

"PERIL IN PARIS!" Great New Series Just Started.

Featuring the Holiday Adventures of the Flying Schoolboys of St. Jim's.

The **GEM** **2^D**

**GUSSY'S
MIDNIGHT
VISITOR!**





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fletchway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Bull 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.

Norman Palmer, of Penasely, Cardiff, writes:

I am pleased to tell you I had the "Holiday Annual" for Christmas and thoroughly enjoyed it. Now for some queries:

1. How old is St. Jim's?
2. What age is Dick Roylance?
3. How much did D'Arcy's monocle cost?
4. What cigarettes does Racke smoke?

ANSWER: 1. About 370 years old.
2. 14 years 9 months, I understand.
3. That's a "dank" secret no "glass" can clear—though I don't think monocles are very expensive.

4. Racke & Co. have experimented with various brands. I'm glad to say that, in the long run, every kind seems to make the "bold blades" feel sick!

Pleased you enjoyed the Annual. Don't miss the 1940 edition next September—it's another winner!

J. W., of Goole, Yorks, writes:

These will beat you:

1. Does George Formby play his banjulele with his fingers, or with a plect?
2. How many of George Formby's songs are not published?
3. How old is Martin Clifford?

ANSWER: So you'll clean my window for me, eh? Plink-plink-plink, and here I go on my little typewriter!

1. With his fingers.
2. Only George knows that. Plenty of good published ones to pick from, aren't there?
3. That's his secret. Encore? Any time you like!

Patrick Kerrs, of Withington, Manchester, writes:

Here's my attempt to puzzle you:

1. Why do stars twinkle?
2. When and how did the fashion of "parting" hair originate?
3. What is Kosher?
4. What is an osier basket?
5. How long is a piece of string?
6. How is it that you can answer most of our questions, yet you are only in the Fourth at St. Jim's?

What price this lot?

ANSWER: 1. They don't. The "twinkling" effect is caused by the variable density of the earth's atmosphere. In other words, the stars shine steadily, but the air "twinkles"!

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2. All nations, savage and civilised, have arranged their hair in every sort of style since the dawn of time. I expect Adam was the first to part his hair when it fell in his eyes. The Normans introduced the "short cut" into England, by the way.

3. Kosher (Hebrew for "fit") means that which is ceremonially "clean" for Jews. It is usually applied to meat, the animal being slaughtered by a licensed butcher according to Mosaic law.

4. Willow twig, or osier, as it is called, is cultivated for basket-making. To make a round half-bushel basket, take brown osiers, with middleboro, threepenny, and long small. Six stout rods are cut and slyped—well, it's a complicated process, but that's how you begin. Did you get all that? I bet you didn't!

5. The correct form of this question is: How long is a piece of string, and why? Come again.

6. You'll give me sculled head.

What price, did you say? Sorry, I never buy questions if I can help it!

Evelyn Barlow, of Headingley, Leeds, writes:

I think you're too hard on Gussy. It's a wonder he's still in existence, the way you treat him. He's my hero. Did you know I write lyrics? How's this—to the tune of "Goody Goody":

'Gonna get my gas-mask, join the A.R.P.
'Cos I'm wise to all those bombs you drop on me;
Gonna dig myself a trench
Inside the garden fence;
Gonna seal my windows up with tin
So that the tear gas can't get in;
Gonna park my cannon right outside the kerb
With a note to Adolf Hitler: "Don't disturb!"
And if I never fall in Nazi hands
That's soon enough for me.
Gonna get my gas-mask, join the A.R.P.

P.S.—Do you get on well with girls?

ANSWER: Better hand over to Gussy. Gussy speaking: "You may tell this wavy charmin' Miss Barlow, Blake, that although it is extremely embawwassin' to be regarded as a hero, I am quite flattered. The lyric seems to be a wavy jolly piece of work. I feel sure if Miss Barlow were to drop in to tea one day, we should do our best to entertain a patriotic girl as she deserves!" That goes for me, too. Gonna get my gas-mask—gosh, I've got it on the brain!

**NON-STOP THRILLS AND FUN IN PARIS WITH THE FLYING SCHOOLBOYS OF ST. JIM'S!
THIS GRAND NEW EXTRA-LONG YARN WILL GRIP AND HOLD YOUR INTEREST
THROUGHOUT.**



PERIL *in* PARIS!

Angry, indignant, and excited, Arthur Augustus hit out with all his force as the dingy hands of the Apaches reached for him in the cab. His knuckles landed on a ruffian's chin, and the man gave an ear-splitting howl as he went over backwards.

CHAPTER 1. Happy Landing!

"**W**E'RE dropping!" exclaimed Monty Lowther

"Bai Jove! Dwoppin'!"
"Yes, look out! Hold on!"

The Silver Swallow dipped and slanted. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, starting to his feet, slipped as it dipped, and sat down again—on the floor of the cabin. A silk hat rolled from his hand.

"Ow!" he ejaculated, as he sat. "Oh ewikey!"

Tom Merry & Co. had been watching the landscape of France unroll below from the windows of the passenger plane. In the distance they had a glimpse of the spires and domes of Paris as the plane hovered over the aerodrome where they were to land.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been otherwise occupied. He had laid aside the cap in which he had made the trip, to be

replaced by a shining silk topper when he landed, to dazzle the admiring eyes of the natives. He was giving the topper a final brush before he placed it on his noble head. He was, naturally, deeply intent on this important occupation, and unaware that the plane was now over the drome, and about to make a landing.

So he rather misunderstood Monty Lowther's sudden exclamation—as perhaps the playful Monty intended him to do.

The Silver Swallow, certainly, was dropping. An aeroplane could hardly land without dropping.

"Hold on, Gussy!" shouted Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Mind my hat, you fellows! Don't tweed on my hat!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. He grabbed at the rolling topper. "Are we weally dwoppin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Tom.

The plane dipped again. Arthur Augustus grabbed his topper with one hand, and scrambled up, grabbing the back of a seat with the other for support.

To "Gay Paree" is the first hop of Tom Merry & Co.'s air cruise on the Continent—but peril as well as gaiety lies ahead of them in the French capital!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

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"Keep cool!" he gasped. "Pway don't panic, deah boys! Wemembah that you are Bwitons, and keep your heads in the honah of dangah!"

There was no sign of panic among the St. Jim's Easter-holiday party. Had the Silver Swallow really been "dropping," probably they would have kept their heads. So they were not likely to lose them when all the plane was doing was settling down gracefully to the landing-place.

"Keep your eyes on Gussy!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Gussy will show us how to face it." "Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Accidents will happen, deah boys, in the best wregulated aewoplanes. Pewwaps we shall pull through. In any case, keep cool, and face it like Bwitons!"

Another dip!

"Bai Jove! Are we vevy neah the gwound, Blake?"

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"Awfully near," answered Jack Blake, from the window. "I can see all the buildings and Froggies buzzing about like flies."

"Lots of them looking up at us," said Herries.

"They can see we're dropping," said Digby.

"They'll be ready with first-aid, Gussy!"

"We shall be bumping in a minute more," said Manners.

"Bai Jove! I am vevy glad to see you fellows keepin' so cool," exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah sowwy I brought you on this twip, if there is goin' to be a feahful accident. Planes are genewally safah than twains or cahs. We may get cleah yet. While there's life there's hope, you know."

"Lots!" agreed Tom Merry.

"I twust, if we fall, that we shall not bang on anybody's head," said Arthur Augustus. "That would be wathah wuff on those Fwench johnnies. It would be vevy wuff!"

"Oh, Gussy!" gasped Blake.

That was Gussy all over. Quite unaware that his aristocratic leg was being pulled, it was just like Gussy to think of the people underneath the falling plane.

"Keep away from the window, Gussy!" gasped Lowther. "Don't look out!"

"Wats!" answered Arthur Augustus. "When there is dangah, deah boy, it is bettah to look it in the face. I shall certainly look out of the window."

He gazed from the window at the tarmac below, and the drome buildings and faces glancing upward. Nothing of an alarming nature met his view. The plane dipped as planes are wont to dip on occasion. That was all. The earth was very near, but it had to be nearer still for the Silver Swallow to land. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed downward; then he gazed at his companions, and Tom Merry & Co. gave a yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, you uttah ass, there is no dangah at all!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "We are simply landin' at the aewodwome."

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"Quite!" agreed Lowther.

"You said we were dwoppin', you sillay ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"So we are!"

"You uttah duffah, I thought you meant that we were dwoppin'—"

"So I did. We have to drop. Can't land by going upwards. We're bound for Paris, not for the planets."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a leg-pullin' ass, Lowthah! I cannot help suspectin', Lowthah, that you were delibewately pullin' my leg!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus severely.

"He's guessed it," said Monty. "What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All serene, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We know now that there's one chap here who will keep cool if we hit trouble."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Of course, it is up to me to set you fellows an example, as you are undah my care, and I have the wresponsibility of you on my hands."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, I see no cause for mewmwent in that wemark," said the swell of St. Jim's. "The patah has sent his man Pawson in charge of the party, it is twue, but the wresponsibility wests on my shouldahs. Don't you fellows wowwy. I shall look aftah you all wight. Bai Jove, we're landin'!"

The Silver Swallow taxied gently, and came to a standstill. The steward came into the cabin, followed by Pawson, Lord Eastwood's man, who was in official charge of the Easter air trippers.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave his silk topper another careful polish—it had been rather ruffled by rolling on the cabin floor, and to land in France wearing a ruffled silk hat was a sheer impossibility to Arthur Augustus. Arthur Augustus could have faced a crash, but he could not have faced that.

"Come on, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"Staying in the plane?" asked Dig.

"Comin', deah boys!"

The door was open, the steps in position, and Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, and Blake, Herries and Digby went down in the bright cheerful sunshine.

Arthur Augustus at last lodged that beautiful topper on his head, and stepped out; and a gust of wind caught him as he ejected.

"Bai Jove, it's windy!" he ejaculated.

"There goes Lincoln and Bennett," grinned Blake.

The gust lifted that carefully polished topper from Gussy's head, and floated it off.

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry, as Arthur Augustus made a frantic clutch after the drifting topper.

But Arthur Augustus clutched not wisely but too well, and lost his footing. The other fellows had gone down the steps one at a time. Arthur Augustus did them in one.

The silk hat landed at the foot of the steps a few seconds ahead of its owner. Arthur Augustus landed on the silk hat. He sat down, good and hard, and there was a crunching sound under him.

"Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus dizzily, as he sat. "Oh cwumbs! Bai Jove, I am quite bwathless! Look aftah my hat, you fellows! Don't let my hat blow away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

D'Arcy, in the confusion of the moment, had not noticed that he was sitting on his hat.

Arthur Augustus staggered up. He left, where he had been sitting, something that looked like a concertina. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye and stared.

"Bai Jove! Where's my hat?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle like that for nothin'! Where's my hat? Has my hat blown away?" roared Arthur Augustus. "Weally, I think one of you fellows might have gwabbed a fellow's hat when a fellow was fallin' down a laddah. Pawson, have you seen where my hat went? What are you gwinnin' at, Pawson?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" gasped the portly Pawson. "There is your hat, sir—behind you, sir. I fear, sir, that that hat is a little damaged."

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus spun round. He stared down at the wrecked topper.

He had found his missing hat. But he did not pick it up. He gazed at it sadly and sorrowfully. Then he gazed round at six grinning faces.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Isn't it frightfully lucky that I packed a spare toppah? That will be a tip to you fellows always to take precautions when you are twavellin' abwoad. Pawson, will you oblige me by unpackin' my othah hat?"

And a topper gleamed on the noble head of Arthur Augustus, reflecting back the sunshine of la belle France, when the St. Jim's party packed into the car for Paris.

CHAPTER 2.

Shadowed!

"JOLLY!" said Tom Merry.

"Topping!" agreed Blake.

It was a bright morning, and the St. Jim's party were breakfasting in a balcony overlooking a wide, tree-lined avenue in the Etoile quarter of Paris.

Tall french windows opened on the balcony from the rooms occupied by the juniors. They sat at little tables, and discussed breakfast and the Easter holidays and the gorgeous trip in the plane, and looked down at the stream of cars coming and going endlessly.

April in Paris was bright and sunny, and every face wore a cheery smile—except that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was leaning on the bronze balustrade and looking down into the avenue with a rather thoughtful frown on his brow.

Something in the street below seemed to have fixed the attention of the swell of St. Jim's.

"A few days in Paris, and then all aboard again and a trip to the South of France," went on Tom Merry. "Ever heard of anything jollier?"

"Hardly ever," agreed Manners. "Best idea Gussy ever had! I shall be able to take some jolly good photographs." Manners, of course, had brought his camera.

"Penny for 'em, Gussy!" called out Blake. "You haven't spoken for three or four minutes, old bean. What are you breaking records for?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Anything on down there?" asked Tom.

"I am not suah, deah boy, at the distance, but I wathah fancy that I can see a face I have seen befoah," said Arthur Augustus, glancing round. "There is a man standin' on the othah side of the

avenue, and I am almost suah that I have seen his face befoah."

"You've seen it before, if you've seen it at all!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"How do you know, Lowthah?" asked Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Law of Nature, old chap! Faces are always seen before—never behind—"

"You uttah ass! I mean that I have seen him on a pwevious occasion, Lowthah! Pway take a look at him, deah boys."

Tom Merry & Co., in some surprise, joined Arthur Augustus at the balustrade.

It was not improbable that Gussy might spot a familiar face among the crowds in Paris. But they could not see why that should draw a thoughtful and rather angry frown to his noble brow.

On the other side of the wide avenue, close by one of the trees, a man stood, looking towards the balcony occupied by the St. Jim's juniors.

At the distance it was not easy to recognise anyone, but they could see that he had a dark, swarthy face and bright black eyes. He looked like an Italian, and Tom Merry & Co. had reason to remember a certain Italian.

"By gum! Is that the dago?" exclaimed Blake.

"I was just wondewin' whethah it was, Blake. Of course, there are hundweds, if not thousands, of Italians in Pawis. But that johnny seems to be vewy interestwed in this place."

Arthur Augustus slipped his hand into the inside pocket of his elegant jacket. In that pocket reposed the little black box which had come into Gussy's possession in circumstances that were quite puzzling and mysterious to his friends.

But though they did not know how or why or wherefore Arthur Augustus was guarding that little black box, they knew that an Italian had snatched it from him at Eastwood House a few days ago and very nearly succeeded in getting away with it.

"Phew!" murmured Tom Merry. "If that is the same dago, he has followed us to France! Doesn't seem likely."

"What the thump does he want that black box for, Gussy?" asked Digby.

"I haven't the foggiest, deah boy. Pewwaps it contains somethin' valuable. In fact, I think it must, or that howwid dago would not want it so much. If that is the same dago, he is aftah it, again! I have a gweat mind to go down and give him a feahful thwashin' as a warnin' to keep off the gwass."

"Sure you've still got it safe?" asked Herries.

"Yaas, here it is!" Arthur Augustus drew the little black box from his pocket. It was oval in shape and rather like an egg, though smaller. It seemed to be made of ebony, and there were tracings of figures carved on the surface, but no sign of an opening of any kind.

"That's worth about a quid as a curio," said Blake. "It isn't the box that the dago wants—it's what's inside!"

"Yaas, pwobably," agreed Arthur Augustus, slipping the mysterious article back into his pocket.

"Try unwinding it to open it," suggested Herries. "I'll bet that is the way to do it."

"I have no wight to open it, Hewwies, as it was entwusted into my hands and is not my pwopahty."

"Who's been pulling Gussy's leg this time?" inquired Lowther.

"Somebody," grunted Blake. "Wasn't he born to have his leg pulled? Doesn't he go round asking people to pull it?"

"Nothin' of the kind!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I cannot tell you fellows about it because I promised to keep it dark, but I weally had no choice but to act as I did. What would you fellows do if a man was cwocked fallin' off a motah-bike and in dycad of bein' wobbled by a dago who was aftah him, and asked you to mind his box for him till he wequested its weturn?"

"Was that how it happened?" exclaimed Manners.

"Pway don't ask me, deah boy; I weally cannot answah, you see, as I have undahtaken to keep the whole thing dark."

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah, deah boys; it is vewy sevicious if that wotten dago has followed us to Fwance aftah that box. I am bound to keep it safe till that Amewican chap asks me to weturn it to him——"

"So it was an American chap?"

"I would wathah not say in the cirs, Blake. When a chap has to keep a secwet it is bettah to say nothin'! A still tongue shows a wise head, you know!" said Arthur Augustus sagely.

"Hallo, there's another chap with him!" exclaimed Blake. "Looks like a Froggy."

Another man had joined the Italian across the avenue.

He was a slightly built Frenchman with a sallow face and cavernous dark eyes and thin, pinched features. The juniors saw him in talk with the dago, and then he glanced up at the balcony and at the row of faces looking down.

Then both men walked away and disappeared among the many pedestrians.

"Well, whether it's our dago or not, they're gone," said Blake. "We're going to trot along to the Bois de Boulogne this morning! Anybody ready?"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!" added Arthur Augustus, with a start. "Look at my fingahs. They are all inkay. How the dooce did my fingahs get inkay?"

"Possibly because you keep your fountain-pen in the same pocket with that black box!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, but I always keep it scwewed tight—it cannot possibly have leaked, you know." Arthur Augustus slipped his hand into his pocket and drew out a fountain-pen—dripping! "Oh cwumbs!"

"Screw loose!" remarked Monty Lowther. "It's catching! That fountain-pen's caught it from Gussy!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! Bai Jove! My jacket's all inkay! I shall have to change befoah we go out! I won't keep you a quartah of an hour, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus went in at the french window of his room. Jack Blake shouted after him as he went.

"You won't keep us waiting more than three minutes, fathead! If you do I shall come and help you out!"

"Wats!"

Jack Blake looked at his watch and counted the minutes. Three having elapsed, he made a sign to George Herries, and they followed Arthur Augustus into his room.

"Ready?" asked Blake.

"Pwesently, deah boy! I have not decided yet

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what jacket I am goin' to weah," explained Arthur Augustus.

Blake jerked the nearest jacket out of an extensive wardrobe.

"Here you are!" he said.

"I am not suah that I can weah that jacket with these twousahs, Blake! You see, the twousahs have a vertical stwipe, and that jacket——"

Arthur Augustus, wriggling, was forcibly shoved into the jacket. He resisted, but on it went. Then Blake and Herries took him by the arms to lead him forth. It had been, after all, quite a quick change!

"Will you welease me?" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps I can weah this jacket, but do you think I can go out without even lookin' in the glass?"

"Sort of!" said Blake.

"I wefuse——"

"This way!"

"You wuff asses——"

Blake and Herries walked out, and as they had possession of Gussy's arms, Gussy had to walk out also. His voice was heard raised in indignant wrath as he went.

"Ready, you men?" said Blake. "Come on!"

"I am not weady!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I shall have to considah wethah I can weah this jacket with these twousahs——"

Tom Merry gave his friends a cheery wink.

"What a topping jacket!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "By gum, the Parisians will see how a fellow ought to dress when they see that! How does Gussy do these things?"

"Sheer genius!" said Lowther. "Gussy ought to have been a tailor."

"Bai Jove! You flattah me, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "If you weally think this jacket will go with these twousahs——"

"Come on!" roared Blake. "The morning's going."

And Arthur Augustus, reassured on the subject of his clobber, came; and the St. Jim's party went forth into the sunshine of Paris.

CHAPTER 3.

The Pickpocket!

BUMP!

"Oh!"

"Mille pardons, monsieur!"

"Oh, don't mench!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I mean," he added, remembering that he was in France, "ne vous menchez pas!"

The St. Jim's party were sauntering in the Bois de Boulogne, where there were plenty of other walkers that fine and sunny morning. As they sauntered along a flower-bordered path, a Frenchman passed them rather hastily, stumbled, and fell against Arthur Augustus.

He was a slim, lightly built man, with a sallow, pinched face half hidden under a slouched black hat. Light as he was in build, his stumble gave the swell of St. Jim's rather a jolt, and Gussy, taken by surprise, tottered. The Frenchman caught hold of him and set him right, begged a thousand pardons, raised his hat, and went on his way.

