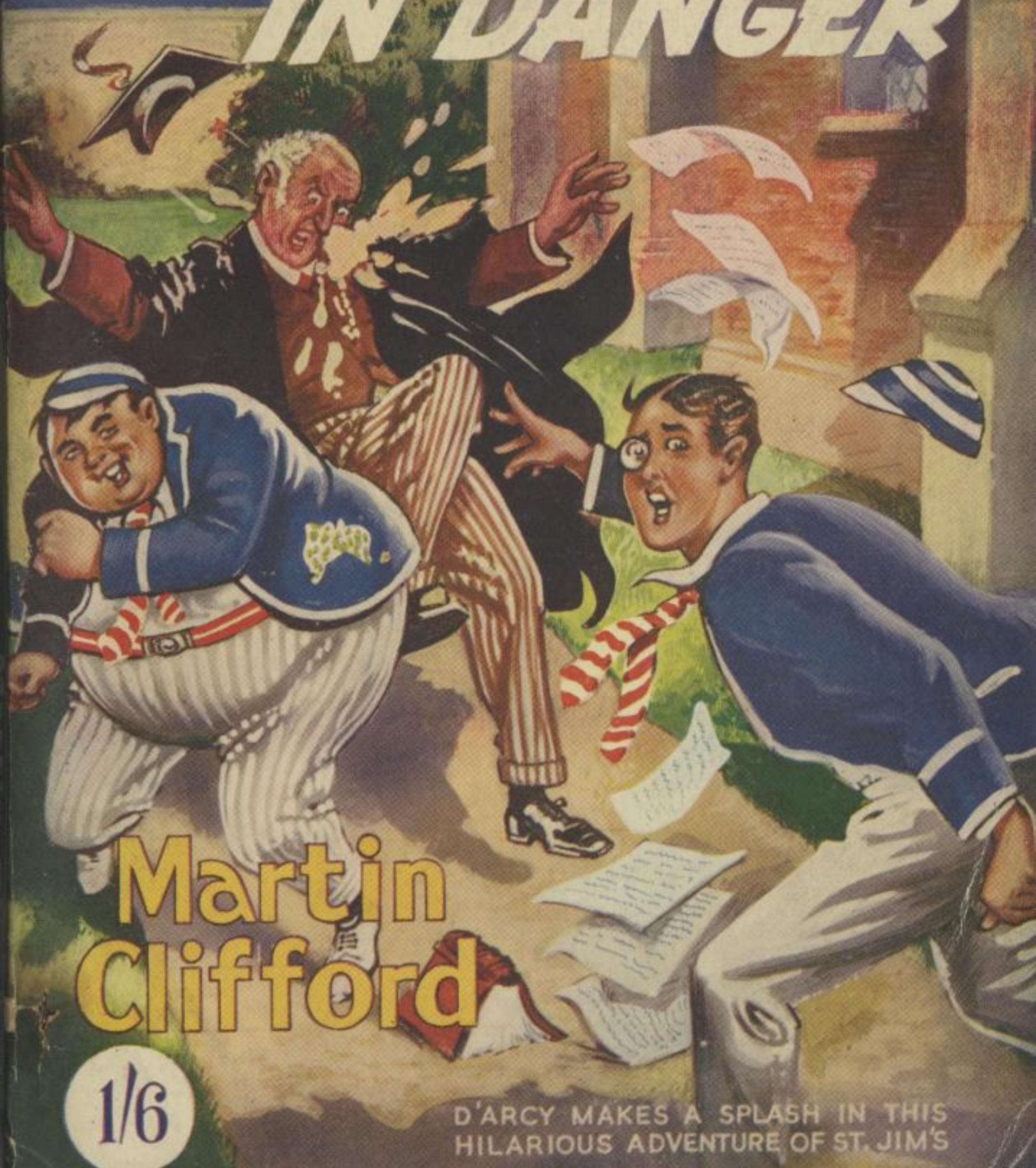




A NEW SERIES FEATURING
ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY
THE "SWELL" OF ST. JIM'S

D'ARCY IN DANGER



Martin
Clifford

1/6

D'ARCY MAKES A SPLASH IN THIS
HILARIOUS ADVENTURE OF ST. JIM'S

D'ARCY IN DANGER

Martin Clifford



Hamilton & Co. (Stafford) Ltd.
LONDON

Our Cover Picture

(Portrayed by C. H. Chapman—the original Billy Bunter artist.)

Arthur Augustus hurled the cake at Trimble's fat features with all the force of his noble arm. But Baggy ducked just in time!

Dr. Holmes gave a bound like a kangaroo as the whizzing cream cake caught him fairly in the middle of his features.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, my hat—!"

"The Head—!"

"He's got it!"

"Urrrgggh!" Dr. Holmes almost tottered. His majestic hands clawed at his majestic face.

"Woooooch!"

D'Arcy in Danger

by Martin Clifford

Out of the window of a passing train flew a missile which struck Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sharply on the nose as he was innocently sheltering from the rain!

But it was no practical joker who hurled a clasp-knife wrapped in paper from the train window—for on that paper was a message in code, and as long as the swell of St. Jim's carried that vital message he was in danger from the shady character it had been intended for!

Then there were strange things seen at St Jim's—lights and stealthy footsteps in the night, and the amazing spectacle of Baggy Trimble running in terror from the police!—before the message was finally decoded and a dangerous criminal foiled by Arthur Augustus and his chums.

By special arrangement with Frank Richards (Martin Clifford), also creator of Billy Bunter and the Chums of Greyfriars. Other titles in this series are:

TOM MERRY'S SECRET

TOM MERRY'S RIVAL

THE MAN FROM THE PAST

WHO RAGGED RAILTON?

SKIMPOLE'S SNAPSHOT

TROUBLE FOR TRIMBLE

D'ARCY ON THE WAR-PATH

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1

Wet!

"THIS wotten wain!" sighed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Rotten!" agreed Jack Blake.

"Blow it!" said Digby.

"Look here, it's not so jolly bad," grunted George Herries.

"Let's push on."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Grunt from Herries.

It was raining! Two or three miles from St. Jim's, the chums of Study No. 6 had been caught in it.

Luckily, they had found shelter.

Where the Wayland road bordered the railway embankment, there stood an old Army hut, left over from the War: derelict, but still something of a shelter. The four Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's had been glad to step into it out of the sudden rainfall.:

It had been a sunny May afternoon when they had started on that ramble. But the uncertain British climate had let them down. The sunny sky was overcast, and a light but persistent rain was falling. It tinkled on the tin roof, splashed in at the doorless doorway, dripped on the bushes on the sloping embankment: drenching everything, including the spirits of the four St. Jim's juniors.

They looked out into falling rain, at dripping trees and bushes and wet grass: and when a train rolled by, hardly a dozen yards distant, envied the passengers sitting in it out of the wet.

After a quarter of an hour, Herries was for pushing on, and chancing the rain. Blake and Digby were rather disposed to agree with him. But as it happened, Arthur Augustus had taken his topper on that walk. He was not in the least disposed to let that beautiful topper brave the inclement elements.

"If a chap had an umbwellah—!" he sighed.

Another grunt from Herries.

"Hadn't you better get into a handbox next time you go out for a walk?" he inquired, sarcastically.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We've been sticking here a quarter of an hour!" argued Herries. "The rain doesn't look like stopping! If this is your idea of a happy half-holiday, Gussy, it isn't mine."

"Wats!"

"Well, we can't stick here for ever!" said Jack Blake. "What about chancing it, Gussy, and keeping on the trot for the school?"

"Not in the wain, deah boy."

"Gussy's worried about his topper," remarked Dig. "What about tipping it off his silly head, and dribbling it all the way to St. Jim's?"

"Weally, Dig—"

Blake looked out of the doorway again. A train rolled by, at the top of the embankment, on its way from Wayland to Abbotsford. The rain was not heavy. But it came down with a slow persistence. No vehicle was to be seen on the road; no chance of a lift. Only one figure was to be seen—that of a thickset man in a bowler hat, who was heading for the old hut at a run. Apparently, he, like the St. Jim's juniors, was seeking shelter from the rain.

"Here's somebody else coming along," said Blake, as he turned back into the hut. "It looks like lasting, Gussy! I think we'd better chance it, and cut for St. Jim's."

"Imposs, deah boy."

"Gussy had to take his topper out for a walk!" grunted Herries.—
"One of these days I shall jump on that topper."

"Let's jump on it now," suggested Dig.

"If you fellows feel like chancing it, you can cut off, and I will follow when the wain stops!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "I am certainly not goin' to wuin my toppah in this beastly wain."

"Fathead!" said Herries.

"Ass!" added Dig.

"Blitherer!" sighed Blake.

"Pway wemembah your mannaahs, deah boys, in the pwesence of a stwangah," said Arthur Augustus, chidingly, as the man in the bowler hat, arriving at the doorway, came quickly into the hut.

He looked at the schoolboys, as he came in, or rather stared at them: and they eyed him in return.

He was not a very pleasant man to look at. He was well-dressed, in rather a flashy way: the word "spiv" came into all their minds as they saw him. He had a hard face, and a hard thin mouth that looked like a gash. His eyes were small and beady, with a quick glitter in them like a rat's: and like a rat's eyes, alert, watchful, suspicious. They glittered on either side of a rather flashy nose that had a slight slant, as if it had been knocked a little sideways in a fight. He was not, on his looks, a man anyone would have cared to meet in a lonely lane on a dark night.

However, his looks did not concern Study No. 6, and they were more than willing to share their shelter with a stranger caught in the rain.

He took off his hat, revealing an oily head of thick hair, and shook raindrops from it, and replaced it.

"Wet outside, isn't it?" remarked Blake, feeling called upon to say something civil.

"Eh? Oh! Yes." The man with the slanting nose was not, apparently, bothering about the wet. "What are you boys doing here?"

"That's an easy one," answered Blake. "Like you—getting out of the rain."

"Have you been here long?"

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Anyone else been here?"

"Not till you came along."

"You haven't seen a man—young man with sandy hair, on the road?"

"No!"

The man gave the schoolboys another stare, and then put his head out of the doorway and scanned the road and the adjoining embankment. He did not seem to heed the rain; and it dawned upon them that it was not for shelter that he had come there, but in the expectation of meeting someone—apparently a young man with sandy hair. It was easy to see that he was hurried and disturbed, and disappointed.

He turned round again, his sharp eyes on the schoolboys.

"Staying here long?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!" answered Arthur Augustus. "We are not goin' on till the wain stops."

"Afraid of a little rain?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his celebrated eyeglass in his noble eye, and bestowed an icy stare on the man. Blake and Herries and Digby looked rather restive.

"I wegard that question as impertinent, my man!" said Arthur Augustus, in his most frigid tones. "Pway mind your own business."

The man gave him a dark look, and once more put out his head and stared up and down the road. Obviously he was very anxious to see something of the young man with the sandy hair! But there was no one to be seen in either direction on the Wayland road. He turned back again.

"Sure you ain't seen a covey about—covey with sandy hair?" he asked.

"Quite!" answered Blake, curtly. He liked the man's manners no more than he liked his looks, and was not disposed to waste any more civility upon him.

The slant-nosed man's eyes left the juniors, and wandered round. He scanned the interior of the hut, as if in search of something. Then the ratty eyes were fixed on them again.

"You ain't picked up nothing 'ere—say a note, or a letter, or anything of that kind?"

"Haven't seen anything of the sort."

"Friend of mine was to meet me 'ere! Might have been and gone, and left word perhaps! Sure you ain't seen anything?"

"Quite!"

"Jest a note stuck on the wall, or something?"

"Nothing of the kind."

The man eyed them, watchfully, suspiciously, and then looked out of the doorway again. A sudden change came over his face

as he did so: the colour wavered, the sharp eyes popped, and he caught a sudden breath. A word fell breathlessly from his lips:

"Cops!"

The next moment, he was out of the hut, running across the road to the wood that bordered it on the further side.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"What the dickens—!" exclaimed Blake.

In sheer wonder, the four juniors looked out. From the direction of Wayland, a cyclist came: a police-constable on a bicycle. The slant-nosed man had darted across the road like a frightened rabbit, and vanished into the wood: so rapidly that, in the falling rain, the officer on the bicycle had probably not seen him. The man had vanished almost in the twinkling of an eye.

