secret."

Figgins & Co. chuckled gleefully as Arthur Augustus walked away down the lane.

"So they've started a garde du corps!" grinned Figgins. "Well, their old garde du corps will have to go out of business when we've captured Munro."

"When," murmured Kerr. "Hallo! What is Gussy stopping for?" asked Fatty Wynn, who was following the elegant junior with his eyes.

Arthur Augustus had halted in the road, and was surveying a roughly dressed man with a beard, who was seated in the hedge, apparently resting.

"He's spotted a tramp!" grinned Figgins.

"Is he, ha!"

Figgins & Co. strolled down the road after Arthur Augustus. The swell of the School House was regarding the roughly dressed man intently.

"Good-afternoon!" he said finally.

"Arternoon, sir!"

"Are you a tramp?"

"I'm lookin' for work, sir," said the man civilly.

"You won't find any work undah that hedge," said Arthur Augustus. "I recommend you to go and look for work somewhere else. I regard you as a suspicious chawactah."

The man started at him, and rose and walked down the lane.

Arthur Augustus shook his head seriously and went on his way, sauntering through the meadows, with a keen eye open for shady characters.

Figgins & Co. chuckled. They did not think it likely that the escaped ruffian, if he came, would have much to fear from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's watchfulness. They strolled up and down the lane, chatting over the somewhat difficult task they had set themselves, without any clear idea of how they were to begin upon it. Suddenly Figgins uttered an exclamation.

"There's that chap again!"

"By Jove!" said Kerr.

The rough-looking bearded man had gone away towards Ryelcombe. But he had evidently doubled back across the fields, for he was now in the lane again, some hundred yards from the spot where Arthur Augustus had seen him. He was leaning against a tree and smoking a pipe, within easy view of the school gates.

Figgins & Co. exchanged quick glances.

It was odd, to say the least of it, that

the man, who certainly could have no business near the school gates, should persist in hanging about there. Why had he pretended to go away and returned after Arthur Augustus had departed?

Evidently it was because he did not want to attract attention to the fact that he was hanging about the school.

The New House juniors scanned him keenly. He was a big man; and they remembered that Munro was a big man. His features were hardly to be distinguished under the beard, the heavy eyebrows, and the pulled-down cap.

"My hat!" murmured Figgins. "Looks to me as if he's watching the school—what?"

"Watching for old Railton to come out," said Fatty Wynn, with suppressed excitement. "Is it possible—"

"I say, don't let's make asses of ourselves," muttered Kerr. "We don't want to jump on a common or garden tramp in mistake for Munro, you know. We should be laughed to death if we made a bloomer like that."

"Let's speak to him," said Figgins. "The New House juniors strolled along and came up to the man leaning on the tree. They paused.

"Warm afternoon, isn't it?" said Figgins diplomatically.

"Yes, sir."

"Taking a rest—what?"

"Yes, sir. 'Bout time I was gettin' on, though."

And the man touched his cap, evidently uneasy, and slouched away up the road.

The juniors watched him out of sight. "Now, then," said Figgins, "we're jolly well going to see whether he comes back again. If he returns when we're gone, we'll know he's our man. It will prove that he's watching the school gates, won't it?"

"Yes, rather, but how shall we know if we're gone?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ass!" said Figgins politely. "We can keep watch over the wall."

"Good!"

The three juniors strolled in at the gates again, and Figgins, looking round quickly over his shoulder as he went in, was almost certain he saw a ragged cap appear for a moment among the trees by the roadside. His heart beat with excitement. He was almost sure now, and he was going to make quite sure.

The juniors went into the quad and along the inner side of the school wall. There Figgins was "bunked" up by his loyal chums to look over the wall into the road, almost hidden from sight by the overhanging trees.

"My hat!" muttered Figgins suddenly.

"See him?" asked Kerr breathlessly.

"Yes; he's come back, and he's watching the gate."

"By George!"

"That settles it!" said Wynn.

Figgins' eyes glittered. In the road, as soon as the coast was clear, appeared the rough-looking man with the beard and the pulled-down cap. He had only waited for the juniors to go in, and then he had come back and taken up his old position, leaning against a tree by the roadside, with his eyes turned in the direction of the school gates.

Figgins slipped down from the shoulders of his chums.

"Come on!" he muttered. "It's a dead cert now. And I'm almost certain his beard is false. If it is—"

"My hat, this will be a score over the School House!" muttered Kerr. "But—"

But he careful Figgins, old man! Kerr was a canny Scot, and knew as he was to score over the School House, he

was very anxious not to make a faux pas. "I'll be careful," said Figgins. "Come on!"

And with hearts beating with excitement, the three juniors hurried out of the gates.

CHAPTER 13.

Figgins' Capture!

TOM MERRY gave a soft whistle. "What the dickens are those New House duffers up to?" he murmured.

Figgins & Co. had been too intent on "stalking" the suspicious character to observe that there were any eyes upon themselves. But there were. The Terrible Three had observed them from the quadrangle, and they were astonished to see Figgins & Co.'s performances inside the school wall. When the three Fourth Formers hurried out of the gates again Tom Merry and his comrades exchanged glances of astonishment.

"Must be playing some game," said Monty Lowther. "Let's see."

The Terrible Three hurried in their turn to the gateway and looked out.

Figgins & Co. had halted directly opposite to the rough-looking stranger who was leaning against the tree by the roadside. The man started as they came up, and looked decidedly uneasy.

"Back again—eh?" said Figgins. "Yes, sir."

"What are you doing here?" asked Figgins, edging closer to the man. He intended to make a sudden snatch at the beard. If it was genuine, Figgie felt that the man's suspicious conduct would justify his action. If it was false, of course, that settled the matter beyond the shadow of a doubt.

"Jest takin' a rest, sir—oh!" Figgins had made his snatch. His grasp closed on the beard, and he jerked at it, and the beard and moustache came off in his hand.

The man, showing a bare and clean-shaven chin, jumped back with a cry, and Figgins, almost overcome by that astounding confirmation of his theory, stood for a moment dazed, with the false beard and moustache in his hand.

But Kerr did not lose his presence of mind. Even the canny Scot was convinced now. A man who was watching the school, disguised by a false beard—whom could he be if not the bitter enemy who had threatened the School House master?

"Collar him!" yelled Kerr. And he leaped at the surprised man, hooked his leg round him, and brought him to the ground with a bump. Big as he was, the man was so taken by surprise that he was down before he knew what was happening.

"Back up!" gasped Kerr. "What—oh!"

Figgins and Fatty Wynn sprang to Kerr's assistance. The unmasked man was struggling violently, and he would have forced off the Scottish junior in a few seconds, but the three together made it quite a different matter. They pinned him down among them.

"Got him!" panted Figgins. "Hold him tight! Help—help!"

The Terrible Three rushed up. They had seen the beard come off the stranger's chin in Figgie's grasp, their eyes almost starting from their heads in astonishment. They were upon the scene in three seconds. The man was struggling furiously and yelling, and in the struggle his cap came off, too, and some of his hair.

"Let me go!" he yelled. "How dare you touch me! Let me get up!"

"Sit on his head, Fatty!"

"How dare you—groogh!"

Fatty Wynn promptly sat on the prisoner's head. The man fairly collapsed under the weight of the fat Fourth Former. Only faint and muffled moans came from him now.

"Got him!" trilled Figgins. "But—but who is it?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Munro, of course."

"Munro!" yelled the Terrible Three. "Yes. Lay hold! He's an awfully strong beast. We spotted him," said Figgins breathlessly. "He's been watching the school for a long time. I spotted the false beard, too! Got him!"

"Well, it does look as if you've got him," said Tom Merry. "He's about Munro's size. It was like the cheek of you New House rotters to chip in, though."

"Yes, rather! He was really our man!" growled Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the Co.

The Terrible Three looked very grim. It was rather rough on them, after they had formed a bodyguard and taken the matter in hand for two or three days, to have their prize snatched from them like this. Figgins & Co. had chipped in only that day, and they had effected a capture at once.

Like Cæsar of old, they came, they saw, and they conquered.

