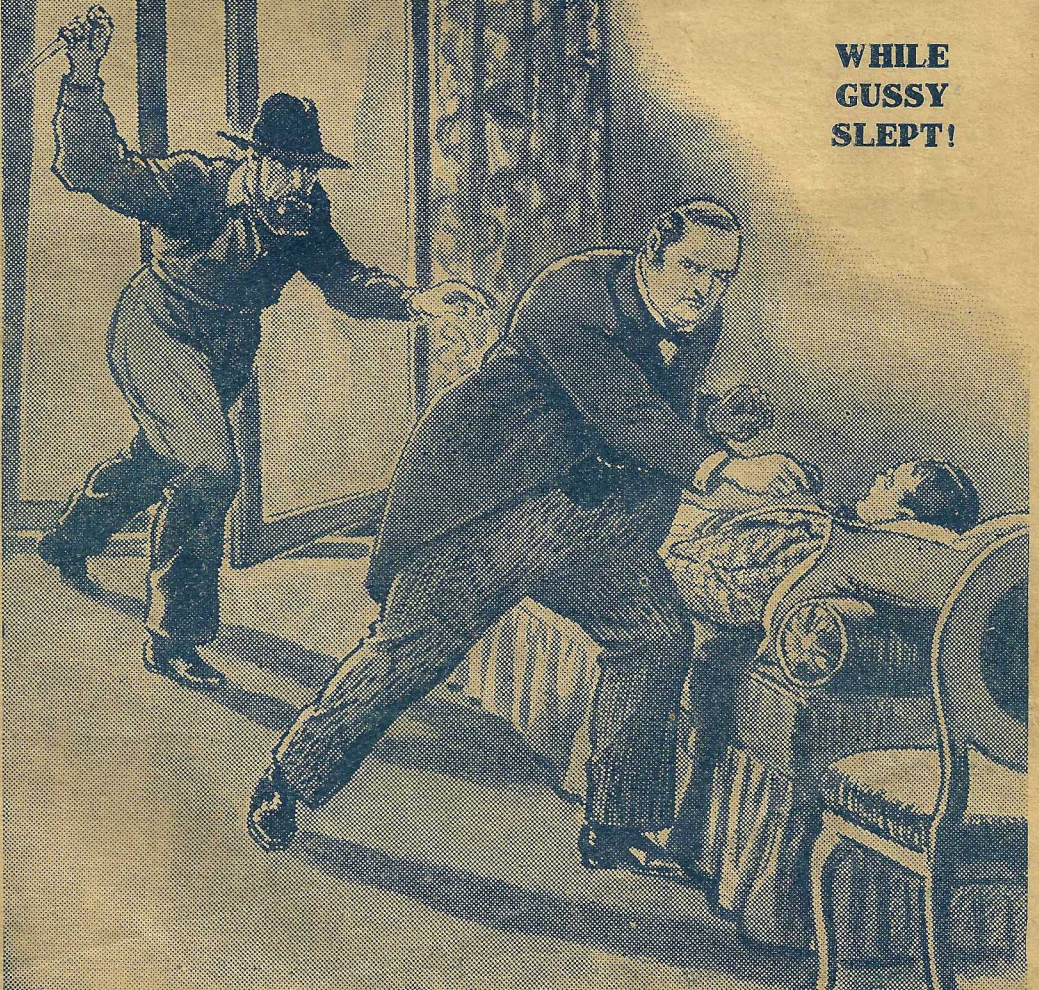


"THE SECRET OF THE BLACK BOX!"

STARRING THE FLYING SCHOOLBOYS OF ST. JIM'S.

The GEM 2^D

**WHILE
GUSSY
SLEPT!**





Blake Answers Back!

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

M. P. Banton, of King's Heath, Birmingham, writes:

I should indeed like there to be a "Tom Merry's Weekly" in the "Magnet."

Why on earth don't you reply to some of those cheeky blighters who write to you in stronger language—without swearing?

ANSWER: The "Magnet" already contains the "Greyfriars Herald."

I'm too kind-hearted, that's what it is. Why, only the other day I hadn't the nerve to say "boo" to a goose. It was in a restaurant, and they served me a very old bird. I said: "Phew!"

"A Scout of Peckham," London, S.E.15, writes:

I'd like to ask:

1. Which is the biggest school—Greyfriars or St. Jim's?

2. Who is most popular at his school—Harry Wharton or Tom Merry?

3. Have both Greyfriars and St. Jim's Scout troops? If so, what are the names of the Patrols?

I am a Scout and I think you are, yet we do not hear much about your activities as schoolboy Scouts. Are you ashamed of being members of this great movement which extends to Australia, China, America, etc.? GARN, you can't take it!

ANSWER: 1. St. Jim's is larger than Greyfriars. 2. No census of opinion available. Both rattling good fellows, anyhow. 3. Yes, both schools own proudly to belonging to the Scout movement. Naturally I know most about our own troop. Tom Merry is Patrol Leader of the Curlew Patrol, which includes our study. We also have a Kangaroo Patrol, a Lion Patrol, a Tiger Patrol, and an Otter Patrol. We never keep our Scouting adventures dark, and Mr. Clifford has written several stories about them. What have I got to take, and where? Let me know.

"A Schoolgirl Admirer," of Liverpool, writes:

The only thing wrong with the St. Jim's yarns is Cousin Ethel. I'm sure boys don't like a girl of fifteen who acts eighteen. I think she is too good to be true, and I scarcely think you want to be blessed with her good advice every time you meet her. Don't tell this to Piggins! Lastly, as none of you seem worried very much by your lessons, I am thinking of sending you my trigonometry homework to do. It beats me hollow.

ANSWER: Cousin Ethel is very popular at St. Jim's. She is one of the rather sweet, sensible THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,650.

type who think more of the welfare of others than of creating an impression among the opposite sex. I suppose it takes all sorts to make a world, and some chaps no doubt prefer very lively girls—like you, for instance! By all means send along your trig prep. It will probably beat us hollow, too, but Gussy, at any rate, will look at it for you. P.S.—I had only to tell Gussy you were a damsel in distress—but I was careful not to mention your remarks about his Cousin Ethel!

BRIEF REPLIES.

My best thanks to the following for writing. I am sure you fellows—and girls—will appreciate that only lack of space prevents my answering you in full:

"Inquisitive," Liverpool.—Wynn is fatter than Trimble. H. S. Raine, Scarborough.—St. Jim's foundation dates mixed. Reference books vary sometimes, you know. R. Potter, Forest Hill.—Birds' ears are hidden by their feathers (there is no outer trumpet) and they have acute hearing. Mean to say you didn't know that? Go before the "beak"! Eileen Thomas, Wrexham.—Manners couldn't forget the licking, even when Roynance had apologised—it rankled. Lord Conway is Gussy's elder brother, yes. Jeff and Jimmy, Hammersmith.—The GEM was published 48 weeks before the "Magnet." It was first issued March 23rd, 1907, at a ha'penny, I think. "13-Year-Old Girl Reader," Sheffield.—Sorry, no photos can be returned. Gussy does not appreciate jokes about his "r's." T. G. L., Buenos Aires.—Gussy is really a splendid chap—a "topper," in fact! Herbert Boale, Birmingham.—We'll have to settle all your fighting questions when we meet some time. "Curious," of Johannesburg, South Africa.—Tom Merry just beat Talbot's 32 average. Fatty Wynn's wickets usually cost less than 5 runs apiece. Junior XIs vary, naturally. C. Harrison, Broughton Astley.—Gussy and Wally aren't much alike. Brothers often differ, don't they? A. T. B., Manchester.—Clive has played for the Junior XI. Blake was skipper before Tom Merry. Levison's a good fellow now—let sleeping dogs lie. "Accordionist," S.E.12.—Herries has tried the piano-accordion; with one "accord" we agreed he was terrible!

THRILLS AND FUN ON THE RIVIERA WITH THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!
ANOTHER SUPER, NEW, LONG STORY OF THE "FLYING SCHOOLBOYS" SERIES.



Tom Merry & Co. gathered round in amazement and curiosity to read what was written on the card. "I demand of you one black box," ran the message. "It is to go to place this black box under a large palm-tree that shall grow by a gate, so that it is to-night to take. Not this to be done, beware of vengeance of Giuseppe Fosco."

CHAPTER 1.

Startling!

CRASH!

Tom Merry & Co. jumped.

Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy so far forgot the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere as to jump almost out of his chair.

Really, it was startling!

That sudden terrific crash of breaking glass rang through the Villa des Fleurs, at Cannes, from end to end.

It was a balmy evening in that white-walled town in the South of France. In the big hall of the one-storied villa, Tom Merry & Co. were listening-in to the radio. Long hundreds of miles from their native land, the St. Jim's juniors were getting the news from home.

Seven juniors took their ease in lounge chairs.

Pawson—the ever-useful and never-failing Pawson—stood by the radio. The big door stood wide open on the porch, letting in the balmy breeze from the Mediterranean and a scent from the flower-banked gardens.

Everybody was pleasantly tired after a day out in a boat, followed by an excellent dinner. Everybody was resting peacefully, while the announcer's voice droned from the wireless in the familiar Kensington accent. And then, all of a

sudden, shattering the peaceful silence almost like a cannon-shot, came that terrific crash!

"What the thump——" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! That sounds like a window broken!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "But how the dooce——"

"It's from one of our rooms!" said Jack Blake, as a tinkle of falling fragments of glass followed the crash and the smash.

"Come on!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

The radio droned on unheeded. Tom Merry & Co. forgot that they were tired. Seven juniors rushed across the hall into the passage on which their rooms opened in a row.

Each of those rooms had a tall french window opening on the veranda that ran along the side of the villa. At night the volets, the slatted wooden shutters, were locked over the windows. But at the present time all of them stood wide open.

"Gussy's room, I think!" said Manners.

The first room in the passage was Arthur Augustus'. Tom Merry was the first to reach it, and he threw open the door and switched on the electric light.

"Great pip!" he exclaimed.

On the floor of polished parquet lay a shower of broken glass. In the midst of it was a large, rugged stone, as large as a brick. The french window had been half-closed. One

What does the black box that Gussy is looking after contain? To the St. Jim's flyers that is a secret, But to their enemy, Giuseppe Fosco, and to the treacherous Pawson its contents mean a fortune—if either can only get his hands on the box!

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

tall pane had been completely shattered, a huge, ragged gap gaping in it.

Tom Merry ran across the room and looked out on the veranda. It was from there that the stone must have been hurled.

But there was no one to be seen in the veranda. Whoever had flung the stone had disappeared at once.

Tom turned back, startled and astonished. Six surprised faces were staring into the room. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed the wreck of his window in great amazement.

"What blithering ass can have done this?" exclaimed Tom.

"What howling idiot—" said Lowther.

"Somebody must have sneaked into the garden and chucked that stone from the veranda," said Heggies. "But who—"

"And why?" exclaimed Digby.

"Look at the stone!" said Manners of the Shell quietly.

Manners stepped to it, treading carefully among broken glass, and picked it up. And as he held it up to view the juniors saw that a square of cardboard was tied to it by a string.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Blake. "A message."

"Bai Jove! There's somethin' w'ritten on it!"

"Quite an original way of sending a message," remarked Monty Lowther. "Not done in the best circles!"

"But what—"

"Let's look!"

Tom Merry & Co. gathered round in amazement and curiosity to read what was written on the card.

Evidently, it was a message of some sort, and as it was D'Arcy's room that had been selected, no doubt it was intended for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But why anyone, unless a lunatic, should select that extraordinary method of sending in a message was a surprising mystery—till the juniors read it!

It was written in a flowing Latin hand that the juniors had never seen before. And it ran—in English—though not exactly in the English they spoke themselves:

"I demand of you one black box! It is to go to place this black box under a large palm-tree that shall grow by a gate, so that it is to-night to take. Not this to be done, beware of vengeance of GIUSEPPE FOSCO."

"The dago!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! That cheekay dago!"

"That ruffian Fosco—"

"The dear old dago at a new game!" said Monty Lowther. "Is he ass enough to think that he can frighten Gussy into handing over that jolly old black box?"

"The uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in great scorn. "I wegard him with despision—I mean contempt! Uttah contempt!"

Pawson looked in at the door, announcing his arrival with his usual deferential cough.

"Gentlemen! What—" began Lord Eastwood's man.

"The dago's latest!" said Blake.

"Wead that, Pawson!" said Arthur Augustus. "It must have been w'ritten by that wascally dago, who has been aftah me evah since that chap gave me the black box to take care of! He has had the feahful cheek to thwow this stone through my window, with this cheekay message

tied on it. Did you evah heah of such a neck, Pawson?"

The portly Pawson read the message. He stared at the broken window. Then he read the message again.

"Extraordinary, sir!" he said. "I feel sure, sir, that you will take no notice of this—you will certainly not place the black box under the palm-tree by the gate, for that rascal to take."

"Certainly not!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I twust you do not think that I could be fwightedened by a beastly dago, Pawson."

"I am sure not, sir!" said Pawson. "Perhaps, in the circumstances, I might suggest that the article should be handed over to Monsieur Boulanger, to be locked up in his safe during your stay in Cannes, sir."

"That's wathah a good ideah, Pawson—"

"Here comes Monsieur Boulanger, sir!" said Pawson, as the fat major-domo of the Villa des Fleurs came rolling to the spot. "If you will tell him—"

"It is quite a good suggestion, Pawson—"

"Thank you, sir!"

"In fact, quite a bwight ideah of yours—"

"Very good, sir!"

"Only, I cannot act on the suggestion—"

"Eh?"

"As I have pwomised to keep the black box undah my personal care! Thank you, all the same, Pawson!" added Arthur Augustus graciously.

Manners winked at Tom Merry, who smiled. Pawson, for a second, set his plump lips. Monsieur Boulanger rolled into the room, gazing with distended eyes at the broken window.

"Mon Dieu! What goes to come?" he ejaculated, gesticulating with both arms, and almost with his legs, in his astonishment. "La fenetre cassee—a window is to break! Mais allons donc! One breaks a window. I ask myself why does one break a window? Mon Dieu!"

Leaving the major-domo gesticulating and Pawson surveying the broken window, the juniors returned to the hall, Arthur Augustus taking the note from Giuseppe Fosco in his hand, a frown wrinkling his noble brow.

The bare idea of that rascally dago fancying that he could frighten him into handing over the mysterious black box roused Gussy's deepest ire.

But the radio was still running on, and Tom Merry & Co. settled down again to listen to the news from home, while Monsieur Boulanger called some of his staff to sweep up the broken glass, and telephoned to Cannes for a man to come on the morrow and repair the broken window.

CHAPTER 2.

A Trap for the Dago!

"H A, ha, ha!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy burst into a sudden laugh.

Six fellows looked round at him in surprise. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, Blake, Heggies, and Digby of the Fourth, all stared at the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus' aristocratic face beamed with merriment. Why, three Shell fellows and three Fourth Formers had not the faintest idea.

The announcer on the radio was telling the world that the honourable member for Muggleton had put a question in the House to the Under-Secretary for the Red Tape and Sealing-Wax

Department. That was not the sort of news that added to the gaiety of Tom Merry & Co. They were yawning fearfully.

The honourable member for Muggleton desired to be told, and desired that House to be told, whether the whole supply of sealing-wax was to be mobilised for National Service, or whether the whole supply of sealing-wax was not to be mobilised for National Service!

He desired a plain answer to relieve the anxiety of that House, and of the public. He desired to point out that, if war actually came, it might be too late then to mobilise the essential supply of sealing-wax. In these troubled times, "Be Prepared" should be the motto of the Government; and of sealing-wax, at least, there need be no shortage if only the matter was taken in hand in time. The Dictators took such matters in time. Could not the Democracies?

Some of the juniors, lulled by the eloquence of the honourable member for Muggleton, were nodding in their chairs. But they all sat up and took notice when Arthur Augustus gave that trill of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus chortled gleefully.

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha! What a wippin' ideah!"

"Spill it, old bean!" said Blake "What's the jolly old joke?"

"It's fwightfully funnay, old scout!" said Arthur Augustus. "Look here, that wascally dago vevy likely thinks that I shall be fwightened by his cheekay lettah into stickin' that black box under the palm-twee by the gate, for him to snaffle."

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed Tom Merry. "What about it?"

"Pwobably he will be watchin' fwom a safe distance to see whethah I put it there, deah boy."

"Perhaps! What about that?"

"Suppose I put somethin' there—not the black box, of course, but somethin' else w'apped up in papah—an owange would do—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And then," said Arthur Augustus, grinning, "we hide and keep watch—and collah him if he comes for it!" The swell of St. Jim's chuckled. "You see, if he comes for it, and we snaffle him, we get that beastly dago safe in choky; and if he gets away with it, he will find nothin' but an owange in it, and fancy his face!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Good egg!" he agreed. "Let's!"

"By gum, that's a jolly good idea!" exclaimed Blake. "We can take a stick each, in case he handles his knife."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's!" agreed Lowther.

Arthur Augustus rose from his chair. He selected a tangerine orange from a dish of fruit, and wrapped it in a page torn from the "Nice Gazette." He grinned cheerfully as he made those preparations.

"Now, if you fellows have heard enough of that wubbish on the wadio—" he said.

"More than enough!" yawned Blake. "Let's get going."

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here's some real news at last. Listen-in!"

The announcer was done at last with the honourable member for Muggleton, though the juniors, not having given much attention, were left in ignorance as to whether that honourable

member's mind had been relieved on the subject of sealing-wax.

The name of Lord Eastwood came through, and that being the name of Gussy's noble pater, Tom Merry & Co. were all attention.

"Investigations by Inspector Hopkins of Scotland Yard leave little doubt that the Nizam's Diamond, the immensely valuable stone purloined from Lord Eastwood's residence shortly before Easter, was purloined by the well-known Transatlantic crook known by the name of Chicago Hank. It is fairly certain that this man has not succeeded in leaving the country, though his present hiding-place has not yet been discovered. But there is reliable information that he was seen riding a motor-cycle in Sussex on the day after the robbery at Eastwood House, and investigation is now taking that direction."

"That's the lot!" said Tom Merry, shutting off as the announcer ran on with I.R.A. bombing exploits. "They haven't got your pater's diamond back yet, Gussy!"

"I twust that they will twack down that wottah," said Arthur Augustus. "The patah is feahfully upset at losin the Nizam's Diamond. But they are feahfully clevah at Scotland Yard, you know; they'll get him all wight."

"All white?" asked Monty Lowther. "I should think he would look black, if they got him."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Come on!" said Blake. "I'm getting sleepy."

Tom Merry & Co. walked out into the starlit gardens of the Villa des Fleurs.

They were careful to take a stout stick apiece. Whether the cunning dago would turn up while they were on the watch was more than doubtful, but there was no doubt that, if he did, they would need something more than bare fists to tackle him. Giuseppe was very prompt at handling that favourite weapon of the dago—the knife!

The front gate of the Villa des Fleurs looked on the Boulevard du Midi, the white road that ran by the sea. Just within the gate was a tall palm that nodded gracefully against the blue, starlit sky.

Whether the dago was on the watch to see whether his demand was complied with, it was impossible to say.

He might have been peering through the masses of wistaria that covered the wall on the road. He might have been in the garden itself, skulking out of sight among the palms, or the banks of mimosa, in the dusky shadows. The juniors were on the alert with watchful eyes, but if the Italian was at hand, they saw and heard nothing of him.

"Here we are!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully, as they arrived at the big palm near the gate.

He stooped and placed the wrapped orange on the earth, taking care to place it out of the shadow of the palm so that it could be seen from a distance. He chuckled as he laid it down.

"Wathah a surpwise for the wottah if he gets it, what?" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Fancy his openin' it and findin' an owange inside—"

"Fancy!" agreed Blake, "and fancy his doing it, if he's listening to you at the present moment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!" Arthur Augustus gave a quick glance round. "Of course, the wottah might be hidin' somewah neah enough to heah us! Mind what you say, deah

CHAPTER 3.

Got Him!

boys, in case that beastly dago is listenin'. For goodness' sake don't mention that it is only an owange in that packet."

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

"Weally, you fellows, I see nothin' to cackle at in my warmin' you to take care!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "It's pwetty certain that Fosco would not come aftah that packet if he heard one of you thoughtless chaps mentionin' that there was only an owange inside."

"Let's hope he's not near enough to hear us!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! But be careful all the same!" admonished Arthur Augustus. "You weally cannot be too careful in dealin' with a foxy wascal like Fosco. I should be vewy glad to leave him in choky when we go on to Italy in the Silvah Swallow. Now where are we goin' to hide and watch for him?"

There was plenty of cover in the gardens of the Villa des Fleurs. The juniors separated to hunt cover—out of sight, but within view of the little packet lying under the palm.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther found a seat hidden under the clustering wistaria on the wall, and parked themselves thereon. Blake and Herries backed into the shelter of a clump of palms. Digby ducked into a mass of mimosa. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wrapped his coat carefully round him and laid down at full length on soft grass, screened by a bank of tall, nodding geraniums.

All the St. Jim's juniors were safely out of sight, but able to watch the packet from their cover. It was arranged that none was to emerge, unless—and until—the dago came, for if he spotted anyone about, it was certain that Giuseppe would leave his call till later. And all the party hoped that he would not leave it too late—for they were all getting fearfully sleepy.

Still, it was reasonable to suppose that the dago, if he came, would come early, for if the black box was placed there at all, it would be placed before the schoolboys went to bed. And the dago was not likely to leave it lying there longer than he could help. They hoped for the best—for there was no doubt that they all wanted to go to bed!

A quarter of an hour passed in silence. Then a voice was heard from the geraniums.

"You fellows see anythin'?"

"Shut up, ass!" came a hiss from the clump of palms.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Pack it, you chump!"

"Weally, Hewvies—"

"Are you going to keep quiet?"

"Weally, Dig—"

"This will entertain our swarthy friend if he happens to come along!" came a remark from under the wistaria on the wall. "Go it, Gussy! What about doing a song and dance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway be quiet, you fellows! You will put that beastly dago on his guard if he is anyhow about! Pway have a little sense, you know! Not a word!"

The watchers settled down in silence again. Every minute, Tom Merry & Co. expected to hear from Arthur Augustus, who had his own inimitable way of being fearfully cautious. But there came no further sound from the swell of St. Jim's. The explanation was simple. Arthur Augustus had fallen asleep.

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"OOOH!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

He awoke.

He sat up and rubbed his sleepy eyes. For a moment or two he did not quite remember where he was.

Then, as he remembered, he jammed his eye-glass into his eye and took a cautious squint through the geraniums.

All was still and silent. Arthur Augustus realised that he had nodded off. He had done so quite unintentionally. But he had done it—and the disturbing thought was in his noble mind that the dago might have come and gone while his eyes were closed in inadvertent slumber. He peered anxiously in the direction of the tall palm by the gate.

The moon had come up over the Maritime Alps, a silver crescent, gleaming. The tall palm cast a black shadow. The garden was deeply dusky in the shadow of the trees and the high wall. But that black bar of shadow from the high palm lay distinct.

Arthur Augustus failed to spot the packet he had left under the palm. It was gone from his view.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

It looked as if the dago must have come and gone. On the other hand, the shadow of the palm might have shifted since the moon had come up, and that shadow might be hiding the packet from view.

If Giuseppe Fosco had snaffled a wrapped-up tangerine orange, he was welcome to it, as far as that went. But if he had come and gone, there was no use in keeping up that vigil any longer; and at that late hour Gussy would have been very glad to go to bed. He had to know how matters stood.

It was easy enough.

To cut across to the palm and ascertain whether the packet was still there or not would be the work of only a moment or two. In another moment or two he could be back in cover.

Arthur Augustus rose quickly to his feet and cut across to the palm. He stooped and groped in the shadow.

There was the packet. The dago had not come; the wrapped-up tangerine was still there. Arthur Augustus was satisfied on that point.

He was not so satisfied at what happened next.

There was a sudden rush of footsteps and Arthur Augustus was suddenly grasped and squashed face down on the earth.

A knee was planted in the small of his back, pinning him down.

"Got him!" roared Herries.

"Good man!"

"Back up, you fellows!" shouted Tom Merry. There was a rush from many quarters. From Arthur Augustus, wriggling breathlessly under Herries' sinewy knee, came a gurgling gasp.

"Oooooooooogh!"

"Come on!" shouted George Herries. "I've got him! Collar him before he can get at his knife!"

"Here we are!"

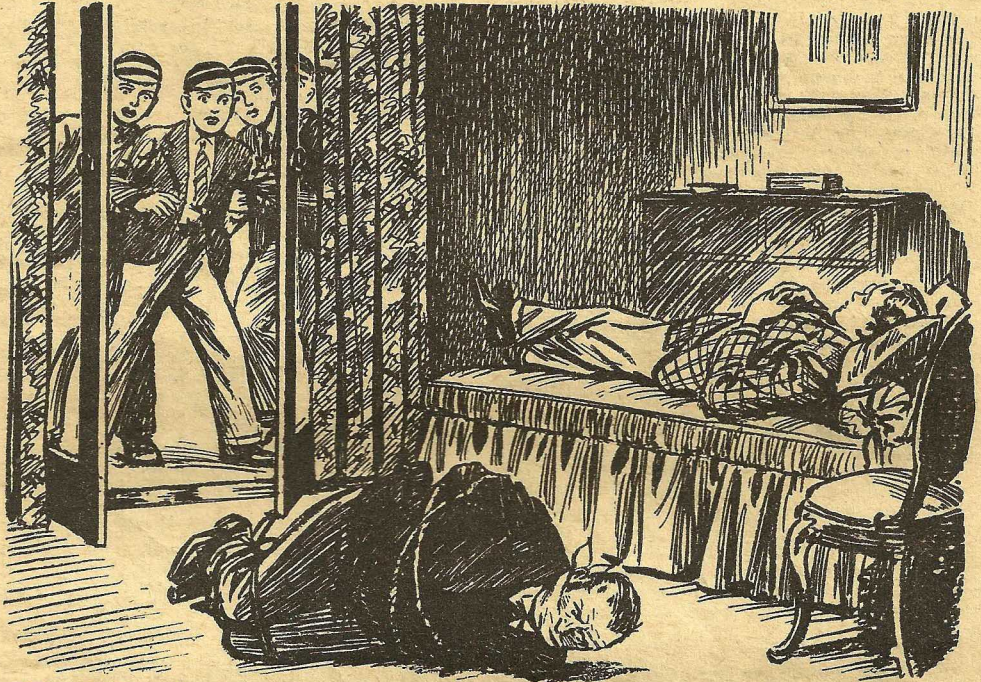
"Bag him!"

"Jump on him!"

"Give him a cosh if he lifts a finger!"

"Look out for his knife!"

"Grip the brute!"



"There's Gussy, fast asleep," said Tom Merry. "And—why—what—who—Pawson!" He stutted with amazement. Arthur Augustus was still stretched on the ottoman, sleeping peacefully. On the floor lay a portly man bound hand and foot and gagged. "Pawson!" yelled Blake.

"Ooooooogh!" gurgled Arthur Augustus, hardly aware of what was happening.

Tom Merry had an arm—Manners had another arm. Blake and Dig had a leg each. Lowther gripped the back of his neck. Herries' hefty knee was grinding into a back. They had him all right—there was no doubt about that. Had that shadowy figure under the palm been the dago's, the dago's number would have been up. And, so far, Tom Merry & Co. had no idea that it was not the dago's.

"Keep hold of his wrists!" panted Blake. "Mind he doesn't get at that sticker of his!"

"We've got his wrists!"

"Crack his head if he struggles!" panted Digby.

"What-ho!"

"We've got him!"

"Where's Gussy? Gussy gone to sleep? Gussy!" roared Blake. "Why don't you come and lend a hand, you fathead? Gussy!"

"Fast asleep, you bet!" chuckled Lowther. "Never mind—we've got the brute! By gum, this is luck! Topping idea of Gussy's to trap him like this!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oooooooghooooo!" came from the wriggling figure in the coat under the mob of juniors. "Wooooogh! Gwoooooogh!"

Arthur Augustus' aristocratic features were grinding into the earth. His mouth was full of grass. He gasped and gurgled and wriggled.

It was like a fearful nightmare to the swell of St. Jim's. His first impression had been that the dago had arrived and seized him. But he

realized that it was not the dago. He tried to speak. But he could only gurgle.

"Gooogh! Gwoogh! Oooogh!"

"Better tie him up with something," said Tom Merry. "Tie his wrists before we walk him off to the house. Anybody got anything?"

"I've got a cord," said Manners. "Yank his paws together behind him!"

"Go it!"

"Wooooooghooooogh!" came a suffocated gurgle.

Wrists were dragged together and tied with the cord, provided by the thoughtful Manners. The prisoner wriggled spasmodically and gurgled horribly.

"Now he can get up!" said Blake. "We've got the beauty! Fancy that fathead Gussy sleeping through all this! Pick that villain up!"

Half a dozen pairs of hands picked the villain up and set him on his feet. So far, the juniors had seen nothing of him but the back of an overcoat, and the back of a head, and wriggling arms and legs.

Now, as he was heaved up, and the moon glimmered on his face, they saw more. Then there was a howl of stupefied amazement.

"Gussy!"

"It isn't the dago——"

"That ass Gussy——"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Gussy, you mad ass——"

"Oh crikey!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at their prisoner like fellows in a dream.

Not for a moment had they doubted that it

was the dago. Herries had been the first to spot a dark figure in the shadows and swoop on it. The other fellows had backed up Herries as one man. Action had been prompt. That one of the watchers had emerged from cover and gone to the spot where the dago was expected to appear had naturally occurred to nobody. But they knew now why Arthur Augustus had not joined in the collaring of that dark figure. That dark figure was Arthur Augustus.

"Oooogh!" gurgled Arthur Augustus. "Gwoogh!"

"Gussy!" said Blake dazedly. "It isn't the dago—it's Gussy! It's that blithering owl Gussy!"

"That burbling bandersnatch Gussy!" gasped Dig.

"Gwoogh! You uttah asses—oogh! I am vewy neahly—gwoogh!—suffocated! Ooogh! My mouth is full of earth! Oogh! You frightful duffahs, what did you wush me down like that for?"

"You howling ass!" roared Tom Merry. "What were you doing here? Why didn't you stick in cover as we arranged?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Gussy all over!" grinned Lowther. "Always the wrong man on the wrong spot at the wrong time!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It—it—it's Gussy!" gasped Herries. "Of course, I thought it was the dago when I saw him stooping under the palm to pick up that packet!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"What did you do it for?" shrieked Blake.

"You uttah ass, I was only comin' heah to see whethah the dago had taken the packet or not!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You fathead!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

"You burbling, frumptious fathead!"

"I wegard you as a set of uttah asses!" roared Arthur Augustus. "How could you possibly think it was the dago, when it was I?"

"Do you think a fellow can see one goat from another in the dark?" roared Herries. "Of course we thought it was the dago! Weren't we all watching for the dago, you howling dundehead?"

"Welease my hands, you fatheads! What have you tied my wists together for? I have a pain in my back where that silly chump was gwindin' his knee into me. I am feahfully dustay and cwumpled all ovah! Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus was released from the cord. He gasped and spluttered for breath.

"Now boot him back to the villa," said Blake.

"Don't be an ass, Blake! It is vewy likely that the dago, if he were awound, has taken the alarm fwom you fellows kickin' up this sillay wov!"

"Very likely, I think!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"But we had bettah keep on the watch. You fellows go into covah again, and don't stir unless I call you! Mind that! I cannot twust to your judgment; you must act entiahly on my instructions atfah this."

"I can see us doing it!" hissed Blake. "We'll give you three yards start, Gussy. Then we're going to boot you all the way back to the house."

"Weally, Blake—"

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"Start!" hooted Blake.

"I wefuse to start!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am goin' to keep on the watch, and if you fellows are vewy careful to act on my instnuctions it will be all wight, and— Yawwooooooh!"

"All together!" said Blake.

"Yawwooh! You wuffians—"

"Go it!"

"Oh cwikey! I wefuse— Yawwooh! Oh, bai Jove! Ow!"

Arthur Augustus flew up the path towards the Villa des Fleurs. After him rushed his friends, dribbling him back to the villa. Arthur Augustus put on speed. So did Tom Merry & Co.

It was a wild race up the path. Arthur Augustus won it by a short neck.

CHAPTER 4.

Dignity!

PAWSON smiled faintly.

It was bright morning at the Villa des Fleurs, at Cannes.

Seven St. Jim's juniors were in the sunny flower-scented garden in front of the villa. Six faces were bright and cheery as the May morning. One was extremely severe in its expression.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in a very reserved mood that morning! His friends beamed on him without succeeding in melting the severity of his aristocratic countenance.

"Look at the sea," said Tom Merry. "Come out in the boat, Gussy."

"I do not care to come out in the boat, Tom Mewwy, thank you," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"I'll let you take some snaps with my camera," said Manners temptingly. "Some lively views up on the hill."

"I do not care for photogwaphy, thank you, Mannahs!"

"I'll tell you some of my latest wheezes that I've been making up for the 'St. Jim's Weekly' next term," said Monty Lowther.

"I feah that I should not be intewested, Lowthah!"

"What about tennis, old chap?" asked Blake.

"I do not care for tennis this mornin', Blake."

"Look here, Gussy, you ass—" said Digby.

"Wats!"

"Fathead!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus disdainful to reply to that.

"Pawson!" he called.

"Sir!"

"Pway bwing me a newspapah!"

"Immediately, sir." Pawson faded into the villa.

Arthur Augustus sat down in a chair under a shady tree. His noble countenance remained inflexible.

"What about bumping him?" suggested Lowther.

"You can't bump sense into a born idiot," pointed out Blake.

Pawson came out with the "Petit Journal." Arthur Augustus opened it to read the news. How much news he extracted from a French newspaper was perhaps doubtful. But he gazed at it sedulously and seemed unaware of the existence of his loyal chums.

Tom Merry & Co. glanced at one another and smiled. Gussy, it seemed, was still in an indignant state over the happenings of the evening before. He was now in a state of extreme

dignity, or on the high horse, as Blake described it. Having mounted that quadruped, Arthur Augustus appeared disinclined to dismount.

Blake, Herries, and Digby wandered away to the tennis courts. Arthur Augustus, deep in the "Petit Journal," did not seem to see them go.

The Shell fellows lingered a few minutes, then Manners, who was keen to get going with his camera, started down the path. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther followed. Arthur Augustus remained in lofty ignorance of their departure.

When they were all gone, however, the swell of St. Jim's laid down the "Petit Journal," which probably did not interest him very much, and sat with a meditative expression on his noble brow. He glanced at Pawson, who was hovering at hand, and who promptly concealed his smile as Arthur Augustus' eyes turned on him.

"I trust, sir," said Lord Eastwood's man, with his deferential cough, "that there is no disagreement between you and your friends, sir."

"The fact is, Pawson, that it is wathah an awkward posish," said Arthur Augustus slowly. "I cannot treat those fellows as they weally deserve when they are my guests. On the othah hand, a fellow has to considah his dig."

"Very awkward indeed, sir," murmured Pawson.

"Of course, they don't mean any weal harm—they are only thoughtless youngstahs, Pawson," said Arthur Augustus in his most fatherly manner. "But weally, it is feahfully exaspewatin'. We might have collahed that wascally dago last night but for their wecklessness."

"Indeed, sir."

"He might have walked wight into the twap, you know. That packet was gone this mornin', Pawson, so it is cleah that the dago came aftah it last night."

"Apparently, sir," murmured Pawson. "Unless, sir, one of the gardeners may have swept it up."

"Yaas, pewwaps that is possible," assented Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, we might have collahed that wascally dago, and now he will still be aftah me for that beastly black box. It is gettin' wathah a wowwy, Pawson, havin' that dago on my twack in this mannah."

"He will be left behind, sir, when we take the plane for Italy."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I feah not, Pawson. That wascal keeps on our twack! He is aftah that black box like a dog aftah a bone. I weally wondah what that beastly box can have inside it to make that wascal so keen on gettin' hold of it."

"Probably something very valuable, sir."

"Yaas, I don't think there can be any doubt about that. Of course, I cannot open it, as it was entrusted to my keepin', but I am weally vewy cwious about it."

"It is very singular, sir, that the box should have come into your hands at all," murmured Pawson.

"Yaas, wathah," assented Arthur Augustus. "Vewy singlar indeed! If I had not taken that walk to Wayland a few days before the hols, Pawson, I should nevah have heard of it."

"It was entrusted to you by some American, I think I have heard your friends say," murmured Pawson.

It did not occur to Arthur Augustus for a moment that Pawson was pumping him. He was quite unaware of Pawson's interest in the black box. To Arthur Augustus, Lord Eastwood's valet was a remarkably efficient and extremely

deferential manservant, and he never dreamed for a moment that there was anything else behind the bland urbanity of the portly Pawson.

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "They appeah to have picked that up fwom some-thin' I said; but, of course, I was not goin' to say anythin' about it as it is a dead secwet. You see, I pwomised that Amewican chap in Wayland Wood to keep it quite dark, Pawson, and a fellow is bound to wespect his word."

"Very right and proper, sir," said Pawson. "You had not, I gather, ever seen the man before, sir."

"Nevah! He was quite a stwanganh to me. But, of course, a fellow was bound to do anythin' he could when a man came a feahful cwoppah on a motah-bike."

"On a motor-bike, sir?" repeated Pawson, with a strange gleam in his eyes.

"Yaas; he came a feahful cwash and injured himself in a tewwible manner. He seems to have been wunnin' away fwom that dago, who was aftah him for that black box. So what could I do, Pawson, but take charge of the black box when he was knocked out, and no help neah and that wotten dago wootin' aftah him?"

"You really had no choice in the matter, sir."

"I have often wondahed what became of him aftahwards, as he was gone when the police got there, motah-bike and all," said Arthur Augustus. "If that wotten dago got him he nevah got the black box, at all events. I weally don't know how the dago found out that I had it, unless he got hold of that Amewican chap and made him tell him where it was."

"That is possible, sir," said Pawson, with a faint smile.

"Anyhow, I'm goin' to take jollay good care

COMBAT IN THE AIR!

The observer of the two-seater disappeared for a moment into his cockpit. When next seen he was crouching with his hands behind his neck as though he was fixing a back stud. Suddenly he appeared to be fixing a back stud at his own tail-plane. His arms swept bodily ward, and two heavy ammunition drums went hurtling over the tail.

The first of the attacking Germans saw his wing-tip threatened by a new and unpleasant-looking type of bomb, and banked inward. His companion, actually damaged by the other missile, also banked inward.

The two Pfalz scouts collided with a crash. Flames shot up from a shattered petrol tank, and at once the locked machines were a furnace—a furnace that dropped like a plummet through two long miles of screaming void.

That's an extract from the great complete war flying story, "The Monkey-Faced Brothers," in this week's issue of

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of his pwpapthy until he turns up to ask for it back again!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I presume that it is safe at the present moment, sir," murmured Pawson.

"Yaas, wathah! Safe in my pocket, Pawson," said Arthur Augustus, tapping his jacket.

Pawson's eyes fixed for a moment on the spot tapped by Arthur Augustus. For that moment his eyes seemed glued. He glanced round as Monsieur Boulanger came round the villa, followed by a bearded man in overalls, with a case under one arm and a bag of tools in the other hand.

"Bai Jove! Who is that, Pawson?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"The glazier, sir, to mend the broken window in your room!" answered Pawson. "Perhaps, sir, you would care for a cup of coffee while you read your paper."

"You are vevy good, Pawson."

"I will bring it immediately, sir!"

Pawson vanished into the villa, and reappeared with coffee on a tray, which he set on a little table at Arthur Augustus' elbow. Then he disappeared into the villa again.

Arthur Augustus drank his coffee and resumed perusal of the "Petit Journal." He was feeling rather bored.

It occurred to him that he had, perhaps, been rather hard on Tom Merry & Co., who, after all, had only acted like the thoughtless youngsters they were! Gussy was a gregarious fellow, and a kind-hearted fellow, and for both these reasons he rather wished that he hadn't shooed off his friends like a lot of chickens that morning. Dignity was dignity, but it was an uninteresting companion.

He nodded over the "Petit Journal."

He nodded and nodded.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I'm gettin' drowsy! We went to bed feahfully late last night—and all for nothin', too, owin' to those sillay asses! I believe I'm noddin' off! It is weally vevy peculiah, as coffee genevally keeps a fellow awake—that coffee seems to be sendin' me to sleep! Vevy peculiah indeed!"

He nodded again.

The "Petit Journal" dropped into the grass. An eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord. Arthur Augustus leaned back in the garden-chair and his eyes closed.

A minute more and he was fast asleep. From the villa came Pawson with his quiet step, approaching the sleeping swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

The Man to Mend the Window!

PIERRE JOSEPH DUPONT had the surprise of his life that morning.

Pierre Joseph was a glazier.

He was employed by the firm of Pollier et Cie, in Cannes. Pollier & Co. had an order to fulfil that morning; a broken window at a villa on the Boulevard du Midi to be repaired. Pierre Joseph was the man to whom the task was assigned.

Bright and early in the morning, Pierre Joseph walked out of Cannes with his case of glass and his bag of tools.

It was an everyday business to Pierre Joseph, one of the ordinary jobs that he had to do, and never for a moment did it occur to Pierre Joseph that anything unusual was going to happen that May morning.

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But something unusual did.

It was an amazing happening to Pierre Joseph Dupont.

Cheerfully he walked out of the town and entered upon the boulevard by the sea, heading for the Villa des Fleurs, where the repair had to be executed.

Naturally Pierre Joseph never noticed that two swarthy Italians, who had been hanging about the boulevard, walked in his footsteps.

Had he observed them, he would have taken no heed of them. There were plenty of Italians in Cannes, and the other Riviera towns—more Italians than French in some of them. Plenty of people were walking along the boulevard here and there. Pierre Joseph never noticed those two Italians, and had he noticed them, not for a moment would it have occurred to him that they had any designs on him.

Pierre Joseph had no more than six sous in his pockets—hardly enough to tempt a bandit! As for anyone having designs on his glass and his bag of tools, no glazier could have suspected such a thing. Still less could he have suspected them of designs on his dingy overalls or his job!

So Pierre Joseph was taken utterly by surprise when it happened!

At one point, between the garden walls of two villas, there ran a narrow alley, leading from the boulevard to a hall-path behind the buildings. That alley was not more than five feet wide between high walls topped with thick creepers. Pierre Joseph had to pass it on his way.

He had just reached that point when one of the Italians overtook him and asked him for a light for his cigarette.

Pierre Joseph stopped to oblige.

Naturally it never occurred to him that the other Italian, coming up behind him, would suddenly barge him into the alley between the high walls.

He was quite surprised when the Italian did it!

Pierre Joseph's brain was quite in a whirl. Before he knew what was happening he was in the alley, barged into the creepers that hung over one wall, his case of glass snatched away, and his bag of tools on the ground.

But Pierre Joseph, astounded as he was at that sudden and utterly unexpected attack, rallied. The Italians were two to one, but no Frenchman would ever have admitted that he was not a match for two Italians. Pierre Joseph, in another moment, would have been strewing those two Italians over the Boulevard du Midi.

But the point of a knife pressed to his neck changed his intentions.

Black beady eyes glared at him over the knife. One lunge from the swarthy hand gripping the weapon would have ended all things for Pierre Joseph. He decided on the spot not to strew those Italians all over the Boulevard du Midi.

"Silenzio!" breathed Giuseppe Fosco.

And Pierre was silent.

Leaving the case of glass and the bag of tools, they hurried him farther into the alley, gripping either arm of the astounded vitrier.

At a little distance they stopped.

Not a word was spoken again; but the gleaming, black eyes and the drawn knife enforced silence and submission.

Giuseppe Fosco gripped the amazed glazier, with the knife at his neck, while the other rascal produced a cord and bound his legs together, and then his arms behind his back, having first jerked off his overalls.

Then a gag was fastened in his mouth, and it

was no longer possible for Pierre Joseph to utter a cry, even had he desired to do so.

Evidently the Italians knew their ground. No doubt they had explored the spot in readiness. They pushed Pierre Joseph into a space between two buttresses of the wall, where descending creepers made a complete screen over him. Bound hand and foot and gagged, Pierre Joseph was now out of sight as well—and the most astonished glazier in the South of France.

"Ecco!" muttered Giuseppe Fosco. "Va bene—va bene, Luigi."

"Benissimo!" grinned Luigi.

Pierre Joseph, parked behind the masses of creepers, could no longer see them. Had he been able to do so, his astonishment would probably have been intensified.

Giuseppe Fosco proceeded to put on the dingy overalls taken from the glazier, and place the glazier's dingy hat on his head. Then from a pocket he produced a large beard and a pair of false eyebrows, which he adjusted on his swarthy face, his companion holding up a pocket mirror to assist him.

Thus disguised, Giuseppe would not have been recognised by his nearest and dearest relative.

He walked down the alley. Luigi remained leaning on one of the buttresses, smoking a cigarette. Pierre Joseph Dupont remained where he was parked, in a dazed and dizzy state of mind.

Giuseppe picked up the bag of tools and the case of glass, and went on the way that Pierre Joseph had been following before the surprising happening.

Anyone who had glanced at him would certainly have taken him for a glazier going to a job.

He arrived at the Villa des Fleurs and went down the path to the back gate. A back door was opened to him by a servant, who gave him only a careless glance.

A glazier was expected at the Villa des Fleurs that morning to repair the broken window in D'Arcy's room. A glazier had arrived. There was nothing whatever to excite doubt or suspicion with Pierre Joseph's order paper from Pollier et Cie in Giuseppe's hand.

Monsieur Boulanger was called. The fat major-domo glanced carelessly at the glazier, who touched his hat.

"Alors, le vitrier!" said Monsieur Boulanger. "Suivez-moi!"

"Oui, m'sieur."

The glazier followed Monsieur Boulanger round the villa. From under the shabby rim of Pierre Joseph Dupont's hat, his black eyes shot at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, seated under the shady tree on the lawn. He followed the fat major-domo into the veranda.

"Voilà la fenetre!" said Monsieur Boulanger, indicating the shattered window with a plump forefinger.

"Oui, m'sieur."

Monsieur Boulanger rolled away, leaving the glazier to his task.

The "vitrier" industriously unpacked glass and tools. There was an industrious tap-tap as he cleared broken fragments from the window-frame.

He stepped within the room. No one was in sight except the schoolboy on the lawn under the shady tree, who seemed to be nodding off to sleep—and three figures on the distant tennis court—and at a farther distance, a man moving

by the aeroplane resting in a field behind the villa.

Giuseppe grinned through his false beard.

If the black box was in the room with the broken window, as very probably it was, Giuseppe had reached his goal at last. Softly, stealthily, the dago proceeded to search Arthur Augustus' room for the black box.

CHAPTER 6.

Caught Napping!

"MASTER Arthur?"

No reply.

"Are you asleep, sir?" asked Pawson in a quiet manner.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was fast asleep. Laying back in the garden-chair, his eyes closed, Arthur Augustus breathed regularly, deep in slumber.

Pawson smiled—a catlike smile. He glanced round him as he stood by D'Arcy's chair under the tree. No one was to be seen at the front of the villa, and the man who was mending the window was just round the corner of the building, that veranda being at the side. Pawson breathed quickly, but just as he was about to hover closer to the slumbering schoolboy he started and stopped, a blaze coming into his eyes at the sight of a figure approaching from the tennis court.

It was Jack Blake.

He was still at a distance, but his eyes were directed towards the spot where Arthur Augustus sat. Pawson paused, breathing hard.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were gone out. Blake and Herries and Digby had been playing tennis. And Arthur Augustus, with the black box in his pocket, had gone to sleep!

If Pawson—as Manners believed—had designs on the black box, he could not have wanted a better opportunity—or so it had seemed! But there is always a slip 'twixt cup and lip!

Blake was coming at a trot. He had played a single-handed set against Herries and Dig. Now he was coming to make one more effort to persuade Arthur Augustus to dismount from his dignity, and come and play a doubles.

From a distance he could see that Gussy had fallen asleep, and that Pawson was hovering over him. Pawson looked at him as he came up, without any sign in his fruity face that Blake's arrival was unwelcome to him.

"Gone to sleep!" exclaimed Blake.

"Master Arthur appears to be taking a little nap, sir!" murmured Pawson. "It was very late hours last night, sir. Perhaps it would be better not to disturb him."

"I was up as late as Gussy, and I'm not napping at eleven in the morning," answered Blake. "Gussy's coming to play tennis! Here, Gussy, old man, come out of it! Think you're in the dormitory at St. Jim's!"

"Master Arthur seems very sleepy, sir——"

"I'll give him something to cure all that!" said Blake cheerfully.

And he grabbed Arthur Augustus by the shoulder and shook him vigorously.

"Mooooooh!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Wake up, lazybones!" hooted Blake.

"Urrr!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"My dear sir, perhaps it would be wiser to leave Master Arthur to repose——"

"Pawson, old bean, we don't slack in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's!" answered Blake. "Gussy isn't going to begin napping in the morning! What the dickens is the matter with him that he doesn't wake up?"

Shake, shake, shake!

Pawson's plump lips compressed hard.

Still Arthur Augustus did not wake! Blake, puzzled and exasperated, bent and bawled in his ear.

"Gussy! Fathead! Wake up! Fathead! Ass! Come out of it! By gum, suppose somebody came after that jolly old black box while you're snoozing out of doors like this! Wake up, you ass!"

A thick, bearded face, under an old hat, glanced round the corner of the building for a moment. Blake's roar had reached the ears of the man who was mending the window.

The face disappeared again.

Neither Pawson nor Blake had noticed it. Blake was looking at D'Arcy and Pawson was looking at Blake.

Shake, shake!

"Gussy!" roared Blake. "Wake up, you slacker! I'll jolly well pinch that black box if you don't wake up, fathead!"

Shake!

Arthur Augustus' eyes opened at last. Generally, Gussy was easy to wake. But this time he had been sleeping as if he had taken a sleeping-draught. However, his eyes opened drowsily. Blake had succeeded in waking him.

"Bai Jove!" he mumbled. "Is that you, Blake?"

"Yes, fathead! Come and play tennis."

"If you would prefer to rest, Master Arthur, I will assist you indoors," said Pawson.

"Rot!" hooted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, I have nevah felt so sleepay!" D'Arcy's eyelids were drooping again already. "I am feahfully sleepay, Blake! I will play tennis aftah lunch. I would weally wathah west now."

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Blake. "Nobody else is sleepay."

"Yaw-aw-aw!" yawned Arthur Augustus.

He nodded off again, under Blake's astonished eyes.

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed Blake, in astonishment. "This takes the cake! We were all up as late as Gussy. Look here, Gussy, old man—"

"He seems to have gone to sleep again, sir!" murmured Pawson. "I think, sir, really it would be better to assist him indoors and allow him to rest."

"Blessed if I can make it out!" grunted Blake. "Better run him in and put him on a sofa, with a cushion under his head. Gussy, old bean, wake up long enough to walk indoors."

Arthur Augustus woke again and Blake and Pawson took his arms and assisted him out of the chair. But he was nodding with drowsiness as they walked him into the villa.

They walked him across the lounge into the passage where the juniors' rooms were. There was a tap-tap-tap from D'Arcy's room, and Blake, about to open the door, paused.

"Not Master Arthur's own room, sir!" said Pawson. "The glazier is repairing the window there. He will disturb Master Arthur. The next room, sir. There is a very comfortable ottoman in Master Merry's room."

"Right!" agreed Blake.

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Arthur Augustus was walked into Tom Merry's room. He was half-awake, but he nodded off to sleep again as he was lifted on to the ottoman by the open french window.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Blake, puzzled and a trifle uneasy. "I've never known Gussy to go off to sleep like this in the daytime, Pawson. He seems unable to keep awake! You don't think there's anything wrong with him, do you, Pawson?"

"I am sure not, sir. A little over-fatigue yesterday in the boat, perhaps, followed by a late night," said Pawson. "I am assured that he will be quite himself when he has had his sleep out."

"Well, it's jolly queer!" said Blake.

He placed a soft cushion under D'Arcy's head and made him comfortable. Arthur Augustus was already sleeping soundly again.

"Perhaps I'd better stay with him," said Blake uneasily. "I'm blessed if I make out Gussy going off like this."

"I shall be at hand, sir, and I shall keep an eye on Master Arthur. You may rely upon me, sir."

"Yes, I know that, Pawson," assented Blake. He was rather worried about his noble chum, but far from keen to spend a glorious May morning indoors. "Look here, if you keep an eye on him—"

"Most certainly, sir!"

"I mean, very likely he's got that blithering black box in his pocket at this very minute!" said Blake. "The other day a man got into the place, and we all thought it was one of that dago's pals nosing after it. See that nobody snoops that black box off him, Pawson."

"I shall remain within sight of him," said Pawson. "I have an account to make up, to send to his lordship, and I will sit on the veranda by the window and do my work there, sir. My eye will not be off Master Arthur for a moment, sir, while he is asleep."

"Right-ho, then!" agreed Blake.

And he left Pawson and Arthur Augustus and returned to the tennis court, to rejoin his friends there.

Pawson stood in the veranda and watched him go.

Tap-tap-tap! came from the next window, at a little distance along the veranda. The glazier was tapping out fragments of glass.

Pawson smiled as Blake disappeared.

He stepped back into the room and bent over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He gave the swell of St. Jim's a slight shake. Arthur Augustus slumbered on undisturbed. A plump hand glided into an inside jacket pocket and reappeared with a small, oval black object in the plump fingers.

CHAPTER 7.

The Secret of the Black Box!

PAWSON gave a violent start.

Even as he drew the black box from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pocket a sudden grasp was laid on him from behind. A left hand gripped the back of his collar and a right hand pressed the point of a knife to his plump ribs. And a soft voice hissed in his ear:

"Silenzio!"

A quiver ran through Lord Eastwood's man. His plump fingers closed almost convulsively on the black box.

But he made no movement to resist. He had

no chance of reaching the revolver he carried in his hip pocket—he had no chance at all. The knife was at his ribs, the sharp point pricking his skin, and for his life he dared make no motion.

Amazement and rage held him dumb.

He could not see the man grasping him behind. But there was a large mirror in front of him, and his eyes gleamed at it. The reflection showed him the shabby hat and overalls of the glazier.

He could hardly believe what he saw.

That Giuseppe Fosco could have penetrated into the villa in broad daylight, unseen and unsuspected, seemed impossible, yet at that grip on his portly neck, and the pressure of the knife on his ribs, Pawson knew that he was in the clutch of the desperate dago. But it was the reflection of the glazier from Pollier et Cie, in Cannes, that he saw in the glass.

The false beard stirred as Giuseppe chuckled.

"Silenzio!" he repeated. "One last time, Signore Pawson, you have one gun, and I, Giuseppe, can do nothing! This time there is no gun, but there is one knife, which will reach your heart if you stir or cry."

Pawson quivered again. It was the dago. The beard, the eyebrows, the overalls were a disguise; it was Giuseppe Fosco.

The dago laughed softly.

"Furfante!" he breathed. "One rascal! You rob your master—yes, yes, it is I, Giuseppe, who know that you watch your master to rob him of one black box! Stolto! When I break a window with a stone when it is night, do you think it is to send one message?" He chuckled. "It is to break a window that I wish, amico mio,

solely to break a window that a vetraio may come! Capite? Yes, yes! But perhaps one would guess, so I tie a message on a stone to make a reason!"

Pawson breathed fury.

"Le vetraio, he come, and I watch!" grinned Giuseppe. "I take a glass, I take a bag, I take a beard—capite? It is only that a vetraio may come that I break a window—and I, Giuseppe, come in his place! The black box is to me, I think! Yes, I do think, amico mio!"

Arthur Augustus slumbered on.

"You give him coffee and he sleep!" murmured Giuseppe. "Oh, furfante, furfante! I think there shall be something in the coffee! Already I search a room—there is nothing! You play for me the game! Give me the black box, signore, or I take one black box from a dead man's hand."

The swarthy paw reached to the little black oval object clutched in Pawson's plump hand. Slowly the plump fingers unloosened their grip and the prize passed into Giuseppe's swarthy fingers.

He slipped it into a pocket under his overalls.

"Va bene, va bene!" breathed Giuseppe. "Now you place two hands behind—you make no call or you are one dead! I, Giuseppe, will kill you like one small dog if you make to call."

The plump hands were drawn behind Pawson. A loop was knotted over the plump wrists. Pawson's face was white with rage. But the knife at his fat ribs kept him quiet.

"One word!" he breathed. "The black box is yours, scoundrel—it is yours, and from here to Italy is but a step—all is finished! One word—



"No newpapah at all! Weally, I do not want a—whoop!" yelled Arthur Augustus as the man, suddenly dropping his bundle of newspapers, snatched off Gussy's straw hat and bolted. "My hat!" yelled Gussy.

that fool of a schoolboy was given it by an American who crashed on a motor-cycle—”

“Certo!” grinned Giuseppe.

“Chicago Hank was seen in Sussex on a motor-bicycle!” breathed Pawson. “He has never been seen since.”

“Certo!” chuckled the dago. “He will not be seen till I choose—in a safe place he is guarded—till the black box is mine! With a knife at his throat he tell me all that I desire to know.”

“Then—what I suspected is true—it is the Nizam’s Diamond that is hidden in the black box!” breathed Pawson hoarsely.

“Now that it is mine, I tell you, yes! A fortune for me, amico—a very big fortune for me! Chicago Hank he would double-cross his friends—he would fly with the stone all for himself—oh, yes! He run on a motor-cycle—but I, Giuseppe, follow in a car—I find him in a wood—and since, in my hands, he tell me how a black box is given to a schoolboy.” Giuseppe chuckled. “He do not wish to tell—but life is sweet! It is to a lordship’s son that he give a black box to take a care—che bella cosa! Think of it, furfante, and think of what you have lost!”

Pawson gritted his teeth with rage. He had suspected it, and now he knew that it was true. And the black box, containing Lord Eastwood’s famous diamond, was in Giuseppe’s hands—and gone for ever!

But he could not speak again; a gag was thrust into his mouth, half suffocating him and silencing him. Then Giuseppe packed away his knife and laid Pawson on the floor. He bound his legs with another cord, grinning down at the infuriated face of Lord Eastwood’s man.

“Addio!” chuckled Giuseppe mockingly. “Addio, amico. I go to my own country to be one rich man! Addio, furfante!”

He stepped out on the veranda.

He did not linger there.

While Pawson writhed in his bonds and chewed desperately at his gag, Giuseppe picked up his bag of tools and disappeared round the house. Had he been questioned, he had an excuse ready, that he had forgotten a necessary tool. But if any servant noticed him going, no heed was paid to the glazier from Pollier et Cie. Giuseppe departed by the back gate and vanished.

CHAPTER 8.

Gone!

“WHY,” asked Monty Lowther, “are some of the inhabitants of this place like Nebuchadnezzar?”

“Blessed if I quite remember who Nebuchadnezzar was!” confessed Tom Merry. “I suppose you know, Manners.”

“Yes, ass! Nebuchadnezzar was the blithering ancient king who was set to eating grass,” answered Manners.

“Oh, so he was! We’re back in good time for lunch,” remarked Tom Merry. “I wonder whether Gussy’s got over his jolly old dignity yet?”

“I wonder whether anybody’s been through his pockets while we’ve been gone!” grunted Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

“I shouldn’t wonder. Let’s get in and ask him.”

“I asked you fellows a conundrum!” hooted Monty Lowther.

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“Oh, yes, so you did, old chap! Why was Nebuchadnezzar like—what was it?”

“Fathead!”

“My dear chap—”

“Ass! Why are some of the inhabitants of Cannes like Nebuchadnezzar?” demanded Lowther.

“Blessed if I know!” said Tom. “Are they?”

“They’re not!” said Manners.

Monty Lowther gazed at his chums, more in sorrow than in anger. This was the sort of encouragement a humorist got!

“Well, never mind whether they are or not!” he yapped. “Why are they?”

“They can’t be, if they’re not!” pointed out Manners.

“Chump!”

“Well, why are they, old fellow?” asked Tom soothingly.

“Because they go out to Grasse!” said Lowther.

“Do they?” asked Tom, in surprise.

“Grasse!” yelled Lowther. “Grasse—grass! See? Grasse is a town a few miles from here! People here often go out to Grasse. See?”

“Oh! Yes! Fine! Ha, ha, ha! Now what about lunch?”

Snort, from Monty Lowther! It had taken him ten minutes of steady brain-work to elaborate that pun! Really, it hardly seemed worth the labour. However, there were four Fourth Form fellows to hear it yet, as well as Pawson.

The Terrible Three walked up the path to the villa. They had had a couple of hours in the boat, sailing on the blue Mediterranean, and Manners had taken several satisfactory photographs.

They met Blake, Herries, and Digby in the garden.

“Where’s Gussy?” asked Tom.

“Snoozing!” said Blake, with a grunt.

“Snoozing in the morning!” exclaimed Tom.

“What the dickens does Gussy want to snooze in the morning for?”

“Blessed if I understand him,” said Blake. “I came to ask him to play tennis, and he was fast asleep in his chair. He could hardly wake up enough to walk into the house. Queer, isn’t it?”

“Jolly queer!” said Tom.

“Pawson thought he got overtired yesterday, and then staying up so late,” said Blake. “He thought Gussy had better have his snooze out, so we parked him on the ottoman in your room—the glazier man was mending the window of Gussy’s room. I suppose he will turn out for lunch.”

“Let’s go and see him,” said Tom. “Blessed if I understand Gussy taking to napping in the morning.”

“Has he gone to sleep with that jolly old black box in his pocket?” asked Monty Lowther. “Chance for the dago, if he was around.”

“Oh, Pawson’s keeping an eye on him,” said Blake. “I’d have stayed with the old ass, but Pawson said he would keep an eye on him.”

“Oh, that’s all right, then!” agreed Lowther.

Manners laughed.

“Right as rain!” he said. “Let’s go and see Gussy, and ask him if the black box is O.K. Must be, I’m sure, with Pawson’s eye on him.”

The half-dozen juniors walked to the villa, Manners dropped behind with Tom Merry, a sarcastic smile on his face.

“You know what to expect when we get in?” he asked.

“You think—”

"No, I don't think—I know!" answered Manners quietly. "I think you agree with my opinion about Pawson since you and I saw him gambling at Monte Carlo, and losing everything he had."

"I—I think so. But——"

"Gussy goes off to sleep in the morning," said Manners sourly. "It happens at a time when he's got his back up with his pals and they're not with him. I dare say Pawson knows why he went to sleep."

Tom Merry looked startled.

"Manners, old man, you can't suppose that—that— Oh, my hat!"

"That man Pawson is a bad egg, Tom," said Manners. "A bad egg all through. He's after the black box. He knows there's something fearfully valuable in it, though goodness knows what it may be, and he's been after it ever since we were in Paris. You know that as well as I do. He's got it now." Manners laughed. "I mean, he thinks he has."

"If that's right, Manners, it's jolly lucky that you bagged it from Gussy the other day and had an imitation box made," said Tom slowly. "If anybody's been through Gussy's pockets, all he's got is a chunk of ebony carved in the shape of the black box."

"And I wish him joy of it," grinned Manners. "The black box itself can't be opened easily—there's some secret about it—but anybody who tries to open that dummy box has got his work cut out."

Tom Merry laughed.

"And the real article——" he said.

"Parked safe," said Manners. "Pawson would have had it the other day if I hadn't been first. You know that! Since then Gussy's carried the dummy box about with him—and he's lost it now. You'll see."

Tom Merry nodded. He had not at first believed in Manners' suspicions of Lord Eastwood's man. But since that day at Monte Carlo, when he had seen Pawson rising from the roulette table with the desperate look of a ruined gamester on his face, he had agreed with Manners.

The man was a bad egg—a very bad egg—though nobody but Tom and Manners dreamed of suspecting it. Tom had little doubt that this opportunity had not been lost, and but for Manners having substituted a dummy box for the real article, that the mysterious black box would have vanished for ever.

They followed the other fellows up on the veranda.

The glazier was gone, though the repair of Gussy's window was not yet completed. The juniors stopped at Tom Merry's window, of which the wooden volets had been closed. There was nobody on the veranda, and Jack Blake gave a grunt.

"Pawson said he would be staying here," he said. "He seems to have cleared off, after all."

He pulled open the shutters at Tom Merry's window.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he bawled. "Woke up yet?"

"There he is, fast asleep," said Tom Merry, glancing in over Blake's shoulder. "And—— Why—what—who—— Pawson!"

He stuttered with amazement.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still stretched on the ottoman, sleeping peacefully. On the floor lay a portly man bound hand and foot and gagged. Tom's eyes fairly bulged at Pawson.

Pawson did not look his usual urbane self, by

any means. His face was crimson with exertion and fury. There was foam on his lips from his desperate chewing at the gag.

"Pawson!" yelled Blake.

He bounded into the room.

The other fellows rushed in after him. They gathered round Pawson. Every hand was stretched out to release him. The gag was dragged away and penknives cut through the cords knotted round his limbs.

Jack Blake gave Arthur Augustus a shake, and Gussy's eyes opened.

"Urrrghh!" he murmured sleepily.

"Wake up, you ass!" roared Blake. "Have you slept through this? What on earth's happened?"

"I feel watah sleepay——"

"Wake up, you fathead! Look at Pawson."

Gussy had perhaps got over most of the effects of the doctored coffee by that time. He lifted his drowsy head, but as he looked at Pawson drowsiness vanished and he fairly bounded.

"Bai Jove! What——" he gasped.

Arthur Augustus sat up, gazing at Pawson like a fellow in a dream; while Tom Merry & Co. released him.

Many hands helped the plump Pawson to his feet. He gasped and panted for breath. But the look of intense fury in his face, which all the juniors had seen when they first entered, was gone. Pawson was himself again.

"Thank you, young gentlemen," he said. "I am really very much obliged to you."

"But what's happened, Pawson?" exclaimed Blake. "Has the dago been here, or what?"

"Bai Jove! Why didn't you call me, Pawson?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Has that faithful wotah been here while I've been asleep?"

"The glazier, of course, is gone?" asked Pawson.

"The glazier?" repeated Tom Merry. "Yes, I think so. What about him, Pawson?"

"I regret to say, sir, that I did not recognise him till he suddenly seized me," said Pawson. "The rascal must have intercepted the man sent here by Pollier's to repair the window and taken his clothes and tools and——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It was the dago?" stuttered Blake.

"Yes, sir."

"The dago—coming here as a man to mend the window!" gasped Lowther. "Oh crumbs! That's why he busted the window, then! He never fancied that Gussy would put the black box under the palm for him; that was all gammon! He busted the window last night, and came to mend it this morning!"

"It appears so, sir."

"But it is vewy remarkable that I did not wake up while he was here!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "If you had called me, Pawson——"

"I had no opportunity, sir, attacked suddenly with a knife at my ribs," said Pawson apologetically. "I assure you, sir, I should have resisted had it been practicable——"

"I am quite suah of that, Pawson. But it is weally vewy remarkable that I did not wake up. I weally cannot undahstand it."

"You were sleeping very soundly, sir."

"Like a top when I left you," said Blake. "And that dashed glazier was at the next window, and I never dreamed——"

"I had no suspicion, sir, and he took me quite by surprise," said Pawson. "I fear that he has

escaped, sir; it must be a good deal more than an hour since he was here."

"How vewy remarkable that I slept like a top all the time! Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus suddenly remembered the black box. "Oh ewikey!" He thrust his hand into his inside jacket pocket.

It came out empty.

"The black box——" exclaimed Blake.

"I regret to say, sir, that I saw him take it from Master Arthur's pocket, and was quite unable to intervene," murmured Pawson.

"Gone?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Gone!" said Arthur Augustus faintly.

And he sank back on the ottoman, utterly overcome with dismay.

CHAPTER 9.

The Real Article!

"MANNERS, old man!" Tom Merry spoke quietly as Manners went out of the room.

Manners did not answer. There was an expression of worry and perplexity on Harry Manners' face, and Tom understood its cause easily enough.

Pawson had gone to the telephone in the lounge. He was sitting at it, rapping away in French at a great rate. Everything that could be done to intercept and seize the dago before he escaped with the black box was going to be done.

Lord Eastwood's man could be relied upon for that, though only two of the St. Jim's party knew that he had a personal interest in the matter.

There was, perhaps, a chance. Giuseppe had got rid of his disguise as a vitrier and cleared while Pawson lay bound on the floor and Arthur Augustus slept. The Italian border was not far away, and Giuseppe had had time to reach it and escape into his own country—if he had lost no time and if no chance accident had delayed him.

Still, he might not yet be across in Italy; delays might have occurred; there was a chance at least. So Pawson got through at once to the police, and was now doing rapid-fire French at the telephone.

On the ottoman in Tom Merry's room Arthur Augustus sat in a state of dismay and dismal dispiritedness that evoked the deepest sympathy of his chums.

The black box, of which he had promised to take care till the owner reclaimed it, was gone. Many a narrow escape had it had since it had been placed in D'Arcy's hands by the injured man, that day at the end of the term, in Wayland Wood in far-off Sussex. All through the Easter holidays it had been in danger. And now it was gone, and the hope of catching the elusive Giuseppe before he disappeared into Italy with his prize was faint—very faint indeed.

"It's wotten!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "It's feahful, you fellows! What am I to say to that Ameycan chap when he turns up and asks for it back?"

"You couldn't help it, old man," said Blake.

"Pewwaps not, but I ought to have helped it somehow," said Arthur Augustus. "I have let the man down. All through goin' to sleep in that extwaordinawy way, you know! I do not wemebah evah dwoppin' off to sleep like that in the mornin' befoah. Fancy me lyin' fast asleep while that w'etched dago was takin' the black box out of my pocket, and poor old Pawson lookin' on, tied up like a turkey, and unable to

stop him. It's weally howwible to think of. It makes me feel uttably wotten."

"The dago was bound to get hold of it sooner or later, old chap!" said Herries, rather unfortunately, perhaps.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"I—I mean——" stammered Herries.

"Perhaps the bobbies will get him," said Dig.

"The French police are pretty smart."

"They may nab him this side of the frontier," said Lowther.

But he did not speak very hopefully. He had little doubt that Giuseppe Fosco was already on the safe side of the Italian frontier.

Arthur Augustus sat in dismal silence. He drew little hope from the comforting words of his friends. The thought that he had let down the man who had trusted him was bitterly painful to Arthur Augustus. His clouded face showed how deeply he felt it.

"Look here, old man," said Tom Merry. "Don't give up hope! The—the fact is, I believe you'll get that box back."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am afraid there is vewy little hope, Tom Mewwy! I feel absolutely beastly about it!"

Tom Merry slipped quietly out of the room, leaving the other fellows with the unhappy and inconsolable Gussy.

He followed Manners into his room. He found Harry Manners there, with perplexed indecision in his face.

"Well?" grunted Manners, as Tom came in. No doubt he guessed what his chum had to say.

"Where's the genuine box, Manners?" asked Tom quietly.

"Parked safe!" grunted Manners.

"Gussy's got to have it, old chap! He's down in the deepest woe about it!" said Tom. "After all, you snaffed it to save it from the dago, and—and Pawson. You've done that. Now——"

"The dago's gone off with the dummy box," said Manners. "I dare say he won't even try to open it till he's safe over the frontier in Italy. He had to be quick on the run to get clear. We may be done with the dago. But there's Pawson. He was after it when the dago got it."

"I dare say! But——"

"If Gussy has the real box back Pawson will know, and he will have it off him before long."

"I know!" said Tom. "We'll do our best to keep it safe for him, Manners, but Pawson may get hold of it. That can't be helped. It's Gussy's—at least, in his charge—and he's got to have it."

"I meant to keep it safe for him till we got back to St. Jim's next term," said Manners. "The dummy box was good enough for him to carry about."

"Good idea—if he hadn't lost the dummy box. But it can't be helped, old chap. You've saved the real box for him this time, and now you've got to hand it over. It will have to take its chance."

Manners nodded.

"I know," he said. "I hate to give that worm Pawson another chance at it, but, of course, Gussy's got to have it."

"Buck up, old man! Poor old Gussy's fearfully mournful about it."

"The silly ass!" said Manners. "Still, even if poor old Gussy wasn't an ass he couldn't have prevented Pawson doctoring his coffee this morning."

"You—you think he did?"

"Fathead! I know he did! 'So do you, ass!"

Manners proceeded to root out the black box from its hiding-place at the bottom of a suitcase. Then the two Shell fellows returned to the room where Arthur Augustus sat on the ottoman in the frame of mind of Rachel-of-old, who mourned for that which was lost and could not be comforted.

"I feel as if I shall nevah get ovah this, you fellows!" Arthur Augustus was saying. "It is weally feahful, you know. I have failed in my twust—"

"Cheer up, old bean!" said Tom Merry. "It's all right."

"Right as rain!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove! What do you mean, you fellows?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That wotton dago is ovah in Italy by this time, with the black box—"

"He's over in Italy all right!" grunted Manners. "But he hasn't taken the black box with him."

Arthur Augustus jumped. His noble countenance brightened, like the sun coming out from the clouds.

"Bai Jove! Mannahs, old chap! I'm suah you would not pull my leg on such a subject! How do you know, Mannahs?"

"I'll tell you," said Manners. "The other day, when you left your jacket lying about for anybody who liked to pinch the black box—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"I snaffled it—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And I went to a wood-carver's in Cannes and had an imitation box made—a chunk of ebony—and—"

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"And shoved it into your pocket," said Manners. "Ever since then you've been carrying that dummy box about, and I've had the real one locked up in a suitcase."

"Mannahs!"

"The dago's got away with the dummy box," said Manners. "He will find it harder to open than the real one—as it doesn't open at all! Here's the black box—the real article!"

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Manners took the black box out of his pocket and extended it to Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's took it like a fellow in a dream. He gazed at it as if he could hardly believe his eyes—or his eyeglass.

"The—the—the black box!" he gasped. "Oh, cwumbs! Oh cwikey! Huwway!"

CHAPTER 10. Safety First!

"THE black box!"

Pawson's voice echoed the words from the door. Pawson had come away from the telephone.

"Huwway!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Hip-pip!" chortled Blake. "Manners, old bean, you're a giddy genius!"

"And Gussy never knew—" gasped Herries.

"Never knew he was carrying about a dummy box!" exclaimed Digby. "Oh, my hat! Gussy's the limit!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus fairly gloated over the black box. He beamed over it. He grinned over it. "Bai Jove! All wight, aftah all! Oh cwumbs! Look at this, Pawson! It's the black box!"

Pawson's expression was very peculiar as he

stepped into the room. Manners watched his face quietly.

"Is—is—is that indeed the black box, sir?" asked Pawson. "This is very extraordinary, for I certainly saw the Italian take it."

"Ha, ha!" trilled Arthur Augustus. "It was a dummy box that the dago snaffled, Pawson! This is the weal one."

"Manners had an imitation box made, and changed them!" grinned Blake. "Got it now, Pawson?"

"Oh!" gasped Pawson.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "And jolly old Giuseppe has gone scooting off to Italy with a dummy box in his pocket, and nothing in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing in it!" repeated Pawson.

"Couldn't be anything in it, as it was merely a chunk of ebony carved in the shape of the black box!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What a surprise for Giuseppe when he tries to open it!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I should weally like to see his wascally face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pawson grinned, while the St. Jim's fellows roared with laughter. But he gave Manners a very curious look.

"That was a very clever and extraordinary idea, Master Manners," he said. "Master Arthur is very fortunate"

"Yaas, watah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I should have been vevy watty if I had known anythin' about it, of course, but in the pwesent circumstances, I feel vevy glad that Mannahs played that twick. Othahwise, the black box would be in Italy now, with that waseally dago. I am afwaid, Mannahs, that in playin' such a twick you did not treat me with weally pwopah wespsect. It was watah like tweatin' a fellow like a baby, you know, though I am suah you did not mean it, old chap—"

"Don't be too sure!" grunted Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Fathead!"

"I will ovahlook that wemark, Mannahs, in view of this vevy gweat service. But you must nevah think of playin' such a twick again, or I shall be vevy much annoyed!" said Arthur Augustus. "You see, I am quite suah that your intentions were good; but suppose you had lost the black box? You are not a careful fellow, like me, you know."

"Oh, great pip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for mewwiment in that wemark. The black box is safah in my keepin'. The master's eye, you know, and all that!" said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, it has turned out all wight, as it happens. You acted watah thoughtlessly, Mannahs—"

"Did I?" grunted Manners.

"Yaas, I am bound to wemark that you acted watah thoughtlessly! Anythin' might have happened to the thing, you see, while it was out of my care—"

"And what would have happened to it in your care?" inquired Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, pway don't argue about it. As it has turned out, I am vevy much obliged to you; but you must nevah play such a thoughtless twick again! I insist upon that!"

"I won't!" snorted Manners.

"That's wight, deah boy! It's wathah widdleous to fancy that you know bettah than a fellow of tact and judgment. I wepeat that I am vevy much obliged to you, and I am awah that you are wathah a thoughtless chap, so—"

"Ass!" said Manners, and he walked out of the room.

"Bai Jove! I twust that Mannahs is not offended at my wemarks!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have not told him I think it wathah a cheek to butt in like that!"

"Perhaps he guessed that one!" suggested Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Chump!" said Lowther. "Good-bye, black box!" he added.

"Bai Jove! What on earth are you sayin' good-bye to the black box for, Lowthah?" asked Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"Because I'm seeing it for the last time!" explained Lowther. "It will be gone by to-morrow, now that Manners isn't looking after it." And Monty Lowther followed his chum from the room.

"What uttah wot!" said Arthur Augustus blankly. "Does that ass Lowthah weally think the thing would be safah with Mannahs than with me? Is Lowthah such an ass as that, Tom Mewwy?"

"Blithering idiot!" was Tom's answer, and he went after Lowther and Manners.

"I am afwaid," said Arthur Augustus, "that those Shell fellows' mannahs are detewiowatin' these hols, I quite fail to see why they have been makin' those wathah personal wemarks!"

Arthur Augustus slipped the black box into the inside pocket, from which the dummy box had been taken. Blake, Herries, and Digby watched him.

"Are you going to leave it there?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it will be safe till Giuseppe finds out that he's been sold a pup, and comes back for the real article!" remarked Blake. "Still, if you knew his address in Italy, you could post it to him, and save him the trouble!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You howling ass," said Digby, "Manners has saved it for you! He would take care of it if you asked him!"

"I should not be likely to twust it out of my hands, Dig, when it was entwusted to me!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't be an ass!"

Pawson gave his deferential cough.

"As we are going on in the plane to-morrow, sir, the Italian rascal will find us gone if he returns!" he said.

"Yes, there's that!" agreed Blake. "I dare say we're done with Giuseppe now. The next pickpocket Gussy runs into will have that black box!"

"Wats!"

"Look here, fathead, let me mind it for you!" hooted Blake.

"I could hardly wely on your care, Blake! Safety first, you know!"

"Idiot!" said Blake politely.

"Chump!" said Herries.

"Fathead!" said Digby.

And with those complimentary remarks the three Fourth Formers marched out. Arthur Augustus gazed after them as they went, and shook his head.

"I am afwaid my fwriends are wathah duffahs, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,630.



As stealthy footfalls were audible in the room, Manners flashed on, Manners and Tom Merry dashed

Pawson," he remarked. "They are just like that at St. Jim's. They nevah seem able to compwchend that I am the bwainy man of the study. They're awffy good chaps, you know—but not, I feah, vevy bwight!"

"Quite so, sir!" murmured Pawson.

"I am suah you agree with me, Pawson, that the black box is bettah in my own hands!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Most certainly, sir!"

"It is all wight now, as we are wid of that beastly dago, and there is nobody else about who knows anythin' about the black box, Pawson!"

"Nobody, sir!" agreed Pawson. "I will now return to the telephone, sir, and inform the police bureau that the missing article is found."

"Pway do so, Pawson!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined his friends at lunch in a very cheery mood. The black box was not, after all, lost; it was safe in Gussy's pocket, than which Arthur Augustus, at least, could think of no safer place.

So all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 11.

Bright!

"I'VE got an ideah!"

"Whose?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Tom Merry & Co. were in the lounge after lunch. That afternoon they were going on the train to Nice; their last excursion before taking off in the Silver Swallow, due to start again in the morning on the air trip.



on the pocket-torch in his left hand. Even as the light
the room to tackle the midnight marauder.

The exciting episode in Tom Merry's room had had the fortunate result of banishing the dignified attitude Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had adopted towards his chums. He was once more his cheery and benevolent self.

"It flashed into my bwain, you know, while we were at lunch," went on Arthur Augustus.

"Into what?" queried Blake.

"Flashes don't occur in a vacuum!" said Monty Lowther, shaking his head.

"Pway don't be asses, deah boys! I don't want to wub it in that I am the bwainy man in this partay," said Arthur Augustus gently. "But facts are facts, all the same. It weally is a wippin' ideah! You fellows fancy that I might get my pocket picked while we are wamblin' round Nice this aftahnoon!"

"We don't fancy it!" said Blake. "We know it!"

"Well, of course, it might happen!" admitted Gussy. "Not so likely to happen to me as to you fellows—still, it might! I have thought of a wippin' ideah for keepin' that twoublesome black box safe. I am goin' to park it in my hat!"

"In your hat!" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" smiled Arthur Augustus. "Pickpockets won't guess that a fellow has anythin' in his hat—will they, Pawson?"

"I am sure not, sir!" said Pawson, who was hovering in the hall to help the party off.

Arthur Augustus had his straw hat in his hand. That hat had a lining of silk. The black box was small—smaller than an egg. Parking it in the lining of the hat was the big idea!

"You see, it will be absolutely safe there, and off my mind!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"It will be on your mind all the time if you park it in your hat!" contradicted Lowther.

"Pway don't be a funnay ass, old chap! You fellows look!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as a wippin' ideah!"

Taking out his penknife, the swell of St. Jim's cut a slit in the silk lining in the crown of that beautiful straw hat. Then taking the black box from his pocket, he pushed it through the slit in the lining, packing it against the crown of the hat.

"What about that?" he asked triumphantly.

"Tip-top!" said Lowther.

This was a joke—but Lowther had it all to himself. Nobody else knew that it was a joke!

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Even if that wotten dago was awound, he would not be likely to guess that the jollay old black box was in a fellow's hat! Wathah a bwight idea—what?"

"Brilliant!" said Tom Merry. "Especially if your hat blows off on the train!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall be vewy careful to keep the hat-guard fastened. Pewwaps you will fasten it for me, Pawson."

"Very good, sir!"

"Now I shan't have to wowwy about the beastly thing any more," said Arthur Augustus. "Come on, deah boys, let's staggh along!"

The St. Jim's party staggered along. Pawson stood watching them from the doorway as they went down the path to the gate. Then he turned back into the villa and shut the door.

At the gate, however, Manners halted.

"Hold on a tick," he said. "I haven't got my camera!"

"Mean to say you'e forgotten your camera?" ejaculated Lowther. "My only summer chapeau! First time you've ever forgotten your camera!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Manners, without replying, cut back to the villa, the other fellows waiting at the gate.

He did not enter by the door, but went up the veranda steps and by the french window into his room. There he picked up his camera-case and slung it over his shoulder.

But he did not leave again by the veranda. He went down the passage to the lounge.

A murmur of French greeted his ears as he arrived there. Pawson was seated at the telephone.

He cut off instantly as he saw Manners. There was a faint flush in his fruity face as he looked round at the Shell fellow of St. Jim's.

"Sorry to interrupt!" said Manners. "I came back for my camera!"

"Not at all, sir!" said Pawson respectfully.

But he did not carry on with the telephone till Manners was gone and the door was shut on him.

Manners cut down the path and rejoined his friends at the gate. Tom Merry gave him a glance as they started down the Boulevard du Midi to go into the town.

It was very uncommon—very uncommon indeed—for Manners to forget his beloved camera. It was in Tom's mind that Manners had had some reason for leaving it indoors and going back for it—a suspicion that was strengthened by the sardonic smile on Manners' face.

"What's up?" asked Tom in a low voice as he followed the rest of the party with Manners. "Nothing!" said Manners airily. "No bisney of mine! I was only curious to see whether Pawson was on the telephone after we'd started. He was!"

"I don't see—"

"You wouldn't!"

"Don't be a shirty ass, Manners, old man."

"Who's shirty?"

"Old Gussy can't help being a bit of an ass! No sense in getting your back up because he's the same old ass here that he is at St. Jim's."

"Who's getting his back up?"

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Tom.

They walked on in silence. There was no mistake about the fact that Harry Manners was a little shirty.

Arthur Augustus had been glad—immensely glad and relieved—that the black box had been saved; and it had been saved by Manners' dodge of taking charge of it and substituting an imitation in its place. But, at the same time, it was easy to read that Gussy did not like such pranks—which he regarded justly as treating him like an infant.

At the bottom of his heart Gussy could not help thinking that it was a spot of cheek on Manners' part to butt in as he had done. Nothing would have induced him to tell Manners so. But unfortunately Gussy's thoughts were as easy to read as a page of the "Magnet."

"Oooo!" came a sudden ejaculation from Arthur Augustus, and his hand went up to his hat, shifting it a little to port.

"What's the row?" asked Blake.

"That wotten black box is wubbin' the top of my head!"

"What did you expect it to do?" inquired Dig.

"Wats!"

They walked on. Tom Merry, as he noticed Manners' eye dwelling sarcastically on the beautiful straw hat in advance, felt a little uneasy. It was clear to him that Manners suspected some new move on the part of Lord Eastwood's man; though what, he could not begin to guess.

"Look here Manners," he murmured at last. "If you think that sweep Pawson is playing some trick—"

"Do you mean, if I know he is?" asked Manners.

"Well, yes; what is it?"

Manners laughed—one of those sardonic laughs! It was only too evident that Harry Manners was shirty.

"Pawson knows people in Cannes," he said. "He's been here before—he's been jolly nearly everywhere. He's a crook of some sort. He's got Lord Eastwood fooled! He's got his confidence to such an extent that Gussy's pater trusted us to him for this trip! Now I know what the rascal's like, I know that he only plays manservant to cover up something else! I've wondered a good deal why he ever became Lord Eastwood's valet. He had some game on at Eastwood House—not brushing clothes!"

"Very likely," agreed Tom. "But—"

"I shouldn't wonder if he was there after the Nizam's Diamond, only that Chicago crook got in first!" said Manners.

"But now—" urged Tom. "What do you think he is up to now? He knows that Gussy's got that blithering black box in his hat, but

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we've left him behind at the villa, and we shan't see him again till the evening. I don't see what he can do."

"He knows other crooks!" said Manners coolly. "I went back to see whether he was phoning to some other crooks to get that hat off Gussy—and he was!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Tom. "You heard him—"

"Don't be an ass!" grunted Manners. "Think I'd listen to him! He was at the phone, as I knew he would be—that was enough."

Tom walked on in thoughtful silence. There was another ejaculation from Arthur Augustus, and he shifted his hat again, this time to starboard.

That bright idea did not seem to be working out to Gussy's comfort. Small as it was, the black box, interposing between the crown of his head and the crown of his hat, rubbed Gussy's cranium in a most uncomfortable manner.

"Bothah!" said Arthur Augustus.

He gave his hat another shift.

"Pawson's pals won't need telling much if Gussy keeps on clawing his hat, what?" remarked Manners sarcastically.

"Look here, Manners, if it's as you think, there may be two or three blighters watching for Gussy here and there, ready to snatch that straw hat off him and bolt!" muttered Tom.

"Half a dozen very likely!" agreed Manners. "He won't get that hat as far as Nice—but if he does, there'll be somebody there to bag it."

"We can't let him lose that black box—"

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"No bisney of ours," he answered. "I'm not butting in again! I've been as good as told to mind my own business once. Once is often enough for me."

"No good being shirty—"

"Who's shirty?"

"You are, fathead!"

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus came to a halt. "That beastly black box is wubbin' the top of my nappah in a feahfully annoyin' mannah. It was a vevy bwright ideah to park that beastly box in my hat—I weally think that it was vevy bwright—but I cannot have it wubbin' the top of my nappah all the aftahnoon. I think I will put it in my pocket, atfah all."

Arthur Augustus took off his hat, extracted the black box from the lining, and slipped it into his pocket.

Then he replaced the straw hat on his noble head and walked on in comfort.

Tom Merry laughed.

CHAPTER 12.

Hats Off!

"OOOOOOH!" spluttered Arthur Augustus. He jumped almost clear of the platform.

The St. Jim's party arrived in good time for their train to Nice. They had, in fact, a quarter of an hour to wait. So they strolled up and down the "trottoir" in Cannes station, plenty of other waiting passengers doing the same.

Then it happened—suddenly.

Manners, in spite of his shirty frame of mind, had really intended to keep a very wary eye on Gussy's hat that afternoon. But since the swell of St. Jim's had transferred the black box to

his pocket, it was not necessary—so no one was giving Gussy's beautiful straw hat any special attention.

That is to say, no one in the St. Jim's party. Someone else evidently was, for all of a sudden a man came cutting along the platform at a rapid run, snatched the hat from Gussy's head, and bolted with it.

It happened so suddenly that Arthur Augustus was taken utterly by surprise. He was left staggering, while the stranger flew on, dodged out at the exit, and vanished into space.

"Oh ewikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "My hat!"

He stared round quite dizzily.

"My hat! Somebody's snatched my hat! Oh ewikey! What evah has that man snatched my hat for? Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus stood bareheaded and amazed. His friends gathered round him—so did about a dozen other waiting passengers, all staring and ejaculating. It was a most extraordinary occurrence.

There were pickpockets in Cannes. Indeed, there was a notice up in the station: "Gardez-vous de pickpockets." But hat-thieves were rare, if not unknown. Seldom or never had a "voleur" been seen to snatch a tourist's hat and flee with such a prize!

There were startled exclamations on all sides.

"Regardez—"

"Le chapeau vole—"

"Allons done! On a vole le chapeau de monsieur."

"Extwaordinawy!" gasped Arthur Augustus, passing his hand over his bare head in quite a dazed way. "My hat—my hat's gone. Can you see the man, you fellows? My hat—"

"Half a mile away by this time!" said Blake. "Lucky you never left the black box in it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus jumped again.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Isn't that fwightfully luckay. A fellow could not foresee a pick-pocket pinchin' his hat! I have nevah had such a vewy extwaordinawy expwience befoah! Nevah!"

Railway officials, porters, and the general public gathered round, surprised, sympathetic, and excited and gesticulating. The St. Jim's party were the centre of not very welcome attention. They had not come that afternoon to furnish a sensation for the citizens of Cannes!

The man was gone. He had vanished with the hat. That beautiful straw was gone from Gussy's gaze like a beautiful dream! Excitement and sympathy were quite useless for the purpose of recovering the hat!

"I shall have to get a new hat, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus. "I cannot go on to Nice without a hat."

"Let's get out!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors pushed through the crowd and got out of the station. There were hat-shops in the Rue de la Gare, and Arthur Augustus certainly did not want to travel to Nice as a member of the hatless brigade!

"What do you think now?" murmured Manners in Tom Merry's ear, as they went out of the station.

"Pretty clear now!" said Tom.

"I should have been watching the silly ass if he'd kept that black box in the hat—"

"So should I!" said Tom, with a smile.

"Now he's going to get a new one!" said

Manners sarcastically. "I wonder how long he will keep it."

Tom laughed.

"Here's a hat-shop!" said Blake, dragging Arthur Augustus to a halt. "Buck up, Gussy! We're not losing the train."

"I am not suah, Blake, that this is the best quartah for buyin' hats," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I think that pewwaps we had bettah walk wound and make suah—woogh! What are you up to, you ass?" howled Arthur Augustus, as Blake suddenly shouldered him into the shop doorway.

"Helping you in to buy a hat!"

"I wepeat that I am not suah that I can get a good hat here! I wepeat—yawwooooooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as Herries and Dig barged, too, and he went headlong into the hatter's.

"Buck up, Gussy—" called out Tom Merry.

"Don't come out without a hat!" called out Blake. "If you come out without a hat, I'll rumple your hair!"

"You uttah ass—" came a voice from the hatter's.

"Don't jaw!" roared Blake. "Get after that chapeau."

"Tom Mewwy—"

"Yes, old bean!"

"What do you call a stwaw hat in Fwench?"

"Chapeau de paille."

"Oh, yaas, I wemembah now! They call it a hat of stwaw, instead of a stwaw hat! It is watah odd—"

"Have you got that hat yet?" bawled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I give you a minute! If you haven't got a hat by then, you're going on without one!"

"I should uttably wefuse to go on without a hat, Blake."

"Wait till I get hold of your ear!" hissed Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus disappeared into the interior of the chapeliers. By great good fortune, he discovered good straw hats therein. He reappeared with a new straw hat on his head and a satisfied smile on his face.

"All sewene, deah boys! Come on, we shall catch that twain aftah all," said Arthur Augustus cheerily.

Tom Merry & Co. hurried back into the station. They were a little late for the train. But the train was a little late, too, so that was all right.

They boarded the train and rolled away towards Nice. During the run to Nice, Arthur Augustus' sole topic was the very extraordinary circumstance that his hat had been snatched at Cannes. Really, he seemed quite unable to get over his astonishment at that remarkable happening.

"Look out for your tile," said Manners, as the train stopped in the station at Nice.

"Bai Jove! You don't think such a vewy extwaordinawy thing is likely to happen again, Mannahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Wubbish, deah boy! There is not likely to be a hat-snatcher walkin' about Nice as well as Cannes."

"You know best, of course!" remarked Manners sarcastically.

"Weally, Mannahs, it is vewy wemarkable for it to happen once, and weally quite impossible for it to happen twice in the same day!"

Arthur Augustus stepped down from the train. He was quite sure that that remarkable and extraordinary happening at Cannes would not be repeated at Nice.

Really, it was hardly to be supposed that in two different towns on the Riviera there existed thieves with a peculiar propensity for snatching hats! Arthur Augustus had no doubt whatever that his new straw hat was safe on his noble nut.

A man with a bundle of newspapers under his arm approached the party as they came out of the station at Nice. His eyes shot rapidly over the party and fixed on Arthur Augustus.

"'Le Petit Journal,' m'sieur?" He held out newspapers.

"Non, merci!" answered Arthur Augustus politely.

"'Le Figaro'—"

"No, thanks—I mean, non, merci! I do not wequiah a newspapah, thank you vewy much—"

"'Le Temps,' m'sieur—"

"No! No newspapah at all! Weally, I do not want a—whoooop!" yelled Arthur Augustus as the man, suddenly dropping his bundle of newspapers, grabbed at the straw hat, snatched it off Gussy's head, and bolted.

"My hat!" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"Oh crumbs!"

"After him!"

"Great pip!"

But it was useless to pursue the hat-snatcher. He had vanished like a spectre in the crowded street, with the new hat that Arthur Augustus had bought in Cannes. He had bought it in Cannes only to leave it in Nice! And Arthur Augustus, once more barcheaded, stood almost gibbering with amazement.

CHAPTER 13. The Hat-Trick!

"MY hat!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have lost my hat again! That awful wottah was only pwetendin' to sell newspapahs—he was aftah my hat! My new hat—"

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Jack Blake. "What are the blokes in this part of the world collecting Gussy's hats for? They don't seem to want ours."

"It is extwaordinaw! I weally fail to undahstand it! I shall have to buy a new hat! I must have a hat!"

"Gussy must have a hat!" said Lowther. "He's got nothing at present to talk out of."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here, it's no good Gussy buying hats to lose them at this rate," said Blake. "Tie a hanky over your head, Gussy."

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I uttably wefuse to tie a hanky ovah my head! I am goin' to buy a hat."

"Well, get a bottle of glue with it next time, and glue it on!" suggested Herries. "Those hat-guards are no good—they snap! Gum it on."

"Or drive a nail through it into the wood inside!" suggested Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to buy a hat! Let us look for a boucher," said Arthur Augustus.

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"Oh crumbs! Are you going to a butcher's to buy a hat?" gasped Tom Merry.

"I mean a cordonnier!" said Arthur Augustus hastily.

"Bootmakers don't sell hats!"

"Bai Jove! Is a beastly cordonnier a beastly bootmaker! I mean an epicier, of course."

"Oh! A grocer—"

"What is a hattah, then, bothah him?"

"Chapelier!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yaas, of course! How vewy odd it is that I have to keep on askin' you, Tom Mewwy, when I know F'wench evah so much bettah than you do! Twickle on, deah boys, and let us find a chapelier."

The St. Jim's fellows were not long in finding a chapelier. Once more a new straw hat was purchased, and Arthur Augustus emerged from the chapelier's, satisfied once more, though puzzled and perplexed by this incessant loss of hats.

Hatted once more, Arthur Augustus walked on with his friends to the Place Massena, where throngs of the citizens of Nice congregated. D'Arcy was in a wary mood now, and he kept his eyes wide open—and startled a good many Frenchmen who passed near him by giving them watchful glares. Gussy no longer doubted that there might be hat-snatchers in Nice—and he was not going to lose a third hat if he could help it.

The juniors sauntered on to the Promenade des Anglais, fronting the Bay of the Angels and the sea. They walked down that magnificent promenade towards the decorative jetty, where there was a casino, with tea-room and band. There they intended to have their tea.

"Wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus for the umpteenth time. "If that wotten dago was about, I should think that he had guessed somehow that I was goin' to stick that black box in my hat! That would account for this vewy wemarkable sewies of occuwences, deah boys."

"Only the dago isn't about," said Dig, "and if he were, he couldn't know anything about your parking the box in your roof."

"No! It is weally unaccountable! What are you gwinnin' at, Mannahs?"

"Just wondering how long you're going to keep that hat!" answered Manners blandly.

"It will be all wight this time, Mannahs! I am goin' to keep it undah my eyes all the time."

"In this sunshine?" remarked Monty Lowther, "I'd rather keep my eyes under my hat!"

"I mean, I am goin' to keep a watch on it, Lowthah."

"That's a new place for wearing a watch, isn't it? Latest thing?"

"You uttah ass, I do not mean a watch—I mean a watch!" hooted Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I warn you, you'll get a lot of attention if you keep a watch on your hat! I've noticed they have clocks on the stockings here, but I haven't seen any watches on the hats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are wathah dense, Lowthah! Weally, you do not seem to undahstand the vewy simplest thing."

"I understand you, old chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! If that is a joke, I do not see it! Where is the joke?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Trotting along under a new hat!" answered Monty Lowther. "You'll see it all right when

we get to the jetty—there'll be a looking-glass there."

"Wats!"

The juniors arrived at the jetty. They paid for admission, and walked into the building. In one spot there were green tables, with a gambling game going on, to which they paid no heed. There was a band discoursing Offenbach music, and a cafe. They sat down at one of the tables, and Arthur Augustus ordered tea in his best French.

"Cafe," said Arthur Augustus. "That's Fwench for coffee, you fellows, in case you don't know. Pang—"

"Plait-il?" asked the waiter.

"Pang," said Arthur Augustus. "That's bwead, you fellows. How do you say we want buttah on it, Tom Mewwy?"

"They call bread-and-butter tartines."

"Bai Jove! Do they? Tartines," said Arthur Augustus. "How do you say jam, Tom Mewwy?"

"Confiture."

"And confiture," said Arthur Augustus, "and some of those stickay cakes— How do you say cakes, Tom Mewwy? Is it chateaux or couteaux?"

"Gateaux!" said Tom.

"Yaas, I wemembah now! Gateaux," said Arthur Augustus. "Comprenny?"

"Oui, m'sieur!"

"Oh, and milk for the coffee," said Arthur Augustus. "How do you say milk in Fwench, Tom Mewwy?"

"Cafe-au-lait is coffee with milk."

"Yaas, wathah, of course it is! Cafe-au-lait, waitah—I mean, garson. And sugah. How do you say sugah in Fwench, Tom Mewwy?"

"Sucre."

"Wight as wain! And sucre, garcon!"

"Oui, m'sieur!"

"That only shows," remarked Arthur Augustus, as the waiter retired, "how jollay useful it is to know the language when you are twavellin' in a foweign cuntry. You fellows see how easily I ordahed the tea! Just a spot of attention to your Fwench lessons at school, you know, and you're all wight! I'm perfectly pweared to give you fellows some tips on Fwench while we are on this twip, if you like. I mean to say, if you happen to be out without me, you will find it wathah difficult to make the natives undahstand what you want."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean it, deah boys—I am not jokin'!" said Arthur Augustus, puzzled by the merriment round the tea-table. "I am not jokin' at all!"

"You are, old bean," said Blake. "Funniest ass going!"

"Weally, Blake, you will see that the waitah undahstood ewery word I said—you will see that he will bwing the wight things."

And the waiter did!

"They seem to weah their hats in here," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah glad to keep my hat with me, in the circs. I am gettin' wathah tired of buyin' new hats!"

Arthur Augustus removed his hat and laid it on a vacant chair near at hand. Then the juniors had tea, and listened to the band, and watched the crowd in the place, and listened to "Marquez vos jeux!" and "Rien ne va plus!" which floated across from the gaming-tables.

Tea over, they settled the bill, and prepared to leave, to resume their walk round

Nice. Arthur Augustus looked round for his hat.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "Where's my hat?"

"Oh crumbs! Isn't it there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you duffahs cacklin' at? Where's my hat? Has some awful wottah pinched my hat while I was havin' tea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently some awful rotter had! Plenty of people had passed up and down and round about while the juniors were having tea, and one of them, it was clear, had picked up the hat from the chair in passing. Arthur Augustus gazed in dismay and wrath at an empty chair!

"Bai Jove! That's the third hat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to go out without a hat to buy a hat! Bai Jove, it is a feahfully long way to the shops from here! I shall have to walk a feahfully long way without a hat! This is weally distwessin'!"

It was distressing; but there was no help for it! Arthur Augustus walked forth with his friends, with a pink face and no hat!

CHAPTER 14.

Manners on the Spot!

PAWSON was standing in the doorway of the Villa des Fleurs when Tom Merry & Co. came up the path to the villa, after their return from the trip to Nice. His eyes turned curiously on a brand-new straw hat that adorned the noble head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. There was, in fact, quite a peculiar expression on Pawson's fruity face.

"Here we are again, Pawson!" said Arthur Augustus cheerily.

"I trust you have enjoyed your excursion, sir!" murmured Pawson.

"Yaas, wathah! But I have had a most extwordinawy expwience, Pawson."

"Indeed, sir!"

"You wemembah I parked that black box in my hat, Pawson?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I should have lost it, Pawson, if I had left it in my hat."

"Eh?"

"Findin' it wathah uncomfortable in my hat, Pawson, I twansferred it to my pocket befoah we got to the station—"

"Oh!"

"And you will hardly believe, Pawson, that I have had my hat snatched three times while I have been out this afternoon."

"Three times!" gasped Pawson.

"Yaas; one old hat and two new hats!" said Arthur Augustus. "This hat is anothah new one, Pawson. I have been watchin' it like anythin' on the way back, aftah losin' three, you know. But wasn't it feahfully lucky, Pawson, that that black box wasn't in my hat at all?"

"Oh! Yes! Quite! Very!" gasped Pawson. "I—I—I trust the—the black box is—is quite safe, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah! In this pocket!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "But if I had left it in my hat, you know, it would have been a gonah! Don't you think it was feahfully lucky I nevah left it there?"

"Extremely so, sir!" said Pawson.

"Come on, you fellows—we haven't much time left to change for dinmah!" said Arthur Augustus.

Pawson's eyes followed the juniors as they went to their rooms. His expression was very expressive. Perhaps Pawson wondered whether he was ever going to get hold of that box!

Tom Merry & Co. were early to bed that night. Bright and early in the morning they were going to turn out to take off in the Silver Swallow and resume their flight.

Blake, Herries, and Dig, as usual, were in D'Arcy's room. Now that the dago was—they hoped, at least—done with, that precaution did not seem so necessary; but it was possible that Giuseppe might turn up again, like a bad penny, and Gussy's chums were not taking chances.

Tom Merry turned in, in his own room, and was fast asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow.

From that balmy slumber he was suddenly awakened by a shake, and at the same moment a hand was pressed over his mouth.

"Quiet!" whispered a voice.

Tom started up. He did not, for the moment, recognise Manners' voice, and he was startled.

Crack!

"Ow!" gasped Manners, forgetting caution for the moment.

"What——" exclaimed Tom.

"You potty ass! You've smashed my nose with your silly head! Ow!"

"What the thump——"

"Idiot!"

"But what——"

"Goat!"

"Have you woke me up specially to pay me a lot of compliments?"

"Chump!"

"Carry on!" said Tom resignedly. "I'll go to sleep again when you've finished."

Manners rubbed his nose.

"Listen to me, you fathead, and don't make a row, you chump! I don't want all the villa to hear, you burbler, and all Cannes as well, you blitherer!"

"Got a pain in your nose?" asked Tom.

"Yes, ass!"

"One in your temper, too?"

"Idiot! Listen to me, and don't roar. Gussy as good as told me to mind my own business about that mouldy black box——"

"Oh, rot!"

"But I'm not going to let him be done in, all the same," muttered Manners. "See?"

Tom sat up, blinking in the dark.

"Mean to say that there's somebody after that perishing black box now?" he hissed. "I'm getting fed-up with that black box."

"Same here! But what I mean to say is, that Pawson gave those Fourth Form chaps their coffee after dinner."

"Why shouldn't he? He always waits on Gussy."

"No reason why he shouldn't—lots of reasons why he should, in fact, if he would rather snaffle that mouldy box and bolt with it instead of going on with us in the plane to-morrow!" jeered Manners. "I don't suppose he's satisfied with the collection of hats collected for him to-day. It's the black box he wants."

"But," muttered Tom—"but——"

"Understudying a billy-goat?"

"It's too thick——"

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"Don't talk about your head now. Turn out!"

"A! I don't think——"

"I know that; you can't! Turn out!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom resignedly. He turned out, slipped on slippers and a dressing-gown, and followed Manners.

The passage was as black as pitch. Manners stepped softly along to D'Arcy's room with Tom at his heels, and opened the door.

They entered silently, and Manners shut the door without a sound.

The french windows were open for air, but the slatted volets were shut and locked over the window; entrance would not have been easy from without. The interior of the room was quite dark.

"I say, those fellows will be fearfully startled if we wake them up suddenly in the dark," whispered Tom uneasily. "May think it's the dago got in——"

"They won't wake up in a hurry!"

"Um!"

There was a flash of light as Manners turned on an electric torch. He stepped to D'Arcy's bed.

The swell of St. Jim's was fast asleep. Manners gave him a shake, and then another shake. Arthur Augustus mumbled and stirred, but he did not wake. Tom Merry watched in silence.

Silently Manners moved in turn to three other beds, one after another. Blake, Herries, and Digby were shaken in turn. None of them wakened.

"What do you think now?" breathed Manners.

"The awful rascal!" muttered Tom.

"A sleeping-draught—same as Gussy had in the garden," whispered Manners. "New dodge of Pawson—something he got in Cannes, of course. It won't hurt them; they'll never know they had it. But what would have happened here if I'd gone to sleep?"

Tom did not reply. It was only too clear what would have happened. But for Manners the black box would have vanished, Pawson, no doubt, vanishing along with it!

"Squat on this ottoman," said Manners.

"Sorry to make you lose your beauty sleep, old man, but if he found only one fellow awake he might put that fellow to sleep with the butt of the gun he carries in his pocket. I'd rather not have a bad headache in the morning."

The two juniors sat down on the ottoman, and Manners shut off the light.

Tom Merry had no doubt now, and he was no longer sleepy. His nerves were strung taut as he waited and watched in the dark with Manners. When would Pawson come? He doubted no more than Manners that Pawson would come. Likely enough, he would leave it late, to make sure that the whole household was fast asleep before he came.

A long hour, more than an hour, crawled by. Then there was a faint sound at the door, and Tom felt his heart thump. He was conscious, though he could not see him in the dense darkness, that Manners had risen to his feet.

The softest of stealthy footfalls was audible in the stillness. Tom felt his heart beat almost to suffocation. Someone was in the room!

Then suddenly there came a flash of light as Manners flashed on the pocket-torch in his left hand. And even as the light flashed on Manners dashed across to the door and his right fist shot out.

Crash!

Bump!

"Oh!" came a startled howl.
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom, following Manners. On the floor, blinking and panting in the glare of the electric torch, sat Pawson, a red stream running down his portly nose. Manners' knuckles had landed fair and square!

That sudden jolt had taken Pawson utterly by surprise.

He sat and spluttered and blinked. Manners stared down at him in the light.

"Dear me!" said Manners. "Is that you, Pawson?"

"Oh! Ow! Ooogh! What— Oh!" Pawson strove to collect himself. "What— He staggered to his feet, dabbing his nose, gasping for breath, and gurgling. "Is—is that— Who is that?"

"Quite a surprise!" said Manners. "What the dickens did you come in here in the dark for, Pawson? I took you for a burglar and hit out."

"Oh!" gasped Pawson.

Master of himself as Lord Eastwood's man was, it was not easy for him to recover self-control.

"You—you—you took me for a burglar, sir!" he gasped.

"Certainly I did!" said Manners—a perfectly truthful statement. "What the dickens did you expect, creeping in here in the dark?"

"I heard a sound, sir," stammered Pawson. "I was awakened, sir, by some sound, and I—I came to see whether Master Arthur was safe—"

"Oh, I see! Gussy's all right," said Manners. "Right as rain!"

"But—but what are you boys doing up at this time of night?" asked Pawson, with a handkerchief to his nose. "Why are you here?"

"Tom woke up," said Manners. "Something woke him, I think. Didn't it, Tom?"

"Yes," gasped Tom.

"So we came here," said Manners. "Your nose hurt?"

"A—a little, sir. Pray do not mention it—such a mistake was really unavoidable." Pawson was the perfect Pawson again. "If your boys would like to return to bed I will remain here for a time—"

"No; as you heard a sound I think we'd better stay," said Manners with cheerful irony. "Those Fourth Form chaps seem to be sleeping like Rip Van Winkle. We'll hang on. That sound you heard may mean that somebody's prowling about, you know."

Pawson, with his handkerchief to his nose, went to the door. At the door he paused.

"Perhaps you would like me to bring you some coffee, sir?" he murmured.

"That's awfully good of you, Pawson," said Manners heartily.

"Not at all, sir!"

"But we won't give you the trouble," Manners shook his head.

"No trouble at all, sir, I assure you."

"Like some coffee, Tom?" asked Manners. "Pawson makes jolly good coffee."

"No, thanks!" gasped Tom.

"I don't think I will either. Good-night, Pawson!" smiled Manners.

"Good-night, sir!"

The door closed on Pawson.

"Manners, old man—" whispered Tom.

"Well?"

"I believe he knows you suspect him."

"Let him!" said Manners. "He won't get Gussy's black box away from him in a hurry while I'm on the spot. We'll take it in turns to snooze on that ottoman, Tom. Fancy me taking Pawson for a burglar and getting him right on the boko!"

Tom Merry chuckled. Manners chuckled, too. Manners was highly satisfied. It was probable that Pawson, caressing a damaged nose in his room, was feeling a good deal less satisfied than Harry Manners.

"Bai Jove!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Look!"

It was bright morning.

The Silver Swallow was rising. The flying schoolboys, once more on board the passenger plane, gazed down from the windows at the Villa des Fleurs, falling swiftly away from view.

The fat figure of Monsieur Boulanger could still be seen waving adieu. But it was at another figure that Arthur Augustus pointed, with an excited shout. That was a figure on the Boulevard du Midi between the villa and the sea—with a swarthy face and black, beady eyes, staring up at the plane as it rose.

"The dago!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, watah!"

Giuseppe had returned. He had returned in time to see the flying schoolboys disappear out of his reach.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Seven laughing faces looked down at the dago as he shook his fist and glared rage after the departing plane. A few moments more, and Giuseppe was only a speck on the white boulevard, and then he disappeared entirely as the Silver Swallow soared onward and upward into the blue.

Next Wednesday: "THE HUNTED SCHOOL-BOYS!"

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THE GHOST HUNTERS!

Frank Richards & Co. are grimly resolved to clear up the mystery of the haunted mine—and not even a terrifying white phantom can turn them from their purpose!

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

Catching Gunten!

"**H**ERE come the funks!" Frank Richards & Co. looked round quickly. Frank and his chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, had just arrived at Cedar Creek School. As they dismounted from their horses that jeering exclamation fell on their ears.

It was Kern Gunten, the Swiss, who spoke. Gunten was standing in the gateway grinning, and several other fellows with him were grinning, too.

"How's your cold feet?" chuckled Eben Hacke. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards & Co. flushed, and they came towards Gunten with somewhat grim looks.

"Are you calling us funks, Gunten?" asked Bob Lawless.

"I guess we've heard the yarn," answered the Swiss. "We've had it from Chunky Todgers. He's told us how you vamoosed from the ghost in the haunted mine."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank.

"I—I say—" stammered Chunky Todgers, who was in the crowd at the gate of the lumber school. "I didn't say you were funks. I bolted just the same as you did—and I'm as brave as a lion!"

"As brave as a jack-rabbit!" roared Hacke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a picture it must have been!" chortled Gunten. "I can just fancy it—the wind blew in the old mine, and they thought it was a ghost, and vamoosed. Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of Cedar Creek were crimson. They could not deny the imputation. They were not funks certainly; but equally certainly they had cleared out of Bailey's bonanza in remarkably quick time when they were exploring the old tunnel the previous evening. It was evident that their old enemy Gunten intended to make the most of the unfortunate occurrence.

"We—we just ran, that's all!" protested Chunky Todgers. "It was awful, you chaps! The ghost was groaning—"

"Ha, ha!"

"And a ghostly finger touched me on the neck—"

"Pile it on!" exclaimed Hacke, doubled up with mirth. "Make it thicker, Chunky!"

"That's true enough," said Frank Richards quietly. "I don't believe in ghosts, of course, but there was something jolly queer in the old mine. There was something that touched us in the dark; it startled us."

"Scared you, you mean!" grinned Gunten.

"Well, perhaps we were a bit scared," confessed Frank. "It was horribly uncanny. But we're jolly well going there again to see what it was. If you call us funks, Gunten, you'll get into trouble!"

The Swiss shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you call it yourself, then?" he sneered. "I guess you had cold feet!"

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Frank Richards clenched his hands. But Bob Lawless drew his chum back.

"Leave the galoot to me," he said. "Now, Gunten, my buck, you say we had cold feet because we lit out. Wouldn't you have done it?"

"I'm not a funk," answered Gunten disdainfully. "I wouldn't run from a sound in the dark."

"That's what you say," said Bob. "Well, we ran, and we own it—though we're going back, and we won't run next time. But as you wouldn't run, Gunten, and you're pleased to call us funks, you can explore the old mine this evening yourself, with some of us there to see whether you run or not."

Gunten started a little.

"I guess I've no time to waste on it," he answered. "It's too much trouble for nothing!"

"But it isn't for nothing!" struck in Dick Dawson. "You've called these chaps funks, and it's up to you. And if you don't agree—"

"If you don't agree, Gunten, we'll ride you on a rail!" said Bob Lawless determinedly. "You shoot off your mouth too much, my pippin!"

"You bet!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers. "Ride him on a rail, and stick white feathers on him if he won't go."

"I guess we will," said Bob.

Gunten backed away a pace. He had fairly landed himself in his keenness to score over the chums of the lumber school. He could not refuse the challenge without confessing that he was afraid to venture into the haunted mine.

There were mocking laughs on all sides now. Bob Lawless had succeeded in turning the laugh against the Swiss.

"Funk!" yelled Chunky Todgers. "Yah!"

"Cold feet!" howled Eben Hacke.

Gunten drew a quick breath.

"I'll show you whether I'm afraid!" he exclaimed at last. "I'll go! You—you fellows can come and watch me if you like."

"Done!" said Vere Beauclerc. "After lessons to-day?"

"Yes," said Gunten desperately.

"I guess we'll all come," said Lawrence. "And I reckon we'll see Gunten bolting out of the tunnel like a jack-rabbit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The school bell rang, and the Cedar Creek fellows trooped into the school-room.

When lessons were over quite a crowd of fellows gathered round the Swiss. Seven or eight of the Cedar Creek boys mounted to ride to Bailey's bonanza and see Gunten through it.

Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc were in the party, and they kept a sharp watch on Gunten. They were quite prepared for the Swiss to bolt if he could.

The trail lay past the town of Thompson, where Gunten's home was, and when Thompson came in sight Gunten drew rein.

"Come on!" chuckled Bob Lawless.

"I guess I ought to be getting home," muttered Gunten. "I—I forgot that—that there's a

lot of truck to be taken to Injun Dick's shack, and I've got to take it."

"Injun Dick can wait," said Bob. "You're coming with us now."

"Look here——"

Bob Lawless took hold of Gunten's rein and led on his horse. The Swiss scowled savagely, but he gave in; and the party of schoolboys rode on into the foothills.

Gunten Has Enough!

BAILEY'S bonanza looked dark and gloomy when the bunch of riders stopped in the lonely gulch in the Thompson foothills. The black tunnel opened in the hillside, yawning dark and grim and extremely uninviting.

"There you are, Gunten," grinned Chunky Todgers. "Mind you don't run when you feel a touch behind you in the dark."

Gunten shivered.

"I—I guess I forgot to bring a lantern," he muttered.

"I've got one," answered Bob Lawless.

Gunten gritted his teeth. There was no help for it, and he took the lantern and advanced with slow steps towards the opening in the adit.

The schoolboys stood in a group by their horses and watched him. They were not laughing now, however. There was something so gloomy in the black tunnel and in the evil reputation of the place that it had a sobering effect upon their spirits.

Gunten entered the mouth of the horizontal tunnel, or adit. The tunnel had been driven deep into the hillside by Bailey, the original

owner of the bonanza, the unfortunate miner whose restless phantom was supposed to haunt the old mine-workings.

"Waal, he's gone in," said Eben Hacke. "I guess I shouldn't specially care about goin' in there alone."

"I guess Gunten doesn't care for it," said Bob Lawless.

The schoolboys watched the tunnel with interest, wondering how long Gunten would remain within. It was not for long.

"Here he comes!" shouted Todgers.

Kern Gunten reappeared at the mouth of the tunnel. His face was white, and his eyes almost starting from his head. His hands were empty. Evidently he had dropped the lantern. He was running frantically. He came out of the tunnel at furious speed and ran to the group of schoolboys.

"What did you see?" exclaimed Chunky Todgers.

Gunten gasped.

"Where's the lantern?" demanded Bob.

"I—I guess I dropped it. It went out." Gunten shuddered. "I—I heard him! I heard it!"

His voice quavered away.

"You heard the wind in the tunnel," said Lawrence.

"I—I'm going. I wouldn't go in there again for the biggest bonanza in British Columbia!" said Gunten, shivering. "I—I'm going!"

He clambered on his horse as he spoke.

"Who's the funk now?" chortled Chunky Todgers.

Gunten did not reply to that. He cut his horse with the whip and galloped away. The rest



From the blackness ahead a strange white figure loomed up, eerily, uncannily, with waving arms. For a moment Frank Richards & Co. stared, and then without stopping to think they dashed back out of the tunnel.

of the party followed him, except Frank, Bob, and Beauclerc. They were there to explore the mine again, and they meant to do it.

Bob looked at his chums as the hoofbeats died away down the gulch.

"We're going in?" he asked.

"Yes!" said Beauclerc quietly, and Frank Richards nodded.

"That jay has dropped my lantern," said Bob. "I've got matches, though, and we can find it, I guess."

The three chums approached the opening of the tunnel. From the black depths of the mine came a faint, moaning sound.

"It's the wind," said Beauclerc. "That isn't like the howl we heard before."

"We'll chance it, anyway."

Bob Lawless struck a match and the trio entered the mine. Keeping close together, they pressed on, Bob striking match after match, and scanning the rough, rocky floor of the tunnel for the lost lantern. He stumbled on it at last, a dozen yards from the opening.

Frank Richards picked up the lantern, and Bob put the match to the wick. The chums were glad enough to have the light. Then they pressed on to the end of the tunnel, Bob Lawless flashing the light to and fro.

From the cross-adits came the moaning of the wind, with a strange, eerie sound, which made them shiver, in spite of themselves. But that was all.

"I guess the ghost has gone on strike," remarked Bob Lawless. "And if it was a practical joker, he doesn't happen to be here now."

"That's it!" agreed Frank.

Having explored the main tunnel, the schoolboys retraced their steps and explored the cross-adits in turn. Two or three of the cross-tunnels, they found, opened out on the hillside, and they came out in daylight several times.

In one of them, however, which ended in a wall of solid rock, Bob Lawless came to a sudden halt, with an exclamation. He placed the lantern close to the rocky wall and examined it intently. There was a yellow gleam from the uneven surface.

"Gold!" he said.

"Bob!"

"Not a bonanza," said Bob, laughing. "but there's gold in paying quantities, I reckon. And it's been worked!"

"The mine hasn't been worked for years," said Beauclerc, "not since Bill Bailey drowned himself in the creek."

Bob pointed to the rock.

"That rock's been worked within a few days," he answered. "Somebody's been sneaking in and working it, and getting small quantities of gold—enough to pay his grub-stakes, I reckon. Look at that. You can see it's a fresh cutting."

Frank Richards nodded.

"By gum, it looks like it!" he said. "That lets in some light, Bob. Somebody has been working the mine and playing ghost to keep off outsiders!"

"That's how I figure it out," said Bob. "I—hark!"

A low, moaning sound came from the darkness behind, and the chums looked round quickly. Darkness met their gaze.

"Only—only the wind!" muttered Frank.

"That's what scared Gunten," said Bob. "But we're done here. Let's get out. We're coming again, though. We're going to talk to that

galoot who gave us a scare yesterday when we catch him at the game."

The trio left the cross-adit and followed the main tunnel to the open air. Bob Lawless extinguished the lantern as they came out into the daylight. He was looking very thoughtful as they mounted their horses to ride home.

"The jay that's been working that mine has no right to," he said. "It's claimed by a relation of old Bailey's, and it's up for sale in Thompson now. He ought to be stopped. Anyhow, we're going to give him a lesson about playing ghost and scaring folks."

With a clatter of hoofs they rode out of the gulch.

Bob Lawless is Suspicious!

"INJUN DICK!"

Bob Lawless uttered that exclamation as the chums of Cedar Creek rode out of the lonely gulch towards the Thompson trail. Ahead of them was a well-known figure, draped in a tattered blanket. It was Ka-noon-ka, known in the Thompson Valley as "Injun Dick."

When the chums had last seen him Injun Dick had been in a state of prosperity. He had purchased a new blanket and leggings at Gunten's store, and other finery, and the saloon-keepers of Thompson had been kept quite busy by his insatiate demands for the white man's firewater.

Evidently, the white man's firewater had banished Injun Dick's short-lived prosperity, for the Redskin was once more in his tattered old blanket, which looked as if it might have been picked up out of a dust heap.

He was tramping into the gulch when the schoolboys came upon him, and he lifted his head and stared at them for a moment, with a gleam in his black eyes.

"Hallo, Injun Dick!" said Bob Lawless cheerily, slackening rein.

"Wah!" said the Indian gravely.

"I hear you've been painting the town red," said Bob, with a shake of the head.

Injun Dick grinned faintly.

"Ka-noon-ka great firewater chief!" he said proudly. "Wah! Injun Dick bully boy with glass eye!"

The chums of Cedar Creek grinned. The Apache had picked up the white man's language in the mining camps and ranches, and it was curious to hear the slang of the frontier pronounced with deep and solemn gravity.

"You'd better let the firewater alone, old scout," said Bob Lawless seriously. "Heap bad for Redskins, you know."

Injun Dick shook his head and tramped on.

The chums resumed their journey in silence. Bob Lawless' brow was knitted in deep thought.

"By gum!" he exclaimed suddenly. "What was that old whisky-skin doing in the gulch?"

Frank Richards stared.

"Blessed if I know!" he answered. "What does it matter?"

"He wasn't far from Bill Bailey's bonanza when we met him."

"I suppose he's not going ghost-hunting?" said Vere Beauclerc, with a smile.

"I guess not. He might be going ghost-playing, if any galoot came along to look at the mine while he's there," said Bob Lawless coolly.

"My hat!"

"He's been in great funds, on and off, for some time," said Bob. "It's pretty plain he's

made a strike somewhere in the hills. I begin to smell a mouse."

"By Jove!" said Frank Richards, with a deep breath "You think he's been playing ghost—"

"Well, I guess it looks jolly likely!" said Bob.

"He must have been laughing in his sleeve when he met us just now, if that's the case," said Frank.

"I guess he was!" growled Bob Lawless. "But I guess we'll make him laugh another way if we catch him in the mine! The old rascal would be put in the calaboose if it was known he was lifting the gold from Bill Bailey's bonanza. We won't give him away to the sheriff, but we'll jolly well put a stop to his tricks, if that's his game!"

And Bob's chums agreed.

The Ghost-Hunters!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. grinned at the sight of Kern Gunten the next day at the lumber school. Gunten's adventure in the old mine, and his ignominious flight from the moanings of the wind in the abandoned workings, was the joke of Cedar Creek now.

The Swiss had a good deal of chipping to stand from the Cedar Creek fellows, and his face was sullen and lowering during lessons that day. His glance when it rested on Frank Richards & Co. in the school-room, was not pleasant. He attributed his discomfiture to them, though he might more justly have attributed it to himself.

After lessons he followed the chums into the playground.

"I hear that you're going to the haunted mine again," he said.

"Correct," answered Bob.

"To-day?"

"Yes; we're going there now. Like to come?" grinned Bob.

"Nope!"

Gunten mounted his horse, and rode away at a gallop. He was out of sight by the time Frank Richards & Co. started up the trail. The three rode at a leisurely pace, and it was some time later when they entered the gulch in the foothills.

"Here we are for the third time," said Frank Richards, laughing as they dismounted and tethered their horses.

"By gum! Gunten came here, after all!" exclaimed Bob. "Look!"

Bob Lawless raised his hand and pointed. Far away up the gulch, through an opening of the pine-trees, a rider appeared in sight, riding away at a great rate. Distant as he was, the chums recognised Kern Gunten.

"That's jolly queer!" said Frank Richards, in amazement. "What has Gunten been doing here? Not exploring the mine, I'll bet!"

"Jolly queer!" said Beauclerc, equally puzzled.

Bob Lawless shook his head. He gave it up.

"Let's get in," he said.

The lantern was lighted, and the three chums entered the tunnel. A dozen yards from the opening they came to a sudden halt. From the blackness ahead a strange white figure loomed up, eerily, uncannily, with waving arms.

For a moment they stared, aghast, at the phantom figure, and then, without stopping to think, they dashed back out of the tunnel.

"G-G-Great Scott!" muttered Frank Richards, as he stumbled out of the mine tunnel. "You—you fellows saw that?"

The three exchanged dismayed glances. Bob Lawless set his lips.

"It's a trick!" he exclaimed fiercely. "It's somebody playing ghost! Injun Dick, or somebody else! Come on!"

"You—you're going in again?" muttered Frank.

"Hang it—yes! And I'm going to heave a rock at that chap, and teach him a wrinkle about playing ghost!" exclaimed Bob savagely.

He caught up a chunk of rock from the ground, and turned back to the mine. Frank and Beauclerc followed his example. Gripping the stones in their hands, they crept into the tunnel again.

From the blackness the white, ghostly figure loomed ahead. It was eerie, uncanny, and, in spite of their belief that it was a trick, the sight made the blood rush to their hearts. But they did not hesitate.

"Look out, whoever you are!" called out Bob Lawless. "I'm going to heave a rock!"

The ghostly figure did not move. Bob Lawless kept his word. His hand went up, and the heavy stone flew through the air. It struck the ghostly figure, and there was a faint sound. But the figure did not fall, and there was no cry, no exclamation. Yet the blow had been a hard one.

Bob Lawless caught his breath. No living thing could have received that missile in dead silence, and he knew it. What did it mean?

"Heave your rocks!" he muttered, in a strained whisper.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc obeyed, and the two heavy stones whizzed through the air.

Crash!

The figure fell without a cry. It lay extended on the floor of the tunnel, glimmering white in the gloom.

"What—what is it?" muttered Beauclerc.

"I'm going to see," said Bob Lawless.

Keeping the lantern light before him, Bob strode on determinedly, his chums at his heels. They reached the ghostly figure extended on the floor.

"M-m-my hat!" stuttered Frank Richards, as he looked down at it in the lantern light.

Bob Lawless burst into a breathless chuckle. They could see what the mysterious figure was now—several branches of pine tied together, with white cloth draped over them. Three or four boulders had been heaped round the pine-branches to keep them in an upright position, and the white cloth, fluttering in the wind, had given the impression of the waving, ghostly arms.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another rather sheepishly.

"Gunten, of course," said Frank.

"You bet!" growled Bob. "That's why he rode here ahead of us, to set up this goldarned scarecrow to give us a scare!"

"And he succeeded," said Frank, with a rather rueful laugh. "No wonder it didn't yell when it got the stones."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of the three chums, reassured now, rang along the old rocky tunnel, echoing into the black depths. It was followed by

another sound. From somewhere in the old workings there came a shrill, ear-piercing cry.

"You hear that?" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "It's the ghost again at his old tricks. He won't scare us out this time."

"No fear!" muttered Frank.

Bob Lawless' grip closed on the coiled trail-ropes he held in one hand. The trail-ropes were for the ghost, if he found him.

Silence followed the cry, save for the moaning of the mountain wind in the hollows of the old adits.

"Come on!" said Bob. "It's a trick, and we're going to nail the galoot!"

They went on, the lantern light flashing to and fro as they went. Again that eerie cry came echoing through the adits, and they rushed in the direction whence it came; but they found only solid rock. Again and again it came, and each time as they searched they were baffled.

"The galoot's dodged in the side adits," muttered Bob. "I guess we're going to find him, if we keep it up all night. He won't play ghost so lively after I've laid this trail-rope round his carcass."

"Let's look in the adit where we found the new working," muttered Beauclerc.

"Good idea, Cherub!"

Bob Lawless led the way, and they turned into the cross-adit they had explored the previous evening, where the signs had been visible of fresh working at the auriferous rock. There was a strange scent in the adit as they progressed, which they recognised in a moment or two.

"Oil!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "There's been oil burning here."

Bob Lawless chuckled softly.

"Of course. He couldn't work in the dark. He had a lantern, and blew it out when he heard us in the tunnel."

They reached the termination of the adit, and Bob uttered an exclamation as he flashed the light on the recent workings.

"I guess that settles it."

It did indeed settle it. There were traces of fresh chipping on the rock, and at their feet lay a pick and an extinguished lantern. The unknown gold-seeker had evidently been at work in the adit when the sounds in the tunnel warned him of the approach of the explorers. He had thrown down his tools, extinguished the lantern, and resorted to the old trickery to frighten away the newcomers.

Frank Richards picked up the lantern and lit it. The wick was still warm.

"I guess that'll be useful to us!" grinned Bob Lawless.

"Hark!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Echoing down the adit came the hideous yell of the "ghost." The schoolboys ran back towards the main tunnel, the lights flashing before them.

Crash, crash!

The lanterns went crashing to the floor, struck out of their hands by whizzing chunks of rock. The lights were instantly extinguished. Darkness descended like a blanket on the three chums in the adit.

"Come on!" shouted Bob. "Ghosts don't throw rocks, I guess. Come on! We're close on the galoot!"

He rushed on, his chums after him, excited and angry. There was a howl from Bob Lawless as

he tumbled over a loose boulder and rolled on the ground.

"Look out!" he gasped. "He's close! I touched him!"

Frank Richards, groping in the darkness, felt his hands come in contact with a human form, and he grasped it instantly.

"I've got him!" he shouted.

As he spoke he bore the figure to the ground with a crash, sprawling across him in the darkness. A wild howl came from underneath him.

"Groogh! Oh! Ah!"

"Keep still, you rotter!" shouted Frank, as his prisoner struggled frantically. "I've got you! I—"

"Leggo!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Leggo!" It was Bob Lawless' voice. "Leggo, you mad gopher! Yow-ow-ow!"

The Last of the Ghost!

FRANK RICHARDS released his prisoner as suddenly as if he had become red-hot. Bob Lawless sat up breathlessly.

"Groogh! Oh! You jay, wharrer you up to?" he shrieked.

"Oh, my hat! Is it you, Bob?" gasped Frank.

"I—I thought it was the ghost!"

"Groogh! You nearly busted my nose on the ground!" groaned Bob, staggering to his feet.

"Oh, Jerusalem! Ow!"

"Sorry!" gasped Frank. "You said he was close."

"So he was—I touched him." Bob set his teeth. "We'll have the rotter yet! He can't dodge us for keeps!"

In the intense darkness the chums groped their way out of the adit into the main tunnel. Far in the distance a speck of daylight appeared at the end of the tunnel, and even as they sighted it, it was blotted out by a dark shadow.

Bob Lawless groped for a stone.

"He's between us and the gulch!" he muttered. "Keep behind me while I heave the rock. I guess I've got him this time!"

Bob hurled the rock with all his force, aiming low so as to take effect on the legs of the figure in the darkness. He did not want to injure the man who was playing ghost, exasperated as he was.

A sudden, terrific yell rang through the tunnel. Bob's missile had got home at last. Bob laughed breathlessly.

"I guess that was a bullseye!" he exclaimed jubilantly.

"Come on!" panted Beauclerc.

The three chums rushed on down the tunnel. They were close behind the fugitive as he reached the opening on the hillside. Bob Lawless, ahead of his chums, caught at a tattered blanket that floated behind the running man.

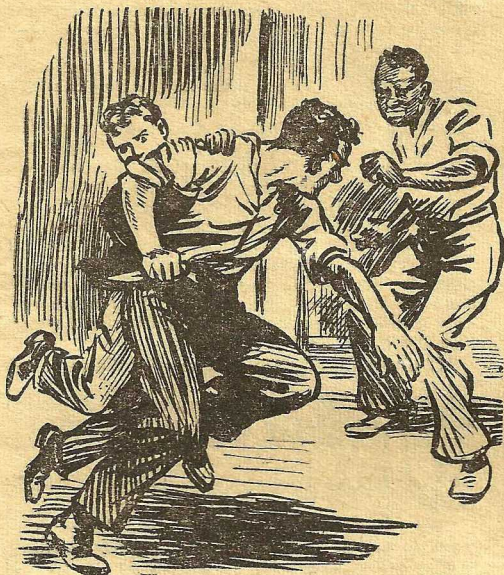
"Stop!" he shouted. "We've got you, Injun Dick!"

"It's Injun Dick!" exclaimed Frank Richards breathlessly.

"You bet!"

It was the Apache, as they saw when the running man halted and whirled round on them. For a moment there was ferocity in the coppery face of the Indian. But he remembered himself, and the look passed, and his coppery features took on their customary stolid expression.

(Continued on page 36.)



Knife in hand, Slaney made a spring at Tin Tacks, his swarthy face distorted with fury. But as he sprang, Jack Drake made a jump at him and caught him by the shoulder.

Old Foes!

“THE sun’s rim dips; the stars rush out; At one stride comes the dark!”

Dick Rodney quoted the lines as he stood, with a group of the Benbow juniors, watching Barbados rise from the sea in the sunset. Red in the west, the sun sank into the waters in a blaze of purple and gold. From the waste of the waters astern darkness was already creeping.

“Not much twilight here,” remarked Jack Drake.

“Jolly good scenery, you know!” said Tuckey Toodles critically. “If the grub is as good as the scenery Barbados will do. Are those lines from Shakespeare, Rodney?”

“No, ass—Coleridge!”

“Coleridge? Never heard of him,” said Tuckey. “We haven’t had him in class, have we?”

The juniors chuckled. Tuckey Toodles’ knowledge of literature was strictly confined to the amount hammered into his head by Mr. Packe. Beyond that limit Tuckey had no desire to stray.

“We shall make Barbados in the morning,” said Rodney, “and then poor old Tin Tacks has to go ashore.”

“Jolly good thing, too!” grunted Tuckey Toodles. “I don’t like that nigger. He’s cheeky!”

“Fathead!” said Drake.

Jack Drake went below, with rather a thoughtful expression on his face. He had taken a liking to Tin Tacks, the coloured gentleman of Barbados, whom he had rescued from the sea, and the black man’s desire to remain with him touched the junior.

He had ventured to hint to Mr. Packe that he would like Tin Tacks to stay on board the

The STOWAWAY!

By Owen Conquest.

Benbow, but the Fourth Form master had poo-pooed the suggestion at once.

Tin Tacks was in Cabin No. 3 when Drake came in. In spite of the fact that his services had been declined with thanks, the coloured gentleman seemed to have constituted himself personal attendant in the cabin. He had washed up after tea, at which he had been a guest, and now he was tidying up the cabin.

“Hallo! You still here, Tin Tacks?” said Drake.

“Me still here, Mass’ Jack.”

“I’ve spoken to Mr. Packe about you, Tin Tacks, but it’s no go,” said Drake. “I’m afraid you’ll have to go ashore in Barbados.”

The black man’s face fell.

“No like go ‘shore,” he said. “Like stay on ship and look after Mass’ Jack. What me do now?”

“There isn’t anything to do, old bean,” said the junior. “We look after ourselves here. Hallo, Slaney! What do you want?”

Drake glanced round as Peg Slaney, the steward’s mate, squinted into the cabin with his single eye.

“Message from Master Daubeny, sir,” said Slaney civilly. “He’d like you to go to supper in his cabin— Hallo!”

The one-eyed seaman broke off abruptly as he

Tin Tacks, the Barbadian Jack Drake saved from the sea, makes his presence felt aboard the floating school. But when it’s time for him to leave the Benbow he’s conspicuous by his absence!

saw Tin Tacks. Slaney had been below when the Barbadian gentleman was picked up, and this was his first meeting with Tin Tacks. Drake, to his astonishment, saw that he was acquainted with the black man of Barbados.

“You here on board the Benbow?” ejaculated Slaney.

Tin Tacks fixed his eyes on the one-eyed seaman.

“You know Tin Tacks, Slaney?” asked Drake, in surprise.

Slaney did not reply. He was watching the negro like a cat, evidently in expectation of an attack.

Tin Tacks’ black good-humoured face had grown grim and menacing, and he came towards the one-eyed seaman with a glitter in his eyes.

Jack Drake ran between them just in time. He pushed the negro back.

“Hold on, you duffer!” he exclaimed. “What

the thump's the matter with you? You can't fight here!"

"Let him come on, sir!" said Slaney, with an evil grin. "I'll tan his black hide for him, like I've done afore!"

"You won't do anything of the sort!" exclaimed Drake sharply. "Stand back!"

Peg Slaney shrugged his shoulders and left the cabin.

"Now, what the thump does this mean?" asked Drake. "You're not going to scrap with Slaney."

"Name not Slaney," said Tin Tacks. "Name Paquito."

"I dare say he's had a good many names in his time," said Drake. "So you knew him when he was called Paquito?"

Tin Tacks nodded.

"Me know dat white trash on de Orinoco!" he said. "Dat when me servant to berry grand white gentleman. Him beat me with rawhide. Me gib dat debble hiding, Mass' Jack, now me see him!"

"What did he beat you for?" asked the junior.

Tin Tacks explained. Paquito had robbed his master, the white gentleman, of a valuable paper, and Tin Tacks had followed him to recover it. Paquito and his associates had seized him in the chaparral, and beaten him with a rawhide whip and left him insensible. Jack Drake started as he listened. He remembered the mysterious Spanish document in Slaney's possession, about which Daubeny of the Shell had been so curious.

"Was the paper in Spanish, Tin Tacks?" he asked.

"Yes, Mass' Jack; me no read him, but me see him. My gentleman jolly waxy when he lose him paper."

"By Jove, I shouldn't wonder if that's the paper the rogue's got about him now!" said Drake. "But you must let him alone in the Benbow, Tin Tacks. And Captain Topcastle would be down on you if you kicked up a row."

"Me savvy."

And Drake left the Barbadian gentleman busying himself in Cabin No. 8, and looked for Dick Rodney to take him to supper in Daub's cabin.

Black Against White!

VERNON DAUBENY of the Shell greeted Drake and Rodney with great cordiality when they arrived in his quarters. Since Daub had made friends with Drake, Rodney had contrived to keep on good terms with him.

Daub's cabin-mates, Torrence and Egan, were barely civil—Torrence the more civil of the two. Egan was keeping up the old feud, but he contrived to keep his feelings below the surface for the present.

Vernon Daubeny's ample supply of cash allowed him the run of the canteen, and there was a very handsome supper in the Shell cabin. The juniors chatted over it cheerfully, their talk running chiefly on the sights they were to see at Barbados and Trinidad, and later on the South American mainland. And the latter topic brought up the mention of Peg Slaney's Spanish document, which had been talked about by all the Benbow fellows since its existence had become known.

"I saw the boozey waster conning over his precious paper this morning," Egan remarked.

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"He's babbled all over the fo'c'sle about some treasure he's going to lift on the Orinoco when we get there."

"Gas, most likely," said Drake carelessly. "But I believe I've got some news about Slaney's merry document."

And he related what he had heard from the Barbadian.

"By gad, then it's pretty clear that he stole it!" exclaimed Daubeny. "It really belongs to Tin Tack's old master, whoever he was."

"Looks like it, only there's no proof, of course."

"Look here," exclaimed Egan, "we're gettin' close to South America now, and the matter ought to be settled. Now we're all friends here"—he smiled rather sourly—"why shouldn't we go into the thing together?"

"Can't be done," said Daubeny. "We can't rob the chap—"

A bang at the door interrupted the discussion at this point. Sawyer major of the Fourth put his head into the cabin in a state of great excitement.

"You fellows coming?" he bawled. "Fight in the fo'c'sle!"

"Oh, rot!" yawned Daubeny. "We don't want to amble along to see two hands punchin' one another. Besides, the fo'c'sle is out of bounds for us!"

"I'm going," said Sawyer. "I thought you'd like to come, Drake, as it's your pet nigger—"

"Tin Tacks?" exclaimed Drake, rising quickly.

"Tin Tacks and Peg Slaney!" grinned Sawyer major. "They're just going to begin. I'm off!"

And Sawyer major rushed away.

Tin Tacks was berthed in the fo'c'sle with the crew, and apparently he had come upon his old enemy again in the seamen's quarters.

"Let's go," said Vernon Daubeny.

"Well, I'd like to see old Tin Tacks through," said Drake.

"Come on, then. It's half an hour to bedtime, and I dare say they'll be through by then."

Egan and Torrence decided to finish their supper, and Daubeny left the study with Drake and Rodney. They made their way forward cautiously. The crew's quarters were supposed to be out of bounds for the schoolboys on board the Benbow, and caution was necessary.

The juniors looked into the fo'c'sle, which was a little dim in the light of the swinging lamp.

The watch below had not turned in, evidently being too interested in the fight to think of sleep. The seamen were sitting on the bunks or standing about, keeping back out of the way of the two foes.

Peg Slaney and Tin Tacks stood facing one another, in their shirts. Both of them were looking savage and determined.

Smacke, the boatswain's mate, seemed to be master of the ceremonies.

"Now, then," he said, removing his pipe, "if you're ready—"

"Me ready to trash dat white trash!" said Tin Tacks, spitting on his big, black hands and rubbing them.

"Let the durned nigger come on!" growled Slaney.

"Me no nigger, you white trash!" exclaimed Tin Tacks wrathfully. "Me free Barbadian coloured gentleman!"

"Good old coloured gentleman!" grinned Daubeny. "Go it!"

The boatswain's mate looked round.

"Here, you younkers, sheer off!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, you've got room for little us," said Drake. "We won't interrupt. You can go ahead!"

Smacke had no time to reply, for the two combatants, equally impatient, rushed upon one another and the fight began.

The Fight in the Fo'e'sle!

THE seamen of the Benbow looked on with cheerful interest as the fight began, only taking care to keep out of the way of the gassing combatants.

The juniors watched from the step outside the fo'e'sle in silence.

There were no rounds in the fight; there seemed to be no rules observed, except the rule of hitting as hard as possible and as often as possible. Both the adversaries were in deadly earnest, and the sound of heavy blows thudded through the fo'e'sle.

Tin Tacks and his enemy clinched and struggled and hammered, giving and receiving heavy punishment, which did not seem to have much effect on them. They parted again and sprang back, panting.

But it was only for a second or two. Then they rushed to meet, and again the thudding blows rang out.

When the fight had lasted ten minutes, it became pretty clear that the coloured gentleman of Barbados was getting the best of it. Neither of the combatants had much knowledge of boxing, and the great strength of the negro was telling in close combat. And Peg Slaney soon had "bellows to mend" with a vengeance. His drinking habits put him at a disadvantage. He lacked the stamina to stand up to such a slogging contest.

There was a terrific crash as the one-eyed seaman suddenly went down under a right-hand drive that might have felled an ox.

"Phew!" murmured Rodney.

Tin Tacks stood panting, waiting for his adversary to rise. Slaney was not in a hurry to get on his feet. He made two or three efforts to rise, and sank back again helplessly, his breath coming thick and fast. There were dark bruises on his swarthy face, and his single eye was purple.

"Now, then, look alive!" sang out Smacke. "If you're done, say so, and if you ain't, show a leg there!"

"I guess I'll smash that durned nigger!" muttered Slaney thickly.

The steward's mate staggered to his feet at last. His swarthy face was convulsed with rage. He advanced upon the coloured gentleman of Barbados, who met him promptly enough. Tin Tacks was grinning. The rawhide Slaney had wielded on the banks of the Orinoco was being avenged now.

With savage courage the one-eyed seaman stood up to his adversary; but he had no chance. He was driven back before the powerful blows of the negro, back and back towards the juniors, who watched breathlessly.

Suddenly he sprang back, dropping his hands, so close to the juniors that Drake could have touched him. His hand slid behind him as Tin Tacks came on, and the next moment it whipped out with a knife in it.

There was a shout in the fo'e'sle at the

glitter of cold steel in the lamplight. Knife in hand, Slaney made a spring at the negro, his swarthy face distorted with reckless fury. But as he sprang, Jack Drake, behind him, made a jump at him, and caught him by the shoulder.

The junior was just in time. Another moment and the negro would have fallen under a murderous blow. But Drake's sudden grasp swung the ruffian aside, and a kick knocked his feet from under him. Slaney came down with a crash, the knife clattering from his hand on the planks. He clutched at the knife as he rolled on the floor, but Smacke kicked his hand aside, and picked up the weapon.

"You cowardly lubber, I reckon I'll take care of this!" he said.

"Give me my knife!" yelled Slaney.

He sprang up and clutched at the boatswain's mate. Without a word the seaman struck out, his clenched fist crashing upon Slaney's jaw and sending him spinning. Peg Slaney collapsed on the planks, half-stunned by the blow.

"Kick him out of the fo'e'sle," said Smacke. "He don't berth here, and if he puts his nose in again I'll alter his figurehead for him!"

"White trash no good!" said Tin Tacks scornfully, as three or four of the seamen dragged up Peg Slaney and pitched him out of the fo'e'sle, the juniors making way for them.

"The show's over," said Vernon Daubeny, as the three juniors moved away. "That ruffian ought to be reported to the skipper, and put in irons. He's not safe!"

"I think he's had a lesson," said Drake. "Hallo, it's bed-time—there goes the bell!"

Drake and Rodney returned to their cabin, where they found Tuckey Toodles. Before the chums turned in, however, a battered black face looked in the door.

"Mass' Jack—"

"Hallo, Tin Tacks! You'd better go and bathe your chivvy, or you'll lose your complexion!"

Tin Tacks grinned.

"Dat debble Paquito want knife poor ole Tin Tacks," he said. "You save ole Tin Tacks second time, Mass' Jack. Me nebber leabe you. No go 'shore at Barbados—nebber leabe Mass' Jack."

And the coloured gentleman disappeared before Drake could reply.

At Barbados!

DAWN flushed up on the sea, and the dark shadows rolled away like a curtain that is drawn.

Long before rising bell Drake and Rodney were on deck, with some of the other juniors, to watch the outermost island of the Antilles as the old Benbow drew nearer.

Larger and larger rose the island, till the juniors could see the reefs on which the surf curled, and the uplands in the interior of the island, and the graceful, nodding palm-trees in the distance.

"We shall be at anchor in a couple of hours now," remarked Drake. "Then I suppose we're going to say good-bye to old Tin Tacks."

"Nebber leabe Mass' Jack!" said a voice at his elbow.

Drake glanced round, and he could not help smiling. Tin Tacks had been the victor in the fight in the fo'e'sle, but his black face showed severe traces of the punishment he had received

from the one-eyed seaman. One of his eyes was nearly closed, and his flat nose was flatter than ever.

"Feel all right this morning, old top?" asked Drake.

"Ole Tin Tacks all right," answered the coloured man "Dat trash Paquito all wrong. Mass' Doctor he got to him, and he off duty. Ole Tin Tacks gib him jolly good hiding. S'pose you come 'shore in Barbados, Mass' Jack, old Tin Tacks guide you, and show you t'ings. What you t'ink?"

"Good egg!" answered Drake. "We'll be jolly glad. I wish you were going to stay on the ship with us, Tin Tacks."

"Me stay," answered the black man, and he walked away with a very determined expression on his ebony face.

After breakfast the Benbow was feeling her way into the bay, and the juniors had a view of Bridgetown. It was late in the afternoon before any of the schoolboys were allowed ashore, however.

Then they went in two parties, under the charge of Mr. Packe and Mr. Vavasour. Tin Tacks accompanied the Fourth Form party, and when they returned to the boat he came back with them. Mr. Packe looked at him rather expressively as he was stepping into the boat after the juniors.

"Me come, too, sar!" said Tin Tacks submissively.

"I think I understood that you were remaining ashore," said Mr. Packe.

"Stay on ship till to-morrow, sar," said Tin Tacks earnestly. "Beautiful white gentleman let poor ole Tin Tacks stay till to-morrow."

Mr. Packe smiled. Possibly he was pleased at being described as a beautiful white gentleman; at all events, he made no further objection to Tin Tacks entering the boat, and the Barbadian pulled back to the ship with the juniors.

There was another run ashore after breakfast the next morning, but Tin Tacks did not accompany the party. Drake missed him, and inquired after him; but Tin Tacks was not to be seen, and the juniors went without him.

They spent a happy morning in a long ramble, during which Tuckey Foodles sampled tropical fruits to such an extent that Mr. Packe came down on him in time to save him from making himself ill. Tuckey was looking a little green when the juniors came back to the Benbow.

"Anybody seen old Tin Tacks?" Drake inquired that evening, wondering at not having seen the black gentleman during the day. Nobody had.

On inquiry Drake learned that Mr. Piper, the boatswain, had seen Tin Tacks in a shore boat, which had come alongside the Benbow with a supply of fruit for the ship. He had not seen him since.

Drake concluded that Tin Tacks had landed, and he was rather sorry not to have said good-bye to his black friend.

"Poor old chap!" he remarked to Rodney. "He seemed very keen about staying on the ship, and I suppose he thought it would be rather too painful to say good-bye. I'm really sorry he couldn't hang on."

"He was a good chap in his way," said Rodney, smiling. "We may see him again if we ever touch Barbados."

"I hope so."

The next day the Benbow left Barbados behind, steering a southerly course.

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Jack Drake stood on deck and watched the island sink out of sight in the sunset, thinking of Tin Tacks and wondering whether he would ever see the coloured gentleman again. A rasping voice at his elbow interrupted his meditations.

"That nig's gone, I s'pose, sir?"

He turned his head and glanced at Peg Slaney.

"Yes," he answered curly.

"Good thing for him, too," muttered Slaney, gritting his yellow teeth. "I'd—I'd have——" He paused.

"You're lucky not to be in irons," said Drake disdainfully. "You would be if the captain knew that you'd drawn a knife in the fo'c'stle."

"P'r'aps so," answered Slaney sourly. "I s'pose, sir, that there nigger talked to you a lot?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did he ever tell you what he was doing on the Orinoco, sir?"

"I don't see why I should answer your questions," said Drake coldly. "But he didn't tell me, except that he was there with his master."

"Did he give you the gentleman's name, sir?"

"No. But he told me you'd robbed his master of a Spanish document," said Drake scornfully. "I shouldn't wonder if it's the same paper you have about you now."

"That ain't any business of yours, sir," said Peg Slaney. "I reckon there ain't much law on the Orinoco, and a man takes what he can find. Do you think that there dockment belonged to the nigger's master? Not it! He was mixed up with Ponce Garcia's rebels, and so was I, and he had no more right to old Ponce's paper than I had. And I reckon he made more out of it than I did. He went back to England a rich man, and I—look at me, sir! Steward's mate on a durned floating school, by hokey! But the time'll come."

And the one-eyed seaman moved off, muttering to himself.

The Stowaway!

"YAROOOOOP!"

That sudden, startled yell came from Mr. Capps, the steward, and it interrupted lessons on the deck of the Benbow the next day. The Fourth Formers stared round, and Mr. Packe uttered an exclamation.

"Bless my soul! What——"

"Something wrong with old Capps," murmured Rodney. "He's in the hold. What the dickens——"

"Elp!"

There was a scrambling and trampling of feet, and Mr. Capps came bursting up the main hatchway. His eyes were almost starting from his head as he came hopping out on deck.

"Elp!" he panted.

"What's the matter there, steward?" shouted Captain Topcastle.

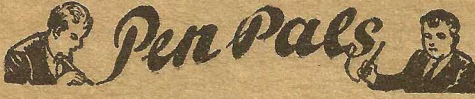
"G-g-ghosts!" spluttered Mr. Capps.

"Ghosts!" roared the skipper.

"Ay, ay, sir—g-g-ghosts!" groaned Mr. Capps. "Come on it quite sudden-like, sir, in the 'old, when I was down for stores, sir— 'Orrid and black and 'orrible, sir——"

"Nonsense! Are you drunk, Capps?"

"Which I ain't touched a drop, sir!" gasped Mr. Capps. "Not a drop this 'ere day, sir. I come on it sudden—a ghost with a black face, sir, and 'orrid, starin' eyes, sir."



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"Belay your jawing-tackle!" snapped the captain. "Bo'sun!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Go down and see if anything's amiss in the hold."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Mr. Piper descended the ladder. Mr. Packe's class had all risen to their feet in eager curiosity. Most of them would have been quite willing to search the hold of the Benbow for Mr. Capps' ghost; it would have been a welcome change from lessons. But their services were not required. There was the sound of a shout below, and a strong sea expression in the deep tones of Mr. Piper. The boatswain emerged on the main deck—not alone. He was dragging up a wriggling form by the collar.

Jack Drake gave a shout as his eyes fell on the latter.

"Tin Tacks!"

"A stowaway!" shouted Captain Topcastle.

"Kim on board, you black lubber!" growled the boatswain; and he jerked the wriggling Barbadian towards the captain. Mr. Capps blinked at the "ghost," and scuttled away to the canteen with very red cheeks.

The stowaway was landed at the captain's feet,

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and Captain Topcastle gave him a very grim look.

"So you're a stowaway!" he growled. "Stand up, you rascal!"

"You leabo go collar," said Tin Tacks to the boatswain. "No handle free coloured gentleman like dat."

Captain Topcastle was a little perplexed to know how to deal with the coloured gentleman.

"Me good sailorman, sar," said Tin Tacks.

"Ship's carpenter, sar—berry useful man. You find ole Tin Tacks berry useful on ship, sar. Me want sail with Mass' Jack, sar."

"I've a good mind to have you tied up and given three dozen!" grunted the captain.

"No flog coloured gentleman, sar—"

"Belay that! Get forward! Bosun, take that man in hand and see that he earns his rations."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Thank you berry much, sar," said Tin Tacks gratefully. He grinned at Jack Drake as he passed the juniors on his way forward. And Drake smiled and nodded in return. He was very glad to see the stowaway of the Benbow.

Next Week: "TROUBLE IN TRINIDAD."
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THE GHOST HUNTERS!

(Continued from page 30.)

"Young white chief let go Injun's blanket," he said, with dignity.

Bob Lawless released him.

"We've caught you!" he panted. "You've been playing ghost!"

"No can savvy."

"You've been working the mine and taking away gold," said Vere Beauclere.

Injun Dick shook his head.

"Injun no can!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards in astonishment. "Do you mean to say that you're not the man we were chasing in the tunnel?"

"Injun no know tunnel. Injun walk on mountains," said the great Red chief with dignity. "Injun stop here to rest. Hear something and run. I have spoken."

The three chums grinned. Injun Dick's denials did not convey conviction.

"So you haven't been working the mine?" grinned Bob Lawless. "You haven't got here the nuggets you've been selling at Gunten's store?"

"No can understand."

"I guess the sheriff would soon make you understand, and shove you in the calaboose to let it sink into your mind," answered Bob Lawless. "This mine is for sale, and you've no right to take an ounce of dust out of it. You know that, you old fibber! You've left your pick in the adit, too, and I guess that could be identified."

Injun Dick started. He had forgotten the pick and lantern left in the mine.

"Oh, that hits you, does it?" grinned Bob.

"Injun Dick honest Injun," said the Apache.

"Injun Dick make mistake. The young white chief speaks with the speech of truth. Injun Dick take little gold."

"Little or not, it doesn't belong to you," said Bob. "You've got to drop it, Injun Dick. Do you see this trail-rop? I've got that to lay round the galoot who was playing ghost. Look here, we'll let you off the trail-rop if you'll quit Thompson and go on your travels till the mine's sold. Is that a trade?"

The Redskin nodded.

"The words of the young white brave are words of wisdom," he said. "Young brave a bully boy with a glass eye. Injun Dick vamoose the ranch."

"Come back and get your pick and lantern, then!" said Bob.

Injun Dick shook his head.

"No want. Not mine."

"What? Where did you get them, then?"

"Injun steal them," answered the Red man calmly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"No want," said Injun Dick cheerfully. "Leave in mine. White man Frisco Bill look if he want. I have spoken."

"We'd better take them to Frisco Bill," said Beauclere, laughing. "And you'd better travel, Injun Dick."

The Red man held out a horny hand.

"Injun sony. You give Injun a dollar—wah!"

"Well, my word!" said Bob Lawless. But he gave the Redskin a dollar; he thought he deserved it for his sublime cheek.

Injun Dick received the gift with great dignity, draped his tattered blanket round him, and stalked away into the gulch.

The chums watched him out of sight, smiling. Injun Dick had paid his last visit to Bill Bailey's bonanza, and the chums of Cedar Creek had solved the mystery of the haunted mine.

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