"Oh, gum!" said Dig.

The police-constable pedalled on his way, passed the hut, and disappeared down the road. The St. Jim's juniors looked at one another, considerably startled.

"That johnny doesn't like bobbies!" remarked Blake. "By gum, it looks as if he's been up to something, and they may be after him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If he comes back—!" said Dig.

Blake shook his head.

"Not likely! The sight of that cop put the wind up him good and proper! Bet you he's on the run as fast as he can go."

"He's done somethin'—!" said Herries.

"Looks like it!"

"He certainly looked a vevy doubtful chawactah," said Arthur Augustus, "and his mannahs were simply wevoltin'. I am wathah glad that he is gone."

"Time we were gone, too!" said Herries.

"It is still wainin', Hewwies."

"Oh, blow!" said Herries.

"Chance it, Gussy!" urged Dig.

"Wats!"

"Oh, let's wait!" sighed Blake. "If we keep a howling ass in our study, we must expect him to act like one."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Blake, crossly.

"Pway be patient, deah boys—"

"Br-r-r-rr!" growled the dear boys, all together.

They waited. Arthur Augustus waited with calm patience. But his three comrades grew more and more restive, and with

every passing minute, their patience grew smaller by degrees and beautifully less. Ten more minutes elapsed—fifteen—then George Herries, with a quite unchummy glare 'at his noble chum, snorted: a most emphatic snort.

"You fellows coming? I've had enough of this."

"It is still wainin'—!"

"Well, I'm going," growled Herries.

And Herries went.

Blake and Dig looked at one another, and then at Arthur Augustus.

"Come on, Gussy, and chance it!" urged Blake.

"Can't stick here for ever!" urged Dig.

"I am wemainin' heah till the wain stops--!"

"Fathead!" hooted Blake.

"Goat!" howled Dig.

"Wats!"

Blake and Dig followed Herries. Half-an-hour in that old Army hut was enough for them, and a little over. The rain was coming down, and waiting for it to stop seemed rather like the countryman in Horace who waited for the stream to flow by! Three St. Jim's juniors tramped away and disappeared in the rain: and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his beautiful topper still safe from the elements, was left on his solitary own.

2

The Mysterious Message

“WOW!”

It was not like the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the glass of fashion and the mould of form at St. Jim's, to express his feelings by a wild sudden howl in the manner of a startled jackal.

Now he did!

He was taken quite by surprise, for one thing! It was quite a hard tap on his noble nose, for another! It happened so very unexpectedly.

Ten minutes had elapsed since Blake and Herries and Digby had disappeared in the rainy distance. Arthur Augustus moved restlessly about the interior of the old Army hut, finding the slow minutes hang heavy on his hands. But the rain was still falling persistently: and he was as undisposed as ever to take his beautiful topper, not to mention his elegant clobber generally, out of shelter for a walk of two or three miles in dripping rain. Every now and then he looked out in the hope of seeing that the rain was clearing off: and that was how it happened.

A train came clattering along the line at the top of the embankment, as Arthur Augustus projected his noble head once more to view the weather.

From a window in that train a sudden missile flew.

With the corner of his eye, as it were, Arthur Augustus had a fleeting glimpse of a hand at an open window of the train. But naturally he did not know what was coming.

Careless people sometimes threw things from train windows: extremely thoughtless people might even throw out such dangerous things as bottles. But Arthur Augustus was not thinking of anything of the kind: he was thinking of the weather, and the irritating persistence of the rain.

The object hurled from the train, whatever it was, was evidently aimed at the old Army hut at the foot of the embankment, for it flew right in at the open doorway, which faced the railway line.

And so it happened that just as Arthur Augustus's noble head was poking out, the flying object shot in: and contact was established in the doorway between that object and Gussy's nose.

Tap!

"Wow!"

Arthur Augustus, very much surprised, staggered back in the hut. The strange object dropped at his feet.

His hand flew to his nose.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he gasped. "Oh, cwikey!. What—what was that? Oh, gweat Chwistophah Columbus!"

He rubbed his nose tenderly.

It felt hurt.

In the course of his aristocratic career at St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus had occasionally experienced a punch on his noble nose. But he had never, even in his celebrated 'scrap' with Cardew of the Fourth, or in any row with Figgins and Co. of the New House, had so hard a tap as this.

There was a trickle of red from his nose. He jerked out his handkerchief and dabbed it.

Wrath gathered in his face.

"The uttah wottah!" he exclaimed. "The careless wuffian! Bai Jove! I should wathah like to get on that twain, and give him a feahful thwashin'."

With his handkerchief to his nose, he stared out of the hut, up at the railway line. It was a train from Wayland to Abbotsford: and the guard's van was already disappearing in the distance. Certainly the unknown person who had hurled that unexpected missile from the window, was quite secure from a thrashing at the hands of the incensed swell of St. Jim's.

"The wotten wuffianly wascal!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Chuckin' things at a fellow fwom a twain, bai Jove!"

He dabbed the crimson trickle from his nose. The object that had tapped that noble nose lay in the doorway unheeded: Arthur Augustus, for the moment, was wholly occupied with his aristocratic proboscis.

But it dawned upon him that it must really have been more or less of an accident. Whoever on the train had thrown that missile certainly could not have known that he was about to put his head out at the doorway. That was merely a happy chance that no one could possibly have foreseen. Moreover, the interior of

the hut was dusky, and no one in the train could have seen into it, and therefore couldn't have known that Arthur Augustus was there at all. For some mysterious reason, the unknown person had thrown that object from the train window, intending to whiz it in at the open doorway: it was merely Gussy's ill-luck that his noble nose had intervened.

"Utahly careless ass!" said Arthur Augustus. "People ought to be kicked for thwowin' things fwom twain windows! Wow! My nose!"

However, the pain abated, though the crimson still oozed: and Arthur Augustus, at last, cast a glance at the object that had caused the damage.

Having glanced at it, he stared at it.

The tap the object had given him on the nose had surprised him. But the object itself, now that he looked at it, surprised him still more.

It was a shut clasp-knife, with a paper folded round it, tied securely with string. On that paper was writing in pencil.

Arthur Augustus gazed at it. Then, in sheer wonder, he picked it up, in his astonishment almost forgetting the crimson trickle from his nose.

"Bai Jove!"

It really was mystifying. A message was pencilled on the paper: and Gussy realised that the clasp-knife to which it was tied was merely added to give it weight, to carry it through the air. On its own, the paper would have fluttered a few feet from the train and settled down in the grass. Tied to the heavy clasp-knife, it had been borne to its destination—the doorway of the old Army hut.

In utter mystification, Arthur Augustus untied the string, and unfolded the paper from the shut knife.

He looked at it, and his eyeglass dropped from his eye, and both his noble eyes popped at it.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he said, almost faintly.

In a clear, heavy hand, this message was pencilled on the paper, which looked like a leaf torn from a pocket-book.

Prices of game have gone up. We can cop good profits on birds in this market. Just train Fred to stuff the partridge lest much too hollow, and take oak logs to Wayland if needing wood. Dated the tenth of May on the old footpath leading north from the Roman road.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at that amazing written message. He goggled at it. He almost gibbered at it.

"Oh, cwikey!" he said.

He read the mysterious message through and through again, and yet again. He could not make head or tail of it.

The first sentence seemed to have some meaning. The second and third seemed mere gibberish. Prices of game might have gone up, and good profits might be had in that market: but what could be the meaning of stuffing a partridge left much too hollow, and what anyhow had that to do with taking oak logs to Wayland, or an old footpath leading from a Roman road?

Was it some preposterous practical joke?

But why? Someone on the train had flung it out, attached to the clasp-knife to carry it: why should anyone throw away a clasp-knife—not a very expensive one, certainly, but worth ten shillings or so—for no reason but a preposterous joke on nobody in particular?

That message, certainly, whatever it might mean, was not addressed to D'Arcy. The man on the train could not have known that he was in the hut: could not have known that anyone was there. It was not addressed to anyone: there was no address and no signature. It was utterly inexplicable.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, hopelessly puzzled. "I twust that I am a wathah intelligent chap, but I weally cannot make this out at all. Pewwaps Blake or Hewwies or Dig may be able to make it out, or Tom Mewwy or Mannahs or Lowthah, or some othah fellow. It is fwightfully mystewious."

He dropped the mysterious message into his pocket. Later on, perhaps, it might be elucidated in Study No. 6.

He gave his noble nose another rub, and looked out into the rain again. It was still coming down, and he had to wait. Another train clattered by, this time from Abbotsford to Wayland. Then, at last, the rain thinned to a few drops, and he was able to leave the hut, and start walking to St. Jim's—pausing every now and then to dab his nose with his handkerchief, as it persisted in oozing spots of red.

3

The Man on the Train!

“TRAIN’S almost due!” said Tom Merry.

“Blow the rain!” said Monty Lowther.

“Rotten afternoon!” said Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

“Why grouse?” he said, cheerily. “The rain’s good for the crops—”

“Oh, bother the crops!” said Lowther.

“Fat lot of good bringing my camera!” said Manners. “It had to rain on a half-holiday, of course.”

“Just had to!” sighed Lowther.

Tom Merry was quite cheerful about it. Tom was seldom anything but cheerful about anything. Rain or shine, Tom’s outlook on life seemed always a cheery one.

Still, it was not pleasant.

The “Terrible Three” of the Shell had come over to Abbotsford that afternoon specially to see a county match. They had expected to watch at least part of a good game: and Manners had intended to take some snaps with his camera. And then the rain came. It had washed out the cricket. Damp and disgruntled cricketers had retired to the pavilion: damp and disgruntled spectators had mostly dispersed. The chums of the St. Jim’s Shell had watched only a few overs, and Manners had not taken a single snap.

The whole thing was a wash-out: literally. The “Terrible Three” had intended to catch a train home from Abbotsford, just in time to get in for calling-over in the School House at St. Jim’s. Instead of which, they scuttled through the rain to Abbotsford Station, to catch a much earlier train—and now they were on the platform waiting for it. And that train seemed a long time

coming Altogether, things were far from satisfactory: that half-holiday had to be written off as a total loss. Lowther and Manners groused a little, and Tom Merry really needed all his cheerfulness to keep smiling.

"We're out of the rain now, anyhow," he remarked.

"Blow it!" said Lowther.

"Bother it!" said Manners.

"I expect the farmers will be glad of a little rain!" suggested Tom.

"They're welcome to it!" grunted Lowther. "I don't want any!"

"Bother it!" repeated Manners. "Not a single snap, after lugging the camera over to Abbotsford."

"Is that train ever coming in?" sighed Lowther.

"Almost due!" said Tom.

"Rotten line!" said Lowther, apparently as dissatisfied with British Railways as with British weather. "Saves time to walk, really! Ask a porter if they ever have any trains on this line! I'd really like to see a train."

"There's one coming up the line from Wayland!" said Tom.

"What's the good of that, ass? We want a train to Wayland, not from Wayland. Dative, not ablative!" growled Lowther.

"Well, it's a train, if that's what you want to see!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!" added Manners.

Undoubtedly, two members of the Co. were very much disgruntled.

There was no sign yet of the train they wanted. They idly watched the train they did not want, as it came in from Wayland, on the other line.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, suddenly.

"What—?"

"Look!"

"Oh, my hat! That fellow must be off his chump—he would get knocked over if our train came in now!"

They stared across the line. The train from Wayland was clattering to a stop, but it had not yet stopped, when a door flew open—on the wrong side: the side, not facing the up platform, but facing the line, and the down platform where the St. Jim's juniors stood.

A man leaped out on the line, and ran across, towards the schoolboys as they stared at him.

He was a slightly-built man with sandy hair, very active—active as a monkey. Why he was getting out of the train on the wrong

side, taking the risk of crossing the down line, Tom Merry and Co. had no idea. Had the train for which the juniors were waiting come in at that moment, he would have been in terrible danger. Luckily, it was not coming in, though almost due. The sandy-haired man came fairly whizzing across the line, and clambered up on the platform where the three juniors, and several other people, stood staring blankly at him.

But the next moment another door, further down the train, and also on the wrong side, opened, and a burly man leaped out. He waved to the staring passengers waiting on the down platform, and the juniors, staring at him, saw that he was in uniform.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. "A policeman—what—"

"Stop thief!" roared the burly man, as he also charged across the line, while the sandy haired man clambered frantically up on the platform. "In the name of the law! Stop thief!"

"Stop him!" said Tom.

That sudden flight, from the wrong side of the train, had puzzled the juniors for the moment. But the sight of a police-constable in swift pursuit enlightened them at once. The man was escaping from the law—taking a desperate chance. No doubt he was aware that a constable was on the train, and expected to be taken into custody when the train stopped: hence that desperate bid for freedom.

"Play up!" said Lowther.

"What-ho!" said Manners.

The three Shell fellows were quite close to the spot where the desperate man was clambering up from the line. They were quick on the uptake: and quite ready to fulfil a citizen's duty in lending aid to an officer of the law. The three rushed together: and as the sandy-haired man landed on the platform, collared him right and left before he could elude them. He struggled frantically in their grasp, fighting like a wildcat: and they reeled and rocked to and fro on the platform in a wild wrestling bunch.

But it was only for a moment or two. The burly police-constable clambered quickly up from the line, and grasped his man. The sandy-haired man crumpled in that powerful grasp, and the handcuffs clicked on his wrists.

The three juniors stood panting, after that brief but breathless struggle.

"Thank you, young gentlemen," said the constable. "I don't think Sandy Sanders would have got clear: but thank you for stopping him. Come on, my man!"

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With a grip on the sandy man's arm, the burly constable marched him along the platform. With the handcuffs on, Sandy Sanders went quietly enough. Probably he had had little hope of getting away.

"Well," said Monty Lowther, as he re-arranged his tie, jerked out in the struggle, "It's the jolly old unexpected that happens! We haven't quite wasted our afternoon after all."

"Glad we were able to help," said Tom. "Not that the fellow had much chance of getting clear. I wonder what he's done! Hallo, here comes our train."

"Lucky for that Johnny it wasn't a few minutes earlier," said Manners.

"Yes, rather."

The train for Wayland came in, and the chums of the Shell boarded it. They noticed that, further down the train, the police-constable was shepherding his prisoner in. Apparently he was taking him back to Wayland. It had been a rather exciting episode, but by the time they reached St. Jim's, the Shell fellows had dismissed it from mind. They were, however, to be reminded later of Mr. Sandy Sanders.

4

Not Nice!

“HE, he, he!”

Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form, seemed amused.

Baggy was not the only fellow who stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he came across the quad towards the School House. Baggy was the only one that laughed, but there were smiles on other faces.

Arthur Augustus's face was pink.

His nose was more than pink—it was crimson!

It drew many glances when he came in.

The rain was over, and summer sunshine streamed down on St. Jim's. There were many fellows out in the quad. Arthur Augustus was glad that the rain had stopped, on account of his elegant clobber and his precious topper: but he was not pleased with so numerous an audience.

That jolt on his noble nose had left very visible signs. His nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. It almost flamed.

Arthur Augustus was very particular, very particular indeed, about his personal appearance. He would have preferred to get in unobserved, and by bathing that nose, reduce its somewhat conspicuous aspect. Instead of which, a whole crowd of fellows were gazing at it.

“Danger!” called out Cardew of the Fourth, who was in the quad with Levison and Clive, and he suddenly grasped his chums, by an arm each, and dragged them off the path as Arthur Augustus came up.

“What the dickens—!” exclaimed Levison.

“What—!” began Clive.

D'ARCY IN DANGER

"Can't you see the danger-signal?" asked Cardew. "Clear the way!"

Arthur Augustus's face, from pink, became scarlet.

"Weally, Cardew, you silly ass—!" he exclaimed.

"Shut up, Cardew," said Levison, laughing. "Had an accident, D'Arcy?"

"I have had a jolt on the nose, Levison?"

"Knocked it against somebody's knuckles?" asked Cardew.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus walked on, red as a rose.

"Been scrapping out of gates, D'Arcy?" asked Talbot of the Shell.

"I have not been scwappin', Talbot. I have had a knock on the nose, that is all! Is it vewy wed?"

"Just a few," said Talbot, smiling. "Shut up, Trimble, you fat ass, there's nothing to cackle at."

"Isn't there?" grinned Trimble. "I say, D'Arcy, Lathom's looking at your beak! He, he, he!"

Arthur Augustus glanced round. Mr. Lathom, the Master of the Fourth, was in the quad, and he had fixed his eyes very severely on the most elegant member of his form.

"D'Arcy!" he rapped.

"Oh! Yaas, sir!" mumbled Arthur Augustus.

"Have you been fighting, D'Arcy?"

"Oh! No, sir."

"Then what is the matter with your nose?"

"I—I—I had wathah a knock on it, sir! Some silly ass thwew somethin' fwom a twain, and it happened to hit me on the nose."

"Indeed," said Mr. Lathom, very dryly.

Cardew winked at Levison and Clive. Trimble gave a fat giggle. Other fellows grinned. Of all the explanations of a punched nose that they had ever heard, this sounded about the lamest.

"I assuah you, sir, that I have not been scwappin'—I mean fightin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I was vewy much surprwised, and—"

"Very well: you had better go in and bathe your nose, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom, still very dryly. "A very unusual occurrence, D'Arcy—very unusual indeed! However, go in and bathe your nose."

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus went in, leaving smiling faces behind him.

His first proceeding was to bathe that nose, which he did with care. But, surveying it in the glass afterwards, he was unable to

feel that it was very much improved. His feelings were deep. He was going to have a red nose for some time—and in comparison with that, the lingering pain in it was a trifle light as air. Very gladly would Arthur Augustus have bestowed a similar nose on the unknown and utterly irresponsible ass who had hurled a missile from a train window. It might have been some comfort to him, if he could have known that that individual was now in the custody of a police-constable: but Arthur Augustus knew nothing of Sandy Sanders and what had happened at Abbotsford.

Having done all he could to repair the damage, Arthur Augustus headed for Study No. 6. On the study landing he came on Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, who were just in from Wayland.

Tom and Manners gazed at his nose. Monty Lowther, always playful, placed a hand before his eyes, as if dazzled.

"Where on earth did you pick up that boko, Gussy?" asked Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—!"

"You Fourth-Form kids been scrapping?" asked Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Glad you're feeling so well, Gussy," said Lowther. "You look in the pink—at least your nose does."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"But what—?" asked Tom.

"A howlin' ass thwew somethin' fwom a twain, and it hit me on the nose," said Arthur Augustus, breathing hard. "I happened to catch it—"

"Some catch!" said Lowther. "If you make catches like that at cricket, Gussy, we'll beat the New House next time—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched on, leaving the Terrible Three grinning. He was rather glad to get into Study No. 6.

In Study No. 6, Blake and Herries and Digby were at tea when he arrived. But they suspended tea, to stare at their noble chum. Three pairs of eyes fastened at once on that flaming nose.

"Great pip!" said Blake. "What the jolly old thump have you been doing with your proboscis, Gussy?"

"Putting a match to it?" asked Dig.

"Is it a nose?" inquired Herries. "Have you lost your nose, Gussy, and stuck on a tomato?"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep.

"I have had a knock on my nose," he said.

"Guessed that one!" agreed Blake. "Who was it? If Figgins

and Co. have been decorating your nose like that, we'll go over to the New House and strew the hungry churchyard with their bones."

"It was some silly ass thwowin' somethin' fwom a twain!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "It was aftah you left me in that hut. A twain passed, as I was lookin' out to see if the wain had stopped, and somethin' came whizzin' fwom the twain and bit me on the nose—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Do you fellows think that funnay?" roared Arthur Augustus. "What is there funnay, I would like to know, in a howlin' ass thwowin' something fwom a twain and hittin' a fellow on the nose with it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake and Co. Quite unlike Arthur Augustus himself, they seemed to think that the affair had a comic side.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' on cacklin' like a lot of hens—"

"Somebody threw something from a train—and you had to put your nose in the way!" gasped Blake. "You would!"

"Gussy all over!" agreed Dig. "He couldn't put his nose anywhere else."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!" snapped Arthur Augustus: and he sat down to tea with a frown upon his noble brow.

It had been his intention to produce the mysterious missive for the inspection of his chums, to see whether they could make head or tail of it. But he forgot all about that now. His noble nose, and the attention it was receiving, more than sufficed to occupy his mind.

After tea, during which Arthur Augustus preserved a dignified silence, disdaining to take heed of three smiling faces, Blake and Co. rose to go down—but Arthur Augustus remained where he was.

"Coming down to the nets, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"It has been wainin', Blake—"

"Oh, that's all right! Come on."

"I think I will wemain in the study—"

"Slacker!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Tired after the walk?" asked Dig.

"I am not tired aftah the walk, Dig. I pwefer to wemain in the study, that is all. You fellows can go down."

'Blake and Co., grinning, went down. Evidently, Arthur Augustus, in the present state of his noble nose, was not anxious to meet the public eye. He was staying in the study, with that nose to keep him company.

A few minutes later, however, the door was pushed open, and Kangaroo of the Shell looked in. Arthur Augustus glanced at him.

"I hear you've got a prize nose, D'Arcy!" said Harry Noble. "Oh, my hat! Where did you pick up a nose like that?"

"Weally, Kangawooh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at, Kangawooh—"

"Isn't there?" chuckled the Australian junior. "Look in the glass!" And he went down the passage, laughing.

Once more Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep. Evidently, the fame of that flaming nose was spreading through the House, and exciting interest. Five minutes later another face looked in at the door. This time it was Mellish of the Fourth. He stared at a frowning face, and burst into a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" What a boko? Did you stop a lorry with it?"

"Weally, Mellish—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Why not go over to Taggles' and ask him to lend you his fire-extinguisher?"

"You uttah ass!" Arthur Augustus jumped up. "If you want a wed nose yourself, Mellish, you are askin' for it. I'll—"

Mellish disappeared, laughing. Arthur Augustus sat down again, breathing very hard. Really, it looked as if his noble nose was going to become as famous as that of Cyrano de Bergerac.

He was not left alone for long. Gore of the Shell put a grinning face into the study.

"I say, I hear that something's on fire here," he said. "What is it, D'Arcy? Oh! It's your nose? Shall I fetch a fire-bucket?"

Arthur Augustus grasped a cushion, and Gore, yelling with merriment, departed just in time. D'Arcy did not sit down again. Neither did he drop the cushion.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "The next silly ass who puts his silly head in here is goin' to get it!"

He waited, not doubting that there would be further visitors. He was right—a few minutes later a bony face and a pair of spectacles appeared in the doorway. Skimpole of the Shell blinked into the study in his owlish way.

"My dear D'Arcy—" he began.

Skimpole got no further. With uplifted cushion, Arthur Augustus rushed. Whop!

"Yaroooooooh!" spluttered Skimpole.

The cushion landed fair and square on his bony head. Skimpole sprawled in the doorway, yelling.

"Take that, you silly ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus, "and that—and that—and that too, you silly chump! And that—and that—!"

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

Skimpole took them—he could not help it. The cushion swiped and swiped and swiped, and Skimmy yelled and rolled and roared.

"Ow! wow! Have you gone mad, D'Arcy? Stoppit!"

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

"Oh, crumbs! Ow! Stoppit!" shrieked Skimpole. "Have you gone crackers? I came here to—yow-ow-ow-ow."

"I know why you came heah, you silly ass! Take that—and that—!"

"Yaroo! Wow! Stoppit! Oh, crikey! What is the matter? Oh, jiminy! I came here to ask you to lend me a pencil—"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"A pencil! Wow! I have lost my pencil—yow-ow—oh, crumbs—!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus ceased to swipe with the cushion. Skimpole scrambled up, and bolted, spluttering as he went. He had come to Study No. 6 to borrow a harmless and necessary pencil: but he did not stop to borrow a pencil now. He fled as if for his life.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus. He realised that he had been a little hasty—Skimmy's visit, if not the others, had been quite unconnected with his burning nose. "Oh, cwumbs!"

He threw down the cushion, and went down from the study, deciding after all, to change for cricket. He passed a group of fellows on the study landing, and heard Skimpole's spluttering voice.

"I say-wow—do you fellows think that D'Arcy—ow!—is quite in his right mind? Wow! I went to his study to ask him to lend me a pencil—wow!—and he attacked me with a cushion—yow-ow—he must be suffering from some mental aberration—ow! wow!-ow!"

Arthur Augustus went downstairs hurriedly.

5

An Unexpected Catch!

MR. HOLMES raised his eyebrows.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face coloured.

It was after school the following day.

The brightness of the summer sun was not reflected in the aristocratic visage of the swell of St. Jim's.

True, the crimson hue of his damaged nose had faded out somewhat. Time is a great healer: and the time that had elapsed had taken the edge, as it were, off the rich hue. But it was still a nose that drew glances and caused smiles. In form, in the Fourth-Form room, every man in the Fourth had gazed at it, and Mr. Lathom had frowned at it. Figgins and Co. of the New House had grinned at it: Baggy Trimble had giggled at it. Now, as he walked in the quad, it caught the eye of no less a person than the Head-master, who was taking a walk in the sunny quad after Greek with the Sixth.

It was really very uncomfortable. That the Head had noticed that nose, was evident from the lifting of his eyebrows.

Schoolboys sometimes indulged in fisticuffs, and sometimes showed traces of such activities. But a Head-master could not be expected to view with an approving eye a junior who looked as if he had had a rough time in a rough house. Arthur Augustus, not in the least desirous of a personal interview with his Head-master, quickened his pace, affecting not to have noticed Dr. Holmes in the quad at all.

He headed for the school shop. Out of that establishment emerged a fat figure, with a cream cake in a fat hand.

It was Baggy Trimble's intention to sit on one of the old benches under the elms, and devote himself to the enjoyment of that cream cake. But at the sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy coming towards him, Baggy paused, stared at the swell of St.

Jim's, especially at his nose, and emitted a fat chuckle.

"He, he, he!"

It was the last straw.

Arthur Augustus's temper had been sorely tried. Fellows had smiled at that nose, even grinned at it—even Kildare of the Sixth had smiled, and Cutts of the Fifth had grinned, seniors as they were: but for a fat fathead like Baggy Trimble to explode into an unmusical cachinnation fairly in a fellow's face, was altogether too much. Arthur Augustus's temper, generally placid, but now sorely tried, failed him for once, and he jumped at Trimble.

"You cheeky wottah, Twimble—"

"Here, I say, you know, keep off!" exclaimed Baggy, his entertainment changing into alarm.

Arthur Augustus did not keep off. He grabbed the cream cake from Trimble's fat paw with one hand: with the other, he grasped the fat Fourth Former—with the fell intention of cramming that sticky comestible down the back of a fat neck. It was quite certain that with a sticky cream cake down his neck, Trimble would be no longer amused.

"Here, leggo!" roared Trimble. "I say, gimme my cake! I say—"

"I am goin' to give it to you, you cheeky fat wottah, wight down your silly neck—!"

"Oooogh!" gasped Trimble. Baggy liked cream cakes, indeed, he loved them: but he liked them, and loved them, internally. Externally, even Baggy did not like or love cream cakes. Sticky cream down the back of his neck was quite a horrifying prospect.

Baggy made a desperate wrench, and jumped away. The cream cake was left in Arthur Augustus's hand.

Baggy did three or four yards almost in a jump. Then he turned. He would have fled—had the cream cake been still in his own fat paw. But it was in Arthur Augustus's hand—and Baggy did not want to lose it. The whole of Baggy Trimble's financial resources—amounting to fourpence—had been expended on that cream cake: and the prospect of losing it was almost as dismaying as the prospect of having it crammed down his neck.

"Look here, you know, you gimme my cake!" bawled Trimble.

Arthur Augustus made a step towards him. Baggy jumped back, to keep out of reach. He wanted Arthur Augustus to give him that cake—but not in the way in which Arthur Augustus evidently intended to give it.

"Will you gimme my cake?" he howled.

"Come heah and fetch it!" answered Arthur Augustus.

"If you're going to stick it down a fellow's neck—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here, you know—"

"Pewwaps you will think it funnay, and you will have some-thin' else to cackle at, you cheeky wottah," said Arthur Augustus. "If you want this cake, you fat fwog, come and fetch it."

"Chuck it to me," said Trimble.

"Wats!"

"You ain't going to pinch my cake!" bawled Trimble. "You gimme my cake, D'Arcy. You chuck it and I'll catch it. Gimme my cake."

"Wats!"

"Hallo, what's the row?" Tom Merry came out of the tuck-shop, with Manners and Lowther. The three gazed in surprise at Arthur Augustus, with the cream cake in his hand, and Baggy Trimble hovering round him.

"He's got my cake!" yelled Trimble. "He's bagged my cake! I say, Tom Merry, you're junior captain—you make him gimme my cake."

"Oh, my hat!" said Monty Lowther. "You taking a leaf out of Trimble's book, Gussy, and bagging a fellow's tuck?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, why don't you give the fat freak his cake?" asked Manners.

"I am goin' to give it to him, Mannahs! I am goin' to cwam it down the back of his cheekay neck."

"For goodness sake, don't!" exclaimed Lowther. "Trimble would have to wash, if you did! The shock might be fatal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my cake!" yelled Trimble. "I jolly well know what you're after—you're going to scoff that cake! You gimme my cake."

Fellows were gathering round, attracted by Trimble's howls, most of them grinning. In the general interest in the scene, no one noticed, for the moment, that a majestic figure was bearing down upon the spot. Such a scene in the quadrangle might amuse the juniors: but Dr. Holmes was not amused. He was frowning.

"My cake!" roared Trimble. "Look here, D'Arcy, if you don't gimme my cake, I'll jolly well go to a prefect! I'll ask Kildare—" Baggy made another jump back, as Arthur Augustus advanced. "Keep off, you swob! Gimme my cake!"

Arthur Augustus's hand went up. Chasing the fat Baggy round the quad to cram the cream cake down his back was altogether too undignified. Landing it on his fat features was really almost as good! Taking deadly aim, Arthur Augustus hurled the cake

at Trimble's fat features, with all the force of his noble arm.

But Baggy ducked just in time! The missile, meeting with no resistance, flew on, over Baggy's fat head.

But every bullet has a billet! The same rule applied to that cream cake. It whizzed on like a bullet past Baggy: and there was a sudden gasp of horror from all the fellows on the spot.

"Gussy—!"

"Look out—"

"Stop—!"

"Oh, great pip!"

Warnings came too late: the cream cake was whizzing through the air.

Squash!

It landed!

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Tom Merry. "Gussy's done it now."

He had!

Dr. Holmes, grave gentleman as he was, gave a bound like a kangaroo, as that whizzing cream cake caught him fairly in the middle of his features. He had arrived on the scene just in time to make that unexpected catch.

"Woooooooch!" spluttered the Head: the very first time that the Head-master of St. Jim's had ever been heard to utter such an ejaculation.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, my hat—!"

"The Head—!"

"He's got it!"

"Urrrggh!" Dr. Holmes almost tottered. His majestic hands clawed at his majestic face. "Woooooch!"

"Oh, cwumbs!" groaned Arthur Augustus. He wished from the bottom of his heart that he had passed Trimble's giggle unheeded. He wished that he had never touched that cream cake. Above all he wished that he had never hurled it at Baggy Trimble. But all those wishes came too late to be of any service! He had done it!

"Wurrrggh!" Dr. Holmes clawed stickiness from his face. He peered at Arthur Augustus through a screen of stickiness. "D'Arcy — groogh — D'Arcy — urrggh — you — you — you — wurrrggh—!"

"Oh, cwikey! I—I—I am sowwy, sir," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I did not see you, sir—I—I—I was buzzin' it at Twimble, sir—oh, cwumbs—"

"Urrggh! D'Arcy, go to my study at once."

"Yaas, sir, but—"

"Wait for me there—"

"Vewy well, sir! But—"

"Go!" thundered the Head.

Arthur Augustus, sadly, went! Dr. Holmes followed him, with his handkerchief to his face. It was the first time that the Head had been seen in the quad with the fragments of a sticky cream cake spread over his majestic face: and no doubt he was anxious to get out of view.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "Poor old Gussy!"

"I say, did the Head look a picture?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy's for it," said Manners. "It's all Trimble's fault—let's kick him."

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here, you know—yaroooooh!" roared Baggy Trimble. Baggy forgot all about even his lost cream cake, as he fled from lunging feet.

6

Who?

“YOU fellows heard?”

“Which and what?” yawned Tom Merry.

Sniff, from Baggy Trimble.

“You fellows never hear anything,” he said. “I heard Railton speaking to old Lathom, and then I jolly well cut into Common Room and got this newspaper. I say, I wonder who they can have been. St. Jim’s chaps, it says.”

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther gazed at Baggy Trimble. Apparently the fat Baggy had news. Baggy liked to be the fellow with the news, and in his eagerness to impart the same, he seemed to have forgotten that only an hour ago he had fled from the lunging feet of the three Shell fellows. His fat face was quite excited. He had a newspaper in his fat paw, from which it appeared that he had been deriving some thrilling information.

“Anything happened?” asked Manners.

“I should jolly well say so!” said Trimble. “What do you think of a daylight raid on Wayland Manor?”

“Oh!” said the Terrible Three, together. Wayland Manor was hardly a mile from the school, and its bronze gates were quite near the footpath through the wood, often traversed by St. Jim’s juniors.

“Two of them, from what the paper says,” went on Trimble. “But they’ve got one of them—he got away on a train, but they got him. They don’t seem to have got the other man. And St. Jim’s fellows mixed up in it, too! Fancy that!”

The Terrible Three displayed signs of interest. A “daylight raid” on a mansion only a mile from the school was a little exciting: and if St. Jim’s fellows were mixed up in the affair, it was more interesting still.

"But who were they, though?" said Trimble, knitting his fat brows. "Blake and his gang were out yesterday afternoon—so were Cardew and his lot—and Figgins and Co., I believe—might have been any of them bagged that burglar when he jumped off the train—"

"Oh!" exclaimed the Terrible Three, all together again. They recalled the incident of the sandy man at Abbotsford, the previous day. It dawned on them that they themselves were the St. Jim's fellows "mixed up" in it.

"Let's look at the paper," said Tom.

He jerked the newspaper from a fat hand, and the chums of the Shell looked at it together. They had almost forgotten the incident at Abbotsford Station on Wednesday afternoon: and certainly had not expected to come across any mention of it in the Press. But there it was.

"Here it is," said Monty Lowther, pointing to a column headed "DARING DAYLIGHT RAID AT SUSSEX MANSION"

And they proceeded to read it. It ran:

Yesterday afternoon a daring raid took place at Wayland Manor, a mansion close by the town of Wayland, belonging to Sir George Carshott. The family were at lunch when the burglar entered by an upper window, and a considerable amount of valuable jewellery was taken. A gardener who saw the burglar clambering down a rain-pipe gave the alarm, and he was immediately chased, and the police from Wayland were called by telephone, and were on the spot in a few minutes.

It is known that two men were concerned in the robbery, one of whom appears to have been on the watch outside the house. Both were seen, but they fled in different directions. The man who carried out the actual robbery was described by the gardener, who saw him face to face, and the description was recognised as that of a well-known law-breaker called by the name of Sandy Sanders. This man succeeded in escaping to the railway station, where he jumped on an outgoing train. He was, however, seen by a police-constable as he boarded the train, and the constable jumped into the guard's van as it was moving. As it was not a corridor train, nothing could be done till it stopped at Abbotsford: and there the man jumped out before the train stopped, on the wrong side, in a desperate attempt to escape across the line.

But for the presence of mind of three schoolboys on the platform, whom we understand belong to St.

James's School, a very well-known establishment in the vicinity, he might have escaped arrest: but these boys seized him as he clambered up from the line, and gave him into custody.

None of the loot was found upon him when he was taken back to Wayland and searched, and it appears that he had succeeded in getting rid of it during his flight, though whether he had an opportunity of handing it to his confederate is not known. The other man, whose description is known, has not yet been arrested.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "So that's it!"

"What a jolly old spot of excitement!" remarked Monty Lowther. "One up for St. Jim's, what?"

"But I say, who were they?" exclaimed Baggy Trimble. "It says plainly that they were St. Jim's chaps, doesn't it? It says there were three of them—think it was Cardew and his gang?"

"Hardly," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Well, I know they were out of gates," said Trimble. "But I believe Figgins and Co. were out, too! Think it was that New House crowd?"

"Couldn't have been," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "Only the School House is up to doing these deeds of derring-do!"

"Well, it doesn't say which House," said Trimble. "I say, I'd jolly well like to know who they were! Might have been seniors. I saw Cutts of the Fifth going out yesterday afternoon with St. Leger. But it says there were three of them—and Cutts would be more likely seeing a bookmaker than collaring burglars. I wonder if it was Kildare—he went out with some other Sixth Form men! I say, think it was Kildare, Tom Merry?"

"Not at all," said Tom, laughing.

"Well, who was it?" said Trimble. "Might have been anybody, you know! Think it was some chaps in the Shell?"

"That seems more likely," said Monty Lowther. "What do you think, Manners?"

"Shouldn't wonder!" grinned Manners.

"Well, if they're in the Shell, you fellows ought to know," said Baggy, eagerly. "You'd have heard them speaking about it, surely. Have you heard any chaps in the Shell talking about it?"

"Have we, you fellows?" asked Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh! What are you cackling at?" asked Baggy, puzzled. "I'd jolly well like to know who they were. Three of them, you know, and they got him, and then the bobby got him. But you

fellows wouldn't know—you never know anything. You don't keep your eyes and ears open, like I do."

"Not like you do, certainly," agreed Tom.

"Well, a chap likes to know what's going on," said Trimble. "I can tell you there's precious little goes on that I don't know. But lots of fellows were out of gates yesterday, being a half-holiday. Some of them went over to Abbotsford for the cricket match there, I believe. I shouldn't wonder if it was some fellows who went over for the cricket, what? Think so?"

"Jolly likely," said Monty Lowther.

"Pretty sure of that," agreed Manners, with a nod.

"Might have been coming back by train, and that's how they happened to be at the station," said Trimble, sagely. "I say, did you chaps go out of gates yesterday afternoon?"

"Did we?" said Tom Merry, thoughtfully. "Yes, now I come to think of it, we did."

"Anywhere near Abbotsford?" asked Trimble.

"Yes, quite near," assented Tom. "You see, we went over for the cricket, but the rain washed it out, and we came back."

"By train?"

"Yes, we had a train back."

"Then you might have seen something of it," exclaimed Trimble. "If you kept your eyes open, like I do—"

"We don't, though!" said Tom, shaking his head.

"No, you jolly well don't!" said Baggy. "You never know anything, you chaps don't. If I'd been anywhere around, I'd have seen and heard everything that was going on, I can jolly well tell you. And there you were, at the railway station where it all happened, and you never saw a thing! You fellows go about with your eyes bunged up." Baggy turned away in disgust."

"But we haven't said that we never saw a thing," said Tom, mildly.

Baggy spun round again.

"Oh, did you see anything of it?" he exclaimed. "I say, did you see anything of what happened at the station?"

"We did!"

"Well, you might tell a fellow," exclaimed Trimble. "Were you there when it all happened?"

"Right on the spot!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Saw everything from start to finish, old fat man—though we don't keep our eyes open like you do."

"You saw the St. Jim's chaps collar that burglar who dodged off the train with the peeler after him?" exclaimed Trimble, breathlessly.

"As plain as we see you now," said Monty Lowther, "and that's plain enough—never saw a chap plainer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you know who they were?" bleated Baggy. "I say, nobody seems to know, but you fellows know if you saw them. I say, D'Arcy came in with a boko like a tomato, and spun a yarn about somebody chucking something from a train. I don't see why he should spin a yarn about it, if it was the burglar gave him that nose! It wasn't D'Arcy, was it?"

"Nothing like him."

"Well, you haven't forgotten who they were, I suppose?" yapped Trimble. "If you really saw them—"

"We saw them all right," said Manners. "Fellows we know jolly well—we see them every day in form."

"Shell chaps?" exclaimed Baggy. "Pals of yours?"

"Well, two of them are pals of mine," said Tom Merry. "The other isn't exactly a pal, but I like him all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at? Pulling my leg?" yapped Baggy. "I jolly well don't believe you saw them at all, so yah! Making out you saw it all, when you jolly well never saw a thing—"

"But we saw the whole show," chuckled Monty Lowther. "We saw that Sandy johnny bolt off the train, and saw the bobby cut after him from the guard's van, and saw the St. Jim's chaps bag the jolly old burglar—we didn't miss an item in the whole show, did we, you chaps?"

"Not an item!" chuckled Tom.

"Then who were they?" yelled Trimble. "I don't believe you saw anything, but if you did, who were the chaps?"

"Us!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Little us!" chuckled Lowther.

"Oh!" gasped Trimble. "You!"

The Terrible Three walked away, laughing, leaving Baggy Trimble blinking after them, his gooseberry eyes popping. But Baggy had the news at last—he was the fellow who knew! He rushed away with the news, and within a quarter of an hour all the School House knew that the three St. Jim's men who had the distinction of honourable mention in the Press, were the "Terrible Three" of the Shell.

7

Doggo!

THE slant-nosed man, sitting on the log by the footpath in Wayland Wood, gave a sudden start, like a startled animal pricking up its ears, and rose hastily. He stared along the leafy footpath with glittering little ratty eyes under a scowling brow. Then, swiftly, he dodged behind a tree: as footsteps and voices on the path drew nearer.

It was quite a solitary spot, in the middle of the wood, thick with its summer foliage. Nosey Pilkins—whose nickname had been bestowed upon him by his friends no doubt in allusion to the sad state of his nose after a fistical accident—had been sitting on the log, smoking one cigarette after another, with a glum and gloomy countenance. Judging by Mr. Pilkins' looks, matters were not going prosperously with him. What Mr. Pilkins was doing in that rural district at all might have puzzled any inhabitant, for he looked, as doubtless he was, a city "spiv," quite out of place in rural regions—almost a blot on the landscape in the green wood. But Nosey Pilkins no doubt had business of his own in the neighbourhood of Wayland, for there he still was, several days after the chums of Study No. 6 had met him at the old Army hut on the railway embankment, on the Wayland road.

Solitary as that path through the wood looked, and safe from observation as Mr. Pilkins had probably considered himself there, it was not so solitary as usual on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons, which were half-holidays at St. Jim's, when it was often traversed by schoolboys going over to the town. But Mr. Pilkins was no doubt unacquainted with the manners and customs of St. Jim's, and unaware that on Saturday afternoon St. Jim's fellows might be coming along that path at any moment.

Evidently, Nosey Pilkins did not want to be seen. Whatever his business in the neighbourhood, he preferred to understudy

the shy violet, and keep himself out of observation. Footsteps and voices startled him into instant cover. Backing behind a tree, he waited for the footsteps to pass on, and from his hidden cover scowled at three schoolboys who appeared in sight.

He had never seen Tom Merry or Manners or Lowther before: but they might have been his deadly enemies, from the scowl he gave them. Mr. Pilkins was in a very disgruntled mood, feeling indeed inimical towards the whole human race just then. Which was perhaps not surprising in a man whose best guess was to clear off, at the earliest possible moment, from the vicinity of the recent burglary at Wayland Manor, and who, every hour that he lingered, risked the fate that had befallen Sandy Sanders at Abbotsford on Wednesday. However, he was safe out of sight when the Terrible Three came along, and they had not the faintest idea that a savage face was scowling at them from behind a tree. And Mr. Pilkins made no sound, only expressing his feelings by that savage scowl, as he waited for the footsteps to pass, and die away in the direction of the town of Wayland. His cue was to remain "doggo" till they went.

Unluckily for Mr. Pilkins, the footsteps did not die away. Tom Merry and Co., strolling through the wood on a half-holiday, were in no hurry—in fact, they had time on their hands. Monty Lowther was interested in a new picture at the picture palace at Wayland, and had persuaded his chums to accompany him thither. Tom Merry would doubtless have preferred cricket: Manners, in all probability, would have preferred to take his camera for a walk—Monty was the only member of the Co. much interested in films. But "give and take" was the rule among the chums of the Shell. Their tastes were dissimilar, but they bore with one another's differing tastes as good chums should.

So there they were, sauntering through the leafy wood, and not in the least in a hurry, as they had more than ample time to reach Wayland for the picture in which Monty was interested. And as they came to the spot where the fallen log offered an inviting seat, Monty Lowther glanced at his watch, and then sat down—to the intense annoyance of the slant-nosed man behind the tree.

"Bags of time," said Monty. "We don't want to hang about in the town—squat down, you fellows. I say, I've done a limerick—like to hear it?"

Tom Merry and Manners grinned. They were quite willing to sit down on the log for a rest before resuming the long walk to Wayland: but they could guess that Monty was thinking more of reading out his limerick than of taking a rest. Good chums as they were, Monty did not always find them too eager to listen-in

while he recited his comic verses—which were perhaps more comic to Monty Lowther than to the listeners-in!

“Oh! Um! All right,” said Manners.

“Cut on,” said Tom. “I was just wondering—”

“About my limerick?”

“Oh! No! I was thinking of Cardew for the Carcroft match—but he's so dashed uncertain—”

“Blow Cardew!”

“Oh! Yes! But he's such a jolly good bat, on his day—”

“Is there a single minute, day or night, that you're not thinking about cricket, Tom Merry?” hooted Lowther. “Do you want to hear my limerick or not?”

Tom Merry laughed.

“Oh! Yes! Rather! Cut on, old chap.”

Tom and Manners sat down on the log, on either side of Monty Lowther. The funny man of the Shell frowned. It was not all “beer and skittles,” so to speak, to be a born funny man. A fellow really couldn't enjoy all his comic cracks wholly on his own—he needed an audience, to enjoy them too. Somehow, when Monty did get an audience, they hardly ever seemed to enjoy them as much as Monty himself did. And he did not always get an audience. Even his best chums, his own familiar friends, while willing to let him cut on, did not seem wildly enthusiastic.

“It's about Gussy,” said Lowther.

“Then it's bound to be funny,” said Tom, encouragingly. “Roll it out.”

“If you don't want to hear it—”

“But we do! Don't we, Manners?”

“Eh! I wish I'd brought my camera,” said Manners. “Might have picked up a few good snaps in this wood—”

“Blow your camera!” roared Lowther.

“Never mind your camera now, old man,” said Tom, laughing.

“Get on with that limerick about Gussy—now listen-in, Manners, and forget your camera.”

“Eh! Oh! All right.”

“Carry on, Monty! We're all ears!”

Grunt, from Lowther. This was not the enthusiasm which a born humourist had a right to expect. However, he fumbled in his pocket for his limerick. He liked an enthusiastic audience: but an unenthusiastic one was better than none.

Behind the tree, only a couple of yards from the three school-boys, Nosey Pilkins was gritting teeth discoloured by smoking. Seldom had Mr. Pilkins felt so intensely exasperated. Round that tree was thick underbrush, which afforded Nosey the cover he

wanted, hiding him while he peered out unseen. But that underbrush, as was natural on a warm summer's day, was inhabited by insects. One of them, which seemed all tickling legs, had crawled on Nosey's neck, and got inside his collar.

Nosey was very particular not to be seen. The Wayland police were interested in a man whose nose had a slant. Certainly he did not want schoolboys chattering about having seen such a person. Nosey lived in fear of the hand of a "cop" on his shoulder. He had to keep out of sight. And exploring the interior of his collar for that troublesome insect would have caused swaying and rustling of the bushes, and undoubtedly warned the schoolboys that somebody was behind the tree. Nosey had to endure that tickling in his neck with all the patience he could muster, only yearning for those schoolboys to get up from the log and go on their way. Which, apparently, they had no intention of doing just yet! Nosey was going to have the privilege of hearing Monty Lowther's limerick—for what that was worth. He did not look as if he was going to enjoy it. He scowled blackly as Monty, all unconscious of that addition to his audience, read it out to his friends.

*Dear old Gussy looked out at the sky,
To see if the weather was dry,
Something came from a train,
Which caused him a pain
In his boko as well as his eye!*

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. Tom did not, as a matter of fact, quite see the point of that limerick: but he was prepared to believe that it was quite funny, and he laughed industriously.

Manners seemed less satisfied. He looked puzzled. Manners was a fellow who liked to have things clear.

"Did Gussy have a pain in the eye?" he asked. "From what I heard, he was in that old Army hut on the Wayland road, getting out of the rain, and somebody chucked something from a train that hit him on the nose—not in the eye! Might have blacked his eye, if it had! He came in with a nose like a tomato, but I never noticed anything about his eye."

Monty Lowther breathed hard.

This was the sort of thing a born humourist had to tolerate, even from his nearest and dearest pals!

"You silly ass!" he began.

"Well, I only want to know," said Manners, mildly. "So far as I know, Gussy had a pain in his nose, and he was mad as a hatter about it—he got six from the Head for buzzing a cream

cake at him because Trimble giggled at his nose—but his eye was all right—he never had anything the matter, with that.”

“It’s a pun!” shrieked Lowther.

“Oh!” said Manners “Is it? What’s the pun?”

“Pain—pane!” yelled Lowther. “Gussy’s eyeglass—don’t the fellows call that a pane in the eye?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” contributed Tom Merry, dutifully.

“Oh!” said Manners, thoughtfully. “His eyeglass is a pane in the eye—I get you! That packet from the train gave him a pain in the nose! So he had a pain in his nose and a pane in his eye! Is that a pun?”

“Isn’t it a jolly good one?” howled Lowther.

“Oh, quite!” said Manners. “Pain—pane—yes, I suppose that’s a pun, of sorts. Jolly good limerick!” added Manners, rather belatedly.

“You silly chump—!”

“Read it out again, old chap,” said Tom Merry, hastily. “I think it’s jolly funny! Hallo, here comes the one and only! Let him hear it.”

An elegant figure appeared on the footpath, coming from the direction of the school. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy turned his eyeglass on the three Shell fellows sitting in a row on the log.

“You fellows takin’ a west?” he remarked, coming to a halt. And he sat down on the end of the log, with a careful regard to the knees of his trousers. “Wathah warm this aftahnoon, isn’t it?”

“Lowther’s got something for you to hear,” said Tom.

“Weally? Wun on, deah boy.”

Behind the tree, the peering “spiv” gritted his teeth. Instead of the three schoolboys walking on, another had joined them. Mr. Pilkins was getting into a state of perspiration and suppressed fury, with that noxious insect tickling his neck. But there was no help for Nosey Pilkins: he had to endure it or show up, and he could not venture to show up. From his perspiring neck, the spider, or whatever it was, was going down Mr. Pilkins’s back, making him feel most horribly uncomfortable. But he had to leave that spider to its own devices. A spider down the back was better than four schoolboys telling the world that they had seen him in the wood.

Happily unconscious of the infuriated man behind the tree Monty Lowther read out his limerick again, for the behoof of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy. Pilkins had, perhaps, been a little interested by the mention, by Manners, of the old Army hut, where

he had expected to meet his confederate: and he recognized D'Arcy at once as one of the four schoolboys he had met there a few days ago. But he was not in the least interested in the limerick to which he now had to listen for the second time.

Neither, apparently, was Arthur Augustus. He did not laugh: he did not even smile. He frowned.

"Weally, Lowthah, I wegard you as an ass," he said, severely. "It is not a jokin' mattah, gettin' a bang on the nose fwom somethin' thwown fwom a twain by an uttably unthinkin' ass. I do not wegard it as funnay in the least, or a mattah for idle jestin', Lowthah. I should weally like to give that man on the twain a feahful thwashin'. Howevah, I think he must have been a little off his wockah—tyin' a message to a pocket-knife and chuckin' it out of a twain for no weason whatevah."

"A message?" repeated Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwans you fellows might be able to make head or tail of it," said Arthur Augustus. "Blake and Hewwies and Dig have looked at it, but they cannot make it out."

The Terrible Three stared at Arthur Augustus. This was the first they had heard of the mysterious message.

"But I don't catch on," said Tom, puzzled. "I heard that something was chucked from a train, while you were in that old Army hut on Wednesday afternoon, and that it hit you on the nose—"

"Yaas, wathah! I still have wathah a pain in my nose, but it is not so vevy wed now," said Arthur Augustus, giving it a reminiscent rub. "You see, I caught it wight on the nose—"

"If it was a pocket-knife, lucky it wasn't open," said Manners. "But what on earth did anyone chuck a pocket-knife out of a train for?"

"I suppose that must have been to cawwy the papah that was tied to it, Mannahs. It would not have gone vevy fah on its own."

"Well, my hat!" said Monty Lowther. He forgot all about limericks, in his surprise at this strange story. "A paper tied round a pocket-knife—chucked from a train—with a message on it."

"Yaas, wathah."

"And what was the message?" asked Tom.

"Uttah wot, fwom all I can make out of it. It doesn't seem to mean anythin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I put it in my pocket, thinkin' that some fellow might be able to make it out and see some sense in it, but the chaps in my study think it just wubbish. I suppose it doesn't mattah weally, but it is

very curious—for why should a man write a silly message and tie it on a pocket-knife and chuck it out of a train into that old hut as the train was passin'—unless he is cwackahs."

"Must have meant somebody to pick it up," said Manners.

"But there was nobody there, deah boy—nobody but I. Blake and Hewwies and Dig had gone on, without waitin' for the train to stop."

"Whoever the man was, he must have expected somebody to be there to pick up a message, if he chucked one into the old hut as the train went by," said Manners.

Arthur Augustus reflected.

"Yaas," he admitted. "Pewwaps that was it! I nevah thought of that! All the same, nobody was there, and nobody was in sight on the woad."

"Sounds jolly mysterious!" said Tom Merry. "Let's see the jolly old message, if you've still got it."

"Heah it is, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus fumbled in his pocket, and drew out the paper bearing the incomprehensible message that had so perplexed him. All the three Shell fellows were interested. Still more interested was a man with a slanting nose behind the tree. Nosey Pilkins' ratty eyes were blazing with interest. He forgot the spider crawling on his back. For the first time since he had been parked behind that tree, Nosey Pilkins was glad that he was on the spot. Nosey had reasons, good reasons, for being deeply interested in a message thrown into the old Army hut on Wednesday afternoon from a passing train—which he did not doubt was the train on which Sandy Sanders had been a passenger, expecting arrest when it arrived at Abbotsford! A dozen spiders might have crawled down Mr. Pilkins's back just then, and he would hardly have noticed them. Hardly breathing in his eagerness, he peered through the foliage, his eyes popping at the crumpled paper the swell of St. Jim's drew from his pocket.

8

Nosey Pilkins Hears Something!

TOM MERRY took the paper, and Manners and Lowther read it with him. They read it with astonished eyes—staring at it.

It had amazed Arthur Augustus. It had amazed Blake and Herries and Dig when he showed it to them in the study. Now it amazed the Terrible Three.

“By gum!” said Monty Lowther.

“Must be some sort of a joke!” said Manners.

“Or somebody wandering in his mind,” said Tom. “It doesn’t make any sense, that I can see.”

He read it through again, with concentrated attention. His chums read it through again with him. But the second reading enlightened them no more than the first. They certainly were not unintelligent fellows: but the most intelligent fellow might have been perplexed to extract any sensible meaning from such a message. Sherlock Holmes or Ferrers Locke might have been perplexed by it. Who was to make sense of such a message as:

Prices of game have gone up. We can cop good profits on birds in this market. Just train Fred to stuff the partridge left much too hollow, and take oak logs to Wayland if needing wood. Dated the tenth of May on the old footpath leading north from the Roman road.

Arthur Augustus sat and polished his eyeglass, while the Shell fellows read and re-read that remarkable message.

“Prices of game?” said Tom Merry. “Good profits! That sounds a good bit like poaching.”

“It do—it does!” said Lowther. “But what about a partridge left much too hollow?”

"Beats me," said Tom.

"The bit about logs sounds like a wood-cutter," said Manners. "Lots of logs on the market now people can't get coal. But what the thump have logs got to do with stuffing a partridge?"

"Dated the tenth of May," said Lowther. "But last Wednesday wasn't the tenth. If that's the date, it's wrong."

"And the Roman road?" said Tom. "Never heard of a Roman road in this part of the world."

"Anyhow, a Roman road doesn't connect up with high prices for game and stuffing a partridge," said Manners.

"Hardly!"

"I wathah thought you fellows would be baffled," said Arthur Augustus. "The man who wrote that must be cwackahs, what?"

"Looks like it," said Tom.

"Mad as a hatter," said Lowther.

Manners shook his head, slowly. Manners was, perhaps, a rather more thoughtful youth than his friends. He had an inquiring mind, and anything in the nature of a problem interested him. He took the paper from Tom's hand, and scanned it very carefully.

"I fancy there's more in this than meets the eye," he said. "Ever heard of such a thing as a cryptogram?"

"A cryptogram?" repeated Tom.

"That's what it looks like to me," said Manners, decidedly. "You want to write a secret message, and you put it in cryptogram style, so that fellows who don't know the secret can't read it."

"Oh!" said Tom. He took the paper back from Manners, and gave it another scrutiny. "You mean, words are used meaning something else—and can only be understood by someone knowing the code?"

"That's it!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "The thing may mean somethin' aftah all, if we could find out the cwryptogwam."

"I've no doubt it means something," said Manners. "Whoever chucked it from the train, into that old Army hut, expected somebody to be there to pick it up—it was a place of appointment, or something of that kind. Called away suddenly, perhaps, and had to take that train, and had no time to communicate—so he just shied that message into the old Army hut as the train passed—having reason to believe that his friend, or whatever he was, might be there."

"By gum!" said Tom. "You've got the brains, old man! That does make it a bit clearer, if you've got it right."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Blessed if I see why he shouldn't write his message in plain English, if it was for a friend to pick up," said Lowther.

"Might be reasons," said Manners.

"Well, what then?" asked Monty.

"Suppose it's poachers—that talk about game looks like it. If they're after poaching, they wouldn't like all the wide world to be able to read a message about it, if it fell into wrong hands—as it did!" said Manners. "The man it was intended for wasn't there—but Gussy was there—and it was that very chance that the cryptogram was intended to guard against."

"Secret code used by a gang of poachers?" said Tom.

"Poachers—or something shady!" said Manners. "Might be quite harmless, for all we know—just friends who keep up a secret code for amusement. But it looks a jolly good deal more like roguery of some sort."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Could be!" admitted Lowther, with a nod.

"I fancy it's something like that," said Manners. "That Army hut was a place they both knew—might have arranged to meet there, or something—and the man on the train took his chance of his message getting into the right hands. The cryptogram made it safe if it didn't. If we could read it, I've precious little doubt that we should be on the track of some roguery or other."

"Bai Jove! If that is the case, Mannahs, I am vevy glad that I was on the spot, though the jolt on my nose was vevy painful at the time," said Arthur Augustus. "If that is a message fwom one wogue to anothah, about some wascally woguewy, it is wathah good luck that it nevah fell into the hands it was intended for, what?"

"That's certainly what it looks like," said Tom Merry. "Why, the man on the train may have been on the run, and that was his last chance of getting into touch with a confederate—"

"Quite possible," said Manners.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "What about that johnny the bobby ran in at Abbotsford—Sandy Sanders! Might have been him!"

"That grammar wouldn't do for the form-room, old man," said Manners.

"Blow the grammar! Suppose it was that burglar-johnny trying to get through a message to the other man?" exclaimed Lowther, excitedly. "There was another man—it said so in the paper—and they took different directions when they bolted."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I suppose it could be!" he said. "If we could read the dashed thing, we could see whether there was any harm in it. But—"

"But we can't," said Lowther.

"Cryptograms can always be worked out, with time and patience," said Manners, oracularly.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. He took the paper. "Let's see! Pwices of game have gone up—well, if it's a cwpyto-gwan, that doesn't mean pwices of game, but somethin' entiahly diffewent. But what else could it mean, deah boys?"

"Ask us another," said Tom, laughing.

"And takin' oak logs to Wayland," went on Arthur Augustus. "That would mean takin' somethin' else sdmewhah else, see? We're gettin' on. But what else, and where else?"

"Goodness knows."

"And the Woman Woad, too! That must mean somethin' else—not a Woman Woad at all. But what?"

"Rapt in mystery," said Monty Lowther.

"I shall certainly work it out," said Arthur Augustus. "If some woguewy is goin' on, and this is a message fwom one wogue to anothah, it is up to a fellow to find out what it means, and put paid to them, you know. It might even turn out to be a mattah for the authowities. I shall certainly work it out, and nevah west till I have found out what it means."

Monty Lowther looked at his watch, and rose from the log.

"Time we were moving on," he remarked. "Mustn't be late for that picture. Coming to Wayland, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Like to come to the pictures with us?"

"I should be delighted, deah boy—"

"Come on, then."

"—only I am goin' to call on my tailah—"

"Bother your tailor! Come to the pictures instead, and give the trouserings and shirtings and jacketings a miss."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Don't try to keep Gussy away from his tailor," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Might as well try to keep Trimble away from a jam puff. Come on—we pass your tailor's on the way, Gussy—we'll drop you there, and leave you to browse on trouserings."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Come on," said Lowther.

The four juniors went on up the footpath together. A bullet head was projected from behind a tree, and a pair of rat-like eyes glittered after them. Nosey Pilkins, with his lips drawn back from his teeth in a snarl, watched them as they went—calculating the chances of rushing them, and grabbing that paper from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But four sturdy schoolboys were not to be rushed and robbed easily, and he abandoned that idea. He backed into the wood again, and slinking among the trees and thickets, followed them unseen. From what he had overheard, they had different destinations in Wayland, and the schoolboy with the eyeglass might very probably be returning later on his own. In which case, Nosey knew what he was going to do—he was going to get hold of that paper, if he had to knock Arthur Augustus D'Arcy senseless to get it into his thievish hands.

9 Taking Care of Cardew!

"CARDEW!"

"Sorry—rather in a hurry."

"Stop!"

"Some other time, old bean."

"No other time will do," said Ernest Levison, grimly. "Stop now."

"I've said that I'm in a hurry—"

"That doesn't matter."

"Doesn't it?" said Ralph Reckness Cardew. "I rather think that it does, old bean! Au revoir!"

And Cardew of the Fourth walked out of gates, taking no further heed of his chums, Levison and Clive. Ralph Reckness Cardew was about the last fellow at St. Jim's to be turned aside from his own wilful way, by the remonstrances of friend or foe.

He walked away cheerily down the lane towards Rylcombe, bordering Wayland Wood, leaving Levison and Clive staring after him from the gateway—with frowning faces. Rifts in the lute were not uncommon in No. 9 Study in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and not infrequently did Cardew try the patience of his friends sorely. Levison set his lips.

"He's going—!" he muttered.

"And we know where!" growled Clive. "By gum, I've a good mind to go after him, and punch his head. Not that I could punch any sense into it."

"Come on," said Levison, abruptly.

"After him?" asked Clive.

"Yes: come on."

"He won't listen to us—"

"We'll make him!"

"Oh, all right."

The two juniors followed Cardew, at a trot. They overtook

him a short distance down the lane, just after he had passed the stile that gave onto the footpath to Wayland. Cardew, evidently, was heading for Rylcombe, and his friends did not need telling why.

Cardew turned, at the sound of running feet behind. He came to a halt, and stared at Levison and Clive, his careless face setting in a frown. Anything like interference with his liberty of action was more than enough to rouse his anger. It was not easy for a fellow like Cardew to take orders from Sixth-Form prefects, or even from "beaks": and certainly he had no intention of taking them from fellow Fourth-Formers. Levison and Clive were his friends: but the glint in his eyes was extremely unfriendly, as he looked at them.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped.

"You!" said Levison, quietly.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Well, don't be a rotter and a fool, Cardew," said Clive.

"You can't mind your own business, you fellows?" sneered Cardew. "You know jolly well that when I go out on my own, I don't want company. Leave it at that."

Levison shook his head.

"We're not leaving it at that, Cardew," he said. "It's too risky—"

"That's my affair."

"Ours, too, as your pals—"

"You won't be my pals long, if you take it on yourselves to meddle with me" snapped Cardew.

"We'll chance that," said Ernest Levison, in the same quiet tone. Just at present we're your pals, and we're not going to let you ask for the sack. Have a little sense, Cardew! You're under suspicion—Railton and the prefects all have an eye on you. Think we don't know where you're bound for?"

"What do I care?"

"Well, you ought to care," said Clive.

"Do I ever do as I ought?" asked Cardew. "My dear old fossil, doing as one ought is a bore! I can stand anythin' but bein' bored! You're borin' me frightfully now! Run away like good boys and play cricket. Tom Merry may shove you in for the Carcroft match if you're very, very, very good."

"You're sneaking off to the Green Man to see a man about a horse—isn't that it?" asked Levison.

"What about it?"

"This!" said Levison. "You can do as you like, as a rule—"

"Thanks!" said Cardew, sarcastically.

"But not now! If you don't think of the risk, we do! Ten to one you will be spotted, now the pre's are watching you. You're not going to be sacked from St. Jim's if we can stop it."

"Come back with us, and have a go at the nets," said Clive.

"I'm goin' on."

"You're not," said Levison. "If you can't take care of yourself, your friends will take care of you. Come back with us."

"I won't!"

"You will!" said Levison. He made a stride towards the scape-grace of St. Jim's, and grasped his arm. "You're not going to take another step towards the Green Man, Cardew! You're coming back with us."

Cardew's eyes blazed. He gave a jerk at his arm, but Ernest Levison's grasp on it was like iron. He clenched his other hand.

"Let go my arm, Levison," he said, between his teeth.

"I'm holding on."

"Do you think you can stop me doin' what I choose?" Cardew almost shouted in his anger.

"Yes!" answered Levison, coolly.

"Will you let go my arm?"

"No!"

"Mind, I shall hit out—!"

"Take his other arm, Clivey!"

"What-ho!" grinned Clive. He jumped forward, and grasped Cardew's other arm, just in time to stop an angry blow.

With both arms gripped, Cardew stood between his friends, his face blazing with rage. Twice, thrice, he wrenched, but he was safely held.

"Will you let go?" he panted.

"No! You're coming back to St. Jim's with us."

"I'm not!" shrieked Cardew.

"Walk him along, Clivey!"

"Come on, Cardew."

Ernest Levison and Sidney Clive started walking up the lane towards the school. Cardew, between them, struggled to hold back. He clamped his feet on the ground, and dragged with all his strength.

But it did not avail. Either of his friends was quite a match for him in strength: and the two of them together were much too much for him. He swayed over, and his feet dragged along in the dust as they marched on, half-carrying him.

He had to walk, or be dragged: and he chose to walk. But he panted with rage as he walked.

Often and often had his friends remonstrated with him: and he

had shown nothing but amusement at their remonstrances, and gone on his own wilful way. But they were in a determined mood now. Cardew seemed to care nothing for the risk he was running—indeed the risk seemed to add to his zest. But since he had come under his House-master's suspicion, the risk was too great to be run—in the opinion of his chums at least. They were going to save him from the "sack" whether he liked it or not! The wilful, arrogant scapegrace could hardly believe that they would go to this length! But they were doing it—and he had to get it down.

A fat figure came rolling down the lane. Baggy Trimble paused, to stare at the infuriated face of the fellow held by his arms.

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble. "I say, what's the row? Taking you for a walk, Cardew? He, he, he!"

"Cut off, you fat frump," grunted Clive.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Trimble, and he rolled on towards Rylcombe.

Cardew breathed fury.

"Will you let go?" he hissed. "Do you want to put up a show, for every silly idiot to cackle at who comes by?"

"Will you come back to the school if we let go?" asked Clive.

"No!" hissed Cardew.

"Then we're holding on," said Levison.

"You meddlin' fool—"

"Thanks!"

"You interferin' dummy--"

"Thanks again!"

Cardew breathed fury. He had to walk on, at the risk of other fellows coming by and grinning at his peculiar predicament. Levison and Clive, evidently, meant business. But a gleam shot into his eyes, as they came past the stile on the woodland footpath. He slowed down.

"Come on," said Levison.

"Let go my arms," breathed Cardew. "I'll promise not to take a step towards Rylcombe—let go!"

"Honour bright?" asked Levison.

"Honour bright, hang you."

"O.K." said Levison, and he released the arm he was holding, and Sidney Clive did the same. Cardew walked between them unheld. Scapegrace as he was, and more than a little of a black-guard, Cardew's word was his bond, and they knew that they could trust him not to head for the Green Man. But they did not guess what was in his mind. There were other such resorts where the scapegrace of St. Jim's was a welcome visitor.

"A spot of cricket will do you good, old man," said Clive, amicably. "You've got a good chance of playing in the Carcroft game, if you keep up with it. Isn't that better than talking gee-gees with Bill Lodgey?"

"Is that sixthly or seventhly?" sneered Cardew.

"Oh, go and eat coke," growled the South African junior. "Dashed if I know why we bother about you at all."

"Don't!" suggested Cardew.

"Oh, rats!"

Cardew walked on between the two, apparently resigned to his return to St. Jim's. But his resignation was only apparent. As they came abreast of the stile on the footpath which led through the wood to Wayland, he woke to sudden action.

A sudden shove in the ribs sent Levison staggering, and a shove at Clive spun him over, and he toppled into the dust. Cardew rushed at the stile, leaped over it at a bound, and ran up the footpath into the wood.

"Oh!" gasped Clive, as he sat up in the dusty lane. "Oh!"

"By gum!" Levison's eyes blazed. "Come on—he's not getting away with a trick like that! After him!"

"Oh, bother him!" Clive picked himself up, and dusted his clothes. "I'm fed up with him—let him rip!"

"Come on, I tell you!" exclaimed Levison.

He vaulted over the stile, and ran up the footpath after Cardew. Clive gave a grunt: but he followed. Both of them put on speed: and Cardew, looking back a few moments later, saw them in hot pursuit, close behind. And from their expressions, it looked probable that head-punching would be the first item on the programme when they overtook him.

But they were not going to overtake him, if Cardew could help it. He, too, put on speed, racing like a deer up the footpath. Levison and Clive, as angry as Cardew now, or angrier, raced after him: and Cardew, going all out, just kept his distance ahead, as they tore through the leafy wood.

10

Up a Tree!

“BAI JOVE!”

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped.

He was taken quite by surprise.

He had visited his tailor, while Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther went on to the picture palace in Wayland High Street. He had spent quite a happy hour at his tailor's. If any fellow at St. Jim's was a good judge of trouserings, Arthur Augustus was: and in the matter of selection of clothes, Gussy took a serious matter seriously, and entered into the spirit of the thing. In a very satisfied mood, he walked out of the town to take the footpath home: and if he was thinking of anything beyond trouserings, it certainly was not of danger. But it was danger that awaited him in the leafy shades of Wayland Wood.

He walked cheerily into the shady dusky footpath, under leafy branches that met overhead. At a distance of a dozen yards from the road, he was out of sight from that road. A big old oak tree, with dusty cavities in its ancient trunk, bulged into the footpath, over which its thick branches spread like a canopy. It was, if Gussy had noticed it, the tenth tree from the road: but Gussy naturally did not heed that circumstance. Neither did he heed a faint rustle in the underbrush round the old oak. But he heeded when a figure suddenly leaped from behind the tree and rushed at him.

It was then that he ejaculated “Bai Jove!” and jumped. As the man rushed, he recognised him as the slant-nosed man who had come into the old Army hut by the railway embankment, on that rainy Wednesday afternoon. Arthur Augustus had totally forgotten the slant-nosed man's existence: and he was unpleasantly reminded of it now. Nosey Pilkins' grasp was on him in a twinkling.

"Oh, cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he went down into the grass, in the clutches of the slant-nosed man.

He sprawled on his back, in an astounded state, gasping for breath. A thievish hand groped for his pocket.

But at that point, Arthur Augustus came back, as it were, with something that Mr. Pilkins did not expect.

No doubt Nosey expected to handle a slim junior schoolboy with ease. So far, he had done so. But there was more in the elegant form of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy than met the casual eye. He was not a fellow to be knocked over and robbed with impunity—very far from it. That the slant-nosed man was after the mysterious paper, or had any connection with the unknown person who had flung it from the train into the old Army hut, Arthur Augustus naturally had no idea. His only possible impression was that he was in the hands of a foot-pad seeking to rob him. And as Nosey Pilkins groped for his pocket, the swell of St. Jim's jabbed upward with a clenched fist, catching Mr. Pilkins on one side of his slanting nose, with a force that almost knocked it straight again.

"Ooooh!" gasped Nosey, as he absorbed that jolt: but before he could quite absorb it, it was followed up by another, which crashed in his ear, and rolled him over in the grass.

Arthur Augustus bounded breathlessly to his feet.

That sudden and hefty resistance, from a schoolboy whom he had supposed to be a helpless victim in his hands, had taken Nosey by surprise. Otherwise D'Arcy could hardly have rolled him off. But for the moment, the swell of St. Jim's was free, and he jumped away.

But Nosey was on his feet the next moment, jumping after him.

Arthur Augustus was not always quick on the uptake. Often and often his aristocratic brain worked at dictation speed, so to speak. But danger acted like a spur.

Facing a muscular ruffian in combat was not a feasible proposition. Taking to his heels was even less feasible, with the man's grasp almost upon him. Without stopping to think—his noble brain lagging behind his actions, as it were—Arthur Augustus made a spring, caught at a low bough of the oak, and swung himself up.

Nosey's hands were on him even as he swung into the air. But that did not profit Nosey, for Arthur Augustus kicked, as Nosey grasped, and caught the slant-nosed man under the chin. Nosey sat down so suddenly that it knocked the breath out of him.

Arthur Augustus slithered up on that branch, with the activity

of a monkey. Nosey was still sitting in the grass spluttering, when the swell of St. Jim's clambered on a higher branch, and then on a still higher one. There he sat astride, staring down at Nosey in the grass, safely out of reach unless the slant-nosed man climbed the tree in pursuit. In which case Arthur Augustus was prepared to defend himself from his point of vantage, while hoping that someone might come along the footpath and interrupt the proceedings. Just for the moment, he was busy with his eye-glass, which had slipped to the end of its cord as he clambered up. He adjusted it carefully in his noble eye, and gazed at Nosey.

Nosey Pilkins clambered to his feet, spluttering rage.

He rubbed his chin, where a bruise was forming—he rubbed his nose, and he rubbed his ear. So far, Nosey had collected all the casualties in that encounter. His eyes looked more like a rat's than ever, as they glittered up at the schoolboy on the branch.

"You young 'ound!" he gasped.

"You uttah wascal!" called back Arthur Augustus. "If you think you are goin' to wob me, I assuah you that you have anothead guess comin'."

"Come down outer that tree!" hissed Nosey.

"Wats!"

"I'll come up arter you."

"Bettah not," said Arthur Augustus. "If you come up aftah me, you wat, I shall knock you down again, and you might get hurt. I shall certainly not stand on cewemony with a wotten wascal like you."

Nosey stood staring up at him, breathing hard. A clamber into the old oak, and a struggle among high branches, was a dangerous game, for which Nosey did not yearn. He did not care much, perhaps, for what might happen to the schoolboy: but he cared very much indeed for what might happen to himself.

"Will you come down, you young 'ound?" he hissed.

"I wefuse to weply to a wotten wascal usin' such extwemely oppwobwious expwessions," said Arthur Augustus. "If you want to wob me, you wottah, come up aftah me, and I will jolly soon knock you off the twee again. You are not goin' to wob me, you wat."

Nosey stood glaring up at him, with an almost tigerish glare. His ratty eyes glittered searchingly up and down the leafy path. At any moment someone might come along that path, which would spell peril for Nosey. He had expected to get that paper into his hands in under a minute—now the minutes were passing, and every minute was fraught with danger to the man for whom the police were looking

"You come down, or I'll come up arter you and chuck you down, and chance it," he threatened.

"Wats!"

Nosey Pilkins gritted his teeth. He had to make up his mind to it. He reached up to a low branch of the oak, and swung himself off the ground.

Arthur Augustus watched him, warily. There was plenty of pluck in the most elegant junior at St. Jim's, and he was not scared, savage as the face of Nosey Pilkins was as he clambered up. But he was very wary. He had no chance in a struggle with the ruffian, and he had to keep him off somehow. And if Arthur Augustus was not so big and muscular as the ruffian, at least he was a good deal more lithe and active. Watching him like a cat, Arthur Augustus prepared for action as Nosey swung himself on the lower branch.

He grasped a high bough, and hung by his hands. That left his feet free for action. And as Nosey clambered on the branch, Arthur Augustus, swinging above him, kicked.

The yell that came from Nosey, as the kick landed on his ear, woke most of the echoes of Wayland Wood. Gussy's foot was not large, and it was not heavy: but there was plenty of force in that kick, and it dislodged Nosey from his hold. He tipped over his branch, clutched at it wildly, and rolled off, landing in the grass below with a heavy thud.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. He sat astride of his branch again, looking down at the sprawling ruffian. "Bai Jove! Pewwaps you would like to come up again, you wascally wottah! All weady for you!"

Nosey did not reply to that.

He sat up in the grass, his hand to his suffering ear, every bone in his body jarred by the crash on the earth, spluttering for breath. For several minutes he sat there, out of action, gasping and grunting.

But the fear that someone might come upon the scene, spurred Nosey to action at last. He picked himself up, and gave the swell of St. Jim's a deadly glare.

"You jest wait a bit!" he breathed. "You jest 'ang on a minute or two! I'm arter you."

"Come on, you wottah!" retorted Arthur Augustus.

And he prepared for defence.

But Nosey was more cautious this time. He did not swing himself on a branch. He circled round the old oak, and started clambering up the gnarled old trunk on the other side.

"Oh!" breathed Arthur Augustus, and his face became very

serious. Nosey was yards out of reach of his feet, and evidently he could not bring off that kick again. Nosey, on the other side of the huge old trunk, climbed up unhindered into the branches.

Through the foliage, a savage face was soon glaring at Arthur Augustus, out on his branch. Nosey's ratty eyes glittered at him.

"Gotcher!" breathed Nosey.

But he had not quite "got him." He came clambering along the branch, and as he did so, Arthur Augustus retreated along it to the very end.

It was a long, stout branch, projecting over the grassy foot-path. D'Arcy's weight, as he reached the end, caused it to sway and sag, stout as it was. Nosey, half-way from the parent trunk, came to a halt. Arthur Augustus, sitting astride, holding on with legs and hands, faced him, the branch rocking under him. His position was precarious, but he was quite cool. Nosey was not quite so cool. There was a drop of ten or twelve feet under that branch, and Nosey did not want another heavy thud on the hard, unsympathetic earth. He was aching all over from the one he had had. And it was a risky business crawling out the length of the sagging branch.

"You young rip!" breathed the infuriated Nosey, as he stopped, glaring deadly threats at the schoolboy only six or seven feet out of his reach.

"Wats!" retorted Arthur Augustus.

"I'll limb yer!" breathed Nosey.

"Get on with it, you wascal!"

There was a brief pause. Had Mr. Pilkins been merely after Arthur Augustus's money or watch, he would probably have given it up at that point. But he had to have that message that had been thrown from the train—if he could get it! And he was in fear every moment of someone passing below. He made up his mind and crawled further along the branch.

Arthur Augustus sat tight. He was at the end of his tether, and could go no further. He faced the ruffian crawling towards him with a set face. Nearer and nearer came Nosey, slowly and carefully, and the branch sagged more and more as he came, Arthur Augustus's end sinking lower and lower. There was a sound of creaking and straining.

"Now—!" breathed Nosey, glaring.

He was almost within reach.

Crack!

What happened next took both by surprise, it came so suddenly. Nosey's weight at the end of that long branch, added to D'Arcy's, was too much for it, stout as it was. It sagged and sagged—and snapped!

D'ARCY IN DANGER

With a loud crack, the branch broke, a few feet out from the trunk. The broken end dropped in an instant under the weight of Arthur Augustus and Nosey, and both of them rolled off it, headlong, and landed in the grass on the footpath.

Arthur Augustus rolled over dizzily in the grass. Nosey Pilkins sprawled two or three feet from him.

"Oh, cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He struggled to his feet. In another moment he would have been running up the path. But Nosey, not yet able to get up, reached out, and grasped an ankle. Arthur Augustus went over again, as his leg was jerked from under him. He was in the crook's grasp at last.

Nosey, windèd, bruised, bumped, and boiling with fury, grasped him with both hands. His eyes blazed at the panting Gussy.

"Now—!" he breathed.

His arm was drawn back, his fist clenched, and in a moment more, savage knuckles would have crashed on Arthur Augustus. But at that moment came an interruption. A running figure shot along the footpath—going too fast to see the two figures on the ground before the crash came. That running figure crashed headlong into Nosey Pilkins, knocking him over, and sprawling on him: and a moment later, two more running figures, also going too fast to stop, arrived on the spot, and sprawled over the two of them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up dizzily, gazed blankly at four rolling, panting, gasping, struggling forms, and ejaculated breathlessly:

"Bai Jove!"

11

One in the Eye!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW hardly knew what was happening.

That race up the footpath through Wayland Wood, with his pursuers hot on his track, had ended in a sudden and unexpected crash.

It had been rather reckless to race along a winding woodland footpath at top speed, at the risk of crashing into anyone who might be coming from the opposite direction. Cardew had not given that a thought. His friends were after him to walk him back to the school and keep him out of mischief. Cardew was determined not to be walked back to the school and kept out of mischief: and that was all he was thinking about.

He had, however, something else to think about now, as he rolled over, half-stunned by the sudden shock. Something alive was squirming under him—he did not know what it was, for the moment—and before he could discover what it was, Levison and Clive had crashed on him, and he was jammed almost as flat as a pancake between them and Nosey Pilkins.

It was Arthur Augustus who came off best. He was just clear of the mix-up, and he sat up in the grass and blinked at it.

From Nosey Pilkins came a half-suffocated roar:

“Urrg! Gerroff! I’ll out yer! Strike me pink! Wurrgh!”

“Oh, gad!” gasped Cardew.

“Oh!” spluttered Levison. “Oh, my hat!”

“Oh, scissors!” panted Clive.

Sidney Clive was the first on his feet. He staggered up, panting for breath. Then he gave Levison a hand, and pulled him up.

Cardew, winded to the wide, still sprawled on Mr. Pilkins. But Mr. Pilkins was quick on the uptake—he had to be, in his peculiar

line of business. What he had feared had happened—others had come along the footpath, and interrupted—a crowd of schoolboys. Nosey realised at once that his chance of getting hold of that mysterious message was gone, and that his best guess was to be gone himself, as fast as he possibly could, before he was collared and prevented from going at all.

He was pinned down under the dizzy, dazed Cardew. One jab of a savage fist rolled Cardew off. It caught Cardew in the eye. Nosey did not care where it caught him, so long as it knocked him aside—and it did that! Cardew rolled on the footpath instead of upon Mr. Pilkins, and the crook leaped to his feet, and with a single bound disappeared into the wood.

"Oh! Oh, gad!" panted Cardew.

"What the thump—!" exclaimed Levison. He stared at Arthur Augustus. "D'Arcy! What the jolly old dickens—"

"Oh, cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Cardew, old man!" exclaimed Clive. "Hurt?"

He helped Cardew to his feet. The scapegrace stood unsteadily, with one hand to his eye, the sturdy South African junior supporting him. Cardew was still dizzy from the crash, and Mr. Pilkins's hefty punch in the eye fairly made his head swim.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus picked himself up. "Jolly glad to see you fellows—did you see that bwute—man with a queeah nose—he was wobbin' me—"

"A footpad?" exclaimed Levison.

"I suppose so—he was goin' to wob me, and I got up in that twee, but the bwanch bwoke, and we came down togethah," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have had wathah a bