

THE RUSTLERS OF THOMPSON VALLEY!

THRILLING YARN OF THE CEDAR CREEK CHUMS—INSIDE.

The GEM 2^d

WALLY TAKES CUSSY TO TASK!

—An amusing incident from this week's grand St. Jim's story, "GUSSY'S BIG GAMBLE!"





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Blunt himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned and no replies given by post.

"Candid," of Chippenham, writes:

Mv. what a lot of balderdash you write! If I wrote such piffle, I'd die of shame. Hardly a fact that's right, and, as for the alleged humour, why, it would put another hundred years on a one hundred and forty-eight-year-old tortoise. Phooey! Nerts! Miaow!

ANSWER: Say, if you can work like you can shout, you could build the Empire State Building in Piccadilly Circus, overnight! Do you know how many years you put on me? I'm white with age, and tripping over my beard at the thought of you!

Miss Eileen Dempsey, of Gloucester, writes:

Are you very brainy? If so, tell me why girls don't go to war and why men have to do all the dirty work. I challenge you to tell me why I, a healthy girl of fifteen, as you see by the snap, could not be allowed to defend my country. Put on your thinking cap Jack!

ANSWER: No challenge refused by this department. Before you are many years older you can join the women's section of the A.R.P., and get ready to help combat raiders from the sky. Lots of people hope and believe there won't be any raiders, but judging by your spirit you seem the sort of girl who would go out looking for raiders with a hungry eye. Meanwhile, I presume you are a Girl Guide? You are? Good for you, Eileen!

"Enthusiastic Reader," of Canvey, near South-end, writes:

Here's a list of questions:

1. Why doesn't Gussy wear a bowler instead of a topper?
2. Why were you born in Yorkshire?
3. Why do you wear an Eton collar?
4. What is Taggles' favourite tonic?

ANSWER: Here's a bunch of come-backs:

1. Gussy says: "Because it's the weally wight and pwopah thing to do, bai Jove!" Besides, it keeps the rain off.
2. You are one point more polite than the reader who asked why I was born at all! Just Yorkshire's luck—good or bad!
3. Well, frankly, I find it draughty round the neck with nothing but a stud!
4. This comes under the Unofficial Secrets Act, but between you and me and the gates of St. Jim's, Taggles' favourite brew is ginger ale, with a strong dash of—um—"tonic"!

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"Codfish," of Openshaw, Manchester, writes:

A big question with us big fish these days is: What sort of a fellow is Jack Blake? Does he like fish?

Secondly, why is Tom Merry permanently 15 years old? Looks fishy to us. With kisses. X X X.

ANSWER: With kisses, indeed! Hold me while I explode! "Jack Blake Kissed By A Codfish!" I can see Monty Lowther punning on that. Not that I'm a "whale" of a fellow, too big for his "plaiice," who must never be "hooked." I like fish, but not "queer fish," or "porpoises," like Trimble.

Secondly, Tom Merry gives his age as 16 years, though whether this is permanent or not time alone will tell. Gosh, you might get stuck at 15 or so yourself! Who knows? With hisses. SS! SS! SS!



"Why do men have to do all the dirty work in wartime?" asks Miss Eileen Dempsey.

G. Winter, of Taunton, writes:

The other day I was given a back number of the GEM dated April, 1934. It did not seem so nice as it is now. Only one thing was good—the supplement, "Tom Merry's Weekly." It had articles about St. Jim's, a puzzle corner, etc. Could "Tom Merry's Weekly" be brought back to the GEM?

ANSWER: It is very pleasant to hear that the mag was appreciated when it ran in the GEM. But whether it appears again is a matter for you, the other 40,000,000 readers and the Editor. Nothing would please me more than to see you all getting together in the board-room, and to hear you all talking at once. I've often wondered what it would sound like to hear the readers of the GEM speak with one voice. Let the Ed. know a few days in advance if you're coming. He'll need some more chairs, and—afterwards—a new roof! Thanks a million.

NUMBER ONE SIZE SHOCK FOR ST. JIM'S! ARTHUR AUGUSTUS PLUNGES HEAVILY ON A HORSE! READ HOW THE AMATEUR GAMBLER FARES IN THIS LIVELY LONG YARN.

Gussy's Big Gamble!



Arthur Augustus took out his pocket-book. "I have three pounds at present, Mr. Banks," he said, handing the bookmaker the money. "I will send on the other four." Mr. Banks almost grabbed the notes. "Any time up to the hour of the race, sir," he said.

CHAPTER 1.

Trouble in Study No. 6.

"FIFTEEN to one against!"

Jack Blake stopped dead in the doorway of Study No. 6. He was astonished.

Blake had come up to the study for his noble chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He heard that remark as he reached the door.

Arthur Augustus, the ornament of the Fourth Form, was alone in the study. He was evidently talking to himself.

The swell of St. Jim's was quite unaware that Jack Blake had arrived in the open doorway and was standing there glaring at him. He was buried deep in thought. There was a wrinkle in his noble brow, and his eyes were glued upon a newspaper.

And clearly and distinctly there came to Blake's astonished ears the remark, repeated slowly and thoughtfully:

It's not like Gussy to gamble, but it's just like him to make a secret of his motive for doing so. Yet whatever the motive, Gussy learns too late that it doesn't justify the means!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Fifteen to one against, bai Jove!"

"My only hat!" murmured Blake.

"Fifteen to one, and the chap says that the horse is a winner. I wonder how he knows. These horsey johnnies know a lot of things, I suppose."

Arthur Augustus was still talking to himself—or to the newspaper. Blake fairly gasped.

He would not have been surprised to see Crooke or Racke reading over a racing list in a newspaper, and pondering the odds. But D'Arcy of the

Fourth—the great Arthur Augustus, whose scorn and contempt for the horsey set knew no bounds!

Blake was almost dazed.

"Fifteen to one against Jolly Wogah!" went on the swell of the School House. "Bai Jove! If a fellow had ten pounds on Jolly Wogah he would bag a hundred and fifty pounds in a lump! That is really a very large sum of money."

"Gussy!" shrieked Blake. Arthur Augustus started violently and jumped up.

For the moment his stately manners lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Hurriedly he thrust the sporting paper under his jacket, and stood facing his chum with a crimson flush in his cheeks.

"Yaa-as, deah boy?"

"What is that paper you've got there?"

"Oh! Ah! Ahem!"

That was Arthur Augustus' reply, and it could not be called lucid or explanatory.

"That's one of Racke's sporting papers!" exclaimed Blake.

"Oh!"

"What are you doing with it?"

"Ah!"

"What do you know about Jolly Roger, and fifteen to one against?" demanded Blake witheringly.

"Ahem!"

"Are you potty?" roared Blake, his astonishment mingled with anger now. "Are you fairly off your silly crumpet?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Are you going to back a horse at fifteen to one against?" demanded Blake, with angry sarcasm.

"B-back a horse!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"You fellows coming?" shouted Herries from the passage.

"Get a move on!" came Digby's voice. "We're not going to stay the whole afternoon on the staircase, if you don't mind."

Blake stepped out of the study.

"You chaps come here!" he called out to Herries and Digby.

"Oh rats! You come here. We're waiting."

"Come here, I tell you!"

"Look here, are we going down to Rylcombe, or are we not going down to Rylcombe?" demanded Herries warmly.

"Bother Rylcombe! Come here!"

Herries snorted, and Digby grunted; but they came along the passage from the staircase. The serious expression on Jack Blake's face rather startled them as they joined him.

"Anything up?" asked Digby.

"Yes. Come into the study."

Herries and Dig, in great astonishment, came into the study, and Jack Blake closed the door. Arthur Augustus was putting on his elegant and spotless gloves.

"I'm weady, deah boys," he remarked mildly.

"What are you shuttin' the door for, Blake?"

"We're going to have this out!" growled Blake.

"Have what out?" demanded Herries.

"Gussy's making a silly fool of himself!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Not much making wanted," commented Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"The frabjous ass," said Blake, in measured tones, "has got a sporting paper there."

"What?"

"He was babbling about Jolly Roger—a race-horse, I suppose—and fifteen to one against, when I came into the room."

"Great Scott!"

"Now he's got to explain," said Blake. "We don't allow any sportsmen of Racke's kind in this study."

"If you mean to infer, Blake, that I beah the wemotest wesemblance to Wacke of the Shell——" began Arthur Augustus hotly.

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"That's one of Racke's sporting papers?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy hesitatingly.

"What were you doing with it?"

"Reading it."

"And what the dickens were you reading a sporting paper for?" demanded Herries, staring at the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment.

No reply.

"Will you explain?" demanded Blake.

"There is nothin' to explain, deah boy."

"He can't be idiot enough to be taking up Racke's games, and making fool bets on races!" said Digby, in wonder.

"I believe he's idiot enough for anything," said Blake wrathfully. "Just the kind of silly idiot to be led into some shady business by some cad."

"I wefuse to be called a silly idiot, Blake."

"Tell us what you've got that paper for, Gussy," said Dig. "You can tell your own pals, can't you?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am sowwy, Dig, that I cannot confide the mattah to you."

"Why not?" snorted Herries.

"Because I cannot wevy well wely upon the dis-cwection of you youngstahs."

That reply was evidently intended to satisfy the three chums that further questioning was futile. As a matter of fact, it had a most exasperating effect upon Blake & Co.

"You frabjous ass!" ejaculated Blake.

"You frumptious chump!" said Digby.

"You burbling dummy!" said Herries.

"Weally, deah boys, your mannahs are wathah lackin' in polish," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"I wepeat that I am weady to walk down to Wylcombe. Are you fellows comin'?"

"Not till this matter's settled," answered Blake.

"You can look on us as your keepers, Gussy."

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I uttahly wefuse to wegard you as my keepahs!"

"What are you doing with Racke's racing paper?"

"Wats!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I wepeat, 'wats!' Now let us go down to Wylcombe."

Jack Blake drew a deep breath.

"I don't know what this means," he said. "It looks to me as if Racke is trying to get Gussy into his shady games, and Gussy is imbecile enough to let him. This study isn't going to be disgraced, I know that. Give me that paper, Gussy, and I'll take it back to Racke, with the compliments of Study No. 6."

"I am sowwy I cannot give you the papah, Blake."

"And why not?"

"I wequiah it."

"Then you're betting on horses!" yelled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Give me that paper!" said Blake grimly.

"Wubbish!"

"Then I'll jolly well take it!"

Arthur Augustus backed away.

"I twust, Blake, that you will not compel me to give you a feahful thwashin'!" he exclaimed.

"I trust not," grinned Blake. "Lend a hand, you fellows!"

"You bet!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby closed in upon the swell of the Fourth at once. Arthur Augustus put up his hands as they collared him; he was

wrathful, too. But in the twinkling of an eye he was being bumped on the carpet.

"Yawooh!" he roared.

The sporting paper slid from under his jacket and fell on to the carpet. Jack Blake caught it up.

"Welease me!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! I will thrwash you all wound! Get off my waistcoat, Dig, you wottah! Return that papah at once, Blake!"

"Sit on him!" said Blake. "I'm going to see Racke!"

"Welease me——"

Blake strode out of the study with the paper crumpled in his hand. Arthur Augustus made a desperate attempt to rise, and Herries and Dig sat on him without ceremony. The Honourable Arthur Augustus had no chance of intervening in Blake's interview with Racke of the Shell.

CHAPTER 2.

Rough on Racke!

"HALT!"

Blake was striding along the Shell passage with heavy steps and a frowning brow when Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came out of their study.

The Terrible Three playfully lined up across the passage and brought him to a halt. Blake glared at them. He was in no humour for playfulness just then.

"Let me pass, you asses!" he snapped.

"My dear man, you look excited!" said Monty Lowther soothingly. "Let not your angry passions rise, my good little boy!"

"Fathead!" roared Blake.

But Monty Lowther persisted in being soothing. Perhaps he knew that it was the most exasperating thing he could do.

"Shush!" he murmured, with a gentle wave of the hand.

"Calm yourself, dear boy!" grinned Manners.

"Mustn't get excited!" murmured Tom Merry. "Can't have obstreperous fags barging about the Shell passage! Shush!"

"You silly chump! I've come here to thrash one of your Shell beauties!" roared Blake wrathfully.

"Shush!" murmured Lowther reproachfully. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite, it is their nature to——"

"Will you——"

"But the Fourth Form fags should never let their angry passions rise," added the humorist of the Shell. "Their little fists were never meant to black a fellow's eye!"

"I want to see Racke!" said Blake, restraining an impulse to rush on the Terrible Three. "The low cad's been up to his tricks again, and I'm going to smash him!"

"Phew! What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake held up the racing paper.

"Look at that! I found Gussy mooning over it, and it's Racke's. I'm going to take it back to him, and talk to him. Now let me pass, or I'll biff you!"

The Terrible Three, reduced to seriousness at last, broke up their defensive line.

"We'll come with you," said Tom Merry.

Blake strode on to Racke's study, and the chums of the Shell followed him. Blake kicked open the study door with a crash.

There was an angry exclamation within.

Aubrey Racke and Gerald Crooke, the black sheep of the Shell, were both there, smoking cigarettes and talking "gee-gees." They jumped up as Jack Blake, with flashing eyes and a frowning brow, burst in.

Racke stared at him angrily. Crooke was gasping and choking; his cigarette had slipped into his mouth as he jumped up in alarm.

"You silly fool!" roared Racke. "What do you mean by bursting in like a maniac? Get out of my study!"

Blake thrust the racing paper under his nose.

"Is this yours?" he yelled.

"Eh? Yes. That's mine!"

"I've brought it back."

"Is D'Arcy done with it?" sneered Racke.

Blake panted with wrath.

"You sneaking, racing, gambling, blackguardly worm!" he shouted. "I've brought it back, and now I'm going to tell you what I think of you for lending it to a chap in my study!"

"Hands off, you fool!" yelled Racke, as Blake rushed at him.

Blake had said that he was going to tell Racke what he thought of him; but he was evidently depending on actions in the place of words. Perhaps his meaning was plain enough.

His fist crashed into Racke's face, and he received without heeding the savage blows that Aubrey Racke struck in return.

Racke went backwards round the study, defending himself desperately, but not very successfully.

Crooke, having ejected his cigarette, stood looking on blankly. He did not offer to interfere.

He might have lent his chum a hand but for the presence of the Terrible Three in the doorway. Tom Merry & Co. were there to see fair play.

Crash!

Racke stumbled over a chair, and went to the floor.

Blake almost pranced round him as he lay gasping, brandishing his fists, still unsatisfied.

"Get up!" he roared.

"Yow-ow!"

"Let him alone!" muttered Crooke. "Get out, you bully!"

Smack!

The back of Blake's hand caught Gerald Crooke across the face, and Crooke spun round. That was Blake's reply to Crooke.

The uproar in the study had drawn several fellows along the passage to see what the row was about. Talbot of the Shell looked in.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"Only a chap killing Racke!" announced Monty Lowther serenely. "It's all right! He's not dead yet!"

"Get up and be finished, Racke!" suggested Manners.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You sneaking funk," roared Blake, "you're not licked yet! Get up, or I'll use my foot on you!"

"Get out of my study, you cad!" panted Racke.

"I'll go to Mr. Railton about this! Ow!"

"Take your racing papers with you when you go," chuckled Monty Lowther. "Our beloved Housemaster will be interested in them."

Blake drew back his foot. He was in deadly earnest, and Aubrey Racke jumped up. He preferred Blake's fist to his foot.

"Go it, ye cripples!" grinned Kangaroo of the Shell from over Tom Merry's shoulder at the door. "Crooke, old scout, as a sporting chap, will you give me ten to one on Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Crash!

Aubrey Racke was putting up a good fight now; he had no choice. But he was driven round the study under a shower of blows. Blake's face was set and savage, and he had no mercy. Racke's dingy blackguardism was nothing to him so long as Aubrey kept it to himself; but when he extended it to Study No. 6, it was time for drastic measures. And there was no doubt that Blake's measures were drastic enough.

Racke went down again at last under a hard blow, and lay gasping and palpitating. This time it was genuine; he couldn't go on.

There was a scuffle in the passage as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy forced his way through the crowd of juniors there, and burst into the study.

"Blake, you silly ass, let Wacke alone!" he shouted.

"I'll let him alone now!" said Blake grimly.

"You uttah ass, you are labouwin' undah a misappwehension!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wacke lent me that papah at my own wequest!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I came here of my own accord to bowwow that papah of Wacke!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "He is not to blame in any way!"

Blake blinked at him.

"You—you—you," he gasped—"you mean to tell me that you're going in for this kind of thing of your own accord, without being led into it?"

"I do not mean to tell you anythin', Blake. I wegard you as buttin' into a mattah that doesn't concern you!"

"Oh!" gasped Blake.

Aubrey Racke, groaning, scrambled to his feet. Gussy's explanation had come too late to save him from a terrific licking. Perhaps Blake had been a little hasty. But he was not sorry. What was a fellow doing with racing papers in a St. Jim's study, anyway? Racke deserved all that he had received.

"You silly fool!" hissed Racke. "Get out of my study! Ow! Hang you, get out!"

"I am sowwy, Wacke, that that silly duffah has given you a feahful thwashin' for nothin'."

"Oh, get out, you fool!" snarled Racke.

Arthur Augustus' noble eye gleamed for a moment, but he answered calmly:

"In the circs, Wacke, I will excuse that extremely oppwobwious expession, as you are wathah excited. I will wetiah."

And he did.

He was followed by wondering stares from all the juniors there. The amazing incident was the talk of the School House in a quarter of an hour. By that time every junior in the House knew that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the once spotless and lofty swell of the Fourth, was taking up "Racke's games," and starting in life as a "merry blade," and a "gay dog" and a "goer."

The astonishment was great, and the news was welcome to Trimble, Mellish, and Scrope, and other fellows of the shady set. But to other fellows the news came as a shock and was very far from welcome.

CHAPTER 3.

Baggy's Latest!

BAGGY TRIMBLE of the Fourth came into the Common-room that evening with a very important expression upon his face.

He had a sheet of paper in his hand, which he proceeded to tack up on the wall; a proceed-

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ing that was watched with curiosity by a good many eyes.

There was a buzz of talk in the Common-room; and, as a matter of fact, the talk mostly ran upon the latest and most astonishing development in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The circumstance that Arthur Augustus was following in Racke's footsteps was, as many fellows remarked, flabbergasting.

The swell of St. Jim's had never concealed his contempt for Aubrey Racke and his shady ways, and had never hesitated about expressing it.

And yet here he was, on his own confession, imitating the sportive Aubrey.

For what could he want with a racing paper save to imitate Racke in his pursuits? He had not even denied it.

After such a show-up the juniors did not expect to see D'Arcy in the Common-room that evening. But he came in quietly and sedately, looking a little more reserved and lofty than usual.

His chums were not with him. In the Common-room it was observed that Blake, Herries, and Digby did not approach their chum. There was a rift in the lute—not surprising, as matters stood.

Tom Merry looked very curiously at Gussy as he came in. Gussy, apparently not noticing the defection of his chums, was reading quietly in an armchair. Certainly he did not look like a fellow with a guilty conscience.

But the entrance of Baggy Trimble, and his curious proceedings, drew the general attention off the swell of St. Jim's.

Even Arthur Augustus glanced up from his book as the fat junior fastened up the paper on the wall of the Common-room.

Baggy stepped back and smirked as he found nearly all the eyes in the room turned upon him.

"Look at that!" he said.

The juniors looked. The paper was daubed with large capital letters, and it ran:

"NOTICE!

Roll Up!

THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL AT WAYLAND
IS A HUNDRED POUNDS SHORT!

£100! £100! £100!

Contribewtions to the Fund will be received by B. Trimble, Esquire, Fourth Form, to enny amount. Reseats given in each case.

ROLL UP AND CONTRIBEWIT!

(Signed) BAGGY TRIMBLE."

Baggy Trimble blinked at the School House juniors to ascertain the effect of that announcement upon them.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You spoofing fraud!" hooted Grundy.

"Rats!"

"Take it down!"

"Look here, you fellows," said Trimble warmly, "you've seen the appeal in the local paper. The Cottage Hospital is a hundred quid short. It's up to St. Jim's to lend a hand!"

"There's a collecting-box downstairs," said Tom Merry. "I think nearly everybody has shoved in something."

"I haven't noticed Trimble near it!" grinned Lowther.

Trimble coughed.

"I'm getting up a fund of my own," he said.

"I hope to raise at least twenty pounds to put into the—"

"Tuckshop?" asked Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you ass; the Cottage Hospital!" hooted Trimble. "I think all the fellows ought to do their bit. I suppose you can trust me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall give you a receipt for every contribution, of course. Now, how much are you fellows going to stand?" asked Trimble encouragingly.

"Bai Jove! You cheeky ass!"

"You had better put in something handsome, D'Arcy. Better than putting in on horses, I should think!"

"That's one for Trimble!" grinned Mellish.

Arthur Augustus flushed, but he made no rejoinder to that remark.

"What about you, Grundy?"

Grundy snorted.

"I should want to know where the money was going!" he said.

"It's going to the Cottage Hospital, of course. Can't you read?"

"You're not starting a tuckshop fund for the sole benefit of Baggy Trimble?" asked Dick Julian.

"If you think I'm capable of that, Julian—"

"I do, rather!" grinned Julian.

"As a matter of fact, Julian, you ought to

contribute something decent," said Trimble. "Your uncle, old Moses, is rolling in money, and you've got lots. Now, shell out, old chap, and show these fellows that a Jew can part with his money!"

Dick Julian laughed.

"I don't think you'll get either Jew or Gentile to trust you with cash, Baggy," he remarked.

"I say, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said the captain of the Shell gruffly. "Take that rubbish down off the wall, and dry up!"

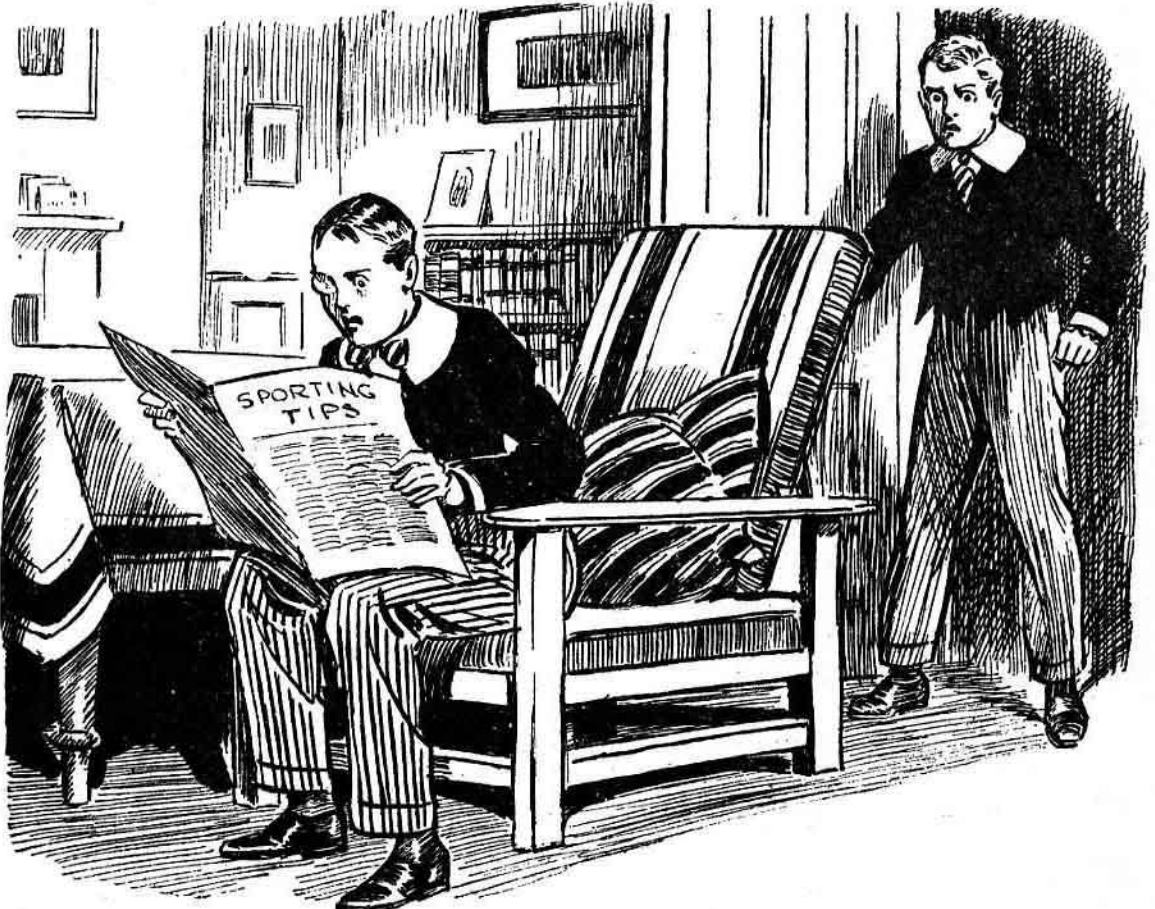
"Chuck it!" said Blake. "Don't we know you, you old spoofer?"

Baggy Trimble glared at the juniors in great wrath. He had evidently taken a great deal of trouble over that daubed notice, though he had not gone to the length of consulting a dictionary for the spelling.

Apparently he had expected it to produce a great effect upon the School House fellows.

There were always subscriptions from St. Jim's for Wayland Cottage Hospital, and there had been a good deal of discussion lately on the deficit in the accounts.

Baggy, having noted the general interest taken in the subject, had plainly seen a chance to do a little profiteering himself—or thought so, at all events.



"Fifteen to one against Jolly Wogah," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Bai Jove! If a fellow had ten pounds on Jolly Wogah he would bag a hundred and fifty pounds!" Jack Blake stared in astonishment as he entered Study No. 6.

He was disappointed.

The expression on Baggy's podgy face was of contempt and disgust and disappointment all rolled in one.

"You—you mean to say that you won't trust me with the funds?" he exclaimed at last, in great indignation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter at the idea.

"You duffer!" yelled Wilkins. "Do you think anybody would trust you with an empty sardine tin?"

"I'd rather trust a tramp myself," said Gunn.

"I suppose you fellows are joking," said Baggy. "Of course, I shall give you a receipt, and every shilling will be handed over to the Cottage Hospital."

"What about the half-crowns?" grinned Lowther

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The half-crowns, too, you ass! Are you going to stand half-a-crown, Lowther?"

"In fifty years' time. I shall be getting four half-crowns a week then for nothing, and I'll let you have one."

Trimble snorted. He did not want to wait for a whack in Monty Lowther's old-age pension.

"Well, I think this is pretty mean," he said. "What about you, Roylance? As a New Zealander you're called upon to set an example to the Old Country."

"I'll set the example of looking after my tin," answered Roylance, laughing.

"What about you, Clive? South Africa leads, you know," said Trimble encouragingly.

"In this case South Africa follows New Zealand," chuckled Sidney Clive.

"I say, Levison——"

"Rats!"

"Cardew, old chap——"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Well, of all the mean rotters!" exclaimed Trimble, in disgust. "Here's a cottage hospital in need of funds—out in the accounts to the tune of a hundred quid—and not a fellow here will stand a bob towards it! I'm really shocked! Why, they may have to close one or two wards if they don't get the account squared. Come, now, if——"

"I'm coming!" said Grundy.

He strode towards the fat Fourth Former.

"Good!" said Trimble. "You're a Briton, Grundy! You—yaroooh! Wharrer you at? Woop!"

George Alfred Grundy did not explain what he was at, but Trimble really did not need telling. Grundy grasped him by the collar and shook him, and Trimble howled and gasped spasmodically. The great Grundy had apparently thought the matter out, and decided to take a hand, and, as usual, he took a heavy hand.

CHAPTER 4.

Only Two Contributions!

"HELP! Yoop! Yow-ow-ow! Woop!"

Thus Puggy Trimble.

But there was no help for Trimble. This particularly barefaced attempt to exploit a worthy institution for the sake of "raising the wind" quite deprived Baggy of any sympathy.

Grundy shook him till even Grundy's powerful arm ached. Trimble's weight told, which was fortunate for Trimble. He looked like a quivering jelly when Grundy ceased to shake him at last.

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"Groo-hoo-hoo-wooh!" mumbled Trimble feebly.

"You fat villain!" said Grundy, still grasping him. "You want us to shell out for the Cottage Hospital, and you'll pocket the funds! I know you! You've played that kind of trick before!"

"Groogh!"

"Who's authorised you to collect money?"

"Woop!"

"Don't you know it's against the law to collect money without being properly authorised?"

"Groooch!"

"Now, you're asking us to shell out," continued Grundy, whose proceedings were watched with much interest by the fellows in the Common-room. "How much were you going to shell out yourself?"

"Gerroogh!"

"Now, then, speak up, before I start again."

"Ten pounds!" gasped Trimble.

"What? You mean ten pence, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ten pounds," spluttered Trimble. "I say ten pounds, and I mean ten pounds!"

"Got it about you?" grinned Cardew.

"I'm expecting a cheque from Trimble Hall——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You spoofing beast!" growled Grundy. "Never mind the cheque from Trimble Hall—if there is such a place. How much cash are you going to put in?"

"I—I—I——"

"So you weren't going to contribute yourself?" roared Grundy.

"Yes!" gasped the terrified Baggy. "I—I was going to put in half-a-crown. I haven't got any more, owing to lending my money to a New House fellow."

"You were going to contribute half-a-crown to the Cottage Hospital?"

"Yow! Yes."

"Good!" said Grundy. "If you do, I will."

Trimble brightened.

"Right you are! Leggo my collar! I'll give you a receipt——"

"Grundy, you ass!" exclaimed Wilkins. "Do you think your half-crown will ever get as far as Wayland if you give it to Trimble?"

"I'm not going to give it to Trimble," replied Grundy calmly. "I'm going to put it in the box downstairs along with Trimble's."

"Oh, I—I see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, much entertained by the expression on Baggy Trimble's face as Grundy marched him towards the door.

Trimble wriggled in the Shell fellow's powerful grasp. He might as well have struggled in the coils of a boa-constrictor.

"What are you wriggling about?" demanded Grundy. "This is the way to the collecting-box."

"I—I—I——"

"Oh, get a move on!"

Trimble disappeared from the Common-room, marched along by the neck. A crowd of fellows rushed after them.

Baggy's expression was almost agonised as he was brought up to the collection-box.

"There you are!" said Grundy.

"I—I say, Grundy——"

"There goes my half-crown," said Grundy, dropping in the coin with his free hand. "Now shove in yours. Sharp's the word!"

"But I—I say——"

"I give you half a minute before I bang your

napper on the box," said Grundy. "Time me, will you, Wilkins?"

"Certainly!" grinned Wilkins, taking out his watch.

"Oh dear! I—I say——"

"Go it, Baggy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Twenty seconds," said Wilkins.

"Look here, Grundy——"

"Twenty-five——"

Clink!

Baggy Trimble, with an expression of a victim suffering under a particularly hard-hearted dentist, dropped his half-crown into the box.

Grundy released him.

"Good man!" he said. "That shows you mean what you say, Trimble!"

"Oh dear!"

"When you've somebody holding you by the neck!" grinned Grundy. "Next time you raise a subscription for anything, you can rely on me to help you like this!"

"Ow!"

Trimble rolled away disconsolately.

The juniors returned, chuckling, to the Common-room, where Grundy detached Trimble's notice from the wall and shoved it into the fire. Trimble's dodges for raising the wind were more often failures than successes, but this one had been the most ghastly failure of Baggy's experience.

The unfortunate spoofer looked decidedly glum that evening. He was thinking of his half-crown; and, like Rachel of old, he mourned, and would not be comforted—not that anybody wanted to comfort him.

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the Common-room alone, Baggy Trimble rolled after him into the passage. He caught the swell of St. Jim's by the sleeve.

"I say, Gussy——"

"Pway do not address me as Gussy, Twimble! I object to it!"

"Look here, you know, will you lend me half-a-crown?" asked Trimble. "I've been swindled out of a half-crown!"

"Wats!"

"I'll settle up when I get back a pound I lent to Figgins of the New House."

"I wefuse to ccredit that Figgins would bowwow money of you, Twimble!"

"I—I mean Redfern——"

"Wubbish!"

"Look here, D'Arcy," said Trimble, adopting a threatening tone, much to the wrath and astonishment of Arthur Augustus, "you had better let me have that half-crown, I tell you!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Twimble!"

"Better than betting it on a horse!" sneered Trimble.

"Weally, you young wascal——"

"I know what your friends think about your goings-on!" said Baggy. "They're shocked, and I'm shocked—disgusted, in fact! I really don't know whether I ought to mention it to the House-master!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Can you lend me half-a-crown?" grinned Trimble.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"You howwid little beast!" he said, in measured tones. "I wefuse to have anythin' whatevah to do with you! You make me feel quite sick, Twimble!"

"You'd like me to tell Kildare, perhaps, that you're going in for horse-racing?" jeered Trimble.

"What's that?"

Kildare of the Sixth was coming along the corridor as Trimble made that remark.

The captain of St. Jim's halted and stared at the two juniors.

Arthur Augustus reddened.

"What do you mean by that, Trimble?" demanded Kildare. "How dare you accuse D'Arcy of anything of the kind, you young rascal?"

"Ask him if it isn't true, then!" growled Trimble.

Kildare looked at D'Arcy.

"I don't think I need ask you, D'Arcy. I am sure you have never done anything of the sort," he said.

"I have certainly nevah done anythin' of the sort so far, Kildare!" answered Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

Kildare smiled.

"So far?" he repeated. "I recommend you never to do anything of the sort, D'Arcy. Trimble, you had better take care what you say, or you will find yourself in trouble!"

He walked on, and D'Arcy, with a glance of utter contempt at Trimble, went on his way. Baggy Trimble snorted. The unscrupulous young rascal had been quite prepared to "squeeze" the noble Gussy for a loan, under the threat of revealing his supposed delinquency; but evidently that was no use.

For some time afterwards Baggy was seen haunting the hall near the hospital box, wherein reposed his half-crown—no longer his. The thought even crossed his fat mind of recovering his half-crown by burglarious methods. Fortunately for Baggy, he stopped short of that extreme.

The Duffer of Greyfriars!

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, is firmly of the opinion that he can play football better than anyone at Greyfriars; that he can master unruly fags; that he's a prize-fighter; in fact, that he can do anything and everything better than anyone else. His latest outbreak is to take on the role of detective! A sum of money has been stolen from the Head's study, and the great Horace determines to track down the thief. Laugh! You'll roar—when you read all about it in

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CHAPTER 5.

Astounding!

DICK JULIAN tapped Arthur Augustus on the sleeve as the Fourth Former came out after lessons the next morning.

Gussy gave him a smile. He rather liked Julian, and they had always been on good terms. Just now Gussy was not on the best of terms with his old chums. The incident of Jolly Roger and the racing paper worried Blake & Co., and made them a little "edgewise."

"Do you mind if I speak to you, Gussy," asked Julian, rather hesitatingly—"as a friend, I mean?"

"I twust you will always speak to me as a fviend, deah boy," answered the Honourable Arthur Augustus graciously.

"You won't think it cheek?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, look here, D'Arcy," said Julian bluntly, "there's been no end of talk about your borrowing that rotten racing paper from Racke. Of course, every fellow knows that you are incapable of shady things, but you're laying yourself open to misunderstanding."

"Weally, Julian, I wish the fellows would not wovwy about things that do not mattah to them!"

"But it does matter to them, D'Arcy."

"I fail to see how, deah boy."

"Perhaps you don't know that a lot of fellows look up to you, and that your example has a good deal of influence?" said Julian, with a smile.

"Bai Jove, it has nevah occurred to me, Julian; but that is certainly vevy wight and pwopah!" answered Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Well, then, if you get mixed up in shady things, you can see it may do harm to others as well as yourself."

"Yaas, I see the point, Julian. But I twust you do not mean to imply that I am capable of doin' anythin' shady?" said D'Arcy severely.

"I know you're not. But what the thump did you want with a racing paper?" demanded Julian. "What did you mean by babbling about Jolly Roger and the odds?"

No reply.

"Cooke says that Jolly Roger is a racehorse entered for the Traffield race on Saturday," went on Julian. "He's a rank outsider, Cooke says, and some sporting tipster fancies him as a winner. You don't care anything about Jolly Roger or any such silly, shady rot, D'Arcy? I've heard you say so."

"That is my opinion, Julian."

"Well, then, why can't you say out plain that you're not intending for a minute to back a silly horse for a silly race?"

"I—I could not vevy well make that statement, Julian," answered Arthur Augustus, after a long pause.

Dick Julian jumped.

"You don't mean to say that you are thinking of it?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"I wegard it as best to say nothin' on the subject at all, Julian."

Julian stared at him.

There was only one possible conclusion to be drawn from Arthur Augustus' words. It was no wonder that Julian was astonished.

"Oh!" he said at last. "In—in that case I'm sorry I spoke! I thought it was all a misunderstanding."

"He, he, he!"

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That cachinnation proceeded from Baggy Trimble.

Dick Julian spun round on him angrily. He had not observed the eavesdropping Baggy lurking close at hand.

"You've been listening, you fat rotter!" he exclaimed.

"I suppose I can walk in the quad if I like?" retorted Trimble. "I say, are you really going to back Jolly Roger, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to speak to you, Twimble!"

"Better not let Railton hear of it!" chuckled Trimble. "Fancy getting sacked from the school, Gussy!"

"You wottah!"

Dick Julian made a stride towards Baggy, who promptly retreated, still chuckling. It was not till he was at a safe distance that he called out defiantly: "Sheeny!" And then he was careful not to call loud enough for Julian to hear. Baggy was a prudent youth in some ways.

Julian had a troubled look.

"If you don't mind my asking you, D'Arcy," he said, "is this your own idea, or—or is any fellow putting you up to it?"

"Weally, Julian, I am not the kind of fellow to be led by the nose by anybody!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Ahem! Then it is your own idea?"

"Entirely!"

"Racke didn't suggest it?"

"I certainly should not listen to any suggestion fwom a shady, gamblin' boundah like Wacke!"

"But—but if you bet on races, aren't you becoming a gambling boulder yourself?" demanded Julian.

"Nothin' of the sort. I feah that I cannot explain fully, Julian. A youngstah like you would hardly undahstand that—"

"Oh!"

"You see, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, in quite a fatherly manner, "a gweat deal depends on a chap's motive. Suppose a chap did a thing that is genewally wegardad quite wightly as shady, but suppose it was for noble weasons—"

"Noble reasons!" murmured Julian, quite dazedly.

"Yaas."

"There is an old text, D'Arcy, that a fellow should not do evil that good may come of it," said Julian.

"Quite wight, as a wule, Julian. Unless a chap had plenty of weal tact and judgment it would be wisky to depart fwom the ordinawy wules. But this is not an ordinawy case."

"But—but—" Julian stammered. "D'Arcy, old man, it can't be right for any reason whatever to get mixed up in betting and gambling."

"I quite agwee with you. I wegard this as a painful and unpleasant duty for a good object."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I twust, Julian, that I have quite satisfied you, as I am sure you were speakin' in a fwiendly spivit."

"You've jolly well mystified me," said Julian. "I'm blessed if I can understand you; but it's your own bisney, I suppose. Will you come over to Wayland with me this afternoon, D'Arcy? I'm going to see my uncle, and he would be glad to see you again."

"I should vevy much like to see Mr. Moses again, deah boy, but I am sowwy I'm booked for this aftahnoon. Anothah time, if you will be so kind as to wepeat your invitation."

"Right you are!" said Julian.

And he left D'Arcy, feeling that it was useless to pursue the subject further. Julian said

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Beards grow more slowly in the winter than in the summer, we read. Another way of telling the time of year is to keep a calendar!

Nobody can afford to take a narrow view of what goes on in the outside world to-day, says an authority. What about booking-clerks?

A successful trombone player, like a boxer, needs perfect breathing, says Herries of the Fourth. And a long reach!

"Cement Hardens," says a City page headline. That is the accepted idea!

Next: "This town is infested with some of the cleverest pickpockets in the States," said the visitor to a Middle West city. "Why, the last time I was here, they not only stole my trousers, but hung weights on my braces so I shouldn't know they were gone!"

When learning to skate, always look upwards, and not at your feet, says the gym instructor. Of course, if you look upwards and still see your feet, you're doing it wrong!

Early rising is all very well, observes a

nothing of D'Arcy's astounding confession, but Trimble did; and the looks that were cast at Arthur Augustus at the dinner-table that day were many and expressive.

After dinner, Blake, Herries, and Digby joined him. The swell of St. Jim's met them with a somewhat severe look.

But Blake & Co. did not mind that. They were anxious about their chum, and had wisely decided not to take offence, when apparently D'Arcy was in need of his friends to keep him from getting into trouble.

"Come on, old scout!" said Jack Blake, with forced good-humour. "Tom Merry's making up a party to raid the New House bounders this afternoon."

"Bai Jove! I am sowwy I can't come, deah boy!"

"Nothing on this afternoon?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, as it happens."

"Well, if it's anything good we'll come with you instead of going on the warpath. Anything to oblige. What's on?"

"Ahem!"

"Going to see Cousin Ethel?" asked Dig.

"N-no!"

"Don't say it's your tailor!" grunted Herries.

"It is not my tailah, Hewwies!"

reader, but where does it get you? Frankly, it gets us down!

News: Thieves ransacked a fish-and-chip shop in Weyland. Chips that pass in the night.

"Bus Conductor Becomes Goalkeeper." Instead of bawling the stops, he now stops the balls!

Third-Form Flash: "Hasn't that cow got a lovely coat?" said Curly Gibson to Wally D'Arcy, out for a stroll. "It's a Jersey," explained Wally. "Oh," said Gibson, "I thought it was its skin!"

Reply to Wilkins: To cure Grundy of snoring, you should try quiet, friendly co-operation, appreciating that snoring is really beyond his control. Better still, stuff an old sock in his mouth!

A former author is one of the prisoners in an American gaol. He claims he is still a best-celler!

Figgins was making a wry face over a cake Fatty Wynn had made with his own hands. "Don't look like that, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn; "there can't be anything wrong with it. The cookery-book says it's delicious!"

Try this: "It's hard to tell what the public wants," sighed the playwright, when hisses and groans greeted his new play. "Easy enough in this case," replied the manager. "They want their money back!"

Yes, and I hear young Jameson of the Third laughed so long at a comedy film in the Wayland Empire, that the manager had to tell him they were closing. S'fact!

Lots of laughs again next week, chaps!

"Well, what is it?" demanded Blake bluntly. "You're going to tell us, I suppose, if we're coming with you?"

"Ahem! The—fact is, Blake, I am bound to be alone this afternoon," said Arthur Augustus, turning very red. "I am sowwy—"

Blake reddened, too.

"You don't want us?" he snapped.

"Pway do not put it like that, Blake," said D'Arcy gently. "I happen to have a wathah pwivate engagement, that is all."

Blake breathed hard.

"Look here, D'Arcy, I've already heard that you've asked Racke where Banks, the bookie, can be found. Are you going to visit him this afternoon?"

Blake expected—and sincerely hoped for—an indignant reply. But Arthur Augustus did not even speak. He only stood silent, with his face growing more and more crimson.

The three chums blinked at him, fairly stupefied.

"You—you—then you are going to see that swindling blackguard?" fairly stuttered Blake.

Arthur Augustus raised his head loftily.

"It is wathah bad form to ask a fellow

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questions, Blake. I'm sowwy to have to point this out to you."

"Are you going to see Banks?" shrieked Blake.

"I wefuse to weply."

"Well, he won't want us if he's going to the Green Man," snapped Herries. "Give our regards to your pal there, Gussy, and tell him we hope he'll soon be in prison. Br-r-r-r!"

Herries walked away. Blake and Dig stood angry and undecided, and Arthur Augustus walked off and left them standing.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake.

"My only aunt!" murmured Dig.

"He's potty, Dig!"

"Going to see Banks!" said Blake dazedly.

"Going to the Green Man—a low pub! Why, it would be a flogging if he were caught there!"

"Or the sack!"

"He's mad!"

"Mad as a hatter!"

"And he's not going!" said Blake, setting his teeth. "I don't know what's gone wrong with his brain, but he's not going to make a shady fool of himself. He's going to be stopped!"

"Good!" said Dig.

"Let's go and tell Tom Merry we can't come with his gang, and then we'll get Gussy up to the study and keep him there."

"Jolly good wheeze!"

And Blake and Dig went into the School House to look for Tom Merry. Unfortunately for their friendly plans, Arthur Augustus was walking out of the gates of St. Jim's while they were looking for Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 6.

Taking the Plunge!

"**B**AI Jove, I weally don't like goin' in!"

Arthur Augustus had stopped at some little distance from that delectable resort, the Green Man at Rylcombe.

He was hesitating.

He had learned a good deal from Aubrey Racke of the Shell. Perhaps, by way of avenging the licking he had received from Blake, Racke was eager to do all he could in helping to bring Gussy up in the way he should not go.

Racke had been astonished, but pleased. Arthur Augustus was a most desirable recruit for the shady set.

D'Arcy certainly seemed to be quite unaware that there was anything shady in his proceedings. But he was the only person who was unaware of it.

Perhaps Gussy was acting on the rule that to the pure all things are pure. Racke's opinion was that Lord Eastwood's son wanted to go the pace, and Racke was keen to help him on that honourable path.

He had willingly placed all his knowledge at D'Arcy's disposal, and Aubrey Racke knew a great deal about bookmakers, and the odds, and the dates and places of racing, and winners, and outsiders, and so forth, though not so much as he thought he knew, perhaps.

He knew enough, at any rate, to make the down-fall step easy for the guileless Gussy.

He told him where to find Mr. Joseph Banks, and at what time. He assured him that Mr. Banks would be only too happy to oblige him, and even sent a note privately to Mr. Banks, apprising him that a very valuable pigeon was about to flutter into the set. That latter circumstance, needless to say, Aubrey did not mention to the swell of St. Jim's.

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But now that he had arrived at the delectable spot where Mr. Banks, for the present, had pitched his tent, a very natural hesitation came over Arthur Augustus.

He knew the penalty attached to frequenting such a place as this, but he was not thinking of the danger. He was feeling a natural repugnance to setting his foot in such a place.

And the thought of Mr. Banks filled him with revulsion. He had seen the fat, loudly dressed man hanging about Rylcombe, and had not liked his looks. And, in spite of his present strange proceedings, Gussy's antipathy to gambling and gamblers was as strong as ever.

As he stood hesitating in the lane, within sight of the public-house, a lad came through the hedge, grinned at him, and touched a ragged cap.

"Follow me, sir!" he said.

Arthur Augustus brought his eyeglass to bear on the youth in surprise.

"Bai Jove! Why should I follow you, deah boy?" he asked.

"Mr. Banks sent me, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

"He seed you from the winder," explained the youth. "You foller me, and I'll take you in at the back, quiet like."

"Bai Jove! Mr. Banks must have known that I was comin' to see him!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "He must be a thought-weadah. Pewwaps Wacke has given him a hint, howevah. Pway lead the way, my lad."

The lad grinned and led the way.

Keeping under the trees, Arthur Augustus followed him, and was led into the garden of the public-house by a side gate.

"Come into the 'ouse, or wait 'ere, sir?" asked the lad.

"If Mr. Banks will be so vevy kind as to come out—"

"I'll tell him, sir."

The boy vanished through the rough, tangled thickets in the inn garden. Arthur Augustus waited under the trees, somewhat relieved in his mind. He was very glad to avoid entering the public-house itself.

He had only a few minutes to wait for Mr. Banks. That gentleman's fat, red face came in sight through the trees very soon.

Mr. Banks was geniality itself.

He could scarcely believe in his good luck at netting such a pigeon as the son of Lord Eastwood. What he picked up from foolish and reckless young fellows who thought they knew a thing or two was a valuable consideration to him; but the Honourable Arthur Augustus was a richer prize than he had ever thought of bagging. Properly handled, he considered the unfortunate Gussy might be a regular income to him.

"Very glad to see you, sir," said Mr. Banks effusively. "So kind of you, sir, to give me a look in! This is an honour, Master D'Arcy. Anythin' I can do for you, sir? Quite at your service."

"You are vevy kind, Mr. Banks," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat embarrassed.

"Not at all, sir. Young gentlemen like a flutter now and then. Bless your 'eart, sir, I've been a boy myself!" beamed Mr. Banks. "I thought you'd rather drop in quietly, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Another time you'll know your way better, sir," said Mr. Banks jocularly.

"Bai Jove, I shall not be comin' any more!"

"I hope you will, sir. Very welcome at any

time. Perhaps you'd be so kind as to step into my little room—very quiet and private like," suggested Mr. Banks.

"If agreeable to you, Mr. Banks, I would wathah twansact the business here."

"Just as you wish, sir."

The bookmaker leaned against a tree, and lighted a cigarette. He offered the case to Arthur Augustus, who repressed a shudder and shook his head.

"To come to business, Mr. Banks, I undahstand that you take bets on waces and things?"

"That's my business, Master D'Arcy. Only too happy to oblige you."

"I shall be there, sir," answered Mr. Banks. "Anything I can put on for you?"

"Have you heard of a horse named Jolly Wogah?"

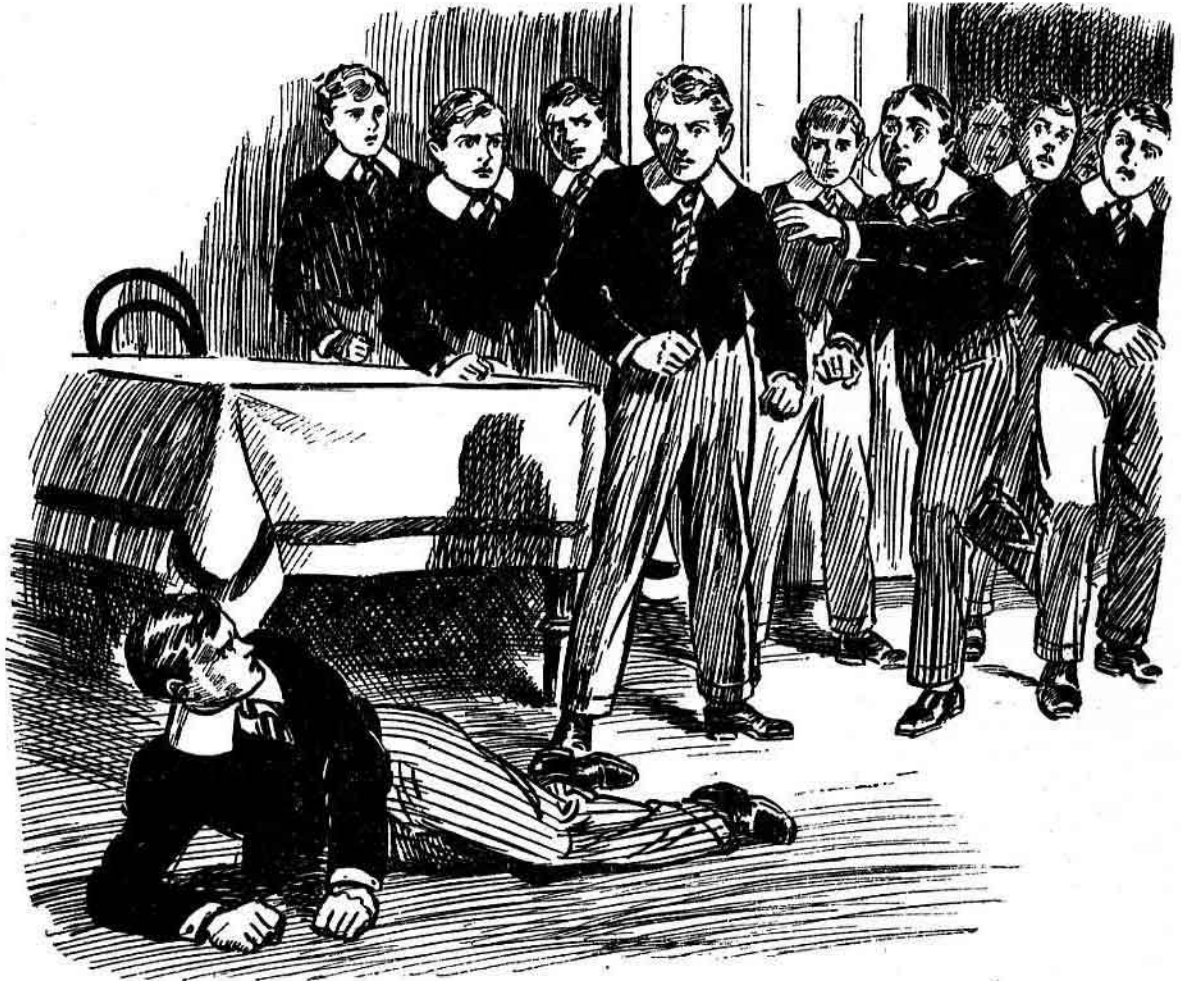
"You bet!"

"I undahstand that odds of fifteen to one are offered against that horse, Mr. Banks?"

"That's the figure."

"Then if I lay a pound on the cweatuah, I am paid fifteen pounds if he wins the wace?"

"Exactly—if he does," said Mr. Banks, without stating his opinion as to the huge dimensions of the "if."



Wacke went down at last under a hard blow and lay gasping on the floor. There was a scuffle in the passage and Arthur Augustus forced his way through the crowd. "Blake, you silly ass, let Wacke alone!" he shouted. "He lent me that wacin' papah at my own wequest!"

Mr. Banks did not add that the Green Man was "not a place within the meaning of the Act." Arthur Augustus was evidently under the impression that a betting man could make bets anywhere he pleased.

"I don't know vevy much about such things," confessed Arthur Augustus; "but Wacke says you will take bets."

"We live and learn, sir," answered Mr. Banks, who really did not need telling that D'Arcy did not know much about such things.

"Pewwaps you know all about the Twaffield Waces next Saturday, Mr. Banks?"

"Then if I want to win a hundwed pounds——"

"Eh?"

"A hundwed pounds——"

"You—you want to—to win a hundwed pounds?"

"Yaas."

"Oh!" murmured Mr. Banks, eyeing Arthur Augustus. "N-no reason why you shouldn't, sir, if you have the luck."

"I am wathah lucky sometimes," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Last Chwistmas I won a gweat many nuts at a wound game."

"Nuts!" murmured Mr. Banks, almost overcome. "Oh, yes, yes! I—I see! Nuts!"

"Yaas."

"I 'ope you 'ave the luck when there's something better than nuts on the game, Master D'Arcy!" smiled the fat gentleman.

"What? I twust, sir, that you do not suppose that I have evah played cards for money!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"What-a-at?"

"Howevah," went on Arthur Augustus hastily, "to come to the point. If I want to win a hundred pounds, I shall have to put, say, seven pounds on that horse?"

"As near as a toucher, sir," replied Mr. Banks. "About that. A little less; but—but make it seven."

"Will you take the bet, Mr. Banks?"

"Oh corks!"

"What did you say?"

"I—I said, certainly, Master D'Arcy! Only too happy to oblige a really sporting young gent!"

"One moment, howevah! A chap in a papah says that he thinks that Jolly Wogah will win the three o'clock wace."

"Does he?"

"Yaas. A chap who signs himself 'Tippy Tipster' in a papah called 'Sportin' Tips.'"

"I—I dare say he knows what he's talking about," murmured Mr. Banks.

"Yaas. I suppose a chap who w'ites for wacin' papahs knows all about the horses and things?"

"Oh, yes!" smiled Mr. Banks. "A tipstah has to give some horse, and if he doesn't have any fancy, he may toss up a penny to see which name he shall recommend as the winner, and sometimes it comes off. But, of course, nothing of that kind with Tippy Tipster, of 'Sporting Tips.' He's a knowing card, he is—all there, with the wool on, and no mistake. I—I dare say he's got the information from the stable—straight from the 'orse's mouth, sir."

"Yaas. That chap w'ites in such a positive way that I felt quite convinced he knows all about it," said Arthur Augustus. "What is your opinion, Mr. Banks?"

"Mum-mum-my opinion?"

"Yaas. As a pofessional man in that kind of business, I suppose you know all about it?"

"Ye-es, certainly!"

"Then pewwaps you will tell me your opinion of Jolly Wogah's chance."

Mr. Banks did not reply for a moment or two. He had to recover his breath first.

CHAPTER 7.

Wrathful Pals!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY waited. Mr. Banks was simply blinking at him.

Whether Gussy was a sublimely innocent youth, or whether he was a particularly "downy" bird, Joseph Banks could not make up his mind.

Certainly so much innocence of the world had never come in Mr. Banks' way before. Innocence of any kind did not flourish in such surroundings as Joseph Banks was accustomed to.

That D'Arcy should suppose he would lay fifteen to one in "quids" against a horse if he thought that horse was likely to win was really a "corker."

Apparently, Arthur Augustus thought it was a bookmaker's business to make bets, irrespective of any question of profit or loss. What the book-makers and the whole racing fraternity lived on

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in that case was evidently a question D'Arcy had not yet considered.

"Well, sir," said Arthur Augustus, surprised at the fat gentleman's silence, "I twust you do not object to givin' me your opinion?"

"Sus-sus-certainly not!" stuttered Mr. Banks.

"Pewwaps you have seen the horse?"

"Oh, yes! I—I've seen him!"

"Is he a good horse?"

"Topping!" gasped Mr. Banks.

"Likely to win the wace, you considah?"

"Oh, my eye!" murmured Mr. Banks weakly. Aloud he went on: "Quite likely, sir, I should say. Of course, you can never tell. There's chances for and chances against. But if I was a young gent looking for a flutter, I—I should certainly put my money on Jolly Roger."

"Vewy good!" said Arthur Augustus. "But isn't it wathah queeah, Mr. Banks, that if Jolly Wogah is pwactically certain of winnin' the book-makers offah such vewy long odds against him?"

"Oh, they—they're a sporting lot!" said Mr. Banks, gasping. "Never was such a thorough-going lot of sportsmen as the bookies, sir! Look at me, f'rinstance! I think Jolly Roger's a good 'orse—a jolly good 'orse—but I'm willing to take your money and chance it!"

That statement was quite true; Mr. Banks was not only willing—he was eager—to take the schoolboy's money. As for the "chance," the less said about that the better.

"That is weally vewy sportin' of you, Mr. Banks!" said Arthur Augustus, feeling his opinion of the fat gentleman rising.

"Oh, business, sir—business!" answered Mr. Banks. "Happy to oblige, sir! You lay your bet, and if Jolly Roger wins there's a 'undred of the best for you on Saturday afternoon!"

Arthur Augustus paused a little.

Innocent as he was, Arthur Augustus could not fail to be aware that Mr. Banks could not produce a hundred pounds on demand. He looked, indeed, as if a demand for a hundred shillings would strain his finances.

Perhaps Mr. Banks guessed his thoughts—Gussy's face was very expressive—for he went on quickly:

"You see, sir, a bookie has a lot of irons in the fire. If I lose money on Jolly Roger I win money on another horse; I may drop a 'undred quids on one gee, and bag double as much on another. What a man loses on the swings he gets back on the roundabouts, you see."

"I see!" assented Arthur Augustus. "That makes it quite cleah! I think I will make that bet, Mr. Banks. Of course, I am not goin' to keep the money I win."

"Not k-keep it?"

"Oh, no! I should wegard that as gamblin'!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Banks.

"You see, I wequiah a hundwed pounds for a vewy particulah purpose," explained Arthur Augustus. "In the circs, I wegard the end as justifyin' the means. I admit that that is wathah a dangewous wule to follow; but, bein' a fellow of some tact and judgment, I can wely upon my own discretion."

"Pip-pip-precisely!" stuttered Mr. Banks, wondering whether he was dreaming.

"Then I will hand you seven pounds, Mr. Banks, and call on Saturday for the winnings."

"That's right, Master D'Arcy!"

"Unfortunately, I do not happen to have the money—"

"Eh?"

Detective Kerr
Investigates

No. 31.

**THE GREAT
STAMP
MYSTERY.**



WHEN Patrick Reilly, an ardent stamp collector, found a British Guiana one cent stamp of 1856 in a packet of loose stamps purchased in Wayland, his delight knew no bounds. This was the rarest stamp in the world—worth thousands of pounds! Crooke of the Shell was one of the first to congratulate Reilly on his good fortune—adding the suggestion that Reilly should get a big London dealer down to make an offer for it. “Detective” Kerr, a keen philatelist himself, was surprised at Crooke’s cordiality, as he knew Reilly had punched Crooke on the nose only a few days before. Detective Kerr decided to check up on the facts.

KERR: Seems to be your lucky day, Reilly. Have you actually got a British Guiana one cent stamp of 1856?

REILLY: Sure, ’tis meself that’s more surprised than ye are, Kerr! I was going through this packet, labelled “Foreign,” when the British Guiana stamp almost popped out under my nose. Tare and ouns, but ’tis worth every penny of a thousand pounds, I’m thinking!

KERR: Rather more than that, if it’s genuine, I should imagine. There’s only one specimen known. When did you buy the packet?

REILLY: This afternoon I glanced through the stamps, and then went up to the dorm to change. When I came down, almost the first stamp I picked up was this one. Look at it, Kerr!

KERR: So that’s the stamp? British Guiana, 1856. It looks genuine enough—though it’s often difficult to tell a fake from the original, if it’s well done.

REILLY: That’s no fake, Kerr. I’m wealthy, entirely! What a spread I’ll be giving to all the fellows—

KERR: I shouldn’t be too sure, Reilly. I think I can get a book with an exact facsimile of a British Guiana one cent 1856 in it. Wait till we’ve compared the two before you send for that expert from London!

KERR: Crooke, will you do me a favour? I want to borrow that book of yours—the one giving the facsimiles of famous stamps.

CROOKE: I’ve no such book, Kerr. I don’t take that much interest in stamps, though I have collected a few.

KERR: I must have been mistaken. What’s your opinion of Reilly’s discovery?

CROOKE: I haven’t had a chance to examine it closely. You see, I’ve been down to Rylcombe—I only came in a few minutes ago. Reilly showed me the stamp, and I suggested getting a London dealer to see it, that’s all.

KERR: Rather decent of you, Crooke—considering you and Reilly were fighting only a few days back.

CROOKE: Oh, I’m willing to let bygones be bygones, if Reilly is!

KERR: Hallo, Trimble! I should have thought you’d have been paying court to the rich man. Haven’t you heard about Reilly’s stamp?

TRIMBLE: Everybody has by now. I hope it’s a fake. Do you know, the mean rotter actually refused to cash a five bob postal order for me in advance—when he knows he’ll soon have millions—

KERR: Shocking!

TRIMBLE: Reilly is meaner than Crooke. I looked into Crooke’s study an hour ago to borrow a bob, and Crooke simply hurled a book at me. Said he had some lines to do that would take him all the afternoon. As if he couldn’t have spared a shilling for an old pal!

KERR: Is that the book Crooke buzzed at you?

TRIMBLE: Yes. A stamp collector’s handbook.

Crooke said if I was hungry I’d better eat it!

KERR: Well, Trimble, here’s your bob—the book may be of more interest to me than to you!

KERR: Sorry, Reilly, about your stamp—

REILLY: Phwat about it, Kerr? I’ve got it here, safe and sound—

KERR: But it’s a fake. A carelessly made copy, foisted upon you by a fellow who wanted to raise your hopes for nothing.

REILLY: But it was in the packet I left on the table. Look, British Guiana one cent 1856. What’s wrong with that?

KERR: Plenty.

(Did Crooke plant the fake stamp on Reilly? If so, where does he give himself away? Kerr’s solution is on page 33.)

“Pewwaps you could awwange it like this, howevah. You make the bet, and when Jolly Wogah has won, you hand me ninety-thwee pounds instead of a hundwed. That will come to the same thing, won’t it?”

Mr. Banks looked at the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

His suspicion was strengthening that that elegant young gentleman was, after all, a “downy bird,” and was bent on pulling his leg.

But he was not sure, and so he answered with great politeness:

“I’m afraid that won’t do, Master D’Arcy.

You see, it’s one of the rules that unless the actual money is staked the bet doesn’t hold good.”

“Oh, that is wathah unfortunate! Then it will be strictly necessary for me to hand you seven pounds?”

“Business can’t be done without, sir!”

“Vewy well.” Arthur Augustus took out his pocket-book. “I have thwee pounds at pwesent, Mr. Banks. I will send on the othah four. Will that do?”

“Any time up to the actual hour of the race, sir.”

“Vewy good! Pway take these thwee notes.”
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Mr. Banks almost grabbed them.

"I will send the west-to-mowwow at the latest, Mr. Banks. That will be all wight?"

"Right as rain, Master D'Arcy!" said Mr. Banks heartily, convinced at last that the school-boy was not a downy bird, but the most unsuspecting pigeon he had ever plucked. "That bet's made, sir!"

"Thank you vewy much, Mr. Banks! I am weally vewy much obliged to you! Good-aftahnoon!"

"Good-afternoon, sir!"

Arthur Augustus left the inn garden, glad to get out of it. Mr. Joseph Banks stood staring after him, and then at three currency notes in his hand, almost dazedly.

"My heye!" murmured Mr. Banks. "Strike me pink!"

And the fat gentleman toddled off to the Green Man at once and stood himself a drink, which he felt that he deserved for keeping his face straight during that talk with the amateur sportsman.

Arthur Augustus came out into the lane again, and sauntered away towards St. Jim's, feeling satisfied in his mind.

There was a sudden shout as he came round the bend in the lane.

"Here he is!"

The next moment Arthur Augustus was surrounded by Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three. Tom Merry & Co., in the kindness of their hearts, had given up the raid on the New House fellows that afternoon in order to look after Gussy—rather too late, as it happened.

"Yaas, here I am, deah boys," said D'Arcy calmly. "Anythin' wanted?"

"Yes; you're wanted!" said Tom Merry. "We've been hunting for you!"

"I weally do not see why you should hunt for me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Have you been to the Green Man?" hooted Blake.

No answer.

"Have you seen Banks?" yelled Manners.

"I wefuse to weply."

"Then you've been!" said Blake, aghast. "I—I suppose you haven't really been idiot enough,

and blackguard enough, to make bets with that beast?"

"I wefuse to weply to a fellow who uses such extwemely oppwobwious expwessions wegardin' me!"

"Have you made any bets with him?" demanded Lowther.

"Wats!"

"He's potty!" said Tom Merry, in wonder. "He must be loose in the crumpet. If he was sane he couldn't act the goat like Racke!"

"If you compare me with Wacke, Tom Mewwy, I'll—"

"If you play shady tricks like Racke you must expect to be thought of as Racke's thought of!" answered Tom.

"The mattah is quite diffewent, you ass!"

"Oh rats!"

"The fact is, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, looking round placidly at his exasperated friends—"the fact is, you fellows are judgin' in a mattah you don't weally undahstand at all. I am twyin' to be patient with you; but, weally, you are vewy pwovokin'. Howevah, I am glad I have met you, as I want to bowwow some money!"

"Money!"

"Yaas. I wequiah four pounds!"

"What's become of the remittance you had yesterday?" asked Dig.

"That was not suffish for my purpose, Dig. I wequiah four pounds. I will return it to you on Saturday."

"Do you want the money for making bets with?" asked Tom Merry, in blank wonder.

"It would be more judicious not to ask questions, Tom Mewwy, as I cannot weply to them."

"Well, you won't borrow any money from us to make bets," said Blake grimly—"not a half-penny, you frabjous ass!"

"I withdwaw my wequest," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"You'll also undertake not to make any bets, or to see that scoundrel Banks again, or you'll get bumped!" roared Blake.

"Wats!"

"Will you promise?"

"Certainly not!"

"You mean to take up this blackguardly rot, then, and get yourself known as a sneaking, gambling, disgraceful blackguard like Racke?" demanded Blake.

"Wubbish!"

"He must be potty!" said Monty Lowther.

"Either that, or he's pulling our leg!" said Blake. "In either case, he wants a lesson, and he's going to have one. Bump him!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back.

"Weally, you fellows—you uttah asses, leggo! Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. were exasperated, which was not surprising in the circumstances. They collared Arthur Augustus without ceremony, and swung him off his feet, struggling.

"Now will you promise to keep clear of that shady rotter and all his rot?" shouted Blake.

"Wats!"

Bump!

"Yawwooooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Then Tom Merry & Co., in great wrath and indignation, walked away, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting in the road, dusty and dishevelled

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and furious. The way of the amateur sportsman was hard, when he happened to have such devoted friends as Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 8.

Misunderstood!

TOM MERRY & CO. were puzzled and worried. The next day they were still thinking over the problem.

What to think of it beat them hollow, as Blake remarked. It was not merely that the great Gussy had slid into shady ways; that was bad enough. But he seemed so perfectly satisfied with himself all the time—so evidently regarded himself as being, like Cæsar's wife, above reproach.

Although he had obviously entered into a betting transaction with a bookmaker—and a very particularly disreputable bookmaker—he seemed to be quite unaware that he had fallen to the level of Racke, Crooke, and Clampe.

The slightest hint that he resembled Aubrey Racke in the remotest degree was sufficient to raise his wrath.

It was really a puzzle.

Racke & Co. themselves were astonished and perplexed. They were quite prepared to take the new recruit to their heart, and acknowledge him as one of themselves—in fact, to make much of him, and stand him no end of cigarettes in the study, and beam upon him at banker and nap.

But Arthur Augustus had apparently set himself a limit, which was not very reasonable, but was very fixed and firm.

When Racke offered him a smoke, he gave Racke a crushing look, turned on his heel, and walked away without speaking.

When Clampe asked him to his study in the New House for a quiet game, he told Clampe what he thought of him and his quiet game; and what he thought was not at all complimentary.

Leslie Clampe was left quite speechless. Clampe couldn't see why a fellow who betted on horses couldn't play nap for half-crowns; and, really, there was some excuse for Clampe there. He couldn't see any difference between the two.

Apparently Arthur Augustus could.

Gussy refused a pressing invitation into Racke's study in the evening with something less than his customary politeness.

He even gave Mellish of the Fourth a fatherly lecture when he found that weedy youth poring over a racing paper. This sublime cheek, as Mellish regarded it, took Percy's breath quite away.

Tom Merry & Co. observed all this, and it made them wonder more and more. Really it looked as if D'Arcy considered that a thing was right if he did it, his lofty touch turning black into white.

He was somewhat cold to his old chums.

They were wrathful; but D'Arcy's expression was more of sorrow than of anger, like that of a fellow misunderstood.

But what was there to misunderstand? Blake asked his chums, in hopeless wrath and amazement. The facts were the facts, weren't they?

Herries and Dig agreed that the facts were the facts, and that the facts spoke for themselves.

Yet it was clear that Gussy looked upon himself as being misunderstood and misjudged, and he was very lofty about it indeed.

Blake confessed that it beat him, and he gave it up.

Duck Julian had some thinking to do on the matter, as well as Gussy's more immediate friends. For it was to Julian that Gussy had recourse for the four pounds he still required.

He requested that loan in a cheerful manner, without the slightest sign of a guilty conscience.

Julian had plenty of money, being well supplied by his uncle, Mr. Moses, of Wayland. He would willingly have lent D'Arcy anything. But he hesitated now.

"Till Saturday," added Arthur Augustus. "I shall return the sum on Saturday, deah boy, aftah thwee o'clock."

Julian paused.

He had only too clear an idea what the money was wanted for; but he could not refuse Arthur Augustus, and he felt he could not ask questions. He handed over the four currency notes, after that brief pause. Arthur Augustus gracefully acknowledged the loan, and went up to Study No. 6 for an envelope. He had finished enclosing the notes when Dick looked in.

"Excuse me, Gussy—" began Julian.

"Yaas, deah boy. Twot in!"

"I don't want to interfere, of course; but—but if you're sending that cash to somebody we're not allowed to know—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm not going to give you advice about that, D'Arcy," said Julian hastily. "But if that letter's to Mr. Banks, don't drop it in the school letter-box. It might be spotted there, and get you into trouble."

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that!" he ejaculated.

It was as good as an admission that the letter was to Mr. Banks, and Dick Julian's handsome face clouded.

"I will walk down to the post-box in the lane," said Arthur Augustus, after a moment's thought. "Thank you vevy much, Julian."

"D'Arcy, old chap," said Julian, "must you send the letter? Wouldn't it be better to—to—"

"You do not understand, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with his fatherly smile. "It is all wight."

"But—but—"

"You can wely on a fellow of tact and judgment to look aftah himself," said Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "I wepeat that it is all wight."

"You can't touch pitch without being defiled, D'Arcy."

OVERSEAS "FOOTER-STAMPS" WINNERS!

In the September contest, prizes of Five Shillings each have been awarded to the following twenty-five readers who submitted the highest scores received, which ranged from 38 "goals" and upwards:

Victor Campbell, N.S.W., Australia; Hui Siew Chow, Perak, F.M.S.; H. F. Cilliers, Wynberg, South Africa; Victor Cilliers, Cape, South Africa; Allan Cook, Victoria, Australia; W. Endean, Johannesburg, South Africa; L. W. Haer, Queensland, Australia; Teo Sit Hu, Singapore, S.S.; Cameron Jamieson, Manitoba, Canada; Louis Klein, Pretoria, South Africa; Magnus Levy, Pretoria, South Africa; D. Little, Natal, South Africa; R. S. O'Connor, Natal, South Africa; Thomas Parker, N.S.W., Australia; Jack G. Reader, The Hague, Holland; P. N. Roberts, Nairobi, Kenya; Ernest Robinson, B.C., Canada; Charles Ryan, Queensland, Australia; James Sandell, Tigne, Malta; H. Schneider, De Aar, South Africa; Harold Sellkson, O.F.S., South Africa; R. I. Shake, Natal, South Africa; J. Sismey, Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Johan van Niekes, Transvaal, South Africa; F. C. Wong, Singapore, S.S.

"There are exceptional cases, deah boy. This is one of them."

Julian felt that it was hopeless. But, though he could not save Gussy from the false step itself, he wanted to save him from possible ill-consequences if he could.

"Excuse me, once more, D'Arcy; but have you put a letter in that envelope along with the notes—anything in your own hand?"

"Yaas, natuwally!"

"Don't do it, then. That man Banks is an awful rascal. He will keep anything he can get in your hand, to hold over you another time."

D'Arcy jumped.

"Gweat Scott! I am sure the fellow would not be such a wascal, Julian."

"I think he would."

"But there is nothin' w'ong in my note—only a statement that I am enclosin' four pounds, as awwanged," said D'Arcy innocently.

"What would the Head think of it if he saw it, D'Arcy?"

"H'm!"

"Take the letter out," urged Julian. "Put in the currency notes, and put your message on a sheet of paper, in capital letters, not your own hand—"

"That would be showin' distwust that would be vevy insultin' to Mr. Banks, Julian," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head.

"But it would be safe. If you must do this, don't put yourself under that man's thumb as well."

"I could not possibly have dealings with a man whom I wegarded with so much distwust," said Arthur Augustus. "I am vevy much obliged to you, Julian, but you are weally wathah uneasy about nothin'. That man Banks is not such a bad sort in his way—quite sportin', in fact, in his shady way. I do not appwove of him or his business—"

"You—you don't?"

"Certainly not. I wegard bettin' on horses as low and immowal."

"Oh!" gasped Julian.

"But he is all wight in his way; quite sportin', accordin' to his lights. This lettah will be all wight. Don't you wowwy, deah boy!"

And with a reassuring smile, Arthur Augustus walked out of the study, letter in hand, leaving Julian dumbfounded.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Takes a Hand!

"HALLO! What do you fags want?"

Tom Merry asked that question the following evening.

The Terrible Three were on the landing when Wally & Co. of the Third made their appearance.

D'Arcy minor was followed by Levison minor, Hobbs, and Joe Frayne. The fags were all grinning.

"We're going to see my major," said Wally loftily. "We've got to talk to him, haven't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Hobbs.

"You bet!" said Joe Frayne, with a chuckle.

"You Shell bounders can come, if you like," said Wally condescendingly. "It may do you good to hear us, if you've got any hankering after the downward path and the road to ruin and the rest of it."

"Oh!" said Tom.

The fags marched on to Study No. 6, and the



"Look here, Grundy——" began Baggy Trimble. "You George Alfred, "or I'll bang your napper on it!" With a flourish, Baggy dropped

chums of the Shell, after exchanging a glance, followed them.

They could guess that the rumour of D'Arcy's delinquency had reached the Third Form. Wally of the Third had come to talk to his major about it.

D'Arcy minor pitched open the door of Study No. 6, where Blake & Co. were at tea—a rather moody tea. D'Arcy major was looking very cold and lofty and misjudged, and his chums were troubled and glum. They stared at the quartet of fags in the doorway.

"Buzz off!" said Jack Blake gruffly.

"Bow-wow!" answered Wally independently.

"We've come here to talk to Gussy."

"Go ahead, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Stand up!" rapped out Wally.

"What?"

"Stand up and look me in the face!" said D'Arcy minor severely.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet in astonishment.

"Weally, you young ass——" he began.

"Now, you've got to answer for yourself," said Wally, in quite a magisterial manner. "I've brought my friends to hear you. There's a rumour about you, Gussy, and the rumour is that you've taken up Racke's game——"

"Oh wats!"

"Yes or no?" demanded Reggie Manners.



got five seconds to put the half-a-crown in the box," said an expression of a victim suffering under a hard-hearted half-crown in the box.

"Wun away, do!"

"Mind, we're here on business," said Wally. "The Third Form are shocked. I'm shocked. Joe's shocked—aren't you, Joe?"

"I ham!" answered Frayne emphatically.

"You're shocked, young Levison?"

"Shocked and pained!" said Levison minor solemnly.

"What about you, Hobbs?"

"I'm disgusted!" said Hobbs.

"You see the effect you have produced on us, Gussy? How do you think it looks for me to have a major who dabbles in racing and betting, like Racke, or Cutts of the Fifth?" said Wally indignantly. "I punched Piggott's head when he told me. I thought he was lying. It turned out to be true. I'm ashamed of you. How you can look me in the face beats me!"

"Hollow!" said Reggie.

The Terrible Three in the doorway grinned at the expression on Gussy's aristocratic face. Blake & Co. grinned, too. They thought Gussy deserved it, and they were glad he was getting it.

"You cheeky young wascals!" gasped Arthur Augustus at last. "How dare you tweek me with this feahful impertinence!"

"Oh, come off!" said Wally. "I'm ashamed of you. You've got to chuck it, see? Repent!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Reform!" said Levison minor.

"Turn over a new leaf!" said Reggie Manners. "You — you — you——" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"What would the pater say if he knew the example you were setting me?" demanded Wally. "What would old Conway say if he knew you were leading a riotous life?"

"Bai Jove! I—I——"

"How would you like me to drop in at the Green Man and chum with Banks?" continued Wally.

"You young wascal! If you go anywhere neah the Gween Man I will give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Reggie Manners. "Why shouldn't Wally go if you do?"

"Yes, answer that, you ass!" snapped Jack Blake.

"It's a fair question," said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"You fellows uttably fail to compwehend," answered Arthur Augustus. "You are simply misjudgin' a chap, like thoughtless youngstabs. I have been turnin' it ovah in my mind whethah I can sufficiently wely upon your discwetion to take you into my confidence——"

"Fathead!" was Herries' remark.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Ass!" said Dig.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Silence!" rapped out Wally. "We can't stay here till calling-over hearing you fellows jaw. Gussy, you're called upon to repent and reform, and if you don't do it of your own accord, we'll jolly well repent and reform you. Savvy?"

"You are an impertinent young ass, Wally!"

"He's got to promise to give it up," said Hobbs.

"That's it."

"Pway wetiah fwom this study, you cheeky fags!" said Arthur Augustus, sitting down with great dignity.

"Not finished yet," answered Wally. "If you won't give us your promise to reform, we're going to whack you."

"What!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Whack you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why I've brought my pals," explained Wally; "otherwise I should have kept this disgrace to the family strictly private. We're going to give you a jolly good hiding, Gussy. Frayne's got the stump."

Arthur Augustus' noble eye almost bulged through his eyeglass as Levison minor produced a stump, which he had hitherto been concealing behind him, visible only to the Shell fellows in the doorway.

Tom Merry & Co. burst into a roar of laughter. Blake, Herries, and Digby shrieked. Gussy's expression at that moment was worth a guinea a box, or more.

"You fellows won't interfere?" demanded Wally. "If you do I'll call up a lot of the Third. I've got to perform this painful duty as Gussy's brother; in fact, as his keeper."

"My dear man, go ahead!" grinned Blake.

"We'll keep clear. Give him one each for us."

"Hear, hear!" said the Terrible Three heartily.

Arthur Augustus jumped up again as the fags hovered near him. Amazing as it was, Wally & Co. were painfully in earnest. The erring youth was to be brought back to the straight and narrow path by means of a cricket-stump—a method which Wally considered would be effective.

"You—you uttah young wuffian!" stammered

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Arthur Augustus, in wrath and indignation. "I—I—I—"

"Are you going to reform, then?" demanded Wally.

"You feahful young ass, there is nothin' to reform! I have not been doin' anythin' w'ong, you young duffah!"

"Isn't betting on races wrong?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Haven't you been doing it?"

"Yaas, but—"

"Isn't it wrong if you do it, as well as if any-body else does it?" bawled Jack Blake.

"Circumstances althah cases, Blake. I wefuse to admit that I have done anythin' w'ong in the slightest degwee. As a chap with an example to set to the House, I should natuwally be vevy careful not to do anythin' w'ong."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am vevy much annoyed and exaspewated," continued Arthur Augustus warmly, "havin' all this talk about my pwoceedings. I wegard it as impertinent. Fellows have been speakin' to me just as if I were goin' out blaggin' like Wacke."

"Well, what have you been doing?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I have been performin' a noble duty."

"Mum-mum-my only sainted aunt! Is it a noble duty to bet on horses like a racecourse loafer?"

"In certain exceptional circumstances, yaas!"

Wally blinked at his major.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he said. "What's wanted here is a strait-jacket, I think! You fellows needn't think it runs in the family. Gussy's the only lunatic we've got!"

"Dwy up, Wally, you cheeky young ass!" Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and surveyed the juniors with growing indignation. "Now that my minah has heard the weekless and iwvesponsible chattah on this subject, I suppose I am bound to explain. Howevah, I shall wequiah you fellows to keep it dark, as it is a delicate mattah."

"Go ahead with the tragic tale," said Monty Lowther.

"Shut the door, then! There is that sneak Twimble in the passage."

Tom Merry closed the door.

"Aren't we going to stump him?" inquired Hobbs, in a disappointed tone.

"Shut up, young Hobbs!" said Wally authoritatively. "Now, then, Gussy, we'll hear what you've got to say!"

"I am not takin' any notice of your widiculous thweat, Wally, which I wegard with uttah disdain."

"Get on with the washing!" said Manners.

Arthur Augustus coughed. All the juniors in the study waited with great interest to hear Arthur Augustus' explanation of his remarkable conduct.

CHAPTER 10.

The Only Way!

"**P**WAY undahstand that I am not excusin' myself," began Arthur Augustus. "I am simply explainin' the mattah because my minah has heard the silly chattah of silly duffahs, and has formed a w'ong opinion."

"That's understood," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Get on—"

"The Cottage Hospital—"

"What?"

"The Cottage Hospital at Wayland—"

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"Who's talking about the Cottage Hospital at Wayland?" shouted Blake.

"I am, deah boy!"

"Then don't! Tell us what you were playing the giddy ox for."

"I wefuse to admit for one moment, Blake, that I have been playin' the giddy ox."

"I think he'd better have the stump," remarked Dig.

"Pway don't be an ass, Dig! The Cottage Hospital at Wayland—"

"There he goes again!"

"If you keep on intewwuptin' me, Dig—"

"Has the Cottage Hospital got anything to do with your going to Banks?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Wandering!" said Manners sympathetically. "Poor old Gussy! Is it worry that's turned his napper?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Go on!" rapped out Blake.

"It is wathah difficult to pwoceed when I am bein' intewwupted by silly kids, Blake. Howevah, to wesume. The Cottage Hospital at Wayland is a hundred pounds out in its accounts. It is a vevy deservin' institution—"

"We all know that."

"Are you going to start a subscription like Trimble?" snorted Herries.

"I am not, Hewwies, because it would be impos- to waise the wequiahed amount by passin' the hat wound in the school. I wathah think some wich man ought to come forward; but wich men seem to have ovahlooked the mattah, somehow. If the Cottage Hospital does not get the money they will have to close down some of the beds, which would be a gweat shame. Havin' thought the mattah out vevy carefully, I decided that it was up to me to waise the money."

"Up to you?" stuttered Blake.

"Yaas."

"How the thunder are you going to raise a hundred pounds, you frabjous jabberwock?"

"I wefuse to be called a fwabjous jabberwock, Blake. I am goin' to waise the money to-morrow aftahnoon—Saturday—and I have already taken my measures. Now," said Arthur Augustus crushingly, "pewwaps you compwehend why I have stwetched a point, and condescended to touch such a wotten thing as horse-wacin' for once. It was for noble weasons!"

The juniors gasped.

"You—you—you're going to raise a hundred pounds for the Cottage Hospital by a bet on a horse?" stammered Herries.

"Yaas."

"Oh crumbs!"

"I wegard the end as justifyin' the means," explained Arthur Augustus. "I weally could not allow several beds to be closed down at the hospital. I felt that I was bound to do it, though I had natuwally a gweat wepugnance to touchin' such a vevy wotten thing as wacin'. It was the only way."

"The—the only way!" babbled Blake, staring dumbfounded at his noble chum.

"Yaas. In the circe, I wegard my pwoceedings as excusable. I have laid that bet with a cleah conscience, not intendin' to touch any of the pwoceeds myself, but to hand ovah the whole sum at once to the hospital."

"Oh crikey!"

"You—you—you think you will win a hundred pounds on a horse-race?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yaas. You see, I have laid seven pounds at

fifteen to one against, so when Jolly Wogah wins I bag ovah a hundred pounds, which is the amount wequiahed," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Seven pounds!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Yaas."

"Do you think you'll ever see it again?"

"Of course. When I win, the stake is returned along with the winnings."

"Oh, great Julius Caesar!"

"Mad as a hatter!" inurmured Reggie Manners. "Now that I have explained," resumed Arthur Augustus, with crushing dignity, "pewwaps you will admit that you have misjudged me, like a set of unwelectin' youngstahs, and I twust you will have the gwace to apologise."

D'Arcy's chums did not apologise. They blinked. He had taken their breath away.

Jack Blake found his voice at last. "You've actually handed over seven pounds to that bookie Banks, expecting a hundred pounds on Saturday?" he said faintly.

"Yaas. Mr. Banks explained that the bet would not be bindin' unless the stake was actually handed ovah."

"And—and you think the horse will win?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, yaas." "With fifteen to one against him!" gasped Tom Merry. "Why, he must be the rankest of rank outsiders to start at a price like that!"

"Outsidahs sometimes womp home, deah boy!" answered Arthur Augustus, with an air of superior wisdom. "Jolly Wogah is goin' to womp home!"

"How do you know? What do you know about racing?"

"Vewy little, I am glad to say. But a tipstah chap in Wacke's papah says quite plainly that he is sure Jolly Wogah will win."

"So—so that's why you borrowed Racke's paper?"

"Yaas. Havin' reflected on the mattah, I wealised that the only way of waisin' the money was by a stwoke of this sort; so I made up my mind to do it, and went into the thing thowoughly. I wegard it as justifiable, considewin' the purpose."

"It might, or it might not be," said Tom. "We'll believe that you meant well, you unutterable ass! But do you think you'll win, or that if you win Banks will hand you the money?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"The fellow hasn't a tenth part of a hundred quid!" yelled Digby.

"What he loses on one wace, Dig, he makes on anothah. The woundabouts make up for the swings, you know. Mr. Banks told me so."

"And—and you rely on a fool tipster in a racing paper—"

"Not entirely. I obtained professional advice," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"How—where?"

"I asked Mr. Banks. As a bookmakah, it stands to weason he knows. He thought vewy stwongly that the tipstah man knew what he was talkin' about."

"And—and you think that Banks would lay fifteen to one against Jolly Roger if he thought the horse would win?"

"He is bound to, deah boy. That is his business. He is a bookmakah, you know."

"Oh, great pip!"

Tom Merry & Co. fairly gasped. They were not angry with the noble Gussy any more. His motives were top-hole, though his methods were more questionable than he seemed to realise. If ne deserved punishment it was pretty certain that

he would get it when he went to collect his hundred pounds.

"And now that I have explained, I am waitin' for an apology," said Arthur Augustus, in his loftiest manner.

Still the apology was not offered. Wally & Co. were doubled up with merriment, much to Gussy's surprise.

"Poor old Gussy!" sobbed Wally. "We might have known that he was only potty!"

"We might!" gasped Reggie.

"Weally, Wally—"

"We'll let him off the stumping," said Wally. "I'm sure he'll reform when that race is run. Come away, chaps. This study isn't big enough to laugh in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Almost weeping, Wally & Co. staggered out of the study.

"I fail to see any cause for mewwiment," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Oh dear!" gasped Tom Merry. "Gussy, old man, you'll be the death of me yet! Fifteen to one against. Expert advice from the bookie who's after your cash! Oh, my hat!"

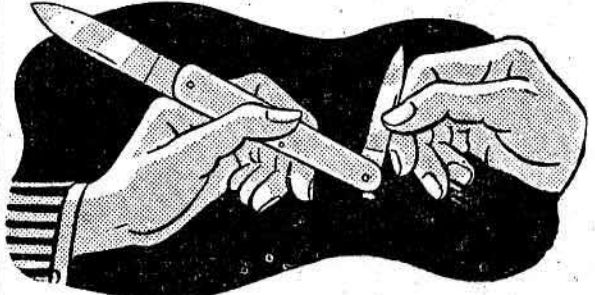
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three departed, almost sobbing. The matter was serious in a way, but the sublime innocence with which Gussy was treading among the pitfalls was too much for them.

"The only way!" murmured Lowther. "The only way—and what a way! I—I think the Cottage Hospital will be seen through now—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, left alone, with his
(Continued on the next page.)



Joe got this Knife FREE

Joe did want a really good penknife, with forged Sheffield steel blades—a knife that would last; keep sharp. How did he get it? He asked his Mum for the coupons from tins of Bournville Cocoa and sent 19 to the Gift Dept., Cadburys, Bournville, for gift No. 817, and sure enough the postman brought the knife. Is there a football, game, or camera you would like free for coupons? Post the form below for the new Bournville Gift Book illustrating lots of free gifts. You will get a free coupon to start you off.

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studymates, eyed them stiffly. Blake, Herries, and Digby were rocking in their chairs.

"When you have finished," said D'Arcy crushingly, "pewwaps you will be kind enough to take me into the joke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're the joke!" yelled Blake. "Oh, you frabjous chump! Oh, you burbling duffer!"

"Wats!"

With that reply, Arthur Augustus strode from the study, and closed the door after him with more vigour than was absolutely necessary. Blake & Co. wiped their eyes. It was impossible to be angry with the ineffable Gussy; and as they thought of the morrow, and of Gussy's prospect of handling the expected hundred pounds, they yelled again.

CHAPTER 11.

The Result of the Race!

THE next day it was evident that the rift in the lute had been mended. Arthur Augustus was no longer on cold terms with his chums.

His explanation, extraordinary as it was, had at last relieved their minds; there was no danger of Gussy following in the footsteps of the festive Racke. It was, as he had said, with great repugnance that he had made up his mind to "back a winner," and thus net the hundred pounds required for the Cottage Hospital. Perhaps he was mistaken in thinking that he could touch pitch without being defiled; but, at all events, it was pretty certain that he would never offend again. If he needed a lesson, undoubtedly he was going to get one.

That afternoon, when Arthur Augustus sallied forth to call on Mr. Banks for his winnings, his chums joined him. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass inquiringly on Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three.

"Oh, we're coming!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to see fair play, you know. Besides, you'll want help to carry home the quids."

"I twust that you will be disweet, deah boys. It was weally my intention to keep the whole mattah secwet, as the hospital people might not like to take money won on a wace. Bettah to say nothin' about that, I think," said Arthur Augustus sagely.

The juniors nearly exploded.

"I don't think the hospital people will be worried about that," said Blake, with a gurgle.

"You fellows had bettah go back. I cannot approve of your visitin' such a place as the Gween Man!" said D'Arcy decidedly.

"No need," said Tom. "Let's go over to Wayland instead, and get the evening paper at the station. The result of the race will be in that."

"Bai Jove! That's a good ideah! I dare say Mr. Banks will not be back fwom the waces yet, anyhow."

And the party walked over by the fields and the wood to Wayland.

The utter disbelief of Tom Merry & Co. in the "win" was not to be concealed, but Arthur Augustus only smiled serenely. They would see what they would see when they got the evening paper.

Arthur Augustus' confidence was really sublime. Having brought his mighty brain to bear upon the subject, he evidently regarded himself as being fully qualified for the difficult task of spotting

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winners. In fact, only principle held him back from making a fortune by means of his newly discovered gift.

But he did not dally with that temptation. He had touched pitch, as it were, once for a generous and noble reason. He would never touch it again. His contempt for gambling and gamblers was as strong as ever.

The juniors arrived in Wayland, and Blake went to the station for the paper, and rejoined his chums.

"Here you are!" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus took the paper and opened it sedately. His companions watched him with great interest.

"Yaas, here it is!" said Arthur Augustus. "This aftahnoon's wacin'. Twaffield—thweo o'clock. That's the wace! Bai Jove! There are three names pwinted in capital lettahs——"

"That's right!" said Tom. "First, second, and third, of course."

"Yaas. But it is vewy odd!" said Arthur Augustus, with a puzzled look. "The thweo names are Sunny Jim, Diamond, and King John!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you fellows laughin' at?"

"Ass!" howled Blake. "Can't you see? Sunny Jim's the winner, and Diamond came in second, and King John third."

"Wats! It is vewy odd that Jolly Wogah is not mentioned——"

"Let's have a look!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Oh, here he is!"

"Where, Lowthah?"

"In small type underneath! Look at it!" Lowther read it out: "'Also ran: Topper, Mark Tapley, Cherub, and Jolly Roger.'"

"Also ran!" gurgled Blake.

"Also ran!" said Monty Lowther, weeping. "Oh dear! He's also run away with Gussy's seven quid!"

Arthur Augustus stared at the paper. He adjusted his eyeglass, and stared again. The horrid truth seemed to be slowly borne in upon his mind.

"Also wan!" he murmured. "I—I suppose that means that Jolly Wogah has not won the wace?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course it does!"

"That is vewy wemarkable! Mr. Banks thought——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am weally vewy much surprised at Mr. Banks' ignowance of his own business! Bai Jove, I shall not get the hundwed pounds now!"

"Just thought of that!" gasped Tom Merry. "Never mind! Banks will get your seven pounds, and that's all he was worried about."

"But—but I shall not be able to set mattahs wight for the Cottage Hospital now!" said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh wats! I do not see anythin' funny in this!"

But Tom Merry & Co. evidently did, for they chuckled, on and off, all the way home to St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus walked very silently and thoughtfully. At the gates of St. Jim's they met Dick Julian.

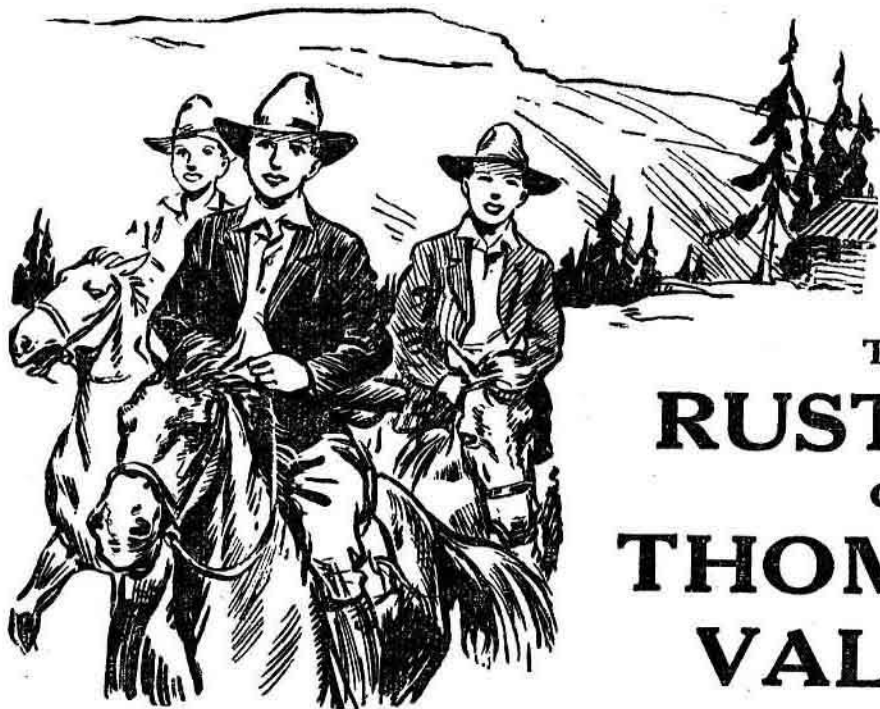
"Julian, deah boy"—Arthur Augustus coloured—"may I wequest you to allow your loan to stand ovah for a few days? I—I am not able to settle up to-day."

Julian smiled.

"All serene, D'Arcy! Any time, you know. Don't bother. By the way, you chaps will be

(Continued on page 36.)

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. FIGURE IN AN EXCITING ADVENTURE WITH HORSE-THIEVES,
IN THIS GRIPPING YARN OF THE CANADIAN BACKWOODS.



The purchasing of a pot of white paint seemed an innocent enough action in itself, but it gave Bob Lawless the clue to—

THE RUSTLERS OF THOMPSON VALLEY!

by Martin Clifford.

Beauclere's Choice!

"**H**OW'S your popper, Cherub?" asked Bob Lawless cheerily, as Vere Beauclere came out into the ranch-house porch.

Beauclere's face was very grave.

"Nothing wrong, Beau?" asked Frank Richards quickly.

"No. The doctor thinks father had better keep in his room for a few days, but it's not serious," said Beauclere.

"Good!"

"Then what are you looking so jolly serious about?" asked Bob.

Beauclere smiled faintly.

"My father told me something. Will you fellows come up and see him before we start for school? There's time."

"Certainly!" said Frank.

The chums followed Beauclere into the house and up the stairs to the room occupied by Vere's father. Lascelles Beauclere, the remittance-man of Cedar Camp, was in bed, propped up by pillows. He was looking pale and wan.

It was a couple of days since the flood in Thompson Valley and the rescue of the remittance-man from the shack by the creek. Frank Richards & Co. were feeling no ill-effects from their exertions that wild night, but the experience had told upon Mr. Beauclere.

The remittance-man was not in a condition to endure exposure and hardship like the healthy schoolboys. Long devotion to potent fire-water had sapped away his vitality. At the first serious strain upon his constitution the unhappy waster had to pay for a long course of foolish recklessness.

There was a new expression on the remittance-man's worn face, which was still handsome, in spite of the haggard lines upon it. He looked more like his son now than ever before. It was easy enough to see that the unfortunate man was in a mood of remorse and repentance. On that

wild night at the flooded shack, when his son had stood by him with quiet courage in the very shadow of death, Lascelles Beauclere had seen things in a truer light, and the mood had not yet passed.

He smiled faintly at the schoolboys as they came in.

"I hope you feel better this morning, sir?" said Frank Richards, as they stood by the bedside.

"I shall be well enough soon," said Mr. Beauclere. "I fear I'm giving your father a great deal of trouble, Lawless."

"I guess not, sir," said Bob cheerily. "The popper was glad we brought you here, and you're more than welcome."

"I have been speaking to my son," said the remittance-man. "I want to ask you, as his friends, to speak to him also—to point out to him what he must do."

Vere Beauclere smiled slightly and shook his head, while his chums looked at him in surprise.

"Hallo! What's the Cherub been up to?" exclaimed Bob.

"He will not see what is best for him," said Mr. Beauclere. "I hope that you will be able to influence him. My son has the offer of a home in England."

"I do not want it," said Vere Beauclere.

"Oh, by gum!" exclaimed Bob, in some dismay. "We shall be sorry to lose you, Cherub."

Frank Richards felt dismayed, too. Frank knew that Vere had wealthy and titled relations in the Old Country, from whom came the remittance upon which father and son lived at Cedar Camp. He had wondered sometimes why they did nothing for Vere, even if his father was too confirmed a waster to have any claim upon them.

"You won't lose me, Bob, if that matters very

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much," said Vere, with a smile. "I'm not going to leave Canada."

"But if your popper goes home——" said Bob.

"My father is not going."

"Oh!"

"Let me explain," said the remittance-man quietly. "My brother, a very wealthy man, has offered to take charge of Vere, to give him a home in England, and an education suited to his proper station."

"Father!" murmured Vere.

Bob grinned faintly. The remittance-man had never lost the ideas he had learned in the Old Country in wealthy and idle surroundings. Even in the Canadian West, where all men worked, and men who did not work were despised, Lascelles Beauclerc had never been able to set his hand to labour. He still dreamed dreams of the past—a past wealth, idleness, independence of others, the life, above all, that he longed for.

But in healthie surroundings his son had learned a truer view of life. Social distinctions counted for little or nothing in the great land of the West. There, the man to be distinguished was not the man with the "handle" to his name, but the man who could make two ears of wheat grow where one grew before.

To Lascelles Beauclerc, life in the West was a grim exile of hardship, but his son looked upon it with a very different eye. To him Canada was not a place of exile, but a beloved home.

The remittance-man coloured a little as he caught the involuntary grin on Bob Lawless' face. He went on rather hastily:

"Vere would have great prospects in England. He would have a future. But the foolish boy refuses to go. He does not understand. He chooses to remain buried in this wilderness. You must speak to him."

"I shall not part from you, father," said Vere quietly. "And my friends wouldn't advise me to go. They don't think as you do, father."

The remittance-man eyed the two chums.

"What do you say, Lawless?" he asked.

"Well, I'm a Canadian, born and bred in the West," said Bob. "I think the Cherub would be an ass to go back to the Old Country and live like a loafer when he has a chance of learning to be a farmer out here."

"A—a what?" ejaculated Mr. Beauclerc.

Bob coloured.

"Excuse me, I shouldn't have put it like that," he said. "But—but, of course, you wouldn't look at it as we do."

"Vere is the nephew of an English earl," said Mr. Beauclerc, with a touch of pride. "In England he will have a wealthy home; he will go to a Public school, and after that to a University."

"Well, I suppose there's a lot in that," admitted Bob. "It's a jolly good offer, Cherub. You won't have to work, anyway."

"Rot!" said Vere Beauclerc briefly.

"What do you say, Richards?" asked Mr. Beauclerc. "You have only lately come from England, and you were at a Public school before you left. I understand. You do not agree with Lawless?"

"I think a man ought to lead a useful life," said Frank candidly. "I shall go back to England some day, I suppose, but it will be to work. I don't think a man ought to spend his life hunting and shooting and lounging about the West End of London. If that's the new life for Beau, I think he'd do jolly well to stick to Canada."

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"I made a mistake in calling you to my assistance," said Mr. Beauclerc, smiling again. "I think that Vere ought to accept his uncle's offer, but I shall leave him to make his free choice."

"I have chosen already," said Vere.

Mr. Beauclerc nodded, and his head sank back on the pillow. The three schoolboys left him. They came down to the porch and looked on the sunny plain, with the great summits of the Rocky Mountains in sight on the far horizon.

"So you're going to stick to this, Cherub?" said Bob. "You don't want to change the plains and the Rockies for smoky old London?"

Beauclerc laughed.

"Not at all," he said. Then his face became grave. "Besides, I couldn't go. It's impossible! My father doesn't want me to go, but he thinks it his duty to urge me to accept what he thinks is a great chance for me. But I could not leave him."

"I suppose you couldn't," assented Bob.

"My uncle is kind enough to offer me a home," said Beauclerc, with a flash in his eyes. "I can read between the lines of his letter. He thinks it would be good for me to be away from my father."

His chums were silent. They could not help thinking that, in that respect, at least, the English uncle was not far wrong, though the remittance-man's son could not be expected to see it in that light.

"The offer is an insult," said Beauclerc in a low voice. "My father feels it, too, though he does not say so. He is willing to put himself in the background and be left alone here. As if I would leave him! I should like the Public school and the University, of course. But afterwards?"

"Well, afterwards?" asked Frank. "There's plenty of work to be done in England, if you come to that."

Beauclerc smiled.

"Not by the nephew of a rich nobleman," he said. "I should be found some fat and comfortable job, with a strict regard for my family connections—that is, I should eat the bread of idleness, with a pretence of being occupied. If I had been brought up to it it would be different. But when I am older I want to do something useful, to make it worth while to have lived at all. I don't intend to depend on other men for my daily bread. That's what I've learned in Canada."

"And a jolly useful lesson, too!" said Bob, with a laugh. "So you're sticking to Cedar Creek and us, Cherub?"

"You bet!" said Beauclerc tersely.

And the chums went out for their horses.

The Horse-thieves!

BILLY COOK, the ranch foreman, came trotting up the trail as Frank Richards & Co. started from the ranch.

Bob Lawless hailed him.

"Billy!"

"Hallo!" replied the ranchman, reining in his horse.

"Heard anything of the gee-gees yet?"

Billy Cook shook his head.

"I've been down to the camp," he said. "The floods are down, sonny, but nobody's seen hide nor hair of the hosses. I guess there's hoss-thieves at work."

"They may have been drowned," said Frank Richards.

"I guess not, or the kerkisses would have

turned up afore this. I reckon those gees are stacked away somewhere by a hoss-thief," said Billy Cook, with a shake of the head. "There's other critters been missed at the camp during the floods, too, and some from the farms. I reckon they'll have to be looked for, and somebody will bag trouble over this."

The chums rode on. Frank Richards' pony and Vere Beauclerc's horse had been lost in the flood, and the chums were very anxious to recover their steeds. The thought that some horse-thief had corralled them made them angry.

"I reckon I'll take a hand in looking for the critters," Bob Lawless remarked. "If the thieves got them away over the line we shall never see them again."

"But who could have bagged them?" asked Frank.

"Some of the rustlers, I reckon—Dave Dunn or Euchre Dick, or some of that gang," said Bob. "It was their chance while the floods were on. They'll try to get them out of the section and sell them over the line. They've got to be stopped."

"What price taking a holiday from school and hunting for them?" asked Beauclerc.

Bob whistled.

"Miss Meadows would have something to say about that," he remarked.

"Well, we can ask her. We needn't mention the horse-thieves. After all, they may not have been stolen."

"We'll try," said Bob.

"Hallo! Talk of angels!" said Frank Richards suddenly.

Two riders came in sight on the trail through the timber, riding towards them. The chums recognised Euchre Dick and Dave Dunn, two of the roughest characters in the section. They were two fellows who were hardly ever known to work, and had their own methods for providing for their daily wants. Needless to say, they were not looked upon with favour in Thompson Valley.

The chums glanced at the horses they were riding. Dave Dunn was astride of a splendid animal, and his companion rode a handsome pony. But the animals bore no resemblance to the lost steeds. Beauclerc's lost horse was a coal-black, and Frank's pony was brown with white fetlocks. The steeds ridden by the two outcasts were white with grey splashes.

The two ruffians scowled at the schoolboys as they passed, and quickened their pace a little.

The chums rode on, and arrived at Cedar Creek School. It was nearly time for morning lessons, and they found most of the fellows in the playground.

Chunky Todgers came to meet them.

"Got your critters back?" he asked.

"No," said Frank. "We hope to."

"I guess I can give you a tip."

"Eh? What do you know about it?" exclaimed Bob. "You haven't seen them, I suppose?"

"Nope. But last evening when I was in Gunten's store buying some maple sugar, Euchre Dick came in to buy paint."

"Paint?" said Frank.

"You bet!"

"What the merry thunder has that got to do with our gee-gees?" demanded Frank.

"Hold on!" said Bob excitedly. "What kind of paint, Chunky?"

"White."

"Oh, Jerusalem! And we let them pass us!" shouted Bob. "Fatheads! Jays!"

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Frank.

Bob rushed away towards the schoolhouse porch, where Miss Meadows was to be seen talking to Mr. Slimmey.

"Excuse me, Miss Meadows!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Sorry to interrupt! Can we clear off from lessons this morning?"

Miss Meadows elevated her eyebrows.

"Really, Lawless—"

"It's very important, ma'am!"

"You must explain the importance, Lawless, before I can give you leave from school."

"Our hosses, ma'am," said Bob—"Frank's pony and the Cherub's critter. They were lost in the flood the other night—"

"Have you not found them yet?"

"No, ma'am. But we've just got on the track of them, and we can get them back if we get after them at once."

"Oh," said Miss Meadows, "in that case you have leave from lessons this morning, Lawless."

"Thank you, ma'am!"

Bob rushed away to rejoin his astonished chums.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"But—but—what—"

"Get your gees out again, you duffers!"

Bob ran into the corral, his chums at his heels. They led out the three horses as the Cedar Creek fellows were going into the school-room.

"Look here, Bob, what's up?" exclaimed Frank.

"Where are we going?"

"After the hosses!"

"But you don't know where they are!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"I guess I do. Come on!"

Bob jumped into the saddle and started. His chums rode after him, and they galloped down the trail together.

"You thumping ass, Bob!" shouted Frank. "What bee have you got in your bonnet now? I tell you you don't know where the horses are."

"Fathead!" answered Bob. "We passed them on the trail coming to school."

"I didn't see them, then," said Frank.

"Yes, you did, and so did I, only I didn't know till Chunky told us," said Bob. "I feel like kicking myself. But there's time yet."

"What on earth are you driving at, Bob? We passed no gee-gees, excepting those that Euchre Dick and Dave Dunn were riding."

"That's it! A horse and pony," said Bob breathlessly. "You and Beau lost a horse and pony, didn't you?"

"Yes, but my pony was brown."

"And my horse was black!" said Beauclerc.

Bob snorted.

"Didn't you hear what Chunky said? Last night Euchre Dick was buying white paint at Gunten's store. Your hosses were painted."

"Oh!" gasped Frank.

He understood at last.

"Don't you see?" grinned Bob. "It's a regular dodge of hoss-thieves. When they corral a horse, the first thing they do is to change its appearance. I ought to have thought of that when we passed those rustlers."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Beauclerc. "They were riding white horses. You think—"

"I don't think—I know!" rapped out Bob. "What would Euchre Dick be buying white paint for? Do you think he ever paints out his shanty in Thompson? It was to disguise the horses, of course—and only this morning we passed him on a white horse. It's clear enough."

"It does look like it," admitted Frank.

"Put it on!" said Bob. "We'll have them yet!"

And the three chums urged on their horses, and rode down the timber trail like the wind.

"Corralled!"

"**BILLY COOK!**" roared Bob suddenly.

The riders had left the timber behind them and were out on the plains. In the distance they spotted Billy Cook, ambling along at a leisurely pace. The ranch foreman looked round in surprise as the schoolboys dashed up.

"Hallo, what are you doing out of school, you young galoots?" was his greeting.

"Have you seen Dave Dunn and Euchre Dick on white horses?" exclaimed Bob breathlessly.

"Nix."

"Then they haven't passed this way. They've got Demon and Frank's pony, painted white," gasped Bob. "They're heading south, I know that, to get out of the section with them."

The ranchman whistled.

"Sure of that, Bob?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then I guess we'll look for them. Where did you see them?"

"Coming south through the timber."

"Come this way—your popper's down by the creek."

The chums joined Mr. Lawless, and the matter was explained to the rancher. The Canadian rancher's brows set grimly.

"Not much doubt about it," he remarked. "They've got the critters right enough. I guess they turned off east, to keep off my land, when they left the timber behind. We ought to pick up their trail at Moose Creek. Have you youngsters got leave from school?"

"Yes, dad."

"Then you can come along."

The rancher spurred on his horse, and the others followed. The wind whistled past their ears as they galloped across the rolling plain.

Mr. Lawless had guessed well. As Moose Creek glimmered in the sun in the distance, two white patches were sighted beside the shining waters. Bob gave a shout as he spotted them.

"There they are, dad!"

"I guess so," said the rancher. "Have you got your gun, Billy?"

"Have I got my head?" was Billy Cook's reply, an answer apparently conveying an emphatic affirmative.

"Keep it handy—you'll want it."

"You bet!"

The beat of the horses' hoofs on the plain was a ceaseless tattoo. The white horses in the distance became clearer and clearer. The two rustlers were riding along the creek in a southerly direction. As matters stood they were likely to be headed off.

But Euchre Dick and his pard were accustomed to "keeping their eyes peeled"; they needed to in their peculiar way of life. The white horses halted by the creek, and the two rustlers stared across the plain at the approaching horsemen. Had they been riding their own steeds there was no reason why they should have been alarmed. But that the horses they were riding were stolen was evident from the fact that they took the alarm at once.

The sight of the rancher and his companions galloping towards them at top speed warned them

that they were suspected, and that was enough for the horse-thieves. They turned from the trail they were following and plunged into the swollen creek.

"That settles it," said Mr. Lawless quietly. "But they will not get away."

The two rustlers swam their horses across and clambered up the opposite bank. But time had been lost, and the pursuers were very near.

Without hesitation the pursuers plunged in and went splashing across the creek. The chase was taken up on the other side. Euchre Dick and Dave Dunn were riding hard now. It was not only the loss of their plunder that they had to fear, but the punishment for stealing horses—a very serious offence in the West.

The white steeds—not quite so white since their plunge in the creek—were lashed savagely and spurred without mercy.

"I guess there'll be trouble with that hoss if it's Demon," Billy Cook jerked out.

The ranch foreman was right. The big horse, lashed and spurred cruelly by its rider, was already giving trouble. Demon had a savage temper, though he never showed it to his master, Vere Beauclerc. But the cruel punishment at the hands of the horse-thief roused the demon in the horse. He began to rear and plunge, and very nearly crashed into the pony ridden by Euchre Dick. The latter dragged his steed out of the way with an angry shout.

"Keep your hoss in hand, Dave, you fool!" he yelled.

Dave Dunn did not reply. He was trying to keep Demon in hand, but it was not an easy task. The more savagely he lashed with his whip the more furiously the horse snorted and plunged and foamed and reared. Instead of galloping on, Demon was giving an exhibition of buck-jumping.

Euchre Dick, forging ahead, glanced back at his pard.

"Get a move on, or you're a gone coon!" he yelled back.

"I can't get on!" yelled Dunn desperately. "The hoss's got the devil in him. Stop for me."

"I reckon not."

"Stop, you hound!" roared Dunn, dragging out a revolver. "By gosh, if you leave me in the lurch I'll wing you!"

Euchre Dick was already out of range of his voice, but he heard a sharp report as his comrade fired over his head. He glanced back fiercely.

Dave Dunn brandished the revolver.

"Stand by your pard, you coyote!" he roared.

It was so evidently his intention to shoot in earnest if he was abandoned that Euchre Dick, with a curse, wheeled his pony and rode back. The big horse was still prancing savagely.

"Stand by me and see it through!" snarled Dunn. "Get out your gun, you pesky coyote. We're not taken yet."

The pursuers were very close now. The big horse calmed down as Dave Dunn ceased to use whip and spur, but further flight was impossible.

Billy Cook's big Colt was glistening in the sunlight, and the horse-thieves were within easy range. They faced the pursuers savagely as the rancher and his party rode up.

"What do you want with us, hang you?" exclaimed Dunn fiercely.

"I guess we want those horses," answered Mr. Lawless. "You'll get down, sharp."

"They're our horses."

"Do you generally paint your hosses to improve their complexions?" grinned Billy Cook.



"Keep back!" said Dave Dunn hoarsely. "Keep back, or——" Crack! There was a yell of anguish from the rustler as the shot rang out from Billy Cook's gun, and Dave Dunn's revolver went spinning from his grasp.

"I guess——"

"Demon!" called out Vere Beauclerc softly.

Dunn's steed whinnied and trotted towards Beauclerc, heedless of the savage drag at the rein.

"Get down!" rapped out the rancher.

"I guess I'm keeping this hoss," said Dunn, grasping his revolver savagely. "The galoot that tries to take it will get hurt."

"Put up that shooter, Dave Dunn," said the rancher quietly. "This isn't Arizona or New Mexico, you scoundrel! Put it up, I tell you!"

He rode straight at the rustler, grasping his riding-whip. The ruffian's six-shooter came up to a level.

"Keep back!" he said hoarsely. "Keep back, or——"

Crack!

There was a yell of anguish from Dave Dunn as the shot rang out from Billy Cook's gun. The revolver went spinning from his grasp, and the ruffian sucked his hand wildly. It was red now.

"I reckoned I could do it," said Billy Cook complacently. "I guess you'll have a sore finger, Dunn. It's your own funeral."

Dunn mumbled furiously over his wounded hand. The rancher grasped him by the shoulder, spun him out of the saddle, and sent him crashing to the ground.

"Take your horse, Beauclerc," he said, unmoved.

Euchre Dick had his hands up. He was not there for a shooting match.

"I guess I pass, pard!" he exclaimed in a great hurry. "Don't shoot! I reckon I'm no hog, and I know when I've had enough!"

"That's your pony, Frank."

"Yes, uncle. I know him now," said Frank Richards.

"Take him."

Euchre Dick slid hurriedly from the saddle, and Frank recaptured his pony. The rancher fixed a stern glance on the horse-thieves.

"You ought to be taken to Kamloops Gaol!" he snapped.

"Let up, old-timer!" pleaded Euchre Dick.

"Go easy on a galoot!"

Mr. Lawless reflected for a moment.

"I don't want to be bothered with you," he said. "Billy, give them a dozen each with your trail-rope, and let them go."

"I'm your antelope!" answered Billy Cook promptly.

"Look here——" yelled Euchre Dick.

"That or Kamloops Gaol!" said the rancher grimly.

The horse-thieves looked at one another. Kamloops Gaol was not an attractive residence. They decided upon the trail-rope.

Billy Cook handled the coiled trail-rope as if he were beating a carpet. The loud cracks rang across the prairie, and louder still rang the yells of the unhappy horse-thieves. They were left yelling.

Mr. Lawless and his companions rode away, taking the recaptured horses with them, and Euchre Dick and his pard, after groaning in chorus for quite a considerable time, set out on a twenty-mile tramp to Thompson. Truly, the way of the transgressor was hard in Thompson Valley.

The Decision!

VERE BEAUCLERC and his father remained at the Lawless Ranch for nearly a week, and then they left.

There was fine weather in the Thompson Valley; the floods were over and Cedar Creek ran at its normal level. The shack by the creek where the Beauclercs lived had been wrecked in the flood, but there were many hands to help in the rebuilding of the little home.

Frank Richards & Co. helped after school and on the days when there was no school. Lumbermen from the river, and cattlemen from the ranches, dropped in to "do a spell."

The shack was rebuilt, the materials growing near at hand and free of cost, needing only the axe and a stout arm to procure them.

Frank and Bob were sorry enough when Beauclerc left the ranch. They would have been very glad if the Cherub could have remained with them. Of the offer in the letter from England nothing more had been said, but the chums had not forgotten it. Frank Richards wondered whether anything would come of it.

It was a great opportunity for Beauclerc in one way. It opened a prospect before him that many a fellow would have been overjoyed to take advantage of. But Frank knew the Cherub's devotion to his father, and the invitation from England was not extended to the remittance-man. Lascelles Beauclerc was not wanted.

That was a bitter item for Beauclerc, who was devoted to his father, perhaps all the more on account of the unfortunate man's faults and weaknesses. Yet even Beauclerc could hardly blame the old nobleman in England, though in his heart he resented the slight to his father.

Unless Mr. Beauclerc changed his ways very considerably his relations could not be expected to desire his presence there. In fact, his remittance was sent to him as much to keep him away as to help him.

His uncle's offer evoked more resentment than gratitude in Beauclerc's breast on account of his father, to whose faults he was indulgent, if not quite blind.

But the lesson the remittance-man had received had not been lost on him. He had lain in the shadow of death on the terrible night when his son's arm had held him back from the seething flood, and he had not forgotten. There was a change in Lascelles Beauclerc. It was not likely that it would last, but it was there.

When Vere came home from school he would find his father cultivating the clearing, with a patient devotion to hard work that was surprising enough in the lounge of the Cedar Camp bars. Beauclerc rejoiced in the change; he only hoped that it would be permanent.

"I have had another letter from England, Vere," said Mr. Beauclerc, one day after Vere had returned from school.

"Yes, father."

"My brother has repeated his offer."

Vere Beauclerc was silent.

"He must have his answer," continued the remittance-man. "It must be 'Yes' or 'No,' and it will be final."

"No, then!" said Vere firmly.

"You must think, my boy," said the remittance-man gently. "If the answer is 'No,' it does not merely close the matter for the present; it closes it for ever."

"All the better, father."

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"Your uncle will, I fear, be offended; he means kindly."

"He has no right to be offended," said Vere. "Why should I leave my home and my own father to go among strangers?"

"This is no home for you, Vere," said the remittance-man, with a sigh. "Your uncle points that out, and quite truly. My boy, you have learned strange ideas in this country, but you must remember that you come of a noble family—that it is possible that some day you may bear an old and honoured title. You must think of your family and the claim of your name, Vere."

The boy was silent.

"Your uncle's offer is generous. You will have every chance that I had, and you will make better use of your chances. Cedar Creek School, my boy, is not the place for you; you may go to Eton or Harrow if you choose. After that, to my old college, to do better there than I did. Money will not be wanting. Here, my dear boy, what is your prospect? To become perhaps a farmer, a rancher, or a miner, and spend your life in a remote province, far from the heart of things, from the people you ought to know. You will make friends—"

"I could make no better friends than I have already."

"Perhaps so, in a way. But there are other considerations. Vere, I have thought the matter out. It will almost break my heart to lose you, but—"

The schoolboy started.

"Father, you don't want me to go?"

"I do not want you to go, Vere, but it is my duty to see that you go," answered his father. "I have wasted my life, but I cannot let you waste yours."

"It's not waste," said Vere. "Why shouldn't I become a rancher like Mr. Lawless? It's a splendid life."

"For him, perhaps, but not for you, Vere. You are not a rancher's son; you are the son of the Honourable Lascelles Beauclerc."

Vere Beauclerc was silent. He could not tell his father what was in his heart—that infantile distinctions did not appeal to him in the least. Between the views of the father and son there was a great gulf fixed.

The remittance-man broke the silence at last.

"You see that you must go, Vere."

"I do not want to go!" broke out the boy passionately. "I've made my choice, and I've not altered my mind! You can't want me to go!"

"You know I do not. But it is for your good. I am older and wiser than you are, my boy—wiser for you, if not for myself. I will not command you, Vere, but I ask you to accept your uncle's offer."

"I—I can't!"

"You must!"

Vere Beauclerc rose to his feet. His father's face was troubled, but there was an inflexible determination in it. He had made up his mind, and Vere Beauclerc's heart sank as he realised it. The remittance-man, in his new mood, was determined to do his duty, to atone, as much as he could, for the harm his way of life had done his son.

There was a long silence.

"You will do as I wish, Vere," said Mr. Beauclerc at last. "I have already written to your uncle."

"Father!"

"When the post wagon passes to-morrow I shall

post the letter. You must go, my boy. When you have entered upon your new life you will thank me for this, and you will wonder that you could ever have dreamed of refusing such a chance."

Vere did not speak.

Nothing more was said, but the matter was evidently taken as settled by the remittance-man.

With a troubled face and a heavy heart, Vere set about getting the simple evening meal in the shack.

The next morning he saw his father hand the letter to the driver of the post wagon. He watched the wagon drive on and disappear over a rise in the prairie with heavy eyes. The die was cast now.

"You feel this now, my dear boy," said Mr. Beauclerc gently. "The time will come—and come soon—when you will be glad of it. You must depend on your father's judgment in this, my boy."

"I will do as you wish, father," said Vere heavily.

"That is right."

Vere Beauclerc's face was clouded as he mounted his horse and rode away on the trail that morning. He was later than usual, and Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were already at the fork waiting for him.

"Hallo, slacker!" called out Bob in his cheery, ringing tones. "Here you are at last."

Frank Richards looked quickly at his chum.

"What's the matter, Beau?" he asked.

"Hallo! Something the matter—eh?" asked Bob. "By gum, you look like a Digger Injun who's lost his fire-water, Cherub! What's the merry old trouble?"

The same thought had come into the minds of the chums at once—that the remittance-man had broken out again, and had been painting the town red. Perhaps Beauclerc guessed their thoughts, for his handsome face flushed.

"Let's get on," he said.

They rode in silence towards Cedar Creek School. It was Beauclerc who broke the silence at last as the lumber school came in sight in the distance.

"Would you fellows miss me much?"

Frank started.

"You're going, then, Beau?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" ejaculated Bob Lawless.

Vere Beauclerc's face was darkly clouded.

"My father thinks it is best for me," he said in a low voice. "I don't think with him, but I can't refuse what he wishes. I don't want to leave Canada; I don't want to leave Cedar Creek; I— I don't want to leave you chaps. But—but—"

"If your father really wishes it you must go, old chap," said Frank Richards quietly.

"I guess that's so," said Bob dismally. "By gum, we shall miss you, Cherub!"

Beauclerc's lips trembled.

"My father will miss me—I know that!" he muttered. "He thinks it's best for me, and he's written to my uncle accepting the offer. It's settled now! I—I must go!"

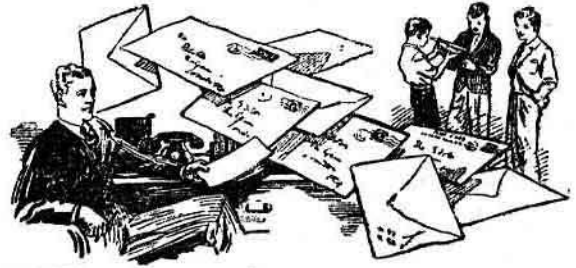
"Perhaps it is best," said Frank, with a dismal attempt to console. "After all, your pater's a man of the world, and he knows what's best, I dare say. And you'll have a good time in England."

"I don't care about that."

No more was said, and the chums arrived at the school.

In his earlier days at Cedar Creek, Beauclerc

(Continued on page 36.)



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letter: The Editor, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS!—I am beginning to think that GEM readers must be shy. Why I make this bold statement is because, so far, out of the many readers who have written to Jack Blake only a handful have enclosed a photograph for reproduction. I am sure you all enjoy reading other Gemites' letters to Blake, but it makes it more interesting when you can also see a picture of the writer. So don't be shy—let other readers see what you look like. Drop Jack a line and send a good clear photo; a close-up if possible.

Another matter which has been brought to my notice concerns "Pen Pals." Some readers seem to think that when they send in a notice for publication it will appear in the next issue of the GEM. Firstly, that is quite impossible, as the old paper goes to press several weeks in advance. Secondly, there is a waiting list of "Pen Pals." Notices are published strictly in order of receipt, and all of them do appear. A full page is being devoted to this very popular feature now, and I hope in due course to wipe out that waiting list.

"THEY CALLED HIM A DUFFER!"

The first glance at the title of next week's St. Jim's story will perhaps call to mind the prize duffer of the school—Grundy. But the yarn doesn't feature George Alfred. There is another duffer who is not quite so conspicuous as Grundy. I refer to Clarence York Tompkins, a genial ass who is seldom in the limelight. But next week Clarence York comes out of his shell with a vengeance. Fed-up with being the butt of his school-fellows' jokes and japes, he sets out to show them he is not the duffer they consider him. His main object is to expose Racke & Co., who have been ragging him. The juniors laugh at Tompkins' threat of vengeance, but the laugh—loud and long—is with Clarence York when the curtain's rung down. See that you enjoy the fun with him.

"THE SHADOW OF FEAR!"

Next Wednesday's gripping yarn of Frank Richards & Co. tells of Vere Beauclerc's last days at Cedar Creek and of his departure for England and his noble relatives. It seems hard to believe that Beau is going away, and Frank and Bob feel the wrench just as much as Vere. But apart from losing his chums, Beauclerc is haunted by a fear for his father, the wastrel remittance man who now seems to have turned over a new leaf. Certain remarks of Mr. Beauclerc's led Vere to think that his father is contemplating something desperate after his son has gone. But not until Beau is in the train bound for Quebec does the real and horrible truth dawn upon him. Readers will enjoy every word of this grand story of real human interest.

Finally, there is another sparkling yarn of the school on the river—called "The Rebel of the Benbow!"—in which Jack Drake defies the bullying Ransome, with painful results to both! And there will be more fun with Blake, Lowther, and Kerr.

All the best!

THE EDITOR.

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JACK DRAKE GETS HIS OWN BACK!

by Owen Conquest.

"I know what you're going to do when you get ashore," chuckled Drake. "But you're not landing yet. Good-bye!" And with a sudden drive of his foot, Drake sent the boat out into the river again.

A Facer for Daubeny!

"DAUBENY!"

Vernon Daubeny of the Shell turned his head in a leisurely way and glanced at the two juniors in the doorway of his study.

Drake and Rodney of the Fourth were in flannels, and Jack Drake had a bat under his arm. Drake's brows were knitted a little as he looked at the elegant youth.

Daubeny looked the picture of lazy comfort, reclining in a long chair, with his feet on another. He had a cigarette between his fingers, and he ejected a stream of smoke from his mouth as he glanced at his visitors.

"Hallo!" he yawned. "Anythin' wanted?"

"Yes. About the cricket," said Drake.

"You've nothin' to do with the cricket, dear boy," answered Daubeny. "If that's what you've come about you needn't pursue the subject! Good-bye!"

Egan of the Shell was sitting on the table, swinging his legs, and he gave a chuckle. He seemed to find some entertainment in the expression on Jack Drake's face.

"I'm going down to practice now," said Drake.

"Go, and take my blessin'!" answered Daubeny.

"Is that how you're getting ready for the matches—lolling in a chair and smoking?" asked Drake.

Daubeny nodded.

"You've got it!" he answered.

There was another chuckle from Egan.

Drake stepped into the study.

"I want to know about the cricket," he said.

"It looks as if you're going to muck up cricket the same as you did footer last term! I suppose I can take it that I shall not be wanted in the eleven?"

"You can."

"Or Rodney?"

"Or Rodney," assented Daub.

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"The same with the boats, I suppose?"

"The same with the boats."

"In fact, we're going to be left out of everything, while you and your friends make a mess of things generally?"

"You can put it like that, if you like," assented the junior captain of St. Winifred's. "The fellows did me the honour—undeserved, I dare say—of electin' me skipper. I intend to be skipper, I assure you. Don't you worry about the cricket. That's in my hands, and it's stayin' there. Would you mind shuttin' the door after you?"

Jack Drake breathed hard.

"It's not good enough, Daubeny," he said, after a pause. "You won't be allowed to play the goat as you did before!"

Daubeny raised his eyebrows.

"How are you goin' to stop it?" he asked.

"Why shouldn't I raise a rival eleven?" said Drake quietly. "There's plenty of material in the

Fagging for a bullying prefect is not a pleasant way of spending a half-holiday. But Jack Drake enjoys himself—much to the prefect's discomfiture!

Fourth; you've left over all the fellows who can really play. Lovelace is head of games, and he ought to chip in; and I think he will when he sees a rotten, fumbling team representing St. Winny's and a good eleven left out in the cold. How do you like that idea, Daub?"

Daubeny started. His expression was quite sufficient to show that he did not like the idea at all. He sat upright in his chair, his brows coming together in a dark line.

"You couldn't do it!" he exclaimed.

"Think again. You know I could."

"The fellows wouldn't follow your lead."

"I've asked some of them already, and they're keen on it," answered Drake coolly. "And when my eleven gets going, yours won't be allowed to represent St. Winny's much longer. Lovelace isn't very pleased with your slacking as it is!"

Daubeny set his teeth.

"You won't do it!" he said.

"I don't quite see how you'll stop me."

"I'll stop you, all the same; you can rely on that! And now get out of my study!" exclaimed Daubeny savagely.

"I'm going. We're off to practice now, and I'm going to begin picking out my eleven this afternoon."

And Drake and Rodney quitted the study.

"We've got to put a spoke in that cad's wheel!" said Daubeny, when the Fourth Formers had gone.

"How are you goin' to do it?" asked Egan. "He can call up an eleven, if he likes, if the fellows choose to play for him. And if he makes up a better one than yours I shouldn't wonder if the captain of the school chips in on his side, just as he says."

"He's goin' to be stopped!" said Vernon Daubeny, between his teeth.

"How?"

"I'm goin' to see Ransome of the Sixth."

"What the thump can Ransome do? He's only a prefect, and he's got nothin' to do with the games."

"He owes me money," answered Daubeny coolly. "I lent him a fiver to back a horse that came in about eleven."

Egan laughed.

"I don't see how that will help, all the same," he said.

"You'll see."

And Daubeny of the Shell left the study and hurried away to the Sixth Form quarters.

Fag Wanted!

"I'M your man, old top!"

Tuckey Toodles made that remark with enthusiasm.

Drake and Rodney were on the gangway between the old Benbow and the bank of the Chadway with two or three of the Fourth. Sawyer major, Rawlings, and Estcourt were in full agreement with Jack Drake on the subject of a rival eleven, and the juniors were discussing the project when Rupert de Vere Toodles added his enthusiastic support:

"Count me in!" said Toodles warmly. "I'll play for you, Drake. I only make one condition."

"I should have to make a condition or two, I think!" said Drake, laughing.

"I should want to open the innings in all important matches," said Toodles. "If that's agreed on, you can count me in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll count you in," said Drake, "but on several conditions. You'll have to learn to play cricket, so—"

"What?"

"So that you'll know a wicket from a wicket-keeper—"

"Look here—"

"And you'll have to bring down your fat till you don't weigh more than half a ton—"

"You silly ass!" howled Toodles. "I jolly well won't play for you now!"

"Then we may as well give up the whole stunt," remarked Sawyer major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Drake!"

Jack Drake looked round as his name was called. Ransome of the Sixth was looking over the side at the group of juniors on the gangway.

"Hallo! Did you call, Ransome?" asked Drake, not very graciously.

Hubert Ransome was not very popular with the juniors. He "pulled" very well with Daubeny & Co., with whom he had a good deal in common. But Drake, even in his former days, when he had chummed with Daub, had never liked Ransome. The sportsman of the Sixth was rather too shady for his taste, and a senior who borrowed money of juniors could hardly be respected. Since Drake had broken with his former associates, he had

found himself the object of Ransome's dislike, and he avoided the Sixth Former as much as he could.

Ransome beckoned to him from the ship, but Drake did not stir.

"What do you want?" he inquired.

"Fag!"

"You can get somebody else, then, Ransome; I'm just going down to cricket."

Ransome frowned.

"You'll come at once," he answered. "I don't want any cheek from you, Drake."

"Look here, you can't fag chaps when they're playing cricket!" exclaimed Sawyer major.

"Are you a member of the junior eleven, Drake?"

"No."

"Then you can be called on to fag at any time. Come on deck at once!" snapped Ransome.

Drake hesitated.

"Better go," said Rodney in a low voice. "No good kicking up a row with a prefect, Drake. Can't be helped."

"If I have to fetch you—" called out Ransome.

"I'm coming!" grunted Drake.

He came back very slowly on board the Benbow. There was no help for it; Ransome was acting within his rights.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, as he stepped on the old warship again. "What do you want?"

"I want you!" snapped Ransome. "You can put that bat away; I shall want you for some time."

Drake set his lips.

"I was going down to cricket—"

"Your cricket can't be very important, as you're not in the junior eleven, or even down as a reserve, I understand. If you were any good, I suppose your captain would know."

"Daubeny does know; he knows that I could play his head off," retorted Drake. "So do you, if you come to that, Ransome. What do you want me to do?"

"Steer for me."

"You could get any fag to steer for you."

"Quite so—that's why I've called you," said the Sixth Former coolly. "I'm going in for the boats this summer, and I shall want you pretty often. My boat's on the other side—come along."

Drake stood still, his breath coming hard. He thought that he could see the hand of his old enemy in this. He was well aware that Daub was intimate with the sportsman of the Sixth, and that Ransome had more than once been obliged with a loan by the wealthy Shell fellow. It looked as if this was Daub's reply to the threat of a rival eleven, and it was hard to see how such a scheme was to be countered.

"Are you coming?" snapped Ransome, looking back over his shoulder as he crossed the deck of the Benbow.

Drake's temper was not always in the best control. It flashed up now.

"No!" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"Do you think I don't know that Daubeny's put you up to this?" exclaimed Drake passionately. "Go and eat coke! I won't come!"

"What? What is that?" exclaimed a sharp voice behind the junior.

"Oh!"

Drake spun round, to find himself face to face with Dr. Goring, the Head of St. Winifred's. His face flushed crimson. He had certainly not been

addressing Ransome as a junior should have addressed a prefect of the Sixth Form, and the Head's expression showed that he thought as much.

"Drake! How dare you speak to Ransome in that manner?" exclaimed the Head sharply.

"I—I—" stammered Drake.

"What is the matter in dispute, Ransome?" asked the Head.

"I want Drake to fag in the boats, sir," answered the Sixth Former smoothly. "I called him as he was hanging about doing nothing."

"Drake—"

"I was just going down to the cricket, sir," mumbled the hapless junior.

"Is it a match this afternoon that you are playing in?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Drake is not in the junior eleven at all, sir," explained Ransome. "The junior captain will not even accept him as a reserve."

"Indeed! Then there is no reason whatever why you should not do as Ransome wishes, Drake. You will go with him at once."

"But I—I—"

"That will do."

The Head walked on, with a severe brow. Jack Drake's eyes gleamed as he followed Ransome. If he could have ventured to defy the prefect, there was no defying the Head, and he realised that he was for it.

Ransome smiled grimly.

"Jump in, you sulky little cad!" he said.

Drake entered the boat in silence. Ransome followed him in, and pushed off from the Benbow. With Drake at the lines, he pulled away down the river. But as the masts of the Benbow disappeared in the distance Ransome pulled in the oars.

"You can take a turn if you like," he said.

"I don't like," answered the junior shortly.

"Well, I do! Take the oars."

Ransome settled himself comfortably in the stern as Drake sat down to the rowing.

Safe out of sight of the Benbow, Ransome extracted a sporting paper from his pocket and lighted a cigarette. That evidently was the boat practice he intended for the afternoon! Drake pulled on savagely. He liked rowing well enough, and a pull on the sunny river was enjoyable in itself; but he had the feeling of being caught in a trap—of dancing, as it were, while Vernon Daubeny pulled the strings. And he realised that this one afternoon at boat fagging was not all he had to expect.

It was nearly tea-time when the boat pulled back to the Benbow, Ransome taking the oars just before coming in sight of the ship. As he came on deck he gave Drake a rather ironical grin.

"Keep Saturday afternoon open for me," he said.

"Do you mean that you're going to bag all my half-holidays?" asked Drake between his teeth.

"I mean what I say! That's enough—get out!"

And Drake walked away to his study with feelings that could not have been expressed in words.

An Unsatisfactory Fag!

"DRAKE!"

The Fourth Form were coming out from lessons on Saturday morning, when Vernon Daubeny lounged into view. Drake gave the buck of the Shell a dark look

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"Well?" he snapped.

"Message for you from Ransome," said Daubeny blandly. "You're not to forget that he will want you this afternoon."

"Go and eat coke!"

Daubeny shrugged his shoulders and lounged away. The look Drake cast after him was not pleasant. He was greatly inclined to "handle" the knut of St. Winifred's there and then.

"You're going, I suppose?" said Rodney in a low voice. "I'm afraid it can't be helped, Drake."

Drake nodded.

"I'm going," he said. "But I think Ransome will be fed-up if he takes me boat-fagging this afternoon. He will find it better to take another fag next time."

Dick Rodney looked uneasy for a moment.

"You've got some stunt in your head?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What are you thinking of?"

"Making Ransome feel sorry he had me in the boat," answered Drake coolly. "I'm thinking of cricket just at present, not fagging for Ransome, and I'm going to make him tired of it."

"Remember he's a prefect, old chap."

"I'm not thinking of punching his nose," said Drake, laughing. "But accidents will happen sometimes in a boat. I think there will be accidents this afternoon. It's his own look-out."

Rodney said no more, though he was not feeling quite easy in his mind. "Backing up" against a prefect of the Sixth Form was not a simple matter, and he was aware that his chum was reckless. But Drake had made up his mind; he was at the end of his patience now.

After dinner he presented himself in Ransome's study to ask for instructions. He found the prefect talking to Steyne of the Sixth, and he was waved impatiently away.

"Don't bother me now!" snapped Ransome.

"When will you want me?"

"Come back in half an hour."

"All right."

Drake returned to the deck, inwardly fuming. It was not much use going ashore for cricket, to return in half an hour. He spent the half-hour about the Benbow, and returned to Ransome's study promptly when time was up.

Steyne was gone, and he found Ransome alone, poring over what looked suspiciously like a betting book.

The senior looked up irritably.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"You told me to come in half an hour."

"Oh, I'm not ready yet!"

"When will you be ready?" asked Drake in a low voice.

"Come back in a quarter of an hour."

"Am I a fag or a footman this afternoon?" asked Drake.

"Clear out, and don't be cheeky!"

The junior returned to the deck and leaned on the rail, looking away towards the cricket ground ashore. Most of his comrades were there at practice, Rodney among them. Drake turned it over in his mind whether he would join them, and leave Ransome to whistle for his services. But that only meant being fetched back by the bully of the Sixth, and resistance would not be feasible. So he waited.

When he presented himself in Ransome's study again, that cheery youth was reading a novel, sprawled on a sofa.

"Not ready yet?" asked Drake sarcastically.

Ransome yawned.

"You can get the boat ready," he said. "Come and tell me when it's ready."

"Don't you find this rather a tie on your time, Ransome?" asked the junior.

Ransome stared at him.

"This—what?"

"Playing this rotten game for Daubeny, I mean. How long are you going to keep it up?"

Whiz!

By way of answer, Ransome's novel came hurtling through the air, and Jack Drake dodged out of the study just in time.

He went to get the boat ready, and when he returned to announce that it was alongside the Benbow, he found Ransome with a black brow.

"Ready!" announced the junior.

"I'm coming now, you cheeky cub!"

Ransome walked away to the boat, and his fag followed. As they pushed off from the Benbow the senior fixed his eyes on Drake, who sat at the lines.

"I've had enough of your cheek this afternoon, Drake!" he said. "If there's any more, look out! I've brought a cane with me!"

"Rats!"

"What?" howled Ransome.

"Deaf? Rats!" retorted Drake.

The Sixth Former glared at him along the boat. With an oar in each hand, it was rather difficult for him to deal with the junior. There was a wind on the river from the sea, and the water was rather rough, and the boat was rolling a little. Ransome swallowed his wrath as best he could and gave his attention to rowing.

When well away from the Benbow he laid in the oars with quiet deliberation, Drake watching him the while. Then he picked up the cane he had tossed into the boat.

"Now, you cub!" he said.

"Now, you rotter!" said Drake coolly.

"Stand up!"

"And let the lines go?"

"Hang the lines! Stand up!"

"All serene!"

Drake let the lines go and stood up, looking very wary. Ransome came closer along the boat, the cane in his grip.

"Now hold out your hand!" he said.

"No fear!"

"Hold out your hand, or I'll lay the cane round your shoulders!" roared Ransome.

Drake picked up a boathook. He had placed it in the boat in readiness, in case it should be wanted.

"Put that down at once!" said Ransome.

"When you put down the cane—not before!"

Ransome plunged forward towards the junior, but stopped, turning almost pale as the boathook touched his chest. He jumped back in a very great hurry.

"You—you young ruffian!" he gasped. "Put that boathook down at once!"

"Put the cane down first, old scout!"

Ransome bit his lip hard, but it was clear that he did not care to come to close quarters again. He laid the cane down. Drake followed his example with the boathook.

"I'll settle with you for this when we get on the Benbow again!" said the Sixth Former, between his teeth.

"There may be something else to settle for then!"

"What do you mean, you cub?"

"Find out!"

"Look out, there!" came a roar from a passing boat; and Ransome clutched the oars hastily.

The boat was pitching spasmodically, and was, in fact, in some danger of capsizing in the rough water.

"Take the lines, you young fool!"

The boat was almost athwart the course of a big wherry coming up the river, and the wherryman was addressing Ransome in a stream of eloquent language.

Ransome thrashed the oars into the water, catching a "crab" in his clumsy haste, and the boat fairly danced; and the eloquence of the wherryman became more lurid as he barely escaped a collision.

Drake did not touch the rudder-lines. Ransome had told him to stand up and let them go, and he was in no hurry to take them again. Ransome could get out of his scrape by himself; he certainly was not entitled to help from the junior he had forced into his service.

Ransome was not much of an oarsman, and he did not find it easy to row and steer in rough water.

Fortunately the boats cleared, and the wherryman's dulcet tones and polished epithets died away up the river.

Ransome sat gasping, and the look he gave Drake was almost homicidal.

"Were you trying to bring about an accident, you young villain?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"No need to try with you at the oars!" answered Drake. "I never saw such a clumsy fool!"

"I—I'll—I'll——"

"What will you do?" grinned Drake. "First of all, I would suggest getting out of the way of that barge."

"Oh, my hat! Take the lines, confound you!"

And Ransome just succeeded in circumnavigating the barge, to an accompaniment of choice remarks from the bargee. The unhappy prefect was feeling very warm and flustered by the time the boat was clear and he was able to pull away in peace.

Accidents Will Happen!

"NOW, you cheeky little cad——"

"Hallo, you cheeky big cad!" was Drake's reply.

Ransome gritted his teeth. "Backchat" of this

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: To begin with, the British Guiana one cent stamp of 1856 did not bear the date 1856, as Reilly's did. It was a plain stamp with the words British Guiana round the edges, with a sailing ship in the middle, but no date. I knew Reilly's stamp was a fake almost at once. The fellow most likely to have planted it in Reilly's packet while Reilly was changing in the dorm was Croke, his enemy—but Croke told me he had been out of gates and had only recently returned. But when Trimble told me quite innocently that he had seen Croke in his study an hour previously—and produced Croke's hand-book in proof—I was certain that it was Croke. Croke was so eager to convince Reilly, he had put the date into his fake stamp. At the moment, there is a terrific row in Croke's study—Reilly, robbed of a fortune, is taking it out of Croke!

kind was very hard to bear from a junior, but punishment just then was out of the question. The river was a good deal too rough for Ransome's taste, and a tussle in the boat would probably have led to an overturn. The bully of the Sixth had to bottle up his wrath.

"I suppose I can trust you with the oars?" said Ransome, as calmly as he could.

"You can suit yourself about that."
"I think we may as well be getting back to the Benbow," said the senior. "Take the oars, and don't capsize the boat changing."

"We shall be back rather early, shan't we?" asked Drake satirically. "I shall still have time for some cricket, you know."

"I'll see that you haven't," said Ransome, between his teeth. "I don't think you'll feel much like cricket when I've done with you."

"Perhaps we shan't be back early, though!" grinned Drake.

"Shut up, and take the oars!"
It required some care to change places in the rocking boat. Ransome crept aft very cautiously, and gasped as Drake trampled recklessly along the boat. There was a violent rocking, and a splash of water came over the gunwale.

"Take care, you young fool!" roared Ransome. "Do you want to get us both drowned?"

"Oh, we shouldn't drown; we can both swim, you know!" answered Drake cheerfully. "Besides, we could hold on to the boat till we were picked up. Are your feet very cold, Ransome?"

"Oh, you young rascal; just you wait till we're on the Benbow again!" spluttered Ransome.

"Right-ho, old top! It may be a long wait."
Ransome took the lines, and Drake the oars. As they plunged in, they escaped from his hands, and went gliding away into the water.

At the sight of that catastrophe Ransome gave a yell.

"You—you young lunatic, you've lost the oars!"

"Looks like it!"

"You did that on purpose!" shrieked Ransome.

"Go hon!"

Ransome stared after the oars, floating away on the turbid water. There was no possibility of recovering them without swimming—and Ransome certainly wasn't inclined to plunge into the rough river. And in a few minutes it was too late even for that. Ransome turned his eyes on the Fourth Former with an almost homicidal look.

"You—you—you've landed us!" he gasped.

"How are we to get back to the Benbow now?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Drake cheerfully.

"Oh, you young rascal!" groaned Ransome.

The boat was moving along with the current now, gliding through the water fairly fast, as Ransome kept its nose straight with the stream. They were a couple of miles from the Benbow, which was up the river, and without oars there was evidently no means of propelling the craft back to the school ship.

"What are we going to do?" muttered Ransome as the green banks glided by. "Oh, I'll—I'll skin you for this!"

"Keep on to the sea!" grinned Drake. "We shall be out in the estuary soon, and it will be too late to get ashore. Have you ever thought of a life on the ocean wave, Ransome?"

"You—you—you—" Ransome panted for breath. "I'll make you suffer for this! I shall have to run ashore and leave the boat. Oh, you young rascal! Wait till I get you on land!"

Ransome steered for the shore, and the current drove the boat on. In a short time the boat's nose was in deep rushes.

"Jump ashore!" snapped Ransome. "There's a stump there, and you can fasten the painter."

"Right-ho, old top!"

Drake hooked the boat closer in with the boat-hook on the tree-stump, and jumped over the rushes. He landed safely, and turned to look back at Ransome. He tossed the boathook back.

"There you are, old scout!" he said.

"Fasten the painter—"

"My dear man, I know what you're going to do when you get ashore!" chuckled Drake. "But you're not landing yet. Good-bye!"

With a sudden drive of his feet, Drake sent the boat surging out into the river again. Ransome sat down in the stern seat with a gasp. Drake walked away up the towing-path, chuckling.

He glanced back a few moments later.

"Oh, you young beast!" howled Ransome. "Go and get some help! I may be drowned!"

Drake laughed easily.

"Well, you won't want any help for that, old top!"

"You callous young ruffian!"

"Don't blub, Ransome," said Drake soothingly. "It won't make things any better, you know. Of course, you may get picked up. Anyway, I'll tell the fellows you won't be back to tea."

Ransome was making frantic efforts to get the boat inshore again, his face crimson with fury. That was the last the junior saw of him as he strode away towards the distant Benbow. For that day, at least, he was done with fagging for Ransome!

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THE RUSTLERS OF THOMPSON VALLEY!

(Continued from page 29.)

had seemed to some of the fellows to be lofty and scornful, and perhaps he had erred a little in such ways. But now that he was to leave the lumber school, he realised how dear the place had grown to him. The lumber schoolhouse, the long, tarred fence, the rough and homely surroundings; the shining creek and the long stretches of timber—all were dear to him now, and he realised, with a pang, how bitter it would be to say farewell to all that he had known there.

But his face expressed little of his feelings. He was only a little more serious than usual when he rode on the homeward trail with his chums after school.

After they had parted with him, Frank and Bob rode on to the ranch in a very subdued mood.

"It's rotten to lose the old Cherub!" said Bob.

CUSSY'S BIG GAMBLE!

(Continued from page 22.)

pleased to hear that the Cottage Hospital is out of its difficulties."

"Bai Jove!"

"A man in Wayland has sent a cheque for a hundred pounds," said Julian, smiling. "I may as well tell you it's my uncle, as the name will be on the list."

"Bai Jove! That is vewy kind and genewous of Mr. Moses!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy glad indeed to heah it, as I have failed to waise the hundwed pounds, aftah all!"

"Gussy was going to raise the quids by backing a winner!" chortled Blake.

"Rotten!" said Frank.

And that was all.

Vere Beauclere rode up to the shack, and his father met him at the door, with a somewhat serious expression. The boy forced a smile to his face.

"I've made all the arrangements," said the remittance-man. "Your place is taken in the wagon from Thompson on Wednesday. You will go in the wagon to Kamloops, and get on the railway there. I shall come with you as far as the railhead. In a short time now, Vere, you will be in the Old Country. You will be happy there."

"Yes, father," said the boy dully.

Beauclere went slowly into the shack. Soon—in a time to be counted by days—he would change that lonely shack for a wealthy mansion, his homely surroundings for wealth and ease. But there was no happy anticipation in his heart; his thoughts were all for his Western home, for his father, and the loyal chums he was to leave behind.

Next Week: "THE SHADOW OF FEAR!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Julian tried not to laugh, but he could not help it, and he roared.

Arthur Augustus did not smile. He jammed in his eyeglass and looked seriously at his chums.

"On weflection, deah boys, I am beginnin' to doubt whethah the end does justify the means," he said slowly. "I wathah think it is bettah to wemembah that a chap should not do evil that good may come of it. I have committed an ewwah!"

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"And I twust," said Arthur Augustus solemnly. "I twust, deah boys, that this will be a lesson to you!"

And he walked in at the gate, leaving Tom Merry & Co. speechless.

Next Wednesday: "THEY CALLED HIM A DUFFER!"

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"There are exceptional cases, dear boy. This is one of them."
Julian felt that it was hopeless. But, though he could not save Gussy from the false step itself, he wanted to save him from possible ill-consequences if he could.

"Excuse me, once more, D'Arcy; but have you put a letter in that envelope along with the notes—anything in your own hand?"
"Yaas, naturally!"

"Don't do it, then. That man Banks is an awful rascal. He will keep anything he can get in your hand, to hold over you another time."
D'Arcy jumped.

"Great Scott! I am sure the fellow would not be such a wascal, Julian."

"I think he would."
"But there is nothin' w'ong in my note—only a statement that I am enclosin' four pounds, as arranged," said D'Arcy innocently.

"What would the Head think of it if he saw it, D'Arcy?"
"H'm."

"Take the letter out," urged Julian. "Put in the currency notes, and put your message on a sheet of paper, in capital letters, not your own hand."

"That would be showin' distrust that would be vewy insultin' to Mr. Banks, Julian," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head.

"But it would be safe. If you must do this, don't put yourself under that man's thumb as well."

"I could not possibly have dealings with a man whom I regarded with so much distrust," said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy much obliged to you, Julian, but you are vewy wathah uneasy about nothin'. That man Banks is not such a bad sort in his way—quite sportin', in fact, in his shady way. I do not approve of him or his business."

"You—you don't?"
"Certainly not. I veward bettin' on horses as low and immowal."

"Oh!" gasped Julian.

"But he is all wight in his way; quite sportin' accordin' to his lights. This lettiah will be all wight. Don't you wovvwy, dear boy!"

And with a reassuring smile, Arthur Augustus walked out of the study, letter in hand, leaving Julian dumbfounded.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Takes a Hand!

Tom Merry asked that question the following evening.

The Terrible Three were on the landing when Wally & Co. of the Third made their appearance. D'Arcy minor was followed by Levison minor, Hobbs, and Joe Frayne. The fags were all grinning.

"We're going to see my major," said Wally loftily. "We've got to talk to him, haven't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Hobbs.

"You bet!" said Joe Frayne, with a chuckle. "You Shell bounders can come, if you like," said Wally condescendingly. "It may do you good to hear us, if you've got any hankering after the downward path and the road to ruin and the rest of it."

"Oh!" said Tom.

The fags marched on to Study No. 6, and the

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"Look here, Grundy—" began Bagggy Trimble. "You've got five seconds to put the half-a-crown in the box," said George Alfred, "or I'll bang your napper on it!" With an expression of a victim suffering under a hard-hearted dentist, Bagggy dropped the half-crown in the box.

chums of the Shell, after exchanging a glance, followed them.

They could guess that the rumour of D'Arcy's delinquency had reached the Third Form. Wally of the Third had come to talk to his major about it.

D'Arcy minor pitched open the door of Study No. 6, where Blake & Co. were at tea—a rather moody tea. D'Arcy major was looking very cold and lofty and misjudged, and his chums were troubled and glum. They stared at the quartet of fags in the doorway.

"Buzz off!" said Jack Blake gruffly.

"Bow-wow!" answered Wally independently.

"We've come here to talk to Gussy."

"Go ahead, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Stand up!" rapped out Wally.

"What?"

"Stand up and look me in the face!" said D'Arcy minor severely.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet in astonishment.

"Weally, you young ass—" he began.

"Now, you've got to answer for yourself," said Wally, in quite a magisterial manner. "I've brought my friends to hear you. There's a rumour about you, Gussy, and the rumour is that you've taken up Racker's game—"

"Oh wats!"

"Yes or no?" demanded Reggie Manners.

"Turn over a new leaf!" said Reggie Manners. "You—you—you—you—" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"What would the pater say if he knew the example you were setting me?" demanded Wally. "What would old Conway say if he knew you were leading a riotous life?"

"Bai Jove! I—I—"

"How would you like me to drop in at the Green Man and chum with Banks?" continued Wally.

"You young wascal! If you go anywhere near the Gween Man I will give you a fearful thrashing!"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the grander," said Reggie Manners. "Why shouldn't Wally go if you do?"

"Yes, answer that, you ass!" snapped Jack Blake.

"It's a fair question," said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"You fellows uttably fail to comprehend," answered Arthur Augustus. "You are simply misjudgin' a chap, like thoughtless youngsters. I have been turnin' it ovah in my mind wethah I can sufficiently vely upon your disewction to take you into my confidence—"

"Fathead!" was Herrics' remark.

"Weally, Hewvies—"

"Ass!" said Dig.

"Wcally, Dig—"

"Silence!" rapped out Wally. "We can't stay here till calling-over hearing you fellows jaw."

Gussy, you're called upon to repent and reform; and if you don't do it of your own accord, we'll jolly well repent and reform you. Savvy?"

"You are an impertinent young ass, Wally!"

"He's got to promise to give it up," said Hobbs.

"That's it."

"Pway wethah fvwom this study, you cheeky fags!" said Arthur Augustus, sitting down with great dignity.

"Not finished yet," answered Wally. "If you won't give us your promise to reform, we're going to whack you."

"What?" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Whack you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why I've brought my pals," explained Wally; "otherwise I should have kept this disgrace to the family strictly private. We're going to give you a jolly good hiding, Gussy. Frayne's got the stump."

Arthur Augustus' noble eye almost bulged through his eyeglass as Levison minor produced a stump, which he had hitherto been concealing behind him, visible only to the Shell fellows in the doorway.

Tom Merry & Co. burst into a roar of laughter.

Blake, Herrics, and Digby shrieked. Gussy's expression at that moment was worth a guinea a box, or more.

"You fellows won't interfere?" demanded Wally. "If you do I'll call up a lot of the Third. I've got to perform this painful duty as Gussy's brother; in fact, as his keeper."

"My dear man, go ahead!" grinned Blake.

"We'll keep clear. Give him one each for us."

"Hear, hear!" said the Terrible Three heartily.

Arthur Augustus jumped up again as the fags hovered near him. Amazing as it was, Wally & Co. were painfully in earnest. The erring youth was to be brought back to the straight and narrow path by means of a cricket-stump—a method which Wally considered would be effective.

"You—you uttaly cheeky wuffiah!" stuttered

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