"Oooh!" murmured Arthur Augustus rather breathlessly. "The Fwench are a vewy polite wace, you know—but weally, that chap was wathah clumsy. Still, he was vewy polite! You fellows noticed that he smiled when I spoke in Fwench."

"Your French would make any Frenchman smile, old chap!" said Blake.

"Might even make him laugh!" suggested Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I wathah think that I speak pwetty good Fwench. Mossoo Morny, at St. Jim's, nevah seems quite satisfied with it, but I have often thought that my accent is wathah bettah than his. What are you lookin' aftah that chap for, Tom Mewwy?"

Tom Merry was staring rather hard in the direction the sallow-faced Frenchman had taken.

"That's the Froggy who was talking to that dago chap in the avenue, before we came out," he said.

"Bai Jove! I nevah noticed." Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass after the man who was disappearing beyond a clump of trees. "Bai Jove! Pewwaps he is keepin' an eye on us! I shall know him if I see him again."

The juniors walked on, enjoying the fresh air and sunshine in that great pleasure ground of Paris. They were heading for an open-air cafe in the distance, their ramble having made them disposed for a rest and a spot of refreshment. A number of other people were making for the same spot, and a few minutes later, the juniors found themselves in rather a crowd.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, as someone bumped against him in passing. "Pway take care—I mean, lookez-vous out, you know."

The man passed on hurriedly in the crowd, and there was an exclamation from Blake.

"That Froggy again!"

"Oh cwumbs! Was it that chap again?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Weally, it is vewy singulah! That is the second time he has bumped into me!"

"What the dickens is his game?" exclaimed Blake, staring after the sallow, thin-faced man vanishing in the crowd. "Is he a jolly old practical joker, making a morning of it?"

"I will be weady for him next time!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If he bumps into me again, I shall say plainly, 'You are a wude fellow!' That will make him feel pwetty small, I think."

"Bound to crush him!" grinned Blake.

The juniors reached the cafe, and selected a table under a spreading tree. They sat down in a cheery bunch.

At the next table, close at hand, a man sat down, a few moments later, and opened a copy of the "Petit Journal."

Tom Merry & Co. looked at him rather expressively, but he did not glance in their direction.



The other fellows had done the steps one at a time. Arthur Augustus did them in one! The silk hat landed at the foot of the steps a few seconds ahead of its owner, and Gussy landed on the silk hat! There was a crunching sound under him! "Oh!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwumbs!"

It was the sallow man with the pinched face and cavernous eyes. This was the third meeting in a morning's walk, and none of the juniors supposed that it was by chance that he had arrived at the cafe so soon after them, and sat down so near at hand.

But if he was shadowing the St. Jim's party, he took no heed of them. The garcon brought him an absinthe, and he lighted a cigarette and read his paper while he alternately smoked and sipped his drink. Even when Arthur Augustus fixed his eyeglass on him for a long moment, he gave no sign!

Arthur Augustus' attention was transferred to the garcon who came for orders. Not only as host, but as the fellow who knew French, Arthur Augustus gave instructions to the waiter.

"Cafe—that's coffee, you fellows, if you don't happen to know," said Arthur Augustus. "Let me see—how do you say seven? Is it dix or quinze?"

"Make it sept!" suggested Tom Merry.

"Yaas, of course! Sept cafes, garson!" said Arthur Augustus. "Et quelque petits couteaux."

"Quelque which?" gasped Blake.

"Those little cakes, you know—" explained Arthur Augustus, who probably had "gateaux" in his noble mind.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quelque couteaux, monsieur?" exclaimed the waiter in surprise.

"Yaas, wathah! I mean, oui, tres bien!" said Arthur Augustus. "Apportez—that means bwing, you chaps—apportez sept cafes au lait, et a plate of cakes—I mean—je veux dire—petits couteaux!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, you wathah cwamp a fellow's style, when he's talkin' Fwench, by cacklin' in that wiculous mannah. Buck up, waitah—what are you waitin' for?"

"It's a waiter's business to wait!" Lowther pointed out.

"Wats! Buckez-vous up, garcon!"

"Mais—mais!" gasped the astonished garcon. "Monsieur desire quelque couteaux—vraiment?"

"Yaas, wathah! Apportez tres quick!" said Arthur Augustus. "Nous avons a spot of faim, and we want some couteaux a manger."

"C'est ca, monsieur!" said the garcon, and he hurried away to execute that remarkable order, which probably confirmed him in the national belief that all the English were a little mad.

"That garcon doesn't seem to catch on vewy quickly, you fellows," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He weally does not seem to undahstand his own language vewy well! I have noticed that about Fwenchmen befoah."

Tom Merry & Co. grinned and waited, quite curious to see what the waiter would bring. He came back, threading his way among the tables with a tray, on which reposed seven coffees, and a little heap of knives.

The coffees were all right! But Arthur Augustus gazed at the heap of knives in great astonishment.

"The Fwench are weally a vewy remarkable people!" he ejaculated. "What is the good of bringin' up knives, and nothin' to cut with them? Garcon!"

"Oui, m'sieur."

"Why—I mean pourquoi—haven't you ap-

ported the couteaux?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway dwy up, you fellows! Regardez, garcon, je vous ai dit—apportez des couteaux—"

"Voilà les couteaux, m'sieur!" answered the waiter, pointing with a greasy finger to the heap of knives.

"Can you fellows make anythin' of this?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a puzzled glance round at six grinning faces.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is the man a little off his wockah, or what? I asked him to bwing me some cakes, and he bwing me a lot of knives! Look here, garcon—lookez-vous ici, I mean—I said—j'ai dit—couteaux—"

"Regardez les couteaux, m'sieur!"

"The chap's cracked, you fellows! Scootez, garcon—I mean, ecoutez," Arthur Augustus was getting a little excited. "Je demande des couteaux—couteaux a manger—to eat—manger—got that? I mean, gottez-vous cela?"

"Couteaux a manger!" repeated the garcon, like a man in a dream. "Mon Dieu!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Make it gateaux, old chap!" gurgled Tom Merry. "You see, couteaux are knives, and gateaux are cakes!"

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, now I come to think of it, a cake is a gateau, not a couteau! Gateaux, garcon—gateaux, vous—understandez?"

"Mais oui!" grinned the garcon, and he hurried away for cakes.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "No wondah he looked surprised, if he thought I was askin' him for knives to eat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The gateaux arrived next, sweet and sticky. And Tom Merry & Co. sipped coffee and ate cakes and watched the circling crowds and forgot all about the sallow man at the next table.

But they were reminded of him suddenly. The sallow man finished his absinthe, threw away the stump of a cigarette, folded his newspaper, and rose. As he stepped away he dropped the paper, clutched after it, and pitched against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, almost knocking him off his chair.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Mille pardons, monsieur! Je vous demande mille pardons!" exclaimed the Frenchman.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Wats!" he said sternly. "That is the third time you have bumped against me! I werged you as a wude fellow!"

Whether those crushing words crushed the Frenchman or not, he disappeared. Arthur Augustus sat down again, frowning. Monty Lowther uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Feel in your pockets, Gussy!"

"Eh! Why?"

"Ever heard of pickpockets?"

"Oh cwikey!"

"By gum, was that his game?" exclaimed Tom Merry. It dawned on the juniors, all at once. "See if you've missed anything, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus' hand shot into the inside pocket of his jacket! It came out empty. He sat overwhelmed with dismay.

"Oh cwikey! It's gone!"

"What's gone?" asked Jack Blake.

"The black box!"

CHAPTER 4.

Louis-sur-les-toits!

"GONE!" exclaimed six fellows together. "Yaas!"

The juniors jumped up. At a little distance, they spotted the sallow-faced man! He had gone through the crowd—but he had not gone far; he was standing by a tree, lighting a cigarette, when they stared round for him.

"There he is!" exclaimed Blake.

"Bai Jove! Aftah him—"

But the next moment the sallow-faced man moved on and disappeared among a throng. Arthur Augustus flashed his eyeglass to and fro in vain search.

"Where is he, deah boys?" he exclaimed.

"Bunked!" said Blake. "He didn't seem in a hurry—but he's gone now. Look here, sure you've lost that blinking black box?"

"Yaas, you ass, and my notecase, too! It doesn't mattah so much about the notecase, as that was my own pwopahty, but the black box was entwusted to my keepin'—I say, where's a policeman? Call a policeman!"

Arthur Augustus was wildly excited. He saw it all now—as all the other fellows did. That sallow rascal had been in touch with the dago—and he had shadowed the party in the Bois de Boulogne, for the special purpose of picking D'Arcy's pockets.

"Gendarme!" spluttered Arthur Augustus. "Ou est un gendarme—where is there a beastly gendarme—"

"Qu'est-que-c'est, monsieur!" The waiter hurried up; two or three dozen people were staring round at the excited Gussy.

"Pickpocket!" said Tom Merry. That word was as well-known in French as in English! Indeed, there was a notice up on the cafe: "GARDEZ VOUS DE PICK-POCKETS."

"C'est comme ca!" exclaimed the garcon. "J'appelle un sergent-de-ville." He waved shiny hands and shouted.

"They call the policemen jongdarmes here—jongdarme—jongdarme!" called Arthur Augustus. "The waiter seems to call them sergents-de-ville!" said Blake. "Anyhow, here's one, whichever he is."

A man in uniform hurried up—one of the constables on duty in the Bois. Arthur Augustus explained, in a wonderful French never before heard in France—pulling out the lining of an empty pocket to make it clear! The waiter explained, probably more comprehensibly. Thirty or forty people, gathering round in an interested circle, contributed exclamations and gesticulations. The sergent-de-ville waved two large hands and poured out a flood of French, too rapidly for the juniors to understand more than a few words of it.

"Bureau de police!" said Blake, disentangling those words from the flood. "I suppose that means the police station."

"Venez avec moi!" said Tom Merry, disentangling a few more. "That means 'come with me.'"

"Yaas, wathah! We've got to go to the police station, deah boys! We must get that black box back as soon as we can, bai Jove! Tom Mewwy, deah boy, will you pay the waitah! I am bwoke to the wide, as my notecase is gone."

"Much in it?" asked Dig.

"No—only about a thousand fwances, luckily. I wasn't cawwyng any English money—"

"Only about five-pounds-ten, you image—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Come on," said Tom Merry, having settled

with the garcon. "We've got to go through it now. Why, great Scott! Look!"

He looked in amazement at the sallow, pinched face staring from the circling throng of the interested public. It was the Frenchman—the suspected pickpocket!

"Bai Jove! That's the man!" roared Arthur Augustus. He grabbed the sergent-de-ville by the arm with one hand and pointed with the other. "Lookiez-vous—regardez—that is the homme—I mean, c'est le man—the pickpocket."

"Comment?"

"Hold on, though!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a sudden spot of doubt. "It's jolly queer for the man to hang about here after picking your pocket, Gussy—"

But the sergent-de-ville, staring in the direction indicated, gave a start, and a grin of recognition. Evidently he knew that sallow, pinched face.

"Louis-sur-les-toits!" he ejaculated. And with a stride he reached the sallow man and dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Bai Jove! The bobby knows him!" exclaimed Gussy. "Pwobably an old offendah! He knows his name, you see."

"Jolly queer name!" said Monty Lowther. "Louis-sur-les-toits means Louis-on-the-roof!"

"Bai Jove, what a weird name! But you can see he knows him."

There was no doubt about that! And the attention of the crowd being transferred to the sallow man, it seemed that others knew something about him. The word "Apache" passed from lip to lip.

Tom Merry & Co. had heard of the Apaches—the gangsters of Paris; as fierce a crew as the Indian tribe from which they derived their nickname. Evidently, many of the people round

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about could see that Louis-sur-les-toits belonged to the Apache fraternity—perhaps from his face, sharp, cunning, watchful and pallid with drugs.

At the grasp of the constable's hand, sudden tigerish ferocity blazed in the sallow face and the sunken eyes, and for a second Louis looked like springing like a wild animal. But the sergent's grip was strong and a crowd circled about him, and the Apache subdued his instinctive ferocity.

Keeping a grip on the skinny arm, the sergent-de-ville signed to the English schoolboys.

"Suivez!" he said. "S'il vous plait, suivez."

And the St. Jim's fellows followed. The sergent-de-ville, burly and ponderous, marched ahead, with the skinny, weedy, wriggling crook in his powerful grasp. Tom Merry & Co. walked behind—and round them, and after them, walked about fifty people, all buzzing with excited interest. It was quite a procession.

There was some distance to cover, and at every step the throng thickened. Murmurs were heard and the juniors caught the word "espions."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "I believe they think we're all arrested and take us for foreign spies!"

"Oh ewikey!"

"I wish that bobby would hurry up!" remarked Blake. "I've had about enough of this!"

But the sergent-de-ville marched on with steady tread, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and the juniors had to accommodate their pace to his. He was not in a hurry; and the majesty of the law had to be given its head, so to speak.

"Can't hurry him!" said Monty Lowther. "I suppose it would be against the law here to stick a pin in him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd thickened and thickened. Excitement spread. "Espions" was hissed right and left. The idea of foreign spies is never far from a Frenchman's mind. But the stolid guardian of the law marched on with his prisoner, slow, stately, and unheeding.

Tom Merry & Co. were thankful when they reached the official building and passed in.

"A bas les espions!" howled some excited patriot, as they went in. Then, at last, they were out of sight of the crowd and ushered into the official presence.

CHAPTER 5.

Just Like Gussy!

LOUIS-SUR-LES-TOITS, by which remarkable name the Apache seemed to be known to the police, stood scowling, almost spitting like a cat.

Apart from his pallid, pinched, unpleasant, unhealthy face, the juniors had noticed nothing special about the man, before the sergent-de-ville's grasp had fallen on his shoulder. But now it was plainly to be seen what he was—a crook, equally enraged and apprehensive at finding himself in the hands of his natural enemies, the police.

But it seemed to the juniors, as they looked at him, that surprise and rage predominated over fear in his cat-like face, and they could not help wondering whether, after all, Gussy's property would be found on him.

It was possible that he had passed it on to a confederate. But the fact that he had lingered on the spot, looking on among the crowd at the cafe, made them wonder a little whether he had,

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after all, picked Gussy's pockets. On the other hand, it was certain that he had, three times in succession, come into collision with D'Arcy—and that D'Arcy's pockets were empty. And the sergent-de-ville had had no hesitation in taking him at once to the police station—it was clear that he was well known to the police.

A plump official sitting at a desk, with a bald head and a double chin, and a pen in his hand, listened to the sergent-de-ville, and then to a stream of spluttering French from the Apache. Then Arthur Augustus was called forward. The fat gentleman looked him over.

"C'est un Anglais!" said the sergent-de-ville.

"Mais oui!" said Arthur Augustus in his best French. "Je suis Anglais, but I speakey Fwrench vevy bon!"

"Comment?"

"I can expliquer the whole thing—I mean, chose—in Fwrench!" said Arthur Augustus. "Je think that cet homme pickey le pocket—"

The man at the desk raised a plump hand. He called to another sergent-de-ville, who called into an inner room, and still another official came forth. After another spate of French, the new man turned to the juniors, with a bow and a smile.

"English spoken!" he said. "Yes? I am one interpreter—for to say over again of French what you shall say in Anglais. Now you shall say in your own language what shall go to happen."

"How well you speak English, sir!" said Monty Lowther, with great gravity.

The interpreter bowed and smiled again. Evidently he was pleased by that little compliment.

"I have very much English!" he admitted. "To some French it is not easy, but to me very facile spoken! Now you shall relate these occurrences."

"Pewwaps I had bettah put it in Fwrench—"

"Shut up, Gussy, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You shall say in English all occurrences that go to come!" said the interpreter. "You shall relate every sort particular."

So the occurrences were related; that Louis-sur-les-toits had dogged the steps of the party in the Bois de Boulogne; that he had thrice collided with D'Arcy, obviously intentionally; and that after the third collision, Arthur Augustus had missed the notecase from one pocket and the black box from another.

The interpreter seemed a little puzzled by the black box! However, he got its description, and having been satisfied, he proceeded to translate to the fat gentleman presiding at the desk. The juniors caught the words "boite noir," evidently referring to the black box.

There followed rapid French on all sides, and finally Louis-sur-les-toits was taken into another apartment, to be searched.

Tom Merry & Co. waited. They had to wait a considerable time, but finally the Apache was brought in again, scowling more blackly than ever.

Nothing, it was clear, had been found on him. The interpreter, after some more rapid-fire French, turned to the juniors.

"Nozzing is to find!" he said. "Zero is no bourse, zero is no boite noir—zero is nozzing in a pocket! Nozzing of nozzing!"

"But he picked my pockets, you know!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly. "Nevah mind about the wallet, but I weally must have the black box! You see—"

"It is not to find!" explained the interpreter. "Ze man he say he take nozzing—and nozzing is to find! He is one bad character—one of ze very baddest in tout Paris—for zat reason ze sergent-de-ville take him—but zere is nozzing de nozzing."

"Oh cwumbs! He must have got wid of the plundah somehow, then!" said Arthur Augustus in dismay. "I say, this is a feahful blow, you fellows! That black box was entwusted to my keepin'—"

"Time to go!" said Blake. "Nothing doing here! Can't you hear that chap saying bonjour?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Well, bonjour him back again, and let's hook it."

"Yaas; but—"

"Zousand regrets!" said the polite interpreter. "But zere is nozzing to do! Perhaps it was anozer pickpocket—in Paris zere are much pickpocket! Zis man is suspicious character—but zere is nozzing."

"Yaas—but—"

Blake grabbed Arthur Augustus by the arm and led him away. Nothing having been found on the pickpocket, it was clear that there was nothing to be done; and the schoolboys were politely bowed out of the bureau de police.

In the street, fortunately, the crowd had dispersed. The proceedings in the police station had taken over an hour. Whether the police were still detaining Louis-sur-les-toits, or letting him go, the juniors did not know. They saw no more of the Apache.

"Well, this is a go!" said Tom Merry as they walked away. "Blessed if I can quite make it out."

"It is absolutely howwid!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "That feahful wascal was set aftah us by that beastly dago, specially to pick my pocket! That is as cleah as anythin' now!"

"Looks like it!" agreed Blake.

"It is feahfully awkward, you know. We were goin' to the south in a few days, but I cannot leave Pawis without the black box—I shall have to wecovah it somehow."

Tom Merry & Co. made no comment on that, except that Monty Lowther bestowed a wink on the other fellows. If Gussy was going to comb Paris for the black box till he recovered it, it was certain that the air trip would not be resumed in a few days—or a few years!

Gussy's face was sad and sombre as they walked back to the mansion in the avenue, in which they had their quarters. Pawson met them as they came in.

"You are late for lunch, gentlemen," said Lord Eastwood's man. "I trust no accident—" The portly Pawson scanned the juniors' thoughtful faces, and the dismal and dismayed countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Gussy's had his pocket picked!" answered Blake.

"Dear me!" said Pawson. "I am sorry, sir! I trust there was nothing very valuable—"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "A little black box—"

"And a notecase," said Blake sarcastically. "It doesn't matter about the notecase, as there was only about five-pounds-ten in it."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "But it mattahs vevy much about the black box. Pewwaps you will be able to help

me wecovah it. Pawson—you are a feahfully clevah chap, and the patah thinks a lot of you."

"Did you say a black box, sir?" asked Pawson.

"Yaas—"

"Is this it?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped clear of the floor as Lord Eastwood's man held up a little oval black box! His noble eye almost popped through his eyeglass.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped. "How in the name of wondah did you get it back, Pawson? Bai Jove, this is like magic!"

Pawson permitted himself a smile!

"It fell from your jacket pocket, sir, when I picked it up in your room," he said. "Finding that your jacket was inky, sir, I took it to send to the cleaner's, and, of course, emptied the pockets first."

"Eh!"

"This little black box, sir, was in one pocket, and this notecase in another," said Pawson.

"Oh ewikey!"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the notecase and the black box. Arthur Augustus goggled at them.

"You left them in the pockets apparently, sir, when you changed your jacket before going out," murmured Pawson.

"Oh, bai Jove! So—so—so I did!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I—I quite forgot that I had changed my jacket before goin' out!"

"Oh, jiminy crickets!" gasped Blake. "You ass—you fathhead—you chump—you burbling cuckoo!"

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was all your fault, Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "If you had not washed in, and played the goat while I was changin' my jacket—"

"You frumptious chump!"

"I wefuse to be called a fwumptions chump, Blake, when it is all your fault! I should certainly have taken the things out of my jacket pocket when I changed—but you know vevy well that you and Hewwies washed in, and cwammed me into a jacket, and dwagged me out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy!" gasped Tom Merry. "He leaves his valuables at home in his pockets, and fancies they've been pinched!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It was wathah wuff on that blightah to take him to the police station for pickin' my pockets, when my pockets weren't picked at all!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "No wondah they nevah found the things on him, you know, when the things were at home all the time. Why, I nevah had anythin' in these pockets at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!" roared Blake. "That's why that blighter bumped into Gussy three times, one after another! He was going through a different pocket each time! That's why he hung about, waiting for another chance at another pocket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared.

There was no doubt that Louis-sur-les-toits had tried to pick Gussy's pockets! He had had three tries, one after another—and there was no doubt, either, that he would have succeeded had the black box been in any of Gussy's pockets in the Bois de Boulogne.

Gussy had saved it by forgetting it, and leaving it in the pocket of the jacket he had changed.

"Bai Jove! What a feahfully nawwow escape!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If I had had it on me, that wotten wascal would have had it all wight! It is wathah luckay I had to change my jacket!"

"And jolly lucky we didn't give you a quarter of an hour to change it in!" chortled Blake.

Arthur Augustus stowed the black box away in his pocket again—Pawson's glance following it rather curiously. And the juniors went in to lunch, still chuckling over that remarkable escape of the black box.

CHAPTER 6.

Gussy Does Some Shopping!

"NO!" Six voices spoke together, "Weally, you fellows—"

"No!" "Now, pway be weasonable, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have got to buy a staw hat! Owin' to Lowihah's twicks on the plane, my staw hat was wuined! Pewwaps it was an ovahsight on my part to pack only one staw hat—but weally, you know, luggage has to be limited on a plane—I have always made it a wile to travel light."

"Oh crumbs!" "You can get vevy good staw hats in Pawis," went on Arthur Augustus. "A fellow told me about a shop in the Wue de Wivoli. Now, you fellows are goin' to the Louvre this mornin'. No need for you to come along with me to buy a staw hat. I can twust you not to get into twouble, if you all keep togethah, and don't wandah about too much. So that's all wight! And so—"

"You're not going out alone in Paris!" said Blake. "Even at St. Jim's a fellow can't trust you out of his sight!"

"Weally, Blake—" "No!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "Can't be done, Gussy! Cut out the shopping, or we'll cut out the Louvre!"

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am not goin' to waste your mornin'. And I must have a staw hat!"

"Then I'll come along with you, and the other fellows can go to the Louvre," said Tom. "You're not going anywhere alone, old bean, after what happened yesterday!"

"I should be vevy glad of your company, Tom Mewwy, of course. But do you think you would like a mornin' at a hattah's as much as a mornin' at the Louvre?"

"Will it take you a whole morning to buy a staw hat?"

"You vevah can tell, deah boy! A job that's worth doin' at all is worth doin' well, you know. A well-dressed fellow has to be wathah particulah about his hats. Hats are almost as important as shoes in bein' well-dressed!"

"What about putting a chain on him and leading him after us to the Louvre?" suggested Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—" "Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'll go shopping with Gussy, and see that he gets into no trouble—if it is possible to keep him out of trouble, I mean."

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"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" "That's settled, then!" said Blake. "Get a move on!"

And the St. Jim's trippers got a move on. Five fellows packed into a car to roll off to the Louvre; Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus walked. It was a settled thing that, after his adventure with the pickpocket in the Bois de Boulogne, Arthur Augustus was not going anywhere alone, so long as the Easter trippers stayed in Paris.

With that mysterious and troublesome black box in his possession, and a mysterious and troublesome dago hunting for it, Gussy was not safe out of the sight of his comrades—in their opinion, if not in his own.

As the two juniors strolled along the bright, sunny streets, Tom Merry had a wary eye open, more than half-expecting to see Louis-sur-les-toits loitering somewhere in the offing.

"Louis-on-the-roof" was not to be seen; but as they mingled in the crowds in the Rue de Rivoli, Tom spotted a swarthy face that he knew, and had a glimpse of a pair of black beady eyes that fixed on himself and his companion.

"The dago!" ejaculated Tom. The dusky face disappeared the next moment, but Tom had seen it.

"Bai Jove! Did you say the dago, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, coming out of a brown study. Gussy had been deep in thought. But he was not thinking of dagoes. He was thinking of straw hats!

"Yes—he's gone!" said Tom. "The dear man has an eye on us, Gussy!"

"Bothah him!" said Arthur Augustus. "Here is the place, Tom Mewwy." And Arthur Augustus led the way into the chapelier's shop.

It was quite a good establishment, and there was an immense variety of hats from which to select. Tom Merry would have made a purchase in about three minutes. But he prepared to put in an hour while Arthur Augustus selected a hat. A bowing shopman gave Arthur Augustus his very best attention. One glance at Gussy revealed that he was a tourist with money to spend.

"Je voudrais—" began Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! How do you say buy, Tom Mewwy? I forget the beastly word! Somethin' like ash-tray, I think."

"Acheter!" said Tom. "Yaas, that's it! Je voudrais acheter un chateau!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! What are you gwinnin' at, Tom Mewwy? A chateau is a hat, in Fwench."

"Not quite!" gasped Tom. "Wats! I am perfectly suah that a chateau is a hat! I wathah think this chap undahstands all wight. Vous avez des chateaux a vendre, ici?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry gurgled. The difference between chateau and chapeau was not very great in the spelling. It was considerably different in the article itself, a chapeau being a hat, and a chateau a mansion. Gussy, happily unconscious of the fact that he was asking the shopman to sell him a mansion, waited for the article to be placed before him.

"Mais non, monsieur!" said the shopman, shaking his head. "Pas ici! Faut chercher un agent d'affaires—un bureau de gerance de proprietes."

"I don't quite get you!" said the puzzled Gussy. "Je ne vous get pas! What is an agent d'affaires, Tom Mewwy?"

"An estate agent," grinned Tom, "and a bureau de gerance de proprietes is an estate agent's office!"

Arthur Augustus' eyes opened so wide that his eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord. He jammed it into his eye again, and stared at Tom in amazement.

"Bai Jove! Is the man cwacked?" he asked. "What does he want to send me to an estate agent for?"

"To buy a mansion, if you want one!" chortled Tom.

"But I don't want to buy a mansion—I want to buy a hat!" Arthur Augustus turned to the shopman again. "Je voudrais acheter un chateau—"

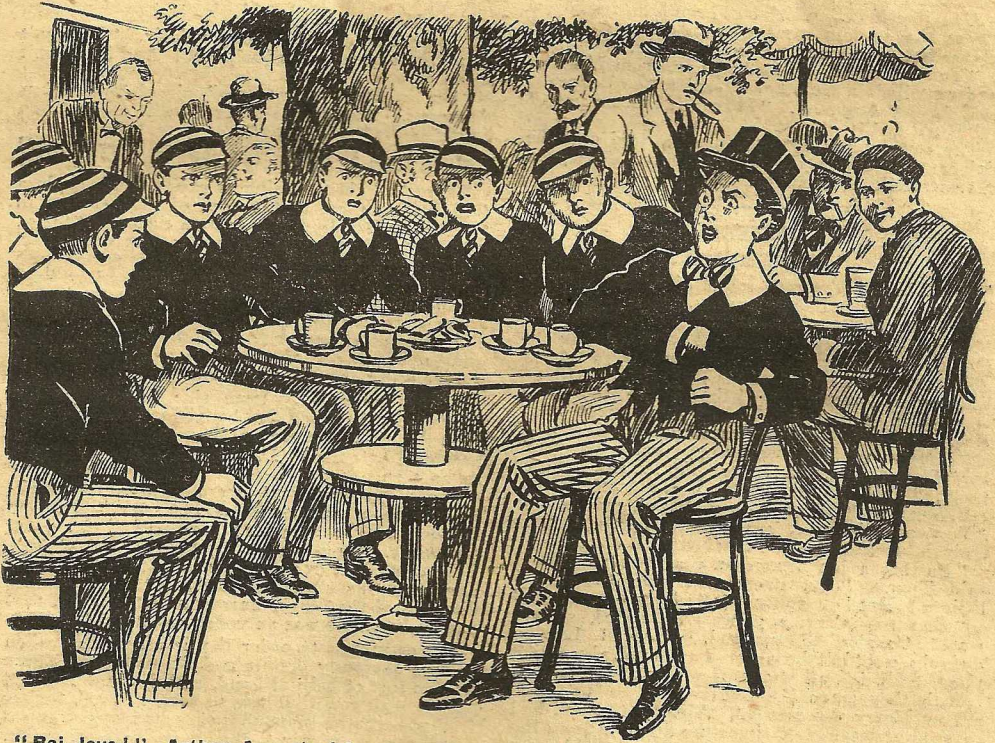
is vewy odd for a shopman to describe his own goods as common, isn't it?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tom. "'Comment' means 'what,' old chap! The man's asking you what you're talking about!"

"Well, it's vewy odd that he doesn't undahstand Fwench, bein' a Fwenchman, though I must say I have had that expewience befoah. Allons, ecoutez!" went on Arthur Augustus. "Je voudrais—that means 'I should like,' Tom, in case you don't know—je voudrais acheter un chapeau de straw—"

"Je ne comprends pas straw, monsieur."

"Oh! Bai Jove! I forgot that! What is Fwench for straw, Tom?"



"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus' hand shot into the inside pocket of his jacket. "Oh cwikey! It's gone!" "What's gone?" asked Jack Blake. "The black box!" exclaimed Gussy in dismay.

"Mais ici, mon!" said the puzzled shopman. "Ici, nous avons les chapeaux—pour acheter des chateaux, faut aller chez un agent d'affaires—"

"Oh cwikey! I mean chapeau!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That's the beastly word, deah boy—chapeau!"

"Ah! Oui, je comprends!" grinned the shopman. "C'est ca, monsieur."

"A straw chapeau!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"Comment?"

"Oh, no, not common at all—I want a good hat!"

"Comment?" repeated the shopman.

"If they only have common hats here, pewwaps we had bettah go farthah, Tom Mewwy! But it

"Paille," said Tom. "Chapeau de paille, fat-head! You can call it a canotier, if you like—same as boater."

"Ah! Mais oui! Chapeau de paille!" exclaimed the shopman. "C'est ca, m'sieur!"

And immediately a pile of straw hats appeared on the counter before Gussy. Arthur Augustus nodded with satisfaction.

"It's all wight, you see!" he remarked. "Nothin' like a knowledge of Fwench when you're in Fwance. You get through evah so much easiah by talkin' to them in their own language, deah boy. If we get time on this twip I will give you some tips in Fwench, if you like! You would find them wathah useful."

"Oh, do!" gurgled Tom.

For the next half-hour or so, Tom Merry wandered about the establishment and looked out into the busy Rue de Rivoli, while Arthur Augustus tried on hats.

A selection having been made at long last, Tom was called upon to pass judgment—which was favourable and, in fact, enthusiastic, possibly because Tom was getting tired by that time of hanging about a stuffy shop.

A quarter of an hour longer was occupied in paying for the hat and giving instructions for it to be delivered at Numero Cinq, Avenue Sarre. Then, at long last, the shoppers emerged into the fresh air and the important task was done.

"Taxi, m'sieur?" called out a wheezy voice.

A taximetre cab, which had been loitering, drew up as the juniors came out. Arthur Augustus glanced at it and nodded to the driver.

"Yaas—I mean, oui! Jump in, Tom Mewwy, and we will join the other fellows at the Louvre!" said Arthur Augustus. "It isn't fah fwom here."

"Right-ho!"

The two juniors stepped into the taxi and the driver shot off at the wild and reckless speed characteristic of Paris taxi-drivers.

CHAPTER 7.

Trapped in Paris!

TOM MERRY stared round him from the taxi with a puzzled expression.

Paris streets were not very familiar to him, but he knew that the Louvre, where his friends were exploring the museum, was not distant from the hatters in the Rue de Rivoli. The taxi had turned out of the Rue de Rivoli and was winding and turning through street after street, still at the same whizzing speed.

"I suppose a Paris cabby must know his way," said Tom, "but we're not heading for the Louvre, Gussy!"

"Aren't we?" Arthur Augustus glanced round. "Pewwaps the woad's up, or somethin'. The dwivah must know his way about, old chap."

"Putting a few francs on the fare, perhaps!" said Tom. "Not uncommon with tourists, I believe! But he's going a jolly long way round."

"He's puttin' on a jolly good speed, at any wate! Covahin' the ground, bai Jove! London dwivahs wouldn't be allowed to wock about like this! Still, it's all wight, if we catch the fellows befoath they leave the Louvre."

Tom Merry was puzzled. Already the taxi had covered at least three times the distance from the hatters to the Louvre. It was not improbable that a Paris cabby, with foreigners in his cab, might cover unnecessary distances in order to put a few extra francs on the fare, relying on their ignorance of the city. But if that was the game, the driver seemed to be rather overdoing it.

The streets through which the taxi was whizzing were growing shabbier and shabbier; likewise the people who loitered in them.

Here and there, outside dingy cafes, lounged untidy men with sharp and unpleasant faces, who seemed to bear a sort of family resemblance to Louis-sur-les-toits.

Tom leaned over and tapped the driver's arm at last. He did not mind a few francs on the fare, but he did not want to be driven into the slums of Paris.

Narrow streets, dingy buildings, low-browed faces, and slouching figures were in sharp and disagreeable contrast to the Rue de Rivoli, the

Rue de la Paix, and the wide avenues of the Etoile quarter.

"Arretez, si'l vous plait!" said Tom.

The driver glanced at him under his glazed hat, but did not answer. He drove on as fast as before, or faster.

"Stoppez-vous, si'l vous plait!" called out Arthur Augustus, putting it into his own French, as the driver did not seem to understand Tom Merry's.

"Look here, stop at once!" exclaimed Tom Merry, beginning to be a little uneasy as well as annoyed. "Arretez, je vous dis!"

The taxi careered on.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "What is he dwivin' on like that for, when we've told him to stop?"

Tom Merry set his lips.

"Something's up!" he said quietly. "We can't stop him, and we can't jump out! And he doesn't mean to stop!"

"But what the dooce—" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "What the dooce does it mean, deah boy?"

A startling suspicion was in Tom Merry's mind now.

There had been nothing to excite suspicion in a taxi hailing them at the door of the hat-shop in the Rue de Rivoli; it was quite a customary thing. Neither had there been anything very unusual in the driver taking a roundabout route with foreigners in his cab. But his present actions were inexplicable—unless he was deliberately taking them somewhere where they did not want to go. The thought of having been tricked into some low quarter of the city for purposes of robbery, came unpleasantly into Tom's mind.

He looked quickly from side to side, as the whizzing taxi rattled and banged over cobbles.

At the sight of a sergent-de-ville he would have beckoned or called. But there was no policeman to be seen.

The dingy pavements were trodden by rough-looking men and untidy women, and those who glanced at the careering taxi looked far from attractive.

No other taxi or car of any kind was to be seen now, and the stares from the loafing, lounging denizens of the dingy, narrow streets showed that any such vehicle was an unaccustomed sight there.

It was useless to order the driver to stop when he was obviously determined not to do so. There was no sort of help at hand, and the juniors could hardly wait for what was to come! Even Arthur Augustus realised now that they had been trapped—and that their driver, though he looked the part, was no ordinary Paris cab-driver.

"Bai Jove, who'd have thought it, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose it would be too wiskey to jump out!"

"Just a few, old chap."

"What about gwabbin' him by the back of the neck?"

Tom Merry shook his head. He would willingly have grabbed the driver, but at such a speed it was clear that would have caused a sudden crash.

"We're for it, old bean!" said Tom quietly. "That man is no taxi-driver! He's some rascal playing the part—may have stolen the cab, for all we know!"

"I shall jolly well thwash him when we do stop!" said Arthur Augustus.

The taxi rocked round a corner on cobblestones and came to a sudden halt.

The street, or rather alley, in which it had stopped, was so narrow that there was hardly

room for a pedestrian to pass a vehicle, and blank walls shut it in on either side. In one of the walls was a still narrower opening of another alley, and it was at the corner of this that the taxi jerked and jolted to a standstill.

Then the driver looked round at his passengers, a grin on his face.

"Descendez!" he said.

"We shall please ourselves about that, you wottah!" snapped Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "Do you think you can give us ordahs, you tweachevous wat?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

Ahead of the halted taxi appeared a dingy figure—behind it, following the vehicle from the last street, came another. Two more emerged from the narrow turning. All four of them—dirty, dingy, ill-clothed, ill-scented savages of a great city—closed round the taxi.

"Descendez!" repeated the driver, grinning.

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort! I ordah you to dwive us back to the Wue de Wivoli!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

The next moment, dingy hands were in the taxi, clutching at the juniors to drag them out by force.

"Chuck it, Gussy!" said Tom Merry hastily. "They're too many for us!"

But Arthur Augustus was too angry and indignant and excited to think of chucking it! As dingy hands dragged at him, he hit out with all the force of his arm and landed his aristocratic knuckles on a ruffian's chin.

Crash!

There was plenty of muscular force in the arm of the swell of St. Jim's. The dingy Apache who captured that punch gave an ear-splitting howl and went over backwards as if he had been shot.

He yelled again as he crashed on the ground. The next moment Arthur Augustus was dragged out, fighting fiercely and resisting every inch. He staggered in the entrance of the side-alley, struggling furiously in the grasping hands.

The odds were hopeless; but Tom Merry was not likely to leave the swell of St. Jim's to it. He made a flying leap out of the taxi, and crashed into the three ruffians who were grasping Arthur Augustus. His fist crashed under a dingy ear, sending one Apache headlong against the wall, yelling.

But the man who was down leaped up like a tiger and grasped him from behind. Tom struggled desperately, but he was dragged away from Arthur Augustus. Another Apache came to the aid of the ruffian who had seized him, and Tom, resisting with all his strength, was dragged headlong up the foul alley.

Behind him, Arthur Augustus was still fighting valiantly with the other two. His hat was gone; his collar torn out; his necktie a wreck; buttons bursting from his elegant waistcoat; his eyeglass fluttering at the end of its cord; a stream of red spurting from his noble nose! But his teeth were set, his eyes flashing fire, and he struggled and fought and hit with desperate energy. Howls of pain and rage came from the two Apaches grabbing him, clutching him, struggling and swaying round him as he fought.

But Arthur Augustus went down at last, breathless and spent, and they dragged him up the alley after Tom Merry.

Then the taxi-driver, who had coolly watched the melee, grinned, and drove on and disappeared. In the grasp of the four panting Apaches, Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were dragged headlong up the foul

alley, dragged through a dingy doorway, and pitched into a dim, dirty room, where they sprawled headlong on bare, half-rotten planks.

A door slammed, and a key was turned.

CHAPTER 8.

Disappointing the Dago!

"OH cwumbs!"
"Oh gum!"
"Oooogh!"

"Urrggh!"

Arthur Augustus sat up dizzily. He grabbed his handkerchief and pressed it to his damaged nose. Tom Merry sat up, gasping for breath. They looked at one another.

"Bai Jove! This is a go, deah boy!" gurgled Arthur Augustus. "I have been thwown into quite a fuittah! Ooogh! The wottahs! The wuffians! The feahful outsidsahs! Wow!"

Tom Merry rubbed a damaged nose, an aching ear, and a winking eye in turn. It had been a terrific scrap. Both the juniors were damaged, though it was some satisfaction to know that they had damaged the Apaches, too.

"We've been twapped, you know," gasped Arthur Augustus—"twapped just like wabbits!"

Tom tottered to his feet, panting for breath, and leaned on the dingy wall. He looked round the room. It was small—hardly eight feet in extent—lighted by a single small window, thick with dust and cobwebs. There was no furniture of any kind. The bare, foul floor was rotten with damp. Beetles crawled from noisome holes in the rotten wood.

He moved to the window, scraped off some of the dirt, and looked through. It looked on the alley—narrow, foul, dim even in the April sunlight. But any idea of escaping by way of the window was shut off at once. Outside in the alley, lounging and smoking cigarettes, were two of the Apaches.

"Well, they've got us!" said Tom.

He gave Arthur Augustus a hand up, and the swell of St. Jim's leaned on the door, still gurgling for breath.

"Yaas; the feahful wottahs have got us!" gasped D'Arcy. "I suppose they are goin' to wob us! That bwute must have been hangin' about in that taxi, watchin' for a chance to pick up touwists!"

Tom nodded.

"No doubt they've brought us here to rob us, old chap," he said. "Blessed if I know why they haven't done it already! Lucky I've only got about fifty francs on me. They're welcome to that to let us out of this dirty den! Are you loaded with cash, as usual, you ass?"

"No feah!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Not aifah what happened in the Bois yestahday, deah boy! I have only fifteen fwances left aifah payin' for the hat. I was not goin' to give a pickpocket anothah chance!"

"Good egg!" said Tom. "Hallo! Here comes somebody."

There was a footstep outside, and the door was unlocked. The two juniors turned, to look at the door as it opened.

They expected to see the Paris Apaches, but it was a swarthy, black-eyed Italian who entered, with a grin on his dusky face, and they jumped at the sight of him.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The dago!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

He understood it all now. It was not a case of picking up unsuspecting tourists and robbing them. It was the dago who was behind it, and it was the black box that was wanted.

The Italian bowed and grinned.

"Buon giorno, signori!" he chuckled. "Now we have the happiness to meet one more time, non e vero? Son assai lieto!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands. But he unclenched them again. In the dingy passage outside he glimpsed the Apaches. They were at hand if wanted. One of them followed the Italian into the room and shut the door. The dago alone Tom would willingly have handled, but it was futile to renew a struggle against overpowering odds.

"You wascal!" gasped Arthur Augustus, his eyeglass gleaming scorn at the dago. "You uttah wascal! I wegard you with uttah contempt!"

"Vero?" grinned the Italian. "I think, signorino, that the pleasure of this meeting is all on one side. Si, si. Now perhaps you give me, with a good grace, la scatola nera—the black box that is handed to you by my friend the American! Yes?"

"I wefuse to take the slightest notice of you!" retorted Arthur Augustus. "You are a wascal and a wottah, and I have no doubt that you are the bwute called Beppo who was aftah that Amewican chap!"

"Si, si, signori! Giuseppe Fosco, se vi piace!" grinned the Italian. "In Inghilterra, you refuse to give me a black box! In the Bois de Boulogne, the fool Luigi fail to take him from a pocket! But here, little signor, you give him!"

"Wascal!"

Giuseppe Fosco chuckled. Evidently he was in a state of the greatest satisfaction.

For whatever mysterious reason he wanted that black box, he had laid his plans well this time. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in his hands in that hidden den in the dingiest alley of Montmartre; he had been trapped, and here he was, at the dago's mercy, with all that he had on him.

"You give?" grinned the dago.

"Wascally wottah!"

"Non importa! If you do not give, it is to take!" chuckled Beppo.

And he opened the door, and called to the ruffians without.

Arthur Augustus clenched his hands.

"Chuck it, old man!" said Tom. "It's no go!"

One of the Apaches—the man whom Gussy had knocked down, and whose nose was crimson and swollen—drew a knife from the back of his trousers. His look at Gussy showed that he was not unwilling to use it.

It was impossible to resist, and Arthur Augustus, crimson with anger and indignation, stood mute while the rascals searched him.

Tom Merry looked on in silence. The black box had had several narrow escapes, but it looked to him as if it was done for now. Pocket after pocket was turned out, the greedy Apaches stowing away in their own pockets all articles of value, after showing them to the watchful eyes of the Italian.

Beppo watched like a cat. And the grin died off his face when the search came to an end without revealing the black box. Watch and money did not matter to him; it was the

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"scatola nera" he wanted, and the black box did not come to light.

A savage, threatening scowl settled over the Italian's swarthy face, and his black beady eyes glittered.

"C'est tout!" grunted the Apaches.

"Furfante!" The Italian ground the word between his teeth. "Dove e la scatola nera—where is the black box?"

Tom Merry looked on in astonishment. D'Arcy had been searched from head to foot; every pocket, every imaginable hiding-place in his clothes, had been searched. But there was no sign of the black box. Tom had expected to see it turned out every moment, and the search had been too meticulous to miss a single article. But it did not appear.

"Dove e?" yelled the dago. "Furfante, dove e?"

Arthur Augustus gave him a glance of quiet contempt.

"If you mean by 'dough vay,' where is it?—it is a vewy considerable distance frowm here," he answered calmly. "I have not cawwied eithah my notecase or the black box since your wascally pickpocket twied to wob me in the Bois de Boulogne yestahday. I was not goin' to give that wascal anothah chance while I am in Pawis!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus had mentioned that he had left his notecase at home. He had not mentioned that he had left the black box at home also. But evidently he had. Arthur Augustus had taken that precaution against having his pocket picked in Paris. That was the result of the exploit of Louis-sur-les-toits in the Bois de Boulogne.

The rage of Giuseppe Fosco was terrible to see. He clenched his dusky hands and gesticulated with fury, and spat like a cat. The Apaches grinned at one another as they watched him.

The dago had counted on success this time. Hitherto that black box had been parked in D'Arcy's pocket. But for Louis-sur-les-toits it would have been there yet. But it was no longer there.

"Dove e?" Beppo gesticulated and shrieked. "Dove e? You do not carry—furfante, always you carry, and now you do not carry—Dio mio! I have you, but the black box I have not! Dove e?"

"If you wequiah particulahs, you wascal, it is at the Avenue Sarre," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "I wathah think it is safe frowm your wascally clutches."

Giuseppe spat out Italian curses for several moments. Then he signed to the Apaches to hold D'Arcy by the arms, while he searched him himself. Arthur Augustus went through the ordeal once more with calm disdain. But the search was futile; the black box was not there!

The dago, snarling, pointed to Tom Merry—perhaps with a suspicion, or a hope, that the black box might have been handed to him. Everything of value was taken in the search; but there was no black box.

Giuseppe Fosco had to make up his mind at last that it was not in the possession of either of the schoolboys. His cunning scheme for entrapping Arthur Augustus had been a complete success; but the black box was as far from his clutches as ever.

"Nonfa caso, nonfa caso!" he hissed at last. "It is no matter—he come to my hands! Si, si, si! Furfante, nonfa caso!"

And the dago, hissing with rage and disappointment, stamped out of the room, and the juniors were left with the Apaches.

CHAPTER 9.

Unexpected!

"THAT ass!" sighed Jack Blake. "That burbling burler!" said Herries.

"He's had time to buy all the hats in Paris!" said Digby.

"He would lose his way back, if he could!" remarked Monty Lowther. "But he can't lose his way back with Tom along with him. If he's still buying hats, poor old Tommy will be tired."

Lunch was over at No. 5, Avenue Sarre. Five fellows had come back, after doing the Louvre, in good time for lunch, and had disposed of the same. But there was no sign yet of Tom Merry or Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

As the St. Jim's party had planned a trip on a river steamer for that afternoon, to go down the Seine, it was exasperating. They lined the balcony, watching the avenue below for the return of the wanderers.

Manners gave expressive grunts. Manners was going to take photographs along the banks of the Seine in the clear bright sunlight, and he had loaded his camera and slung it on in its case, all ready. But nothing was to be seen of the missing two on the broad pavements of the avenue, and none of the cars that buzzed incessantly to and fro stopped at No. 5.

"Hallo, here's somebody!" said Blake at last, as a shabby-looking old car, leaving the stream of traffic, slowed down opposite the house.

It was an open car, old and shabby, and in want of paint and polish. It was driven by a man in a shabby coat and hat, and another man sat inside. On the floor were two large sacks, apparently full of something.

The juniors looked down at the old car, but without much interest. It was obviously not a conveyance that Tom Merry and D'Arcy might have picked up; moreover, the only occupant was a rough-looking Frenchman in a black slouched hat.

The whole turn-out was rather uncommon in that wealthy quarter. But it seemed booked for No. 5, for it stopped, and the man inside got down and drew out the sacks, one after another, bumping them on the pavement, right under the eyes of the schoolboys gazing down.

Then, to the surprise of the juniors, he jumped back into the car, banged the door after him, and the chauffeur shot away.

In hardly more than a moment the shabby car was lost in the traffic, leaving the two sacks sprawling on the pavement.

"Well, that beats it!" said Blake in astonishment. "Is that the way they deliver goods here?"

"Sacks of potatoes, I suppose," said Lowther, "or firewood, or something! By gum! That's a queer way to leave goods!"

"Can't be that!" said Manners. "The tradesmen's cars go to the back. Blessed if I can make it out!"

"By Jove! It's livestock of some kind!" exclaimed Blake, staring down. "Look—there's something wriggling inside those sacks! You can see them move!"

"Chickens—or rabbits. A jolly queer way to

deliver them!" said Manners. "But there's something alive inside them, that's a cert!"

Several passers-by stopped to stare at the sacks. A babble of French floated up to the ears of the St. Jim's juniors.

Then they saw a servant emerge from the house below and run across the sacks and, after staring at them, hurry back into the house.

"Let's go down," said Blake. "This is jolly queer! I suppose Gussy hasn't had his hats delivered in sacks like coals?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The portly form of Pawson emerged from the house.

The juniors turned from the balcony and cut down the stairs, quite curious to see what was up. They found the doorway open and several servants gathered there, staring across the pavement at the two sacks, and at Pawson, who was standing by them, blinking at them in astonishment.

"What is it, Pawson?" asked Manners as the juniors came out.

"Really, sir, I do not know and cannot understand!" said Pawson. "These sacks are labelled to this address, but I have not the remotest idea what they contain; and it is very singular for them to be delivered in this extraordinary way, left lying on the pavement in front of the house! Some extraordinary mistake must have been made."

"It's livestock of some kind!" said Blake.

There was no doubt about that! Both the sacks were in constant motion, from the wriggling inside. But, judging by appearances, they contained something a good deal larger than chickens or rabbits! But what they could contain was mystifying.

Each sack was labelled in print letters, with the address, "Avenue Sarre 5."

"Well, if that's the way Gussy sends home his shopping—" said Digby. "But what on earth can he have been buying?"

It was really an extraordinary mystery.

PRIZES FOR OVERSEAS PALS!

In the Overseas Section of the November "Footer-Stamps" Contest, PRIZES OF TEN SHILLINGS have been awarded to the following two competitors who submitted entries with the highest totals of "goals" scored:

Stanley Gregory, 22D, College Avenue, Penang, Straits Settlements.

Basil Smith, 12, Flat Westcliffe, West Street, Durban, South Africa.

PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS have been awarded for the twenty next-best scores which ranged from 173 down to, and including, 94 "goals," the winners being:

D. B. Archibald, North Vancouver, Canada; Dennis Arlow, King William's Town, Cape Province, South Africa; Lewis Bell, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia; Saw Chu Beng, Penang, Straits Settlements; Mike Borisuk, Box 372, Fernie, British Columbia, Canada; A. Carew, Northern Rhodesia; Leslie Carter, Auckland, New Zealand; Yon Chew, Singapore, Straits Settlements; Tan Aik Chu, Singapore, Straits Settlements; Ronald Emberg, 10, Milroy Avenue, Valois, Quebec, Canada; Saw Tiang Eng, Perak, Federated Malay States; J. Garrard, Johannesburg, South Africa; W. J. Goodman, Cellardy, New South Wales; H. Harvey, Leederville, West Australia; Jerome Horne, Capetown, South Africa; Pentti Koiuwkoski, Ontario, Canada; Charles Pang, Perak, Federated Malay States; G. D. Pringle, Port Elizabeth, South Africa; P. S. Wong, Perak, Malaya; G. C. Zouves, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Packing livestock in sacks was rather a new idea. And the contents of those sacks were evidently very much alive! They wriggled and wriggled and wriggled!

"I think we had better see what is in those sacks before having them taken into the house," gasped Pawson. "It is really most extraordinary!"

A dozen people had gathered to stare. Blake and Lowther opened their pocket-knives to cut the cords that fastened up the ends of the sacks.

Blake had his open first, and as he opened the end he gave a yell that rang the width of the Avenue Sarre and almost its length.

"Oh! Oh crumbs! Oooh! Gussy!" Jack Blake fairly staggered. "Gig-gig-Gussy!"

"What?" yelled Herries.

"What?" gasped Pawson, his eyes bulging.

"GUSSY!" shrieked Blake.

A head wriggled out of the sack! It was hatless, it was wildly dishevelled; a cloth was tied over the mouth. But it was easily recognised! It was the noble head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The juniors gazed at him, petrified. From the end of the other sack another head emerged—the curly, untidy head of Tom Merry, also with a cloth tied over his mouth! From under the cloth came a faint, feeble gurgle.

The portly Pawson almost tottered. Blake & Co. gazed like fellows in a dream. From the surrounding lookers-on came startled ejaculations and sounds of merriment. The spectators seemed amused.

"Tom!" gurgled Lowther.

He stooped and dragged away the cloth from the face of the captain of the Shell. Tom was able to speak at last.

"Urrgh!" he gasped. "Get me loose! Get me loose, for goodness' sake! Oh crumbs! I'm tied up with rope!"

"But who—how—why—" stuttered Lowther.

"Get me loose, ass!" gasped Tom.

"This beats it!" gasped Blake. "Oh, my hat! Gussy—Gussy, old man—is this the way you come home from a walk? Oh crickey!"

He grabbed the gagging cloth away from Gussy's face. Arthur Augustus spluttered for breath.

"Gwoogh! Ooogh! Oh ewikey! Gwoogh!"

"We're dreaming this, I think!" gasped Dig.

"Gussy, old bean—" stuttered Herries.

"Pway welease me!" gurgled Arthur Augustus. "My hands and feet are tied up!

Ooogh! Weally, I think you fellows might have let us out befoah! I have been listenin' to you jawin' for houahs—"

"We haven't been here two minutes—"

"Well, it seemed like houahs, wigglin' in that howwid sack and waitin' for you to welease a fellow!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwumbs! Do get me loose!"

The two juniors were dragged out of the sacks. Both of them were tied hand and foot. Evidently they had been bound securely and gagged before being put in the sacks for delivery at No. 5, Avenue Sarre. How and why was a bewildering mystery to their friends.

But they were speedily cut loose, amid loud laughter from the gathering crowd. Apparently the natives regarded this as a sort of freakish antic on the part of mad English. Breathless, dusty, dishevelled, crimson, the two juniors were helped up by their amazed friends.

"But what—" exclaimed Blake.

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Jack Blake had his sack open first, and as he opened the sack. It was hatless, it was dishevelled, a cloth was tied over the mouth.

"But how—" howled Lowther.

"Why?" gasped Digby. "What—how—why—er—"

"Gentlemen," murmured Pawson, "pray retire into the house. You are attracting a great deal of public attention—hem!"

Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus were only too glad to cut into the house, and get out of the public view. Their friends followed them, Pawson rolling on behind, and the door was shut on the entertained public.

CHAPTER 10.

Pawson Is Too Obliging!

"OH ewikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. He sank into a chair. "Oh cwumbs! Oh, bai Jove! Gwoooooogh!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "I'm glad to get out of that!"

"But what have you done it for?" roared Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You want a wash, Gussy!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, watahah!" moaned Arthur Augustus. "I feel feahfully in need of a wash! This has been a feahful expwience!"

"But how did it happen?" yelled Lowther.

"Pway tell them, Tom Mewwy! I am too breatheless to uttah a single word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"



He gave a yell. "Gussy!" A head wriggled out of the sack over the mouth. But it was easily recognised. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

"We've been collared by a gang of hooligans and robbed!" said Tom. "They got us to some den in Montmartre and went through our pockets. Then they tied us up and gagged us, and shoved us in those sacks. Oh crumbs! I wondered what the thump they were going to do with us while we were jogging along in that car!"

"It was fearful!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Packed in a sack like potatoes, you know—"

"But why—" gasped Manners. "I suppose they had to get rid of us, and in some way to prevent us from bringing the police down on their den," said Tom. "We got there in a taxi, going all out, and could not possibly find the way again; but if we'd left on foot, of course, we should have been able to mark the spot. They carried us a little distance, inside the sacks, and dumped us into a car."

"And brought you home!" said Blake. "I wondered where on earth they were going to dump us down!" said Tom. "I hadn't the faintest idea where we were when I was hooked out of the car and dumped! Then I heard you fellows speaking—"

"Yaas, wathah! And weally, I wish you fellows had opened those beastly sacks soonah and—"

"How were we to guess that you were inside, fathead?" hooted Blake. "We thought it was chickens, or something—"

"Never guessed that it was a couple of geese!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"
"I suppose they're gone—the brutes who brought us here?" asked Tom.

"Yes; the car shot off like lightning as soon as you'd been dumped down. They weren't taking any risks!" grinned Blake. "You don't think you could spot the place they brought you from?"

"I think it was somewhere in Montmartre. I'm not quite sure of that! That blighter of a dago had—"

"The dago!"
"It was that blighter after Gussy's black box, of course!" said Tom.

"Oh, my hat! Then he's got it this time!"
Tom Merry laughed.

"No; Gussy left it indoors, to keep it safe from pickpockets. Jolly lucky he did, if it's of any value. It was almost worth while going through this to see that dago's face when he found that Gussy hadn't got it on him! He had banked on it as a cert this time."

"Yaas, wathah! He was in a feahful wage!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "He was gwandin' his teeth like anythin'."

"Well, what I want chiefly is a wash and a change," said Tom. "And after this, we'd better keep together, so long as we're in Paris. I've had enough of being snaffled by Apaches."

"Bai Jove, I shall be glad to get into a bath!" said Arthur Augustus. "I feel as if I want a tewwific sewubbin', aftah havin' their howwid hands gwopin' ovah me. I do not believe those beastly Apaches evah wash!"

Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus went up to their rooms for a much needed wash and change. Pawson, who had listened with an expression of great astonishment on his portly face, glanced inquiringly at the other fellows.

"This is a very extraordinary affair, gentlemen!" said Lord Eastwood's man. "What is this black box? It seemed to me some sort of a curio when I saw it yesterday, and I supposed Master Arthur had bought it somewhere. But in these very strange circumstances—"

"Nobody knows, Pawson!" answered Blake. "So far as we can make out, some American chap asked Gussy to mind it for him, because he was knocked out in an accident, and was afraid that that dago would pinch it. The dago seems to want it bad, that's a cert."

"Extraordinary!" said Pawson. "It beats the band!" said Monty Lowther. "Looks as if we're going to have a few spots of excitement on our Easter holidays."
"It do—it does!" agreed Blake.

"As his lordship has placed me in charge of you young gentlemen for this holiday trip, it might be wiser for Master Arthur to place the article in my hands, for care!" said Pawson.

"Jolly good idea!" said Blake. "You can lock it up and keep it safe for him. Better tell Gussy that."

"I will do so, Master Blake," said Pawson, in his smooth tones; and he glided away, leaving the Co. discussing the startling adventure of their chums.

Tom Merry was not long in rejoining them, looking and feeling a good deal better after a bath and a change, though still showing a good many signs of damage sustained in the scrap with the Apaches. He sat down to a late lunch, and had finished when Arthur Augustus appeared, newly swept and garnished, spick and span, and

with a red swelling on his noble nose and a dark shadow under one eye.

Pawson waited on him at lunch. Pawson was not really bound to perform such duties, for the household staff of No. 5, Avenue Sarre had been let, along with the mansion, for the juniors' stay in Paris. But Pawson's chief business in life seemed to be to make himself useful and agreeable, and to keep a sort of fatherly eye on his youthful charges.

"Bai Jove! I am wathah hungwy," remarked Augustus. "I feel as if I could eat like that chap—what was his name—that fat Gweyfwahs chap? Gwuntah—Puntah—no. Buntah! Thank you, Pawson, you are vewy good!"

"Pawson's got a bright idea," said Blake, as Arthur Augustus began on his lunch, "about that jolly old black box, you know."

"Yaas?" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway let me heah it, Pawson! I know that you are a feafully clevah chap, and although you have not been vewy long with my patah, he thinks no end of you."

Pawson gave him a deferential cough.

"As you appear to be in some danger, sir, from the possession of the black box, whatever it may be, I should be very pleased, sir, to take charge of it for you until you return home."

"That is vewy good of you, Pawson!" said Arthur Augustus gratefully. "It is just the kind and obligin' thought that would occur to you, my deah chap."

"Not at all, sir!" murmured Pawson.

"But pewpaws you have not wecteted that by takin' charge of that beastly box you might get that dangewous chawactah aftah you, instead of affah me, Pawson."

"That would not trouble me at all, sir, even if it should occur!" said Pawson. "My only desire is that you should not run further risks."

"Yaas, that's fwightfully decent of you, Pawson. You see, you fellows, the patah was quite wight in sendin' Pawson with us!" said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, you fellows would have been quite safe in my care—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' of a comic nature in that wemark, deah boys. But though you would have been quite safe in my care, and we wually do not need to be looked aftah, Pawson is the man to do it if it was needed! He is willin' to wun the wisk of bein' snaffled by that w'etched dago—a vewy dangewous chawactah. Of course, I cannot let him wun the wisk—"

"That is nothing, I assure you, sir!" said Pawson.

"It is like you to say so, Pawson. I can hardly expwess how much I am obliged to you. But I am not goin' to put it on you, my deah fellow."

Pawson coughed.

"The fact is, sir, if I may return to the subject—"

"Yaas, pway wun on, Pawson!" said Arthur Augustus, pausing in his lunch.

"The fact is, sir, having been placed by his lordship in charge of your friends and yourself, I do not feel easy in my mind, now that it appears that you are the object of attacks, sir. I should feel very much easier if you would place the article in my keeping."

Tom Merry & Co. glanced at Lord Eastwood's man rather curiously. There was a faint tone of insistence in his voice, which was unusual, and a little surprising, in the perfect Pawson. Really, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,626.

it almost looked as if Lord Eastwood's man had a little forgotten his place, for once.

But no such idea seemed to occur to Gussy's unsuspecting mind. He gave Pawson a benevolent look.

"Yaas, no doubi," he said. "I quite undahstand that, Pawson! And I should certainly weliieve your mind on the subject, as you put it so vewy nicely, but for the circumstance that I have engaged to keep the box in my own hands, and, in fact, to keep the whole thing secwet."

"But, sir——" murmured Pawson.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on him in some surprise. Even on the unsuspecting Gussy it seemed to dawn that Lord Eastwood's man was exceeding the limit a little. His tone was quite kind, but quite firm, as he rejoined:

"I am vewy much obliged to you, Pawson; but pway say no more about it."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Pawson; and the subject was dropped like a hot potato.

Monty Lowther winked at Tom Merry, who smiled. Even the incomparable Pawson, it seemed to them, was yielding to curiosity on the subject of that mysterious black box! But if Pawson had forgotten his place for a moment, he remembered it again at once, and was immediately his suave, deferential self once more.

CHAPTER 11.

The Man in the Night!

LOUIS-SUR-LES-TOITS stopped in the dark shadow of a high wall, and his sunken, rat-eyes glinted to and fro in the gloom.

The Avenue Sarre was well lighted, but close by the mansion, in the shade of the trees that lined the avenue, the shadows were deep.

It was past midnight, and at that hour there were few footfalls to awaken the echoes of the street. Louis' footfalls had not awakened the faintest echo; the Apache moved without a sound.

The house was dark; the occupants sleeping. The avenue was silent and deserted. Louis stood bunched against the wall by a buttress, watching and listening, like the wild animal he was. There came through the silence a heavy, steady tread, and the Apache crouched closer, like a beast in cover, as, at a little distance, a burly sergent-deville paced by. The burly form disappeared down the avenue; the footfalls died away.

Then the Apache stirred.

He stepped a little away from the wall, tilted his head, and stared up. Twenty feet above him was the balcony from which he had seen the schoolboys looking down. Louis scanned the wall with a calculating eye. The lower windows of the mansion were guarded by massive shutters, as in most French mansions. Upper windows were covered by wooden volets or slatted shutters. If Louis was thinking of making an entry into No. 5, Avenue Sarre, his task did not look an easy one.

Having scanned the building, the Apache glanced up and down the avenue, listened for a long moment, and climbed.

Few would have supposed it possible to climb that wall, which gave hardly hold for a cat or a monkey. But Louis' special profession was that of a cat-burglar; and it was said at the Prefecture of Police that there was no building in Paris that Louis could not climb. It was by such exploits that he had gained his peculiar nickname of "Louis-on-the-roof."

But the task he had set himself now was no easy one, even for Louis-on-the-roof. A narrow buttress, an ornamental ledge, a crack between

massive blocks of stone—such were the aids he had, and they were trifling enough. But though the cat-burglar climbed slowly, he climbed surely. It was not easy, but it was an old game to Louis-sur-les-toits.

Suddenly he stopped. Cramped on the wall, fifteen feet up, he hung like a cat, his heart beating, his breath coming quick. Below sounded a steady, regular tread.

Had the sergent-de-ville looked up as he paced by, he must have seen the catlike figure cramped on the wall. But he passed, and again the Apache breathed freely.

Then he was climbing again. Like a cat—more active than a cat—he climbed, till his arms rested on the balustrade of the high balcony.

There, for a long moment, Louis-sur-les-toits rested. There were beads of perspiration on his sallow brow; his sunken eyes were almost glazed with effort; his breath came thick, foul with the fumes of absinthe.

But his rest was brief. He drew himself over the bronze balustrade, and dropped, catlike, on the balcony.

There he gave himself five minutes to recover his breath and his strength—huddled in the deep shadow of the balustrade.

But even while he rested, his glinting eyes were picking out the row of windows that opened on the balcony. He smiled a feline smile as he saw that some of them were open.

He suspected, but had not been sure, that the English schoolboys occupied the rooms on the balcony where he had seen them. But now he knew. Only mad English left their windows open at night!

No one would have fancied that there was danger of burglary in rooms opening on a balcony twenty feet up a sheer wall. Certainly no such idea had crossed the minds of Tom Merry & Co. A native of the land would have shut the windows to exclude the fresh air. The St. Jim's juniors left them open to admit the same—as Louis knew was one of the mad customs of the mad English; who had many mad customs, such as letting fresh air into bed-rooms, and washing themselves all over in the morning!

The Apache rose silently to his feet at last.

Soft, noiseless, like the human cat he was, he crept towards the french windows. Soundless, he crept to the nearest, listened, and flashed a spot of light from a tiny flash-lamp.

He crept out again; that was not the room he wanted. Jack Blake slept on, unconscious that he had had a brief visitor.

In the next room, of which the french windows stood wide, Louis-sur-les-toits remained, after he had stepped in. The tiny flicker of light from his flash-lamp revealed the sleeping face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—the noble nose showing up red against the spotless white of the pillow.

Louis grinned.

Arthur Augustus was sleeping soundly. If he was dreaming, he certainly was not dreaming of the sallow-faced thief who had attempted to pick his pocket in the Bois de Boulogne.

He came suddenly, sharply, out of that happy slumber. Starting into wakefulness, the swell of St. Jim's would have uttered a startled cry; but a hand was pressed hard over his mouth.

Arthur Augustus gave a faint gurgle; that was all.

He stared up blankly into the dark.

A dim shadow loomed over him in the gloom. He had a glimpse of two sunken, glinting eyes. Instinctively he began to struggle; but he ceased

at once as something sharp was pressed to his neck.

He shuddered and lay still.

"Pas un mot!" came a low, hissing whisper in his ear, "ou la mort!"

D'Arcy knew that that meant "not a word, or death!" He made no further attempt either to cry out or struggle. He was utterly at the mercy of the half-seen wretch who had penetrated into his quarters.

The grasping hand was withdrawn from his mouth, but was immediately replaced by a pear-shaped wedge, driven between his teeth. It was a gag, with which Louis had come provided.

The sharp point of the Apache's knife pricked his skin in warning.

Then his hands were jerked out, and whipped into a loop instantly drawn tight. The knife disappeared. Hands in the darkness groped, and Arthur Augustus felt himself rolled in his sheets and blankets, round which a cord was swiftly knotted. He lay gasping behind the gag, in a state of utter bewilderment and dismay. The whole thing did not occupy the Apache more than a minute or two.

He stepped back from the bed, leaving the swell of St. Jim's silent and helpless.

There was a gleam of light in the darkness.

Arthur Augustus contrived to raise his head. He realised that this man, whoever he was, must be a burglar; he had rendered him helpless to search the room for plunder. There was nothing to stop him. In the adjoining rooms, the St. Jim's fellows were all asleep—the whole household was deep in slumber at that hour. The midnight marauder had only to search for what he wanted.

To and fro in the dark room the light flashed, seeking.

There were a good many valuables in the room. Whether the midnight thief touched them or not, D'Arcy could not see. He could only watch the winking, flitting light helplessly.

Suddenly the dark figure loomed over his bed again, and the light flashed into his face, almost blinding him.

"Ecoutez!" whispered the harsh voice. "Ecoutez, et repondez toute de suite! Ou est la boite noir?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

So far, he had supposed that his midnight visitor was a burglar in search of loot! But the mention of the "boite noir"—the black box—enlightened him. This man was not the dago; he was a Frenchman; but he was in search of the black box.

The Apache had searched—a hurried search. He had not found the black box, which was not surprising, as it reposed underneath a large variety of garments at the bottom of a trunk. Even with the night before him, that small article wanted some finding!

The Apache laid the flash-lamp on the pillow. As its light shifted, Arthur Augustus saw his face—sallow, with cavernous eyes, and sharp cheekbones; the rat-face of the pickpocket of the Bois de Boulogne, Louis-sur-les-toits! He knew in whose grasp he was now.

Holding the junior's neck with one hand, ready to choke back a cry, the Apache removed the gag with the other.

"Dites!" he muttered. "Dites donc."

"You uttah wascal!" mumbled Arthur Augustus, half-suffocated. "I will tell you nothin'."

"Allons! Dites!" hissed the Apache. "Vous parlez francais, assez, je crois! Ou est la boite noir—la petite boite noir?"

"Find out, you howwid beast!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Dites!" hissed the Apache. His lithe fingers compressed the throat of the swell of St. Jim's, his sauken eyes gleamed a deadly threat. "Je vous dis, la petite boite ou la mort."
"Urrgh!"

The grip relaxed; D'Arcy could not speak. He gasped for breath.

The Apache's eyes burned down at him. Whether he supposed the black box to be hidden, or whether he did not care to linger for a lengthy search, the outcast of the Paris slums was determined to make the schoolboy speak.

His thumb was on D'Arcy's windpipe. He showed his teeth, under his ragged black moustache, like a wild beast.

"La mort!" he breathed. "La boite noir ou la mort! Dites donc!"

"Nevah!" breathed Arthur Augustus faintly.

"Comment?"

"Nevah! Jammy!" gurgled Arthur Augustus. Gussy's pronunciation was all his own; but no doubt the Apache realised that he meant "jamais"—never—for his eyes blazed with ferocity.

"La mort, alors!" he hissed.

"I am not afraid of you, you howwid wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I will tell you nothin'!"

"Je vous dis—" hissed the Apache.

A sudden blinding light swept through the darkness. The Apache released Arthur Augustus with a bound, spinning round.

The door was wide open; a portly figure stood there, a plump hand on the lighting switch. With a snarl the Apache sprang—and as he sprang there was a deafening report, and Louis-sur-les-toits, shrieking hoarsely, rolled over headlong on the polished floor.

CHAPTER 12.

The Admirable Pawson!

TOM MERRY jumped out of sleep. Through the silence of the night, in the sleeping household of No. 5, Avenue Sarre, the report of a revolver boomed like thunder. It rang through the building, waking countless echoes.

"What the thump—" gasped Tom.

What was happening he had no idea. But he knew that something was, and he leaped out of bed. He knew that it was a firearm that he had heard. He ran to the door of his room, threw it open, and stared out into the corridor.

A door at a little distance was wide open, and the electric light shone out. It was the door of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's room.

"Gussy!" exclaimed Tom.

He cut along the corridor. Other doors were opening—the pistol shot had awakened all the St. Jim's juniors.

"What's up?" came Blake's calling voice.

Tom reached Arthur Augustus' door almost in a bound. He stared in—at a startling scene that took away his breath.

Just within the doorway, with a smoking revolver in his hand, stood Pawson, portly and plump and calm as usual, though it was evidently Pawson who had fired the shot.

Rolling on the floor, panting and shrieking hoarsely, was Louis-sur-les-toits, leaving crimson splashes on the polished wood as he rolled.

"Good heavens!" panted Tom.

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Arthur Augustus lay in his bed, tied up in his bedclothes. There were dark marks on his neck where a savage hand had gripped.

"Gussy!" panted Tom Merry.

"Oh cwikey! Tom Mewwy! Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry ran across to him.

"All is safe now, sir," said the calm, deferential voice of Pawson. "There is no occasion for alarm, sir. That dangerous character is past doing any further mischief."

"Gussy!" shouted Blake. He hurtled in a few moments after Tom Merry, with Herries and Digby, Manners and Lowther, at his heels.

"All wight, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wight as wain, thanks to Pawson! Pawson, you are a bwick!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Pawson.

"A burglar!" exclaimed Digby.

"The pickpocket!" exclaimed Manners, as he recognised the Apache, groaning on the floor. "That blighter the bobby called Louis-sur-les-toits."

"He was aftah the black box!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Thank you, Tom Mewwy!" The swell of St. Jim's, released at last, rolled out of bed. "Bai Jove! That feahful wottah had me by the thwoat, you know, when Pawson blew in! He wanted me to tell him where the black box was, you know; but, of course, I wefused to do anythin' of the kind."

"By gum! It's lucky that Pawson was up!" said Blake, with a deep breath. "How on earth did that rotter get in?"

"Goodness knows, deah boy! I was thwown into quite a fluttah when I woke up in his gwip. It was weally vevy unpleasant. I hope he is not badly hurt, though. Is he badly hurt, Pawson?"

The Apache had ceased to roll and struggle. He lay on the floor in a pool of crimson, his sallow face like wax, his rat-eyes burning from it. Close by him lay a knife. The savage of the slums had drawn the knife as he sprang and dropped it as the swift bullet bowled him over.

"It's Louis-sur-les-toits!" said Tom Merry, looking at the wounded, groaning wretch. "The man that dago put up to picking your pocket, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am feahfully obliged to you for buttin' in, Pawson, but I twust the bwute is not vevy badly hurt."

"Fairly, sir!" answered Pawson, unmoved. "I had to shoot very suddenly, sir, as he was springing at me with a knife. However, I aimed low—and his life is not in danger, if that is of any consequence. The bullet is in his leg."

The juniors all looked at Pawson. The revolver had disappeared into his pocket by this time. But Pawson's possession of such a weapon and his skill in handling it were utterly astonishing to the St. Jim's fellows.

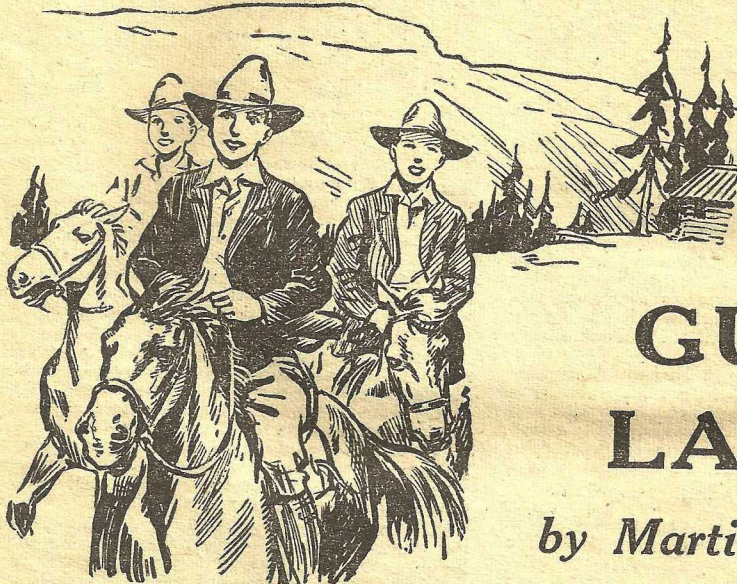
Never for a moment would they have connected the plump, portly, bald manservant with the idea of deadly weapons, still less with skill in their use. It was fortunate—very fortunate—that Pawson had had a revolver and knew how to use it, but it was astonishing, all the same.

"I did not know you cawwied a wevolvah, Pawson," said Arthur Augustus, voicing the astonished thought in the minds of all the juniors.

"I thought it best, sir, to pack my old revolver when his lordship placed me in charge of a party travelling abroad," said Pawson apologetically. "One can never tell, sir, what may happen in foreign countries."

(Continued on page 35.)

GANGSTERS AND A GRIZZLY BEAR GIVE THE CHUMS OF THE BACKWOODS SCHOOL
AN ALL-TOO-THRILLING ADVENTURE IN NORTH-WEST CANADA!



The law of the six-gun rules in the region where Frank Richards & Co. have landed in their runaway balloon. But the chums of Cedar Creek School are not backward when it comes to gun play with gangsters!

GUN LAW!

by Martin Clifford

Hunted Down!

CRACK, crack!
The rifle-shots rang out sharply on the sunlit prairie. Frank Richards, his heart thumping, looked over the rim of the car as the balloon shot up from the plain.

The last bag of sand had been thrown out, and the balloon rose fast. The gang of ruffians riding below fired furiously after it as it sped upwards.

Whiz-z-z!

"That's through the balloon!" said Bob Lawless, looking up at the swelling gas-envelope overhead.

Crack, crack!

Two or three of the bullets struck the car and glanced away. But in a couple of minutes the balloon was out of effective range. Frank Richards, looking downwards, could see Handsome Alf and his gang riding in pursuit as the balloon rolled westward on the wind. A clump of timber hid them from sight at last.

Frank turned to his companions.

"We're well out of that!" he exclaimed.

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless grimly.

"What do you think, Cherub?"

Vere Beauclerc smiled.

"It was a narrow escape," he said. "But we could have put up a fight, all the same."

Frank regarded the swelling envelope above with an anxious eye. At least one of the flying bullets had gone through it, and it was certain that the gas was escaping from the hole, slowly but surely. So far, however, it had no effect on the balloon, which showed no sign of sinking. In fact, it was still rising. High over the plain and forest, it floated on westward, towards the rocky spurs of the Cascade Mountains.

Bob Lawless was attending to Bill Lomax, the prospector, who was lying on the rugs in the bottom of the car. His bronzed face was white. His wound had begun to bleed again, and Bob was washing it carefully, preparatory to replacing the bandages.

"How do you feel now, Mr. Lomax?" he asked at last.

The man smiled faintly.

"I guess I shall pull through O.K.!" he replied.

"But it would have been all up with me if that gang had roped me in, sonny. And I reckon Handsome Alf was surprised to see me in this hyer way. What beats me is how you kids came hyer in the North-West in such a contraption as this."

"This isn't a holiday trip," answered Bob, laughing. "We belong to Cedar Creek School, in Thompson Valley, and a sneaking coyote cut us adrift in the balloon yesterday. It's a runaway balloon, and it belongs to an American, who is still hunting for it on the other side of the Fraser River."

"By gum!" said Lomax.

"The galoot was blown north in a windstorm, after an ascent down in the States," explained Bob. "The balloon came down near our school, and we caught it for him. And then a skunk named Gunten cut us adrift in it."

"I reckon it was lucky for me you came down in this section," said Lomax. "They would have had me, sure." He touched the wound. "I've got something hyer to remind me of Handsome Alf Carson. I guess I'll let him have it back some day. The gang are after my strike in the Cascade Mountains; but I reckon they'll have to let up on it now."

"A big strike?" asked Bob curiously.

The prospector's eyes gleamed.

"A regular bonanza!" he said. "There's been some strikes in the Cascade Range, but I guess my bonanza lays over them."

"And Carson can't find it without you?" asked Beauclerc.

"Not without the map I've got in my pocket," said the miner, "and I guess Handsome Alf won't touch that now. Can you see anything of them, sonny?"

Frank Richards looked down from the car

again. Far away on the plain beneath he could discern a number of moving dots. It was impossible to make out their form, but he did not need telling that they were horsemen in motion. Handsome Alf and his followers were still on the trail of the bonanza.

"I can see them, Mr. Lomax," said Frank. "But they're almost out of sight."

"I guess they'll follow so long as they can see this contraption," said Lomax. "But they can't reach us. All O.K., so long as it don't go down."

Frank Richards did not reply to that. For by this time the balloon was showing signs of settling. The gas that had been lost in making a descent was compensated for by the throwing out of ballast. But in the great gas-envelope was the hole of a bullet, through which gas slowly escaped. The loss told upon the balloon slowly and surely.

Frank could hardly have spotted the descent, so gradual was it, but he could not help observing that the earth was drawing nearer. Plains and woods and creeks had been spread out like a map below, but already he was able to distinguish them more clearly. He exchanged a glance with his chums.

"She's settling," muttered Bob.

"And if those scoundrels come up—"

"It will be a fight," said Vere Beauclerc quietly.

"Better look to the guns."

Quietly they examined such weapons as they had. The rifle and revolver taken from Handsome Alf were in the car, with a good supply of cartridges. There was a revolver in Bill Lomax's belt.

Bob Lawless took the rifle, examined it carefully, and loaded it. His sunburnt face was a little pale. It was the first time he had thought of pulling a trigger against a human being, but he did not shrink from it. In the wild North-West their lives were in their own hands. The wounded miner watched them.

"We're going down?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so," answered Frank reluctantly.

"I guess—" Bill Lomax hesitated, and then went on: "Boys, this ain't your funeral. I ain't no right to drag you into this. They're a bad gang, that lot. You'd better put me down as soon as your contraption is low enough, and leave me to take my chance."

"Rot!" said Bob Lawless tersely.

"Do you think we could let you land among that gang, to be murdered?" said Frank Richards.

"We shan't, anyway," said Vere Beauclerc. "If it's a fight, we're all in it, Mr. Lomax."

"I guess you've no call to face that for me," said the miner.

"Well, I dare say Handsome Alf wouldn't let us get away to tell the yarn if we did let him have you, Mr. Lomax," said Bob. "I guess I wouldn't trust him."

Lomax nodded.

"That's so."

"Anyway, it's a fight if they come up," said Beauclerc; "and we're in a good position. They'll be easier targets than we shall."

Rifle in hand, Bob Lawless looked over the rim of the car. The balloon was settling downward over a wide plain that rose in a gentle acclivity towards the distant mountains. Closer now, though still far away, the horsemen were riding in hot pursuit, and they were near enough for

the schoolboys to discern the glitter of Handsome Alf's ear-rings in the sun.

Bob set his lips.

"That galoot gets the first bullet when the circus begins," he said grimly.

And they waited and watched.

A Fight for Life!

LOWER and lower the great balloon surged. The schoolboys waited quietly. Bill Lomax said no more, though evidently it weighed upon the honest Canadian's mind that he had brought the schoolboys into this deadly quarrel.

Soon the grassy plain below was close enough for them to discern the gophers blinking out of their holes. At the lower level there was little wind, and the balloon drifted slowly, almost imperceptibly, westward.

Carson's gang, riding hard, were gaining fast now. In a dusty bunch the horsemen came on. Handsome Alf's face was set and savage. As he came closer he raised his rifle, and took a shot at the balloon, which grazed the gas-envelope.

The car was swinging less than fifty feet above the ground now, and the hard-riding horsemen were racing up. The voyagers seemed to be descending into the jaws of death.

Bob Lawless rested his rifle across the rim of the wicker car, and glanced through the sights steadily. The muzzle was bearing upon the man with the ear-rings, and Bob's hand did not tremble. His chums watched him silently.

Handsome Alf had fired the first shot, and of his intentions there was no doubt—murderous violence as soon as the schoolboys were at his mercy. It was no time for hesitation.

"Let him have it!" muttered Lomax.

The miner had dragged himself up, and was leaning on the wicker rim, revolver in hand.

Bob still waited.

"I guess I'm going to make sure," he answered.

There was a sudden burst of firing from the horsemen, and the bullets whistled round the balloon. They had spotted the rifle-muzzle gleaming over the rim of the car, and realised that danger threatened. But the rifle-shots, fired with the riders in rapid motion, flew wide of the mark.

Bob set his teeth hard, and a glitter came into his eyes. It was time! With a hand that was firm as a rock he pulled the trigger.

Crack!

Frank Richards caught his breath as he followed, with his eyes, the sudden shot. In the distance Handsome Alf and his horse rolled on the plain together.

"A bullseye!" grinned Bill Lomax.

The next moment, however, Carson was seen to leap to his feet from the grass. The horse lay where it had fallen. At the very moment that the bullet had sped, the horse had tossed up its head, and received the bullet intended for the rider.

"The gee-gee got it!" muttered Beauclerc.

"Well, he's out of the race," said Frank. "I—I'm rather glad!"

Bob knitted his brows as he reloaded the rifle. The horsemen were tearing on towards the sinking balloon.

"Fire!" muttered Lomax. "They're inside pistol-range now."

His revolver rang out as he spoke.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The rifle and two revolvers opened fire upon the gang of rustlers. Loud yells followed from the horsemen. Two of them were seen to reel, and

though they did not fall, they stopped in the race and dismounted. It was plain that they were hit.

Three came tearing on furiously. The balloon was not a dozen feet above the ground now, and looked like bumping at any moment.

Splash!

There was a sudden splashing of water, and the schoolboys stared down in astonishment. Unseen by the voyagers, whose eyes were turned upon the pursuers, the balloon had drifted on over a wide river, and as it reached the level of the earth, it was water that it touched instead of the solid prairie.

Splash! Splash!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob.

The three horsemen slowed down as the river rolled before them. If the balloon crossed it, the pursuit was stopped; but in the very middle of the wide stream, the car was dragged through the water.

"Throw something out!" panted Frank. "Anything!"

He grasped a heavy bearskin rug from the bottom of the car, and tossed it overboard. Bob and Beauclerc pitched over two or three loose articles at the same time. The balloon, relieved, rose six or seven feet, clearing the river. It drifted on, close over the shining water.

Bump!

Down it came again, striking the bank on the opposite side. The concussion sent it spinning upward again. Lomax sank down in the car, and the schoolboys held on as it rocked and swayed wildly.

There was a shout of rage across the river, and splattering bullets followed the balloon, few of them coming close. Handsome Alf and his gang had been shaken off at last.

In a series of long hops the balloon rolled on, striking the earth again and again. It was a good two miles from the river when it collapsed at last, landing in the thick grass and remaining there. The gas-envelope sagged over.

"I guess we're landed!" panted Bob.

He turned his eyes towards the now distant river. There was no sign of the rustlers.

"I reckon it's O.K.," said Bill Lomax. "I know this hyer section. There ain't a crossing for five miles either way. I guess Handsome Alf has come out at the little end of the horn, after all."

That was good news to Frank Richards & Co.

Lomax leaned on the rim of the car and scanned the plain. Within a few miles rose the dark foothills to the west.

"You see that clump of trees yonder, sonnies?" said the prospector.

"Yes," said Frank.

"That's on the trail to Last Chance. I guess that if we can hoof it fifteen miles, we're O.K."

"I guess we'll try," said Bob.

The balloon had landed in thick grass, in the midst of clumps of timber. Here and there rocky spurs cropped out of the soil.

Bob Lawless looked for a handy tree to fasten the grapnel, for, collapsed as the balloon looked, there was no doubt that it would rise when it was relieved of their weight.

"I guess that tree will answer," said Bob. "You fellows keep in the car till I've got it fixed."

"Right-ho!"

Bob took the rope and slipped from the car, which shifted a little but did not rise. He ran to the tree to secure the rope, his chums watching him. To their astonishment Bob stopped suddenly as he reached the clump of timber, turned, and bolted back to the car. His face was white.

"What's the matter?" shouted Frank in alarm.

There was no need for Bob to answer. From the dark shadows of the timber a grizzly bear loped out in pursuit of the schoolboy, his savage jaws only a few yards behind Bob as he ran.

Dropped From the Clouds!

BOB LAWLESS bounded frantically into the car. The fierce animal gained on him at every step; his red, open jaws were only a couple of feet behind when Bob bundled in over the wicker rim and rolled in the car head-foremost.

There was a deep savage growl from the grizzly. He reared on his hind legs, his paws catching at the car, and his little red eyes glared in over the edge.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Frank, almost frozen for the moment.

The grizzly was gaunt and evidently hungry. Doubtless he had been watching for prey in the timber when Bob Lawless almost walked into his jaws.

Vere Beauclerc caught up the axe and made a fierce slash at the threatening muzzle over the car's edge. The huge animal growled savagely and backed away.

"The rifle—quick!" panted Bob as he struggled to his feet.

Frank handed it to him. The grizzly was coming on again, and his paws were laid on the car, evidently to climb in. Bob thrust the rifle almost into the bear's jaws as he pulled the trigger. From the grizzly's deep throat came a howl that was almost a yell, and again the ferocious brute backed down.

Bill Lomax was on his feet. He did not even draw his revolver. He knew how useless that weapon was against a grizzly bear. He was gazing upward at the strong, ample netting that held the car to the gas-envelope.

"Climb for it, sonnies!" he jerked out. "He'll be in the car in the shake of a possum's tail, and then—"

He did not finish, but caught at the ropes. The miner's advice was too good not to be taken. The three schoolboys swarmed into the ropes as the savage face looked again over the rim of the car. Blood was streaming down the bear's fur, but the wound had not disabled him.

Bill Lomax struggled feebly to climb, and the schoolboys lent him their aid, without which he would never have cleared from the car in time. They helped the wounded miner as high as possible in the netting, and Bob ran a rope round him, and knotted it, to secure him there. It was easy enough for the three active boys to hold on.

Below them, the grizzly was raging and growling. He climbed into the car, and cast a savage look up at the victims above his head.

"He's going to climb!" muttered Bob.

"I guess the ropes won't stand him!" answered Lomax.

The prospector was right. As the huge animal dragged himself upon the ropes they sagged and curled, and he bumped heavily into the car, screaming with rage. For a long time the schoolboys hung on to the netting, while the savage brute raged in the car below. He did not essay to climb again. The schoolboys hoped that he would go; but the bear was angry, and he showed no signs of going.

"This looks like a cinch for the grizzly!" muttered Bob.

"I'll try on him with the shooter," said Lomax. He swung his right hand free, and his revolver barked out. There was a deep growl from the bear as the bullet stung him.

Clinging to the rope, against the belling gas-envelope, it was impossible to use the rifle. The pistol was little more use than a popgun. But two or three more stinging shots increased the grizzly's anger.

Snarling with rage, he made another attempt to climb into the netting. The ropes sagged under him as before, but this time he did not fall back into the car. He held on with his claws, and the netting to which the four were clinging was dragged down closer to him.

"Hold on!" gasped Frank.

The bear was climbing again. With a sagacity amazing in so huge and clumsy an animal, he gathered up the netting in his claws and dragged the intended victims down closer and closer.

"Give me the axe, Beau!" muttered Frank.

He grasped the axe and slashed at the ropes below. Three of them parted, and the bear, thrown from his balance, tumbled back into the car. The gas-envelope trembled, partly released by the severing of the ropes.

"The game's up if we stick here!" muttered Bob Lawless. "Franky, the dashed thing would rise if we cut the car away. Shall we chance it?"

"I think so," said Frank, with a deep breath. "It couldn't rise high—very high, anyway. We're safe if we hold on."

"I agree," said Beauclerc. "What do you say, Mr. Lomax?"

The miner gave a shrug.

"I guess the b'ar will have us if we don't vamoose," he answered, "and if the b'ar don't Handsome Alf will! Look!"

He jerked his head towards the distant river. Against the glimmer of the water, shining in the sun, a horseman appeared in sight, followed by another and another. The delay caused by the grizzly had brought the enemy close again.

Frank set his teeth.

"It's the only chance now, Bob. Let's try."

"Go it!" said Bob tersely.

Frank slashed at the ropes.

With two or three loose ends the schoolboys tied themselves to the netting, to secure themselves against a fall. There was no doubt that the lightened balloon would shoot up when the heavy weight of the car was gone.

Slash! Slash!

The bear was seeking to climb again. Cut ropes rained down on him. When at last only a single rope held the balloon captive, there was a rifle-shot on the plain, and a sound of distant galloping. Carson and his gang were close at hand.

Slash!

With a loud twang the last rope parted. The next moment the axe dropped from Frank Richards' hand, and he clung to the netting with all his strength. The balloon, released and lightened, shot upwards almost like a bullet.

Dizzy and breathless, the four clung on to the netting, while the balloon rose and rolled. Higher and higher it sailed, till the earth was a misty blur, plains and trees and hills losing all their outlines. Misty clouds loomed round them as they clung on desperately.

But it was only for a short time. The gas was still leaking, and before long the balloon began

to settle, carried along by the wind as it descended. Once more the earth became clear to their eyes, but they were nowhere near the spot where they had left the grizzly bear in the car.

The wind was bearing the released envelope onward in the direction of the Last Chance trail. Bill Lomax uttered a sudden exclamation.

"That's the camp!"

The schoolboys looked. There were rugged spurs of rock about them now. Pine-trees and rocky acclivities met their gaze. In the distance smoke could be seen rising against the clear sky. They were close to human habitations at last.

Sinking lower every moment, the gas-envelope drifted on. As they drew closer to the earth the schoolboys cut themselves loose from the securing ropes and held on ready to jump.

Their feet dragged on the ground at last. A hundred yards away they caught sight of a collection of rudely built cabins by a silvery creek. They guessed that it was the mining camp of Last Chance.

Three or four men in red shirts were standing and staring, in dumb astonishment. Perilous as their position was, the schoolboys couldn't help laughing at the amazement in the faces of the Last Chance miners.

"Mind!" said Bob. "The beastly thing will jump as soon as some of us let go! You first, Lomax! Let go when your boots are on the ground."

"Right!"

Lomax's heavy boots were already dragging. He released his hold and rolled on the ground, two or three red-shirted men running to his assistance.

As Bob Lawless anticipated, the balloon rose when his weight was gone. But the gas was escaping fast now; the great envelope sagged and hollowed ominously. As it swooped down again, Bob yelled:

"Now then, us three altogether—when I say go!"

"Right you are, Bob!"

Their boots dragged on the ground.

"Go!" shouted Bob.

At the word go, the three released their hold. They bumped on the ground, and the balloon shot upward and swept away in the distance on the wind. It was the last the chums of Cedar Creek ever saw of Hiram K. Chowder's balloon!

Frank Richards rolled over, dazed and breathless. A horny hand grasped his shoulder and helped him up, and a rugged face grinned at him.

"All O.K., sonny?"

"Yes," gasped Frank. "Thanks!"

"I guess this hyer beats everything!" said the big miner. "Fust time I've ever seen a new pilgrim come to camp by dropping from the clouds. Search me!"

"Thanks for helping me!" panted Frank. "You all right, Bob? And you, Beau?"

"Right as rain!" said Beauclerc cheerfully.

"Same here, except for a bump the size of a walnut," said Bob Lawless. "I guess I wouldn't give Mr. Chowder much for his balloon, though."

Frank Richards laughed breathlessly.

Bill Lomax limped up and joined them. And in a very short time the landed voyagers were partaking of the hospitality of the men of Last Chance, and never had they done more justice to a meal than they did now to corn-cake and antelope steak.

Home Again!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. remained till the morning at Last Chance. They were anxious to get home and assure their friends of their safety, and the next morning they took their leave of Bill Lomax, leaving the Canadian miner among his friends, and safe from Handsome Alf and his gang.

The storekeeper of Last Chance was going south for supplies, and he gave the three schoolboys a lift in his buggy.

Glad enough were the three when they reached the nearest railroad town, and were able to use the telegraph. A message was flashed away along the railway to Kamloops, then to be taken by rider up the Thompson Valley, to relieve the anxious hearts at the Lawless Ranch.

It was some days later that the chums of Cedar Creek rode, on borrowed horses, up the Thompson Valley for home. Vere Beauclerc parted with his chums on the trail, and rode away for the shack by the creek, where his father awaited him.

Frank and Bob galloped on to the ranch. Mr. Lawless met them at the porch, and there was a good deal of emotion in his bearded face as he greeted them.

"You young rascals!" he said.

"How's mopper, dad?" asked Bob anxiously.

"She was very anxious. She had given you up for lost," said Mr. Lawless gravely. "No, I don't blame you. I know you couldn't help it. Go in and see your mother, Bob."

Bob Lawless ran into the ranch.

"There's a gentleman here you'll like to see, Frank," said Mr. Lawless to his nephew. "You'd better report to him what's happened to his balloon."

It was Hiram K. Chowder, the American balloonist. He shook hands with Frank, with puckered brows.

"I guess I reckoned there was noos of that balloon when your wire came along, sonny," he said. "Mr. Lawless was kind enough to put me up hyer while I was hunting for it. I guess I tackled it as far as the Fraser River, and then I calculated it was a goner. But I was real glad to hear that you were safe and sound, and it was better news than getting the balloon back, I reckon. But what's become of her?"

Frank Richards explained. Mr. Chowder shook his head seriously as he listened.

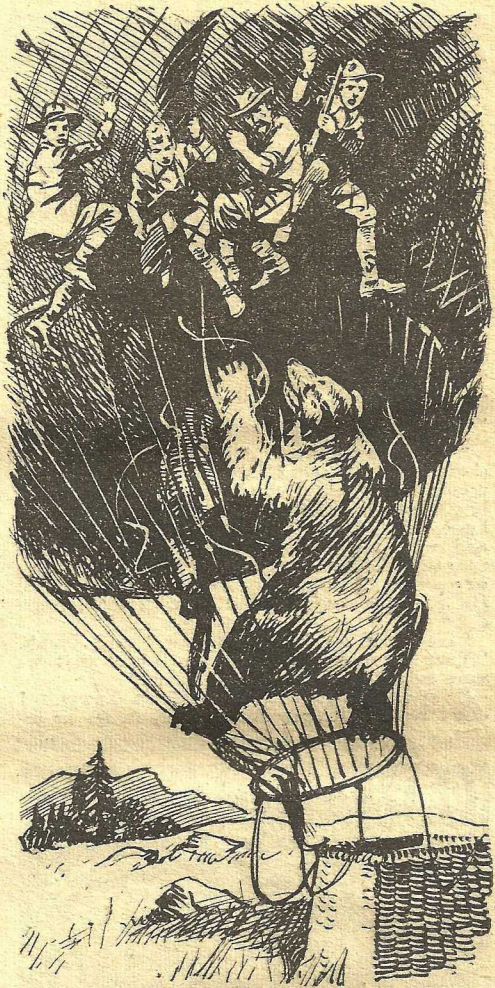
"I guess I shan't go after her," he remarked.

"There won't be much left of her by this time; and how I'd get the rags home from the Cascade Mountains is a puzzle, sir, I can't find an answer to. But I'm much obliged to you boys. You did your best to catch her for me."

"I'm sorry we couldn't do better, Mr. Chowder," said Frank. "It's a heavy loss to you."

"I guess she was insured," said the American gentleman. "But I'd rather have had my balloon back. I was making a heap of dollars exhibiting in the North-Western States. But now I know she's a goner, I guess I shall hump it home and give my order in Chicago for a new contraption, you bet!"

Frank Richards reflected. It was Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy at Cedar Creek, who had cut the balloon adrift with the chums in it, after they had captured the runaway for Mr. Chowder. Frank wondered whether he ought to inform the American gentleman, so that he could lay a claim against Gunten's father for damages.



Snarling with rage, the bear climbed into the netting. The ropes sagged under him, but he held on with his claws, climbing closer and closer to Frank Richards & Co. and the gold prospector!

But Frank, wrathful as he was with Gunten for his unscrupulous trick, had a strong repugnance to the idea of informing against his school-fellow.

"I guess," went on Mr. Chowder, oblivious of the schoolboy's thoughts, "I guess this hyer will be a good advertisement for my business, at any rate. Aeronaut blown away to the wild North-West—coming down among gangsters and grizzlies! By hokey! The papers will make a lot of it!"

And Mr. Chowder rubbed his hands at the idea.

"But you didn't come down among the gangsters or the grizzly!" said Frank, in surprise. Mr. Chowder smiled.

"Sonny, you don't want to tell the public too

many facts," he answered. "What does it matter whether it happened to you or to me? It was my balloon, wasn't it?"

"Yes; but—"

"I guess that's good enough. You'll give me the whole yarn, with all details, and I guess I'll get the papermen to write it up in great style!" said Mr. Chowder, rubbing his hands again.

Evidently Mr. Chowder was a gentleman with a keen eye to the value of advertisement, and had not been brought up at the feet of his famous countryman, George Washington.

And that afternoon Frank and Bob had to give Mr. Chowder full details of their adventures, and the enterprising American gentleman seemed fully satisfied when he took his leave at the ranch.

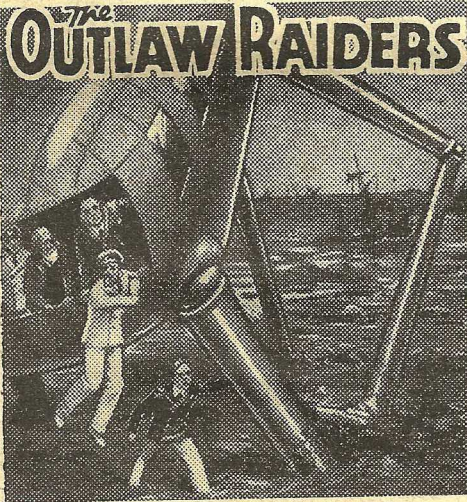
"I suppose it was no use telling him about Gunten, Bob," Frank Richards remarked, when the cousins went to their room that night. "Of course, Gunten's responsible for the loss of the balloon."

Bob shook his head.

"Nix!" he answered. "He couldn't screw any shekels out of the Guntenes. Not much use trying, I reckon. Gunten will swear black and blue that he never touched the rope with his knife, and I guess it wouldn't be easy to prove; and we don't want to stand up as witnesses against a Cedar Creek chap. That wouldn't be any use for Chowder; and as for ourselves, we've got our own way of dealing with the foreign cad."

"We shall see him to-morrow," said Frank. "Your pater sent word to the school that we were safe when he got the telegram."

"Yep; I'm glad Miss Meadows knows. I don't reckon Gunten will be glad to see us to-



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morrow morning," said Bob. "We'll go early, and meet him on the trail. Gunten's called the tune, and to-morrow morning he's going to pay the piper."

And the chums turned in.

Gunten Pays the Piper!

BRIGHT and early in the morning Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin started for Cedar Creek School. Vere Beauclerc met them at the fork in the trail. He was early, as usual.

"What are we going to do about Gunten, you fellows?" asked Beauclerc, as they rode on together. "He endangered our lives by sending us adrift, and it's cost Mr. Chowder his balloon. He oughtn't to get off scot free."

"He's not going to," said Bob grimly. "We're going to meet him on the trail, Cherub. I've brought a special length of trail-rope for him."

Beauclerc smiled, and said no more.

The three chums rode at a gallop and turned into the Thompson trail at some distance from the school. They had covered the ground quickly and were early on the scene.

It was some time later that Gunten and Keller, the two Swiss, came riding up the trail together from Thompson. Gunten started at the sight of Frank Richards & Co. sitting their horses in the middle of the trail.

"Hallo! You fellows back?" he called out.

"Looks like it. Halt!" answered Bob.

"I guess I'm going on."

"I guess you're not," said Bob coolly, catching the reins of the Swiss. "You can get on, Keller."

Keller looked at them.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"I guess the trouble is that Gunten cut us adrift in the balloon, and now he's going to step up to the office and settle," answered Bob.

"It's a lie!" said Gunten, between his teeth. "Take that tale to my father, and see what he'll say. I shall deny it, every word!"

"I know that," answered Bob. "And I reckon I'm not going to your popper, Gunten. We're dealing with you."

"Let go my reins!" exclaimed Gunten fiercely.

"Not just yet."

Gunten made a slash at Bob's wrist with his riding-whip. The rancher's son let go the reins and grasped him by the shoulder. In a moment the Swiss was swung out of the saddle and bumped in the grass of the trail.

"Help me, Keller!" yelled Gunten.

"You vamoose!" said Frank Richards, giving Keller's pony a flick.

Keller rode on up the trail to the school. He would not have been much use in putting up a fight, and apparently he was not inclined to try his luck.

Gunten clenched his hands, eyeing the chums of Cedar Creek savagely.

"Now, what do you want?" he demanded savagely. "I'm not going to fight you, Bob Lawless, if that's what you mean."

"I give you the chance, if you choose," said Bob quietly.

"I don't choose, then. Will you let me mount my horse?"

"You want to crawl off unpunished, after risking our lives by a dirty trick!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

Gunten shrugged his shoulders.

"You can report me to Miss Meadows, if you like," he answered.

"You know we shan't do that."
 "Then let me get on, hang you!"
 "You're going on," answered Bob. "Start his horse, Franky. Gunten's going on foot."
 "I'm not going on foot!" roared Gunten furiously.

"Your mistake—you are!"
 Frank Richards started Gunten's horse up the trail, and the animal trotted on towards the school. Gunten stood with clenched hands, breathing hard.

"I guess I make you the offer again, Gunten," said Bob quietly. "You risked our lives, and you knew it. You can stand up to me, or Franky, or the Cherub till you're licked, if you like."

"Oh, shut up!" was Gunten's answer.

"You won't?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then you will get the trail-ropes. Lay him over!" said Bob.

Gunten struggled fiercely as Frank and Beau grasped him. He was pitched down on his face in the trail, still struggling. Then Bob Lawless brought the trail-ropes into play.

Lash, lash, lash!

Bob had a strong arm, and he laid on the trail-ropes with a hearty good will. Gunten yelled and struggled under the castigation; but his struggles did not avail him, and the punishment was not spared for his yelling. He wanted a lesson, and he had it.

Bob laid on the trail-ropes till he had counted twenty, and every lash was, as Bob expressed it, a "sockdologer." When twenty had been laid on he stepped back.

"I guess that does it," he remarked. "I'm satisfied, if Gunten is. Are you satisfied, you foreign rotter?"

Gunten sat up, white with rage and pain.

"I'll make you suffer for this!" he hissed.

Bob laughed carelessly.

"Next time you think of a dirty trick, you'd better think, too, about what you'll get afterwards," he answered. "So-long! Time we got off, you fellows!"

The three schoolboys remounted their horses and rode on towards Cedar Creek. Gunten was left gasping and groaning in the trail.

There was a shout at the gate of the lumber school as Frank Richards & Co. rode up. Chunky Todgers waved his hat.

"Here they are!" he yelled.

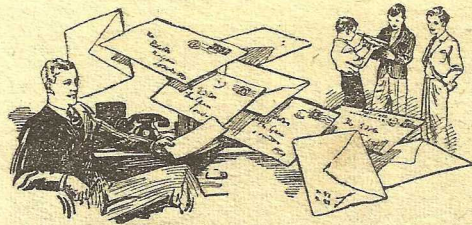
There was a rush of the Cedar Creek fellows to greet the three, and they had a forest of hands to shake as they got down from their horses. In a triumphant procession, they were marched into the playground. There was no doubt that Cedar Creek School was glad to see Frank Richards & Co. again.

Miss Meadows met them at the porch.

"My dear boys," she said, "I was so glad to hear that you were safe!"

And the Canadian schoolmistress shook hands with them in turn, and then Mr. Slimmey, and then Mr. Shepherd, the new master, who had arrived during their absence. It was quite a reception.

That morning was a cheery one at the lumber school, only Kern Gunten's face being dark. A dozen times the chums were called upon to relate how they had voyaged to the wild North-West, and how they had been at grips with gangsters who recognised no law but gun law.



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!—How do you like the second yarn of the new holiday series? Great, isn't it? But there's better still to follow. I have read the next two yarns, and, believe me, you are booked for some rare fun and thrills with the chums of St. Jim's.

I have just been wrestling with a very difficult problem—how to pack into thirty-six pages next Wednesday's grand stories and features. I had the same problem with this issue, but with the next number my task is even more difficult. As I told you last week, Martin Clifford is so absorbed in writing the stories of the new series that he forgets time and space. Hence the next yarn is longer, and the following one longer still! But I am determined to get in every word of them, because I know readers welcome the increasing length of the St. Jim's stories, and because it would be a pity to cut shorter such excellent yarns.

I have succeeded in wangling in the contents of the next issue, but the following one will require some hard thinking. However, let's deal first with

"THE STOWAWAY OF THE SILVER SWALLOW!"

which is the title of the next story. After some further fun and adventure in Paris, the flying school-boys take off on the second "hop" of their holiday cruise on the Continent. The next landing place is Lyons, but before they arrive there Tom Merry & Co. pass through a perilous experience in midair. Unknown to them, there is a stowaway on the plane, and as the Silver Swallow wings its way south he reveals himself. It is none other than Giuseppe Fosco, and the juniors don't need telling that he's after Gussy's mysterious black box! Will the Italian crook get away with this daring attempt to secure it? Make sure you don't miss next week's gripping yarn, chums!

"THE GENTLE SHEPHERD!"

That is a rather unusual title, but the new master of Cedar Creek, whom you will meet in next week's story, is an unusual customer! His name is Horatio Shepherd, but the boys of the backwoods school soon nickname him the "Gentle Shepherd." He is nothing if not a dandy and he speaks with an affected accent. But he is very simple, and, as Bob Lawless maintains, born to have his leg pulled! And pulled it is! How Bob, with the aid of an old Redskin chief, japes the new master will keep you in roars of laughter. Look out for the fun!

"THE SCUTTLED SCHOONER!"

It seems that Jack Drake, after being rescued from the Atlantic, is doomed to die like a rat in a trap! For with the mutineers in control of the ill-fated schooner the chief mate can see no way out but to scuttle the ship and send them all down to Davy Jones' locker! There follows terrible moments for Jack as the mate begins his grim work in the hold; but he realises that their lives would not be worth much, anyway, if they surrendered to the mutineers. So he waits for the end, his thoughts with his chums on the school-ship Benbow.

This powerful yarn, together with more Pen Pals and "Blake Answers Back," completes the next number. Order early, chums!

Chin, chin!

THE EDITOR.

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Next Week: "THE GENTLE SHEPHERD!"



"Vous comprenez ?" said the black-bearded seaman, pointing to the dark waters. "Are you mad ?" panted Drake. "You will not refuse to save me ?" "Alas, monsieur, I am not here to save the lives of strangers !"

Missing !

"**D**RAKE !" No reply. "Drake !" repeated Mr. Packe, raising his voice a little.

The boys of the Benbow were gathered on the deck for evening call-over, and all of them were there—with one exception.

Jack Drake of the Fourth had not turned up.

Dick Rodney glanced round, looking for his chum. He was tempted to answer "Adsum" for Drake, but refrained. He was, in fact, feeling rather uneasy about Jack Drake.

At St. Winifred's, on shore, it was not uncommon for a fellow to miss call-over; but in the narrow confines of the school at sea, there was no excuse for not turning up in time. Nobody on board the old ship could fail to be aware that the roll was being called on deck.

Mr. Packe frowned, and went on with the roll when it was clear that Jack Drake was not present.

When the school was dismissed, the Fourth Form master called to Rodney.

"Do you know where Drake is, Rodney?" he inquired severely.

"No, sir; I haven't seen him for an hour or more," answered Rodney. "He must be somewhere about the ship, of course."

"Naturally. Find him and tell him to come to my cabin at once!" said Mr. Packe.

"Yes, sir!"

The Fourth Form master retired to his cabin, and Dick Rodney began the search for his chum, assisted by Tuckey Toodles.

What had become of Jack Drake was a mystery; and the other fellows were soon interested

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The MUTINY SHIP!

By Owen Conquest.

in the search, and looking for the missing junior high and low.

He was not in the Fourth Form cabins or in the Common-room, and he was not to be seen about the decks, and hailing the tops for him brought no answer. It was close upon bed-time when Dick Rodney tapped at the door of Vernon Daubeny's cabin, in the Shell quarters. He looked in and found Daubeny of the Shell there, with Egan and Torrence. Daub's face was pale and drawn in the light of the swinging lamp.

"Have you fellows seen anything of Drake?" Rodney inquired.

"Nothin' at all," said Egan, staring at the Fourth Former. "Drake's no friend of ours. You don't expect to find him here, I suppose?"

"Not likely!" grinned Torrence.

"I'm speaking to you, Daub!"

"I don't know anythin' about him," said Vernon Daubeny, speaking with a visible effort.

Rodney's eyes dwelt upon his pale face very sharply.

Lost in the Atlantic, Jack Drake has
a narrow escape from a watery grave
—only to discover that he is saved by
a craft with mutineers in control!

"Are you sure of that?" he asked.

"Of course I'm sure!" broke out Daubeny irritably. "What the thump do you mean? Why should I know about Drake?"

"There was a fight arranged between you and Drake, and you kept out of sight to keep clear of it," said Rodney coldly. "I thought perhaps Drake might have found you."

"He didn't."

"If you've played any trick on him," said Rodney quietly, "you'd better own up. If he's still missing at bed-time there'll be a row."

Daubeny breathed hard.

"What do you mean, you chump? What trick could I play on him?"

"He must be shut up somewhere, or he would have shown up before this," answered Rodney. "I thought you fellows might have caught him napping, and stuck him in the hold, or something."

"Well, we haven't."

"Perhaps he's fallen overboard!" suggested Egan. "He was always doin' stunts in the riggin'."

Rodney started.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"I don't see that it's impossible," said Daubeny, with dry lips. "Fellows do fall overboard, I suppose?"

"The sea's runnin' fairly high, and the watch on deck mightn't hear a splash, you know," continued Egan, with a grin. "Better dive over and look for him in Davy Jones' locker, Rodney."

Torrence chuckled.

As a matter of fact, the Shell fellows did not think for a moment that Jack Drake might have fallen overboard, or they would not have been so humorous on the subject. But the suggestion sent a chill to Rodney's heart. He left the cabin with a deeply troubled face.

"You—you fellows shouldn't joke about a thing like that," muttered Daubeny. "It's no jokin' matter."

Egan laughed.

"Only pullin' Rodney's leg," he said. "He shouldn't come here askin' for his precious pal. We don't know anythin' about him, and don't want to. All the same, it's queer what's become of him."

"Daub's been dodgin' him to keep out of the scrap," said Torrence. "Is it possible that Drake is dodgin' Daub, too?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon Daubeny was silent. Torrence's remark would have brought angry words from him at any other time, but Daub was not capable of anger now. Still before his eyes was the dreadful vision of Jack Drake slipping from the maintop under a hasty blow, and vanishing into the darkness of the sea.

That vision haunted Daubeny: it was likely to haunt him to his dying day, if Drake had indeed found his death in the depths of the Atlantic. It had been an accident, he told himself feverishly, over and over again. But it had been his hand that had struck the junior from his hold—his hand that had sent Jack Drake spinning into the shadowed sea. He dared not speak.

Dick Rodney went directly to Mr. Packe's cabin after leaving the bucks of the Shell.

"You have found Drake?" asked the Form-master, as Rodney presented himself.

"I've not found him, sir."

"What?"

"He can't be found. It—it——" Rodney's voice faltered. "It begins to look as if he isn't on board the Benbow at all, sir!"

Mr. Packe started to his feet.

"Not on board the Benbow! What do you mean? It is not possible that he has fallen overboard?"

Rodney did not answer.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Packe. "This must be seen to at once!"

The Form-master hurried on deck. In a few minutes more Captain Topcastle had called all hands to search the ship. But the search was in vain.

And the boatswain remembered that earlier in the evening he had seen Jack Drake climbing the main shrouds. Two or three seamen searched the maintop and the crosstrees. From end to end of the Benbow every recess was ransacked.

Bed-time was forgotten. There was a thrill of excitement and horror through the school ship. For it was plain to all now that Jack Drake of the Fourth was no longer on board the Benbow.

"'Bout ship!"

That was Captain Topcastle's order.

Jack Drake was overboard; how many a long mile behind the ship no one knew or could guess.

The hope of saving him was faint; indeed, there was no hope. But not a chance was to be left untried; and the Benbow surged back upon her course, with eager eyes watching the sea in the faint glimmer of the stars.

Overboard!

LIGHTS danced before Jack Drake's eyes as he came to the surface after his deep plunge. They were the lights of the Benbow, gliding away into the night.

The fall from the maintop, the sudden plunge into the sea, had dazed the St. Winitred's junior; for some moments he hardly knew what had happened, though he struck out by instinct and kept himself afloat.

The slant of the ship as she rolled had caused him to fall clear when he was struck down, otherwise he would have crashed on the Benbow, and the fall would have killed him instantly. But it remained to be seen whether he had escaped that terrible fate, only to die a more lingering death. He was alone—alone on the wide sea, with the ship's lights fading away in the distance, and not a soul on board aware of his fate—excepting the white-faced, trembling, guilty Shell fellow crouching in the maintop.

As his brain cleared the junior shouted, but shouting was in vain. The Benbow was already distant.

Desperately the junior struck out after the fading, winking lights that mocked him from a distance. It was well for him that he was a good swimmer, though perhaps his desperate swim was but prolonging his fate.

Swimming did not serve him, however. The swell of the ocean tossed him like a cork, and the lights of the Benbow died away in the distant night.

It was then that despair rushed upon him. Evidently his fall overboard had not been seen; probably he would not even be missed till evening call-over.

Doubtless Daubeny supposed that he had gone straight down to his death, like a plummet, for evidently he had not spoken. If Daubeny had given the alarm the ship would have stopped for him. Daubeny could not know, he could not guess, that the hapless junior was still swimming for his life, and, believing that Drake was dead, terror tied his tongue.

Drake realised it, and he realised that the ship would not turn back—not, at all events, until his fate was discovered by someone other than Daubeny.

That would be too late. Even if he were still afloat, what chance had they of finding him in the boundless expanse of the Atlantic? With a shudder and a chill at his heart, Drake realised that there was no hope of rescue.

He continued to swim, keeping himself afloat; mere instinct impelled him to do that, though he was in despair.

The murmur of the water in his ears began to lull him into a kind of stupor. A wave broke over him, and for some seconds he was under water, and he came up again dizzy and dazed.

Dimly he understood that the end was coming; his strength was going, and before long a wave would swamp him, and he would not rise again—or rise only to toss to and fro, inert, like a log on the sea.

Suddenly he started from the lethargy that was falling upon him—the lethargy that was the

precursor of death. A sound came through the murmur of the pitiless waters—a sudden, sharp sound, so strange, in the midst of the waters, that it startled all his faculties and recalled his wandering senses.

It was the report of a firearm.

Drake pulled himself together and stared round dazedly over the tumbling waters.

Crack, crack!

It was no feverish fancy; the sound was repeated again and again—almost a fusillade of sharp shots.

Drake panted, and swam more strongly. The thought came into his mind that the firing was a signalling from the Benbow, searching for him on the sea. He strained his eyes to look.

Two lights came winking across the dark waters, so close at hand that he gave an involuntary cry as he saw them. But for the lethargy that had seized on him, he must have seen them earlier.

But they were not the lights of the Benbow. They were too close down to the water for that. They were the sidelights—red and green—of a small vessel, coming almost directly towards him. And it was from that vessel that the firing came.

Crack, crack!

They were the last two shots. The firing was followed by silence, and in the silence Jack Drake thought he heard a distant splash.

The winking lights came on. He could see other lights now, and dimly there loomed up, in the shadows, the form of a small schooner, under mainsail and jib.

He shouted with all his force:

“Help! Ship ahoy! Help!”

The lights came on, but there was no answer to his call. The schooner was very close now. He shouted again and again, desperately, in the fear that the vessel would run him down and glide on her course over his body.

Something that floated on the water struck him, and he threw out his hand to catch hold for support. His grasp closed on the collar of a pea-jacket, and for an instant he saw a white, set face before he let go his hold with a shudder. He remembered the splash he had heard. It was a lifeless body that was floating past him in the sea.

What was happening on board the strange schooner? He did not know—he hardly cared. He was only thinking of a helping hand to draw him from the engulfing waves.

“Help!”

To his amazement there came a hoarse shout not a dozen yards from him in the shadowed water.

“A moi! A moi!”

A man was shouting for help in French, and his shout mingled with that of the junior.

Lights flashed on the mysterious schooner, and Drake heard hoarse shouting. He saw the schooner round to when it was almost upon him; he heard the creaking of the davits, and knew that a boat had dropped into the sea. The schooner had stopped, and a boat had been lowered.

A lantern gleamed over the waters.

“Hola! Hola! Ou etes vous?” shouted a deep voice.

“Here!” shouted Drake.

“Ici!” shrieked the voice near him.

The boat came on. A dark-skinned man, with curly black hair, was standing up in the bows, lantern in hand. Two seamen were at the oars.

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and a third at the rudder. Drake’s face showed white in the lantern light.

A hand grasped his shoulder, and he was dragged, gasping, into the boat. He sank down in a pool of water.

“Voila!” said the black-haired seaman, with a laugh.

“A moi!” came a howl from the sea.

The man started. Evidently he had supposed that it was the Frenchman he had dragged into the boat.

“Mon Dieu!” he ejaculated in astonishment. He bent over Drake, and turned the light full on his face, staring at him blankly. “Mon Dieu! C’est un garçon—un Anglais, je crois! Mais comment?”

Before Drake could speak he turned away, and the boat glided on to the drowning Frenchman. The black-haired seaman dragged him aboard and the boat pulled back to the waiting schooner.

Saved From the Sea!

JACK DRAKE sat up in the bottom of the boat, drenched with water and panting for breath. His strength was spent. But, exhausted as he was, he was wondering into what strange hands he had fallen. That there was something amiss on board the French schooner he could not fail to know. The firing and the dead body that had floated by him in the sea told as much.

The black-haired seaman, who was evidently in command, looked at him in the lantern light. The man had a rather handsome face, swarthy and reckless, with a black beard and black hair, evidently a Frenchman’s face. The look in the black, glinting eyes was not reassuring.

He spoke in English.

“Who are you? How did you come here, boy?”

“I fell overboard from the Benbow,” gasped Drake.

“The Benbow? An English ship?”

“Yes.”

“Is she near at hand?”

“No. It was more than an hour ago, I think.”

“Ma foi! And you have been swimming all the time?”

“Yes.”

“Bon! You are a good swimmer, mon garçon, and you may go for another swim,” said the black-bearded man.

Drake stared at him, hardly comprehending.

With a mocking grin, the black-bearded seaman pointed over the gunwale of the boat to the dark waters.

“Vous comprenez?”

“Are you mad?” panted Drake. “You will not refuse to save me?”

“Alas, monsieur, I am not here to save the lives of strangers, and there is no room on board my ship for you!” said the black-bearded man, still with the mocking grin on his swarthy face.

“Your ship?” exclaimed Drake. He could see that the man was dressed like a seaman. “Where is your captain? I demand to speak to your captain!”

“Parbleu! You will have the opportunity, since our captain is in the locker of Davy Jones, and you are going there!” answered the man coolly. “Give him the regards of Gaston Dubois!”

Drake shuddered. He remembered the body that had floated past him in the sea.

The boat was close under the schooner’s

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quarter now. Gaston Dubois laid a heavy hand on the junior's shoulder.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

Drake panted.

"You can't mean it! You can't mean——"

The Frenchman who had been dragged into the boat moved forward and caught Gaston Dubois by the arm.

"Jamais!" he said sharply. "Laissez le garçon! Mais vous etes fou."

"Taisez-vous, Pierre Dandin."

Two or three faces looked down from the schooner into the boat. There was a jabbering of voices in French. Gaston Dubois tightened his grip on Drake's shoulder, but Dandin continued to speak in rapid French—so rapid that Drake, though he knew French fairly well, could scarcely follow the meaning. But he understood that the seaman was speaking for his life.

"Soit!" exclaimed Dubois at last. He released the junior. "What is your name, boy?"

"Jack Drake."

"If I take you aboard my schooner, will you make yourself useful? We are short-handed—our crew has had losses this night." He grinned. "We are several hands short, and Dandin thinks you may be useful."

"I am willing to work, if that is what you mean," answered Drake, his heart throbbing with relief.

"Allons donc."

Drake was passed up the side of the schooner, and in a few moments the boat was slung up to the davits, and the vessel was under way again. Once he was on deck, no further notice was taken of the schoolboy. Hardly one of the French seamen glanced at him, and both Dubois and Dandin seemed to have forgotten his existence.

Drake remained in the shadows of the boat, resting, and only too glad to keep out of the way of the ruffians into whose hands he had fallen. He did not need telling now that there had been a mutiny on board the French schooner, and that it was taking place at the very time he sighted the vessel's lights.

And the struggle was not apparently over yet. Gaston Dubois had gone down the companion, and Drake could hear his voice shouting in the cuddy, in French. From what he said, it was easy to gather that two at least of the ship's officers had barred themselves in their cabins, and were still living. The remainder of the crew seemed to be under Dubois' orders.

The cuddy was swarming with seamen, and Drake heard a sound of hammering, followed by a revolver-shot. Then there were oaths and shouts, and the hammering ceased.

Seamen passed him in the shadows, and from their excited talk the junior soon learned more completely how matters stood.

The mutiny had come suddenly, when the French captain was taking the watch on deck. The mutineers had rushed him, and he had used his revolver, before he was tossed overboard, and in the struggle Pierre Dandin had been knocked into the sea. It was the latter circumstance that had saved Drake's life. The ruffians had stopped for their comrade, as they would not have been likely to do for Drake's cries for help. The two mates below, alarmed by the firing, had had time to bar themselves in their quarters when the rush of the mutineers came, and they were still holding out.

Jack was startled from his reflections by two splashes in the sea, and he knew that two bodies had been slid overboard. He did not doubt that

they were the bodies of the mutineers who had fallen in the fight. Gaston Dubois came back on deck at last, and his eyes fell on the schoolboy. He gave a start.

"Ah! J'avais oublie!" he exclaimed, showing his teeth in a grin. "You belong to my ship now, mon garçon!"

"Yes," said Drake quietly.

He did not show the horror and disgust that he felt in the presence of the ruffian. His life depended on a word from Gaston Dubois.

The Frenchman pointed forward.

"You will find yourself a bunk in the fore-castle. You are not wanted now. Allez-vous-en."

"Very well."

Drake stumbled forward to the little, dark, evil-smelling fore-castle of the schooner. He found it quite deserted; all the crew were aft now. He was glad to find an empty bunk, and turn into it.

The junior was utterly exhausted, and in great need of rest. In spite of his wild surroundings he was soon sound asleep.

In Desperate Hands!

JACK DRAKE was awakened by being turned bodily out of the bunk. He came to the floor heavily, and picked himself up, rather dazed. A rough seaman grinned at him, and pointed to the deck, jabbering in French. Drake caught the word "travailler," and comprehended that he was to turn to work.

He emerged from the fore-castle, and blinked round him in the sunlight. It was morning, and the sun was high in the heavens.

Five or six seamen were loafing about on the deck, most of them smoking, and two or three under the influence of liquor. Discipline on the vessel had evidently been ended by the mutiny. Gaston Dubois and Pierre Dandin were chatting aft. Drake wondered what had become of the two mates in the cabin below. If they had fallen into the hands of the mutineers, there was no doubt as to their fate.

Dubois beckoned to him to approach.

"Bonjour, mon garçon!" he said, with an evil, mocking smile. "I am going to make you my cabin-boy. You will turn to on deck when you are wanted. You'll take your orders from the cook. Go to the galley at once!"

"Very well," said Drake.

He found his way to the little, dirty galley of the schooner, where a fat, perspiring black man was engaged in cooking. The black man looked round at him.

"Who de dickens are you?" he inquired politely.

"Cabin-boy at present," answered Drake. "I'm at your orders."

"Touch hat to your superior officer, den!"

"What?"

"Or I soon make you!" added Cooky, picking up a big wooden ladle with a flourish.

Drake's cap was gone, but he touched his fore-lock to the important black man. Cooky grinned approval.

"You 'bey orders, and you get on all right in dis galley," he said. "You find Napoleon Bonaparte all right if you 'bey orders."

Drake grinned.

Napoleon Bonaparte speedily set him to work, and his first task was to take the new captain's breakfast into the cuddy, where he laid the table and set out the meal.

Gaston Dubois and Dandin came down to breakfast together, and Drake was kept pretty busy waiting on them. He soon discovered that the two mates were still in the cabins, which opened off the little cuddy.

The doors were closed and fastened within, and outside them some articles of furniture had been piled, to keep the mates from making a sudden appearance and attacking the mutineers without warning. The two officers were prisoners in their cabins, and the mutineers appeared to be content to leave them there rather than face their revolvers at close quarters. Probably Dubois was postponing their fate till they should be weak from hunger.

After breakfast the two rascals returned to the deck, and Drake was left alone in the cuddy to clear up.

He stepped to the companion and looked up the ladder, and listened. There was a murmur of voices above, but he could not distinguish the words. Feeling secure now, he stepped back and approached the barricaded cabin doors, and tapped lightly on the first door.

To his surprise, an English voice answered the tap from within.

"Are you there agin, you lubbers? You can come in as soon as you like."

"Hush!" There was a bullet-hole through the door, and Drake approached his lips to it to whisper. "I am a friend."

"Who are you? I don't know your voice. English?"

"Yes. I was picked up last night at sea."

"You've landed in a bad box, then."

"You are English?" asked Drake.

"John Jones, chief mate of the schooner," was the reply. "Do you know what's become of the captain?"

"Overboard," answered Drake.

"So that rascal said. Then there's only me and Gautier, in the next cabin." An eye was glimmering through the hole, taking stock of the schoolboy. "I suppose the coast is clear there, as you are speaking to me?"

"I'm alone in the cuddy. Can I do anything to help you?" whispered Drake. "Speak low. The cook may come in any minute."

"They mean to starve me out," muttered the mate. "I've tried to get out of the cabin, and chance it, but the door's barred. If you could let me loose—"

"What could you do against the enemy?"

"I reckon there's one thing I could do, if I could get out of this without being shot down as soon as I show my nose," answered Jones. "I reckon I could turn the tables on the mutineers in a way they don't look for. Are you game to help?"

"Hush! I'll do what I can. Hush, now!"

Drake stepped quickly away from the cabin door as he heard the shuffling footsteps of the cook. Napoleon Bonaparte shook his black and dirty forefinger at him.

"You no loaf 'bout," he said severely. "You no loaf 'bout, you white trash. You clean up cuddy and get busy, or I make you understand."

"All right!" said Drake.

"You say 'ay, ay, sir,' to superior officer," said Napoleon.

"Ay, ay, sir," said Drake meekly.

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"Dat better," said Napoleon, and with a satisfied grin he returned to the cuddy, after setting the new cabin-boy to work.

Drake cheerfully set to work with the broom, making a good deal of noise with it. He was determined to do as the chief mate had asked him, but there were several heavy articles piled outside the cabin door, which could not be removed without noise. He clattered the broom in the companionway, and then about the cuddy, and then he began to shift aside the furniture from the door. Soon the door was free.

He whispered a word in at the hole, and the next moment the door opened. A thick-set man stepped out into the cuddy, revolver in hand.

He did not speak a word to Drake. There was no time, but he motioned to the schoolboy to help him free the other cabin door. In a few minutes the second cabin door was opened, and a slim young Frenchman stepped out. It was Gautier, the second mate of the schooner.

"You white trash—"

It was the voice of the black cook. He came along suddenly into the cuddy, and almost staggered with astonishment at the sight of the two mates. With a wild yell he turned and fled.

"Now for it!" muttered the chief mate. "There's only one way, Gautier. Come on!"

The second mate nodded, and followed his companion with a rush through the alleyway into the galley.

Napoleon Bonaparte had fled from his quarters to the deck, and Jones was only just in time to shut the galley door and secure it. Then he turned up a hatch in the galley floor, disclosing a ladder leading into the depths below.

Drake had followed the two mates in a state of bewilderment. The mutineers were firing into the cuddy through the broken skylight. Drake caught Jones by the arm as he was plunging down the narrow trap into the hold.

"What are you going to do? What—"

"Follow me!"

The chief mate disappeared, and Gautier followed him instantly. Then Drake clambered down the ladder into the dark and somewhat noisome depths. He stumbled blindly in the hold among the cargo of the schooner, unable to see even his companions in the darkness. A minute later a face appeared at the galley-hatch above. The chief mate fired up at it, and it vanished instantly.

"They won't follow us here, I reckon," said the mate grimly. "We've got plenty of time. Gaston Dubois will never sail this schooner to the South Seas, Gautier!"

"Jamais, je crois," answered the second mate, with a grim chuckle.

"What are you going to do?" panted Drake.

"What do you reckon?" answered the chief mate. "We're done for, and the schooner's in the hands of those murderous thieves. It's hard on you, youngster, but you'd never have been allowed to leave this craft alive to put justice on their track. It's Davy Jones for all of us—and we're all going together."

Drake panted.

"But—but what is it you mean to do, then, in the hold?"

The mate's answer was short and sharp.

"Scuttle the schooner!"

Next Wednesday:

"THE SCUTTLED SCHOONER!"



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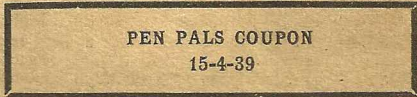
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PERIL IN PARIS!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Bai Jove! It's jolly lucky you did, Pawson! You must be a cwack shot, too!" said Arthur Augustus. "I felt quite howwid when I saw that wascal spwing at you with his knife. I dweaded that you were a gonah, Pawson. You must weally be a cwack shot."

"I have some little skill, sir," murmured Pawson. "It is a long time since the War, sir, but I have not quite forgotten the use of firearms. I trust, sir, that you have not suffered too severe a shock."

"I can still feel that howwid wottah's fingahs on my neck! But it's all wight! Wight as wain! You are weally a wondahful chap, Pawson! It's weally wondahful the way you turn up when you are wanted. Just in the nick of time, bai Jove!"

"I happened to be unable to sleep, sir, and had left my room to take a walk on the balcony, sir," said Pawson. "I heard a sound—"

"Thank goodness you did!" said Arthur Augustus. "But we must do somethin' for that wottah, bwute as he is! Tie a sheet wound his leg, or somethin'."

"I will look after him, sir, if you wish. I have some little skill in surgical matters, sir."

"Bai Jove! Is there anythin' you can't do, Pawson?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Pawson smiled a deprecating smile, and approached the Apache groaning on the floor. Louis-sur-les-toits glared at him with undiminished rage and ferocity; but he was helpless, his shattered leg hanging like a broken stick. Louis-sur-les-toits would recover, but his nights as a cat-burglar were ended. He would never climb again. That climb into the balcony of No. 5, Avenue Sarre was the last climb of "Louis-on-the-roof."

He spat fury as the portly figure bent over him. Unheeding it, Lord Eastwood's man bared his wound, and bound it up with strips of sheet

from D'Arcy's bed. The juniors watched him in silence, rather wondering, like Arthur Augustus, whether there was anything that the incomparable Pawson could not do.

By that time five or six startled servants were gathered round the doorway. Pawson called to them. Pawson spoke perfect French, among his many other gifts, and they carried the wounded Apache out of the room.

"I have given instructions, sir, for the police to be communicated with by telephone," said Pawson. "They will soon be here to take away that dangerous character. If you young gentlemen will return to bed, I, with Master Arthur's permission, will sleep on the ottoman in this room, in case of any possible further alarm."

"Bai Jove, I weally cannot permit you to make yourself so uncomfortable on my account, Pawson!"

"Not at all, sir. I shall be perfectly comfortable."

"Good idea!" said Blake. "And we'll jolly well camp here, too!"

"Just thinking so," said Herries; and Digby nodded.

Manners had his eyes curiously on Pawson's plump, portly face. He drew a little behind Tom Merry and Lowther, looking at Lord Eastwood's man—unobtrusively, but very intently.

Pawson coughed.

"Really, gentlemen, it is not necessary," he murmured. "Pray do not disturb yourselves! Master Arthur will be quite safe. I shall be here—"

"Necessary or not, we're keeping an eye on Gussy!" answered Blake. "I'm jolly well not trusting him out of my sight, after this, till we get home."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't you jaw, Gussy! We're sticking to you!"

"But really—" urged Pawson; and a sort of gleam came into Manners' eyes. His look at the portly face became even more intent.

"Chuck it, Pawson!" said Blake. "I know you mean well, but we're sticking to Gussy, and jolly well keeping an eye on him."

"Yes, rather!" said Herries and Dig together. That was settled by Blake and Herries and Dig fetching bundles of bedclothes from their own rooms, to camp in D'Arcy's room for the remainder of the night.

Pawson said no more; but it seemed to Manners that he caught a glint in the eyes of that perfect manservant as Pawson watched the Fourth Form fellows, and Manners of the Shell watched Pawson.

Arthur Augustus, at least, was glad of the company of his chums after what had happened. Perhaps Manners doubted whether Pawson was.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther bade them good-night, and went back to their own quarters. Manners had an extremely thoughtful expression on his face as he went. He followed Tom Merry into his room before going to his own, shutting the door after him. Tom looked at him in surprised inquiry.

"What do you think, Tom?" asked Manners, very quietly.

"Think?" repeated Tom. "I think it was jolly lucky that Pawson was up, and heard that brute in Gussy's room. What do you mean?"

"Is that all?"

"What the dickens——" Tom stared at his chum. "What have you got in your noddle, old chap?"

Manners paused a moment.

"A fellow doesn't want to be suspicious," he said slowly.

"Suspicious!" repeated Tom blankly.

"But it's jolly odd——"

"What's odd?"

"Well, look at it," said Manners, in the same quiet tone. "Pawson had that black box in his

hands the other day when Gussy left it in his inky jacket. He took no notice of it then, thinking that it was some old curio that Gussy had picked up somewhere or other. But after the jaw about it to-day——"

"Well?" said Tom, as Manners paused again. "He was very keen on minding it for Gussy," said Manners.

"Yes; very. But——"

"Jolly odd that he happened to be sleepless this special night, after being so keen to mind that box for Gussy this afternoon——"

"Manners!"

"And if he was going to walk on the balcony, that needn't have brought him anywhere near Gussy's door. And you can bet that that Apache didn't make enough noise to be heard very far."

"Manners," repeated Tom, staring, "you don't think—you can't fancy——"

"I fancy Pawson was very near that door," said Manners.

"But——" gasped Tom.

"I think that jolly old black box will be safe enough with three other fellows along with Gussy in his room. But I think that if Louis-sur-les-toits hadn't burgled, somebody might have been looking for that black box while Gussy was fast asleep," said Harry Manners deliberately.

Tom Merry gasped.

"That's all," said Manners. "Good-night, old chap!" And Manners, having relieved his mind, went to his own room, leaving Tom Merry staring.

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