"Well, you seem to have done it,"



Figgins snatched at the suspicious stranger's beard and moustache and they came away in his hand. The man jumped back with a cry. The New House juniors felt sure now that he was Mr. Raitton's enemy! "Collar him!" yelled Kerr.

"My hat!" "Groooogh!" came from the squashed prisoner.

"We've got him!" chuckled Kerr. "You fellows take hold of him, too; he mustn't get away. But mind, he's our capture."

"Rather!" said Figgins. "Don't you School House bouncers pretend you had a hand in it, for you haven't! He's ours!"

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Fatty Wynn. "Figgie said as soon as we heard about it that it was up to the New House to rope him in, and we've done it. This is where the New House scores—what?"

"But—but are you sure it's Munro?" gasped Manners.

Figgins snorted.

"Who else could it be? I tell you he was watching the school, hanging about the gates and watching, and he was wearing a false beard. Do you want any more proof than that?"

said Tom Merry. "Like your cheek, I must say."

"Oh, rats! Lend us a hand to get him in," said Figgins. "I—Hollo!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Fatty Wynn.

He made a sudden leap into the air, as if the prisoner's head had turned red-hot all at once.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Yow! Ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Yow! Ow! I'm bitten! Groooooogh!"

"Hold him!" shrieked Figgins, as the prisoner, relieved of Fatty Wynn's weight, began to struggle again.

"Release me!" yelled the prisoner. "Help! Police!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Figgins. "What awful cheek! Fancy an escaped convict calling for the police! Hold him! Pile on him!"

"Help! Release me! I am a policeman! Ow!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Hold on, Figgy!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he peered at the fallen man's flushed and discoloured face. "Oh crumbs! You've made a bloomer this time! That isn't Munro!"

"Rot!"

"It isn't, I tell you! I know the man's face. This isn't him. Munro's got a big nose, and this chap has a little snub!"

"My hat, that's so!" gasped Lowther. "His face is so jolly dirty I didn't notice it; but I know his nose now—I mean, I don't know his nose. If that's Munro, Figgy, he's wearing a false nose as well as a false beard!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

Figgins and Kerr released the prisoner in astonishment and dismay. They had a very dim recollection of the man's features—Munro's—but they remembered that he had a large nose. And their prisoner's nose was a small one of the snub variety. And Lowther's humorous suggestion that it was a false nose was, of course, impossible. The man was not Munro!

"You've made a mistake, Figgy!" chortled Manners. "But, as you said, he's your prisoner. We won't pretend we had a hand in the capture. We won't claim any of the credit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't care!" gasped Figgins. "If he isn't Munro—and I suppose he isn't—he's a suspicious character—very likely a confederate. He was watching the school—and he was wearing a false beard. You've seen that, yourselves!"

The breathless and furious man sat up.

"You silly young idiots!" he rasped out. "I'll take you into custody for this! I'm a plain-clothes constable, you stupid idiots!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lowther. "You've put your foot in it this time, Figgy!"

"I—I don't believe it!" stammered Figgins. "You were watching the school, you scoundrel!"

"Of course I was watching the school, when I've been stationed here by my inspector to watch the school!" hooted the unfortunate man, staggering to his feet. "I'll go and complain to your Housemaster of this outrage!"

"I—I say, hold on! We—we—"

"It was all through that false beard," said Kerr, in dismay. "I—I say, we're sorry, you know—really sorry!"

"I shall complain—"

"It was a mistake, officer," said Tom Merry, trying to pour oil on troubled waters. "And it won't do you any good if your inspector knows that your disguise was spotted by a schoolboy, will it?"

"I'm not going to be handled—"

"Do you mean to say you were here watching the school for Munro?" asked Figgins, in blank dismay.

The man calmed down a little now. He had cause to be angry, but he seemed to be naturally a good-tempered fellow, and he understood that the zealous juniors had made a little mistake.

Probably, too, he realised that if the matter was reported, Inspector Skeat would certainly not consider that he had done his work well.

"Of course I was here watching for Munro!" he snapped. "I've been detailed for the job, as the man is expected to come back here. And he wouldn't be likely to show himself if he saw a policeman walking up and down, would he?"

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The juniors understood now. The plain-clothes man had adopted the disguise of a tramp, which was undoubtedly the best he could have adopted for the task he had to perform.

Figgins had spotted him with remarkable keenness, but it had never occurred to the keen Figgins that he might be a detective on the watch.

"Well, it was a mistake," said Tom Merry. "We—ahem!—we're looking for that villain Munro, too! Sorry!"

"Awfully sorry!" said Figgins. "Here's your beard!"

"Oh, clear off!" grunted the plain-clothes man. "Don't you say a word about this, and I won't! Only clear off, do!"

And the watcher retired among the trees to renovate his disguise, and Figgins & Co., feeling a strong desire to see the earth open and swallow them out of sight, fairly slunk in at the school gates.

The Terrible Three followed them in, grinning.

"Your capture, Figgy!" murmured Tom Merry. "It was up to the New House to make a capture, and you've done it."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Figgins. "Don't be discouraged," said Lowther consolingly. "You've only captured a common or garden bobby this time, but next time you must catch the inspector himself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins glared at the chuckling trio, and walked away to hide his blushes within the walls of the New House. In Figgins' study the three chagrined juniors looked at one another with long faces.

"Well, it was a mucker!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

Figgins snorted.

"What about looking for the convict after this?" murmured Kerr.

Figgins snorted more emphatically than before.

"Oh, rot! It was a rotten idea!" he growled. "For goodness' sake don't suggest any more rot like that, Kerr, there's a good chap!"

Kerr stared, as well he might.

"I didn't suggest it!" he yelled. "You suggested it!"

"Oh, don't argue!" said Figgins crossly.

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"But you—you—"

"For goodness' sake, Kerr, don't jaw!"

And Kerr, like a loyal chum, took compassion upon the discomfited Figgins, and forbore to "jaw."

CHAPTER 14.

To Save His Enemy!

"HIS going out!"

"And so are we!"

"Yaas, wataiah!"

It was Saturday afternoon. In ordinary circumstances, the chums of the School House would have been busy on the football field that afternoon.

But the circumstances were not ordinary. The circumstances, in fact, were far from ordinary.

For there had been no news of the escaped convict. Munro was still at large. If he had ventured near St. Jim's again, nothing had been seen or heard of him. The school—as the juniors now knew—was being kept under surveillance by the police, in the hope of "nabbing" the rascal if he came in that direction. Perhaps Munro guessed as much, for he had not been seen there.

But he had not been captured. Whether he was still in the neighbourhood was not known.

It was probable enough that, baffled in his attempt upon Mr. Railton, he had fled, seeking safety in distance.

But the garde du corps of the School House did not trust to any such theory. Until the man was safe under lock and key again, they did not intend to relax their vigilance. They had formed themselves into a bodyguard for the special purpose of safeguarding their Housemaster, and they were not going to slacken in their efforts.

Once they had saved him, and it was up to them to save him again, if danger threatened. Whether he liked it or not—and certainly he would not have liked it if he had known—Tom Merry & Co. meant to keep him under their eye, and see that nothing happened to him.

So when, after dinner that afternoon, Mr. Railton took his hat to go out, there was a flutter of excitement in the bodyguard.

"This means cutting the footer this afternoon," Talbot remarked.

"Not at all, dear boy," said D'Arcy. "You fellows go and play footer and leave Waylton to me!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy had better go and play footer. He'll do less damage there than anywhere else!"

"I wufuse!"

"But what are we going to do?" said Blake. "We can't march out after Railton like a giddy army! He would be certain to spot us for one thing!"

"Bethah leave it to me!"

"It's all serene," said Tom Merry. "I heard him tell Mr. Linton he was going to Wayland. He's pretty certain to walk, as there isn't a train for an hour yet, and he's starting now. Now, there are two ways to Wayland—by the footpath and over the hill, or down by the village and over the bridge. We can separate into two parties—one lot to the footpath, the other lot to keep an eye on the road by the bridge. We can easily cut round and get ahead of Railton."

"Good egg!"

The arrangements were soon made, and a few minutes after the athletic figure of the Housemaster swung out of the school gates, the bodyguard was at work.

Kangaroo, Glyn, Dane, and Talbot and the chums of Study No. 6 made for

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the wood, to post themselves at intervals along the footpath, which was the longer route. The Terrible Three made for the bridge over the Rhyll, to keep their eyes open in that direction.

The more numerous party disappeared into the wood. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther hurried along the towing-path, Mr. Railton having gone down by the village way.

The Terrible Three were following a longer route to the bridge than the Housemaster; but they ran most of the way, and by the time they reached the old stone bridge, they knew that they were well ahead of Mr. Railton.

It was an unfrequented spot where the old stone bridge spanned the shiny waters of the Rhyll. The towing-path was on the near side of the river; but on the other side it was a thick wood, through which the road ran from the bridge in the direction of Wayland town.

Tom Merry halted under the trees along the towing-path.

"We'll wait here till old Railton passes," he remarked. "Then we can keep him in sight down the road to Wayland. Easy enough to follow him in cover; we're not silly duffers like those Fourth Form kids!"

"Hear, hear!" said Lowther. And they waited, keeping an eye on the road that led up to the bridge. It was about twenty minutes later that Mr. Railton came into view, striding on towards the bridge.

"There he is!" murmured Tom Merry. Then the juniors ducked out of sight in the thickets. Mr. Railton had stopped on the bridge, and, leaning on the old stone parapet, he was looking up the river. The shining Rhyll, flanked by green woods and meadows, was beautiful to the eye on that sunny afternoon, and the Housemaster had paused to admire the scenery, and the Terrible Three had only just time to dodge out of sight as the Housemaster's glance swept down from the bridge.

"How long is he going to stay there?" murmured Tom Merry. "Jolly nearly spotted us!"

Mr. Railton seemed in no hurry to move. With his elbows on the stone parapet, he gazed along the sunlit river.

It was a stealthy step behind him on the bridge that caused him to turn his head.

A burly man, with a stubby chin and haggard face, was almost upon him.

"Munro, you again!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"The second time—and the last!" muttered the convict.

"My luck is good, after all! You will not escape me this time!"

He was rushing on the Housemaster as he spoke.

Mr. Railton's hands went up in defence, and his right came out like a hammer, catching the ruffian full in the face.

Munro staggered back with a panting cry, reeling on to the low stone parapet of the bridge.

Mr. Railton gave a sudden shout and sprang forward to save his enemy. But he was too late. The convict had fallen backwards over the stone parapet, and the Housemaster's grasp came too late. The man's hard and haggard face went white as he felt himself falling. He clutched wildly at the bridge, and shot downwards from the space towards the shining surface of the Rhyll.

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Railton looked down with a startled face from the parapet.



The convict struck the water and disappeared. Under the bridge the Rhyll ran with a strong, fierce current, and the man was whirled out of sight under the stone arches in a second.

The ruffian had attacked Mr. Railton murderously. But the Housemaster was not thinking of that now. He was thinking only of his enemy's danger. He rushed across the bridge to the other side. He looked down, just in time to see a white and despairing face swept from under the stone arch. Either the man could not swim, or his fall had deprived him of his senses. Without a struggle, he was whirling away to his death in the deep waters of the Pool.

One glimpse of that deathly, despairing face was enough for the Housemaster.

He leaped upon the parapet, put his hands together, and dived. Like an arrow he cleaved the air and the water, and came up, swimming strongly. The fierce and rapid current tore at him like a living thing. A few powerful strokes, and he reached the convict, who had come up after sinking, and was about to sink again. A moment more and the Housemaster's strong grasp was on the drowning man.

Up came the dripping head and the white face—up from death.

Munro's eyes opened wildly, and fixed on the Housemaster's face. He did not struggle; his limbs seemed powerless.

The Housemaster struck out powerfully for the bank, supporting the haggard man above the water.

But the current was fierce and strong, and Mr. Railton, powerful swimmer as he was, was swept from the bank into the broad, shining river.

Three juniors came tearing along the towing-path with white faces.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had seen what had happened, and they were running along the bank to help.

"We must save them before they are carried into the Pool!" panted Tom Merry. "Once in the Pool, it will be almost hopeless!"

"There's no boat in sight!" Tom Merry threw off his jacket. "I'm going in!"

FEN PALS COUPON

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"Look out! He's coming!" gasped Manners.

Mr. Railton was making one more effort to reach the shore. His teeth were set, his eyes glinted like steel. With wonderful strength and courage he forced a passage through the whirling current to the steep bank. His hand gasped at the grass, but the roots tore out in his hand.

A second more, and he was swept into the river again. But Tom Merry was in the water like a flash, and his grasp was on the Housemaster.

Lowther, up to his armpits in the river, was holding on to Tom Merry's hand, while Manners was hanging on to Lowther with one hand and gripping a tree with the other.

Even then it was not easy. But, by combined efforts, Mr. Railton and his burden were dragged to the steep bank and helped ashore. The convict sank into the grass, half senseless. Mr. Railton stood, drenched and panting.

"Merry, Manners, Lowther! My dear boys, thank you for what you have done!" gasped the Housemaster. "It was my good fortune that you happened to be here."

The Terrible Three did not explain how they "happened" to be there. It was the second time the School House master had owed his safety to the garde du corps.

Munro lay gasping in the grass, dazed and helpless.

"Got him now, sir," said Tom Merry.

"That's Munro!"

"Yes."

"Better make sure of him, sir."

"Go to the school at once," said the Housemaster. "You must change your clothes immediately—you are drenched!"

"But, sir, that man—"

"Don't take cases of him. You see, he is exhausted. Probably, he has had no food for days. He seems to be utterly reduced. Go at once, my boys."

The Terrible Three said no more. The convict was evidently in a state of exhaustion, and quite easy to deal with.

The juniors cut off. Munro raised himself on his elbow, gasping for breath.

"You—you have saved my life!" he panted.

Mr. Railton nodded, looking down on the haggard wretch with a compassionate gaze.

"Why did you do it?"

"Because you were in danger."

"You—you know what I meant to do—"

"I know it!"

A look of wonder came over the haggard face.

"And yet you saved me!"

"Yet I saved you!" assented the Housemaster.

There was a short silence. The ruffian's face was working strangely.

The wild light had died out of his eyes.

"I—I am your prisoner, Railton!"

His voice was subdued and broken. "I am in your hands. Send me back to prison. But—before I go, I have something to say. It was you that sent me to a convict prison—"

"I did not!"

"I meant to be avenged for that, and I have tried. I brooded over it in the convict cell till my brain seemed to turn. Perhaps it did turn a little; I don't know. But—but now, after what you have done, I—I have something to say. I have been your bitter enemy—"

"Without just cause," said the Housemaster.

Munro staggered to his feet.

(Continued on page 28.)

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"My hat!" gasped Glyn. "He's quite ferocious! Hold him!"

"I've got him!" grinned Kangaroo. "Now, you blessed idiot, you're going to explain what you've been sitting on the stairs for."

"I refuse to do anything" of the sort. "What's the little game?" demanded the chums of the end study together.

"Wats!"

"There's something on," said Kangaroo. "I can see that. Those bounders outside know what it is, and they're keeping us out of it."

"This champion idiot has started out to watch Railton for some reason. He's going to explain himself. They can't keep secrets from this study. Hallo! Who's there?" The door-handle had been turned from the outside, but as the door was securely locked it did not open.

"Hallo!" called out Tom Merry's voice. "Let us in, Kangy!"

"Busy!" replied Kangaroo.

"Well, let Gussy out, then."

"Not till he's explained what he's been playing the giddy goat for."

"Ahem! It—it's a secret," said Tom Merry. "Sorry we can't let you fellows into it, but it's a secret. Don't say a word, Gussy!"

"I have no intention of sayin' a word, Tom Mewwy; but if you keep on talkin' you will probably let out the secret!"

"Gussy's going to let out the secret," said Kangaroo cheerfully. "We can't have you kids playing the giddy goat like this. Now, Gussy—"

"I refuse to say a word!"

"What were you watching Railton's study for?"

"Find out!"

"That's what we're going to do!" grinned the Cornstalk. "If you won't give up the deadly secret, we're going to put you to torture. Is your electric battery working, Glyn?"

"Yes," chuckled Glyn.

"Then give him a shock."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn was a great dabbler in electricity and electric contrivances. His study was quite a museum of batteries,

wet and dry, of wires and coils, and all kinds of weird and wonderful paraphernalia. Arthur Augustus wriggled apprehensively as Glyn brought two handles, attached to wires, towards him.

"You uttah wottah! Keep off!"

"Are you going to tell us?"

"Certainly not!"

"Hold out his hands," said Glyn. The handles were tied to Arthur Augustus' hands and the current switched on.

"You feahful wottahs—groogh—wooh—wooh! Leave off!"

Arthur Augustus wriggled wildly at the electric contact. The current from the battery filled him full of pins and needles.

"Woo-oooh!"

Glyn shut off the current.

"Now, are you going to talk?"

"Yow—ow! No!"

"Give him another shock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Gussy—"

"I refuse to say a word!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "And I will give all you wotten beests a feahful thwashin'!"

Bang, bang, bang! came at the door. The bodyguard were all outside, in an extremely anxious state of mind.

"Let us in, you bounders!" howled Blake.

"Rats!"

"Don't give it away, Gussy!"

"I am not goin' to give it away, Blake. I refuse to say a word about why we are watchin' Waitlon."

"Oh, you're all in it, are you?" said Kangaroo, with a whistle. "The whole giddy family! We can't allow this sort of thing. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Gussy. It's shocking—more shocking than Glyn's battery!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass! We are doing it for his own good!" gasped D'Arcy. "I twist you do not think I am capable of spyin' on people, like that wottah Mellish. We are takin' care of Mr. Waitlon because he is in dangah, y'ass!"

"Oh, he's in danger, is he?" said Kangaroo. "In that case, you'd better

tell us all about it, and we'll look after him!"

"It is imposs., you ass! That duffah Blake has pwomised Mr. Waitton that nothin' should be said about it."

"About what?"

"Shut up, Gussy!" howled Blake through the keyhole.

"It's all wight, Blake! I'm not goin' to say a word about Munwo!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake. "The silly ass has done it now!"

"Munro!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "What's that about Munro? I remember that name. Wasn't Munro the name of the rotter who went for old Railton some time ago?"

"That's it!" said Glyn. "We're getting at it! But the chap is in prison now; he can't do anything to old Railton. What do you mean, Gussy?"

"I refuse to say another word."

"Give him another shock."

"Gwoooogh!"

"Now, Gussy—what is this about Railton and Munro? Is there any more trouble with that chap? Have you heard anything about him? Has he got away?"

"It's all out now!" came Tom Merry's voice from the passage. "May as well tell him now! Oh, Gussy, you ass!"

"Then he has got away!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove! It is uttably wotten of you, Tom Mewwy, to let out about Munwo escapin' from prwison aftah pwomisin' Mr. Waitlon."

"Munro escaped from prison!" exclaimed Glyn.

"Tom Mewwy, you uttah ass—"

"Let us in, Kangy!" growled Tom Merry. "It was to be kept a secret, but that silly chump has given it away now."

"I have not given it away. Tom Mewwy, you have betwaged the secwet in the most stupid mannah—"

Kangaroo grinned and unlocked the door. Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet, panting.

The bodyguard crowded into the study, looking daggers at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Fashed!"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Chump!"

"You silly asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "I have not uttached a word! You have given it away, and I wogard you—"

"Oh, bump him!" said Blake.

"Bump him hard!"

"I refuse! I—I wogard—I—"

Yawwooh!

Bump, bump, bump!

"Now give him the rest of the ink!"

But Arthur Augustus had had enough of the ink. He tore himself away, and fled from the study.

"So that's the little game, is it?" said Kangaroo. "Munro has escaped from prison, and you fellows were keeping it dark."

"Railton wants it kept dark," growled Blake. "He doesn't want to be jawed about. He made me promise that nothing should be said. Now that awful ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows know now," said Tom Merry. "But don't let it go any further. Railton will think we've broken our word—or Blake's word—if it becomes the talk of the House."

"Right-ho!"

"They'd better join the gardy kaw now they know," said Digby.

"The—the what?"

"The gardy kaw."

"What on earth's that?" asked the

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EMPIRE

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room, and it struck Harry that she brightened the place up very much, and was a much more picturesque figure than Mr. Quelch. It occurred to him also that lessons seemed to be easier.

Miss Locke possessed feminine tact and patience, and did not expect too much, and she certainly had a most sweet temper. Mr. Quelch had ruled with a heavy hand—the Remove needed it and prided itself on the fact. It began to dawn on several fellows that the new regime might be more pleasant than the old.

Wharton seemed to have profited by his lesson. He was very quiet through the afternoon lessons, but Bulstrode was in a state of suppressed sulkiness. He was as surly as he dared to be, and gave as much trouble as he could. It happened that English history came up that afternoon, and Bulstrode found a chance of giving the fair Form-mistress his opinion.

"Queen Elizabeth was popular with the mass of her subjects, but was there a section of the population strongly opposed to her Government?" said Miss Locke.

"Yes, miss," said Bulstrode.

"And who were they?"

Bulstrode knew perfectly well, but he did not choose to render the correct answer.

"They were the people who were opposed to petticoat government," he said coolly.

The Remove chuckled faintly. Miss Locke coloured.

"That is not correct, Bulstrode," she said.

"I believe it was the fact, miss."

"You are at the bottom of the class, Bulstrode, so I cannot send you lower. You will write it twenty times. The Catholics as a party were opposed to the Government of Queen Elizabeth."

"But—"

"Not a word more!"

Miss Locke went on quietly with the lesson, and Bulstrode grinned at those near him. His impertinence was worth the twenty lines, in his opinion.

Several times during the afternoon Harry Wharton had noticed a grin on the face of Skinner, who was sitting two places from him. Skinner was the joker of the Remove, and it was easy to see that there was something on from his expression, though what the something was Harry had no idea.

"What is it you have under your desk, Skinner?" said Miss Locke suddenly.

"Miss?" asked Skinner.

"Yes, you," said Miss Locke. "You have been putting your hand under your desk a dozen times or more. What have you there?"

Skinner hastily slid something along to the next boy's desk—Bob Cherry's—and assumed a look of virtuous innocence.

"I haven't anything here, miss, except my books."

"Are you sure, Skinner?"

"Quite sure, miss."

"Then do not fidget."

The lesson proceeded. Skinner winked with one eye at Bob Cherry, while the other side of his face, turned towards Miss Locke, was quite solemn. Bob gave him a sidelong glance.

"What have you put in my desk, Skinny?"

"Only my automatic mouse."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Only have a lark. Mum's the word!"

"But, I say—"

"Cheese it! She's looking at us."

"You must not talk in class, Cherry."

"Very well, miss."

Miss Locke turned away a little. She was dealing with Harry Wharton. Skinner slid his hand into Bob Cherry's desk, and took back the article he had hidden there.

It was a curious toy with which Skinner had more than once performed tricks to the amusement of the Remove. He had been punished once by Mr. Quelch for bringing it into the classroom, but this was unknown to Miss Locke.

It was a mouse, life-size, and worked by a spring inside. As soon as it was set on the floor, the spring worked, and it ran out to the length of a string, which the operator kept in his hand.

Miss Locke gave Wharton a glance of approval.

"You are a credit to the class, Wharton," she said. "You fully deserve to be head of the Form."

Wharton coloured a little. The kind words smote upon his conscience a little, after the disagreeable feelings he had had towards Miss Locke.

"If you please, Miss Locke—" said Skinner.

"What is it, Skinner?"

"I think I saw a mouse."

Miss Locke started.

She could be firm and determined in dealing with an unruly Form like the Greyfriars Remove, but her expression showed that a mouse had power to shake her nerve.

"Where, Skinner?"

"Just near your feet, miss."

Miss Locke gave a start.

There was a faint whir, and a mouse ran out of the gangway by the side of Skinner's desk.

"Oh!"

The string attached to the mouse was invisible, and Skinner jerked on it. The mouse recoiled, and then ran on again, and Miss Locke fairly ran. In a moment she was standing on a chair near the master's desk, looking very apprehensive.

There was an irrepressible giggle from the Remove. The sight struck them as funny.

"Oh, chase it away, someone!" gasped Miss Locke.

Bob Cherry jerked Skinner's arm.

"Stop it, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner jerked in the mouse and hid it in his desk. Miss Locke descended from the chair, still with an uneasy look.

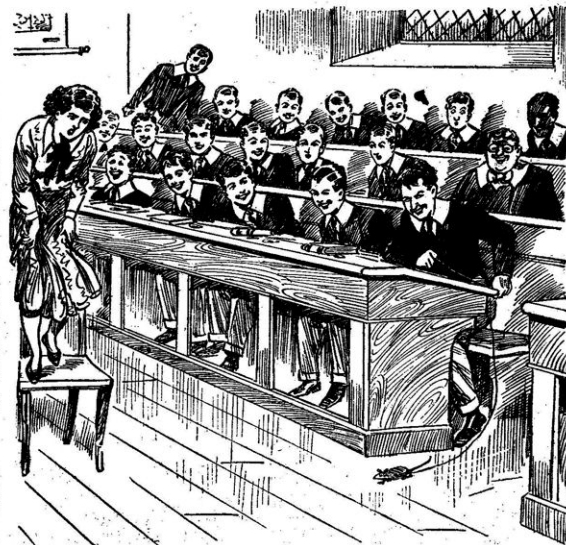
"It's gone, miss," said Skinner. "I can't see it anywhere."

"Are—are you sure?"

"It's quite gone," said Harry Wharton, with a warning look at Skinner. "It won't get into the room again, Miss Locke."

And it did not. But the incident had quite upset the gravity of the class-room for the afternoon, and at intervals a suppressed giggle was heard, and Miss Locke looked quite relieved when the time came for the Remove to be dismissed.

As the Form filed out the Head's sister signed to Harry Wharton to come to her. Somewhat wondering, Harry obeyed. Miss Locke detached a rose she was wearing and pinned it to Harry's coat.



Miss Locke fairly ran as she saw the mouse. In a moment she was standing on her chair, looking very apprehensive. There was an irrepressible giggle from the Remove. "Oh, chase it away, someone!" gasped the Form-mistress.

"In recognition of the good example you have set the class, Wharton," she said, with a sweet smile.

Wharton was crimson and dumb. It was a graceful action, but he knew how it was likely to be taken by the Remove, and repeated up and down the school. But there was no help for it. He could not be rude enough to refuse or even hint that he did not care for it. He muttered something and walked on, followed by the Removites, a broad grin on every face.

A Regular Row!

"H A, ha, ha!"
It was a yell of laughter as soon as the Remove were out in the Close. Grinning faces surrounded Harry Wharton, and even his own chums joined in the mirth. "You are a credit to the class!" said Levinson.
"You fully deserve to be head of the Form," remarked Bulstrode.
"A nice little flower for the darling's coat!" said Skinner.

"In recognition of the excellent example he has set the class!" said Hazeldene, with a shake of the head.
"Don't forget that!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.
"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton angrily.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Look here, if you don't shut that silly cackling—"
"Oh, don't get ratty, Harry!" grinned Nugent. "It strikes us as funny, therefore we laugh. And it is funny!"
"Hence these cackles!" said Bob Cherry.

"The cackleness is great, but the funniness is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Let not the worthy Wharton lose his esteemed temper."

"You cackling asses!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Harry Wharton swung angrily away and strode across the Close.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's really got his back up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "A touch of the old temper—eh?"

"The wrathfulness is great," said the nabob. "Let us go after him followfully, and restore the smile of serenity to his brow."

Bob Cherry ran after Harry and gave him a poke in the ribs. Wharton gasped and turned round.

"What the dickens—"
"That's all right, old chap. The gentle nudge was only to show that there's no ill-feeling," explained Bob. "You ass! You've nearly busted my ribs."

"Never mind; don't bother about trifles. And don't get your back up over nothing either. We were only joking. In short, don't be an ass!"
Wharton's face cleared a little.

"Well, a chap gets fed-up with chipping in the long run," he said. "It's bad enough to have it all day long from the Upper Fourth without you fellows starting it, too. I shall get chipped to death over this rose, I know."

"Take it off before it's seen, then."
Wharton shook his head.

"Suppose Miss Locke should see that I had taken it off as soon as I was out of sight? She would feel insulted."

"The probableness is great."
"Besides, it was kind of her to give it to me," said Harry, half defiantly. "I don't really see what there is to cackle about. Some silly asses will cackle about anything."

"Thank you!" grinned Bob Cherry.
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"Well, I don't mean exactly that. Still—"

"Here comes Temple with the Co."
"Hallo!" said Temple affably, as he came up. "We've just heard about Wharton getting a prize for being a good boy, and we've come to congratulate him."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.
"Oh, clear off!"

"Not without congratulating you," said Fry. "A nice little boy had a nice little flower, and all his loving schoolmates congratulated him—Ow!"

Harry Wharton's patience, never very great, was exhausted. His fist shot out and caught Fry on the end of the nose. Fry sat down in the Close with a suddenness which jarred him from head to foot.

"Oh!" he gasped.
Harry looked down at him with a glint in his eyes.

"Want any more?"
"Yes, rather," roared Fry, scrambling up. "I'll teach you to dot me on the nose, you cheeky ass!"

And he rushed at Harry Wharton. He was a bigger fellow, as was natural as he belonged to a higher Form. But he found the captain of the Remove ready for him. Harry's fists were already up and he and Fry went at it hammer and tongs.

"Go it!" roared Bob Cherry.
"Buck up, Wharton!"
"Give him socks, Fry!" exclaimed Dabney. "Give the young bouncer what for!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob Cherry. "Who are you calling a young bouncer. Look here, put up your fists!"

"I don't want to—"
"Then don't—just as you like, of course, but I'm going for your nose!"

"Bob Cherry was dancing round Dabney, making frantic hits at him, and Dabney had no choice but to put up his fists.

Nugent looked on with the light of battle in his eyes, and suddenly knocked Temple's cap off.

"Here, what's the game?" roared Temple.

Nugent squared up.
"Come on!"

"You young ass, do you think I'm going to fight a Remove kid?"

"Yes, or else be licked! There's a one or start with."

Nugent gave Temple a sharp tap on the chin. Temple forgot all about his superior dignity as captain of the Upper Fourth, and went for the Remove like a bull. They grappled and went reeling to and fro, struggling desperately.

The nabob looked on regretfully. Three pairs of combatants were engaged in wild and whirling conflict, and he couldn't fairly interfere. But the blood of the fighting race of Bhanipur was up. Scott of the Upper Fourth came running up.

"Hallo! What's the row? Here, you inky lunatic, what are you up to?"

"I'm attacking fightfully," said the nabob, letting Scott have it with left and right. "I'm inflicting the honourable lickfulness."

"Get off—keep off—Oh!"
Scott was hitting out now in return and the nabob staggered. But he returned to the attack manfully. There were now four couples, fighting away for all they were worth. The noise attracted spectators from far and wide, and a crowd gathered round in next to no time.

"Go it, Wharton!"
"Buck up, Dabney!"

"Wipe him up, Cherry!"
"Lick him, Temple!"

In their keen interest in the fight no one noticed a slim, girlish-form advancing quickly towards the scene.

"What is the matter here?" asked Miss Locke as she came up.

"My hat!" murmured Hazeldene. "It's the Head's sister!"

The crowd made way for Miss Locke to approach. But the combatants were too excited to see her. Just as she came through the crowd Harry Wharton's fist landed on Fry's nose with terrific force, and he rolled at the feet of Miss Locke.

Wharton Changes His Tune

"GOOD gracious!"
That exclamation from Miss Locke was enough. The combatants stopped as if by magic.

Fry sat up, scrambled to his feet, and rubbed his nose. Harry Wharton stood with his hands dropped, his face red with exertion. Hurree Singh and Scott, Bob Cherry and Dabney, Nugent and Temple, separated all of a sudden, and stood looking red and shame-faced.

They looked a disreputable lot. Each face bore the plainest possible marks of the fight. Swollen eyes and cut lips and bruised noses were well in evidence.

"You have been fighting!" exclaimed Miss Locke.

The remark was needless, and some of the crowd tittered. Harry Wharton felt awkward. The whole affair had been caused by his hasty temper, and he was keenly conscious how dirty and disreputable he must look at that moment.

"Ye-es," stammered Harry.
"What about?"

"Nothing."
Miss Locke turned to Temple, Dabney & Co. severely.

"Temple, you are captain of a higher Form, I believe. You should know better than this."

Temple was silent.
"That's all right," said Nugent. "I chivvied Temple into it. We fight sometimes for want of something better to do."

"The exactfulness of my worthy chum's statement is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I aver for my partfulness that I attacked the honourable Scott myself and gave him socks, simply to keep the honourable ball rolling."

There was a laugh.
"That's the size of it," said Bob Cherry. "It's all right, Miss Locke."

"I am ashamed of you!" said Miss Locke. "This is brutal. I should hope that you are ashamed of yourselves!"

"It was my fault," said Harry Wharton abruptly. "I lost my temper. I'm sorry I hit you, Fry!"

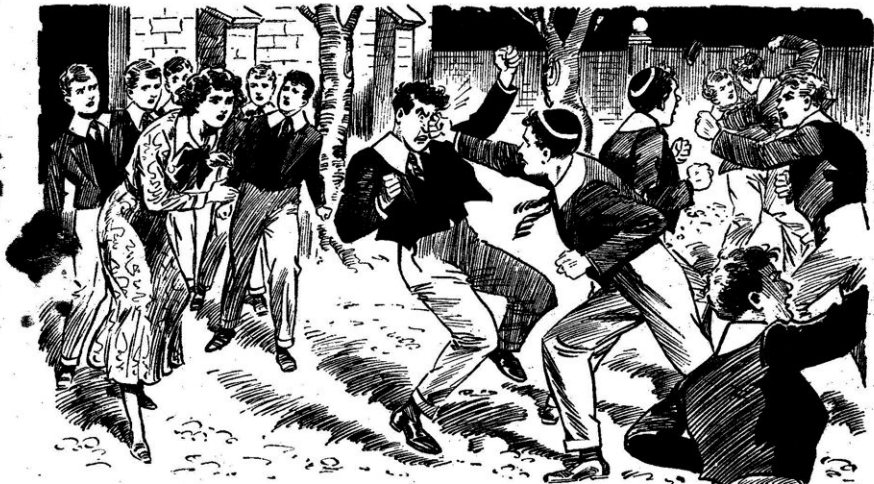
Fry grinned rather uneasily.
"Oh, that's all right, Wharton! I chipped you into it."

"I hope," said Miss Locke, "that this is at an end. I forgive you this once, but any boy in the Remove renewing this disgraceful scene will be severely punished."

And the Head's sister walked away.
"Nice kettle of fish!" growled Dabney. "All on account of a giddy rose in Wharton's jacket! Why didn't you tell her, Wharton?"

"Because I didn't!"
"I think I got and get a clean up," said Nugent ruefully.

"Same here!" grinned Temple.
The chums of the Remove walked away. They were all feeling knocked up, and were glad to get into a bath-room and wash themselves, and change their collars.



Just as Miss Locke arrived on the scene of the free fight between the chums of the Remove and Temple, Dabney & Co., Harry Wharton's fist landed on Fry's nose. The Upper Fourth fellow collapsed and rolled at the feet of the Remove Form-mistress.

Then they went along to Study No. 1. A fire was blazing in the grate and the kettle was singing on it. Billy Bunter turned a crimson countenance from the fire, where he was making toast.

"I say, you fellows, tea's nearly ready. My hat, you do look rotten! Have you been bumping your faces against something?"

"Yes," grunted Bob Cherry. "Against Temple & Co.'s fists. We're hungry. Make the tea, old chap, and don't talk."

"Really, Cherry—"
"Cheese it!"

The Removees sat down at the table. Harry Wharton was in a thoughtful mood. He did not join in the chatter at the tea-table, and was evidently thinking something out.

"I say, Harry!" said Bob Cherry presently. "What have you got on your mind?"

"I've been thinking," said Harry Wharton. "Do you know, we've been playing the giddy goat the last day or two."

"Nothing new in that," said Nugent. "We often do. But what particular species of giddy goat are you alluding to?"

"I mean, setting ourselves up against Miss Locke."

"Oh!" said Nugent.

"It's all rot," said Harry Wharton quietly. "There's no reason why she shouldn't take the Remove. She's quite capable."

"You've changed your tune!"

"Well, I hadn't thought it out before. As a matter of fact, it was of no use getting our backs up over it, as Miss Locke has the Head's authority behind her. We could do nothing but rag her, and that's caddish towards a woman."

"Well, we haven't done it."

"No. Bulstrode and some of the others have, and they're cads. I've thought the matter over, and I'm going to back-up Miss Locke."

"My hat, that's a change, anyway!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Perhaps it is. But we've acted the giddy goat, and I'm going to stop it, for one. You fellows can do as you like."

"Oh, we shall follow in our father's footsteps!" grinned Nugent. "You can depend on us."

"Rather!" said Bob, more slowly. "The ratherfulness is terrific! I agree with the honourable sentiments of our esteemed friend Wharton, and I follow him up backfully with all my heart!"

"I don't think you'll be sorry for it," said Wharton. "It isn't as if Miss Locke was a sharp-tempered, nagging girl. She plays the game, as a matter of fact, and we ought to do the same."

"I suppose you're right. But, I say, this means being at loggerheads with a lot of the Remove—this idea of backing up the schoolmarm!"

"Can't be helped."

The door of the study opened at that moment, and several Removeites presented themselves to view. Bulstrode and Levison were at their head. Their expressions were far from agreeable.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're too late for tea, and we haven't any old things to give away!" said Bob Cherry. "Good-bye!"

But Bulstrode stepped into the study. "We've come to speak to you chaps," he said. "We're backed up by the Form, too, I can tell you! We're not going to stand—"

"You'll have to," said Nugent. "Every giddy chair in the study is occupied, you see, and we're not going to shift!"

"Let me finish, will you?" roared Bulstrode. "We're not going to stand this petticoat rule. The Remove is going to rise against it!"

"Go hon!"

"We've come to see if Wharton is willing to take the lead. He calls himself captain of the Remove, and if he likes to take the lead, let him. But we're not going to put up with petticoat rule."

"Rot! You've got to put up with it!" retorted Harry.

"Oh, I know we can't have a revolt in the Form-room, when Miss Locke is backed up by the Head!" said Bulstrode disagreeably. "But we can rag her, and make the place too hot to hold her!"

"A cad's game!"

"Then you won't take a hand in it?"

"No!"

There was no hesitation about Harry Wharton's reply. A growl from the group of Removeites in the doorway followed.

Misunderstood!

BULSTRODE'S eyes glistened. There were half a dozen of the rougher spirits of the Remove with him, and he had the sympathy of many more. He had hoped for a refusal from Harry Wharton, but he had not expected quite so direct a one.

"You mean that, Wharton?" he said. "Yes, I mean every word. You are not going to rag Miss Locke. It's a cad's game to bother a girl, anyway."

"Who says we're not going to?" demanded Bulstrode.

"I do!"

"You can keep out of it, if you like, but I suppose you're not going to have the cheek to interfere with us?" said Bulstrode.

"That's where you're mistaken—I am!"

"You are going to stand up for Miss Locke?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you're joking?" said Levison. "You'll never have the cheek and nerve to take the schoolmarm's part against the Remove."

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"You'll see," he said. "I've thought the matter over. Miss Locke is treating

us decently, and one good turn deserves another. We're going to treat her decently. It's only for a few days, anyway, till Mr. Quelch comes back."

"That's our business. We'll do as we like."

"Not if I can prevent it."

"But can you prevent it?" sneered Levison. "You've changed your views, but I suppose you don't expect us to change ours, and follow at your heels like a set of tame puppy dogs? We're going to carry out our plans, and you can do what you like."

"What plans?"

"For making Miss Locke get out of the Remove."

"What are you going to do?"

"That's telling. If you're not going to help you needn't know anything about what we're going to do. You'll hear soon enough."

Harry's eyes gleamed with anger.

"Well, I can't say any more!" he exclaimed. "There's going to be no ragging, if I can stop it, and that's all I've got to say on the subject."

"Well, you can't stop it, that's one comfort," said Bulstrode, and he left the study with his friends.

"I say, you fellows, I wonder what they're up to!" said Bunter, blinking round the study. "I know Bulstrode has got some trick in his mind, because he gave the page-boy sixpence to fetch some fireworks from Friardale."

"Fireworks?" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes; I saw him showing a jumping cracker to Levison, and they were grinning over it."

"Are you sure of that, Bunter?"

"Of course I am, Wharton!"

"I say, that's a caddish thing to do,

if they're thinking of scaring her," Nugent remarked. "I don't like petticoat rule, but that's a bit too thick."

Harry set his teeth.

"They're not going to carry out their plan, if that's it."

"I don't see what can be done."

"I'll speak to Bulstrode."

"He won't take any notice."

"I'll make him."

"But you don't know for certain—"

"I'll speak to him, anyway."

Wharton left the study and went along the passage. The door of Bulstrode's study was open, and the malcontents were in it, talking busily. They stopped as Harry Wharton appeared in the doorway.

Bulstrode looked at him with a sneer. The others fixed their eyes upon him in a rather disconcerting manner.

"Well, have you changed your mind again, Wharton?" said Levison mockingly.

"No," said Harry, advancing into the study. "I've got a hint as to what your precious plan is, that's all. You are thinking of scaring Miss Locke with a firework."

"How do you know that?"

"Is it a fact?"

"Mind your own business," said Bulstrode, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't see why we should tell you anything."

"Not in the least," said Trevor. "It's our affair."

Harry Wharton controlled his temper with difficulty.

"Well, I suppose I can't stop you," he said, "but I tell you plainly, Bulstrode, if you play a cowardly trick like that you'll have to answer to me for it."

"Oh, get out of my study!"

"Get out! Get out!"

The juniors took up the cry, and Bulstrode, emboldened by the backing of the others, advanced blusteringly towards the captain of the Remove. He pointed to the door.

"I travel," he said. "We've had enough of your high-handed methods. Get out, or you'll be thrown out!"

"There's no fellow here could do it!" blazed out Harry.

"We'll show you! Collar him!"

Strong in numbers, the malcontents hustled round Harry Wharton, and he was forced by weight of odds into the doorway. There, for a moment, he held his own, hitting out furiously.

Then a final effort, and he was back into the passage. He staggered headlessly against the opposite wall, and, as luck would have it, Miss Locke came down the passage at the same moment.

Bulstrode slammed the door. The Head's sister stopped and looked severely at the panting junior.

"Wharton! Fighting again!"

The junior did not speak. He could not exculpate himself. The girl's face grew more severe.

"Whose study is that, Wharton?"

"Bulstrode's."

"Why were you quarrelling with him?"

Wharton was silent.

"This is the second time to-day," said Miss Locke. "You must not let it occur again, Wharton. The next time I shall have no alternative but to report you to the Head."

And she passed on.

Harry Wharton walked away without a word. He could not explain the facts of the case to Miss Locke; but it was hard that he should be called over the coals, in the circumstances.

All the same, he was not disposed to abandon the cause he had taken up. His contempt for the methods of Bulstrode & Co. made him regret keenly that he had ever sympathised with their party. His determination was to back up the Head's sister henceforth, come what may. If he was misunderstood by the object of his championship, that could not be helped.

Backing Up Miss Locke!

"GOT it, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then come on! She has been to the class-room, and will be along in a minute."

"Right-ho, Levison!"

"Drop it over the banisters," grinned Levison. "My hat, it will make the schoolmarm jump, and no mistake!"

Bulstrode chuckled.

"I should say so."

"Quiet now."

The two cads of the Remove crouched on the stairs in the dimness, overlooking the lower passage. There was a sound of a door closing below. Levison nudged his companion.

"She's coming!"

"Good!"

A match scratched in the gloom. Bulstrode had in his hand a jumping cracker. It contained six charges. The bully of the Remove put the flame to the fuse and blew out the match. There was a splutter of sparks in the gloom.

"Now then!" whispered Levison. "Drop it into the passage—she's coming!"

"Right-ho!"

Bulstrode reached out with the sputtering cracker. In another second he would have pitched the firework into

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the passage at the feet of Miss Locke, with results startling enough for the Form-mistress of the Remove. But at that moment a powerful grip fastened upon him and he was dragged back from the banisters.

"You cad!"
It was the voice of Harry Wharton. The spluttering of the cracker's fuse showed Wharton what was going on. He grasped the bully's arm, and bent it back towards him, and it was no longer in Bulstrode's power to fling the firework where he had intended.

His hand was forced back against his waistcoat, with the cracker in it.

"Let go!" he gasped. "Help, Levison!"

He grappled furiously with Harry Wharton on the stairs and dropped the cracker. He was only just in time, for the fuse had burnt through.

Crack!
The sharp explosion rang from under the struggling juniors on the stairs. Bulstrode gave a startled yell, and hit out wildly. There was a yelp from Levison. In the gloom he had received the blow intended for Wharton, and he rolled down the stairs. Wharton grasped Bulstrode tightly.

"You cad!"
Crack, crack, crack!

"Good gracious! What is that?"
It was Miss Locke's startled voice from the passage below.

Neither Harry nor Bulstrode replied. They were too busy. Harry's temper was fully roused, and Bulstrode was equally furious. They fought in the gloom, while the cracker continued to explode.

Crack, crack!
"What is it? What is happening up there?"

Miss Locke hurried to the foot of the stairs and looked up. Levison blundered against her, and cut off down the passage before he could be questioned.

Miss Locke ran up the stairs. Two struggling forms rolled past her, and she put out her hand to stop them. But they rolled from her grasp, and landed on the mat at the foot of the staircase, still struggling.

The noise of the explosions and the struggle had attracted a dozen fellows to the spot. It was late in the evening, and the staircase was not lighted at that hour. Someone turned on the light in the Hall.

"You cad!"
"Hang you, Wharton!"

Miss Locke's face grew hard and stern as she looked at the desperately struggling forms at the bottom of the stairs.

"Stop this instantly!"

The combatants separated at last. Wingate of the Sixth had come out of his study, and he dragged Bulstrode away from Wharton, while Bob Cherry dragged Harry back.

Dusty and dishevelled, the two combatants glared at each other.

Miss Locke looked at them severely. The Head's sister was angrier than any of the Remove had seen her look before.

"Wharton! You again!"
Wharton was silent.

"What's all this row about?" asked Wingate sharply. "These young sweeps turn the place into a pandemonium, Miss Locke. Who has been letting off fireworks in the House?"
Neither of the Removites spoke.

"Did you let off that cracker, Wharton?"

"No, Wingate."
"Then it was you, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode scowled and was silent.

"You will take a hundred lines, Bulstrode," said Miss Locke. "At your next offence I shall send you into the headmaster to be caned!"

Bulstrode looked sullen.

"And you, Wharton—were you a party to letting off the cracker?"

"No, Miss Locke."
"What were you fighting Bulstrode for?"

Harry was silent.

He was in an awkward position, but he would have faced any punishment rather than appear to be wanting to make capital out of his championship of Miss Locke.

"Have you no answer to make, Wharton?"

"No, Miss Locke."
"What was Wharton fighting you about, Bulstrode?"

"He can tell you best," said Bulstrode.

"You remember what I said to you early this evening, Wharton?" said Miss Locke. "You have disregarded my warning, and you have no excuse to make for yourself. You must go to the Head."

Harry Wharton started.

In his early days at Greyfriars he had had more than one rather painful inter-view with the Head in his study; but those days were over now. Of late he had more than once earned an approving glance from Dr. Locke. It was hard that he should get into his black books again, when he was trying his best to do his duty.

"You have nothing to say, Wharton?"

"Nothing."
"Then you will go directly to Dr. Locke's study and tell him that I sent you there to be punished for fighting," said Miss Locke severely.

"Very well."
Bulstrode grinned savagely. He had his revenge now, and no mistake. He could scarcely avoid chuckling openly at the situation. Wharton had interfered with him to save Miss Locke from a shock, and, as a reward, was to be caned by the Head.

Harry Wharton was too proud to explain, and Bulstrode certainly had no intention of doing so.

Harry turned away and slowly made his way towards the Head's study. The crowd dispersed, and Bob Cherry ran after Harry. The latter looked round as his chum pulled him by the arm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerily. "Are you particularly looking for a licking to-night, Harry?"
Harry laughed ruefully.

"Hardly, Bob!"

"You went for Bulstrode because he was going to chuck the cracker somewhere where it would frighten Miss Locke?"

"Yes."
"Why didn't you tell her so?"

"It's all right."
"Ass! If you had told her so—"

"I'm not going to make capital out of it," said Harry Wharton. "She might think I was trying to curry favour. Bulstrode would very likely deny it, too, and then it would be his word against mine."

"Then you'd rather be licked?"

"Yes," said Harry quietly.

"Suppose I explain?"

Harry Wharton put his hand quickly on his chum's shoulder.

"Don't do anything of the kind, Bob. But look here—"

"I'd rather you didn't. I can take a licking. It's all right."

"I think you're an ass!"

"I don't mind, so long as you do as I wish. Mind, not a word to Miss Locke about the facts of the case."
"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry unwillingly. "He stood in the passage, looking thoughtful, while Harry Wharton went on his way."

"Ach! I tink tat Wharton is vat you English call ein ass!" said a voice in the gloom. Bob Cherry gave a jump.

"Herr Rosenblaum!"

The kindly little German master grinned at him through his big spectacles.

"Ach. So tat vas it, vas it? Wharton, come pack!"

Harry Wharton looked round.

"You want me, sir?"

"Ja. I have somethings to say," said the German master, as Harry came back. "I tink you vas foolish, Wharton."

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"Oh, sir!" said Harry, colouring. "Ach, ja, ja, mein poy! Tink vat Mees Locke vould tink if she learn tat she punish you because you interfere to save her from being startle, mein poy!"

Harry's face went scarlet. "I hear vat you say as I come along mit meinsel," explained the German. "I tink tat it is to ease before; now I know tat it is so after. You vas find Pulstrode vaitching to throw firework, and you stop him, ain't it?"

"If you please, sir—"
"I tink you should say so to Mees Locke, Wharton going to throw firework."
"I vould rather—"

"Ach! If you not say so, I says so for you. Come mit me!"

Harry Wharton had no choice but to obey. The German master marched along into the Hall, where Miss Locke was speaking to Wingate. She glanced up and nodded brightly to the German master, and then her glance fell upon the scarlet face of Harry Wharton.

"Wharton, have you been—"
The German master waved his hand.

"Allow tat I explain," Tat had poy Pulstrode vaitching to throw firework to startle you, Mees Locke, out of padness of bearing Wharton stop him."

Miss Locke looked quickly at Harry. "Is that the case, Wharton?"

"Yes, Miss Locke."
You interfered, with Pulstrode to prevent him playing a trick upon me?"

"Yes."
"Why did you not tell me so?"

Wharton was silent. "Because he's an ass!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "He was afraid you might think he—"
"Shut up, Bob!" muttered Harry.

"Go on, Cherry," said Miss Locke quietly.

"He was afraid you might think he was looking for favour," said Bob Cherry.

Miss Locke laughed. "Thank you very much, Cherry. You should have told me this, Wharton. I might have discovered it after you had been punished, and you may imagine how painful that would have been to me."

"Tat is vat I tink, Mees Locke."
"I am very much obliged to you, Herr Rosenblaum."

"It is a great honour to oblige to charming Mees Locke," said the German. And he smiled off.

Miss Locke looked earnestly at Harry.

"I wish you had spoken out, Wharton," she said. "I appreciate your motives, but you must let me tell you that it is possible to carry even a proper pride too far—I should have believed you—and I had a right to know."

"I—I am sorry, Miss Locke!"

"Very well; that is enough, Wharton," said Miss Locke, holding out her hand. "I am very much obliged to you, Wharton, and I shall not forget my obligation; you have put me under, eric, the Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Harry shook hands with the Form-mistress.

"Good-night, Miss Locke! And—"

"And what, Wharton?"

"You can rely on us—my chums and myself—to back you up, Miss Locke, for all we're worth. While you are mistress of the Remove."

Miss Locke smiled cordially. "Thank you very much, Wharton. Then you have got over your objection to petticoat rule?"

Harry turned crimson. "We're sorry, Miss Locke. We—we've been silly asses, I know, but going to back you up, I know."

"Very good! I shall rely on you."

And Harry Wharton kept his word. The chums of the Remove backed Miss Locke for the remainder of the time that the Form was in the charge, and most of the Remove supported them, and Bulstrode and his friends had to give in.

Matters went very smoothly after that, and when the time came for Mr. Quetch to resume charge of the Remove, more than one fellow was heard to regret the departure of Miss Locke.

(Another grand story next Wednesday of the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. See that you don't miss "THE CONJURER OF THE REMOVE.")

THE HOUSEMASTER'S BODYGUARD!

(Continued from page 21.)

"I'm ready!" he said.

Mr. Raifon drew back. "I cannot give up the man whose life I have saved. Go! Take your chance; I cannot touch you!"

Munro gasped. "You mean that?"

"Yes. Whether I am doing right or wrong, I do not know; I cannot send you back to a convict prison when I have saved your life! The police must do their own work!"

"Then listen to me," said Munro, in a deep, eager voice. "You shall not be sorry for it. If I am captured, I must serve my sentence. If I escape, I swear that I will lead a new life. I have been within touch of death, and it has opened my eyes. I swear to you that from this day, free or not, my hands shall be clean from crime!"

"I hope you will keep your word!" said Mr. Raifon.

And so they parted.

Tom M. noted that Mr. Raifon wore a very grave expression the rest of that day at St. Jim's.

That was what had become of the convict.

The Housemaster thanked the noble Three again for the aid they had rendered him, but he made no mention of Munro; and they wondered.

But these was news that night. P. C. Crump, of Rycombe, had made a capture, and the news was telephoned to the school. Munro was in the hands of the police again, and on his way back to the prison he had escaped from.

In this week's "MAGNET"

"BILLY BUNTER'S LUCKY DAY!"

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Later, it was learned that Mr. Crump capture did not reflect great glory upon him, for the convict had given himself up. Was it merely in hunger and desperation, or was it a

proof of his repentance? Mr. Raifon wondered.

"It's rubbish written," said Arthur Augustus. "I would it as without inconsiderate of the man to give himself up to such a dull job as Crump, when we were actually keen to capture him."

"I would it as without inconsiderate of the man to give himself up to such a dull job as Crump, when we were actually keen to capture him."

"I would it as without inconsiderate of the man to give himself up to such a dull job as Crump, when we were actually keen to capture him."

"What about the gurdy kaw?" asked Digby. "I suppose the gurdy kaw is done with now, you fellows?"

"Well, as there's nothing more to gurdy, there's not much use to a gurdy kaw," grinned Tom Merry. "I suggest that we have a tremendous feed in the study to celebrate the success of the gurdy de corps. How's that?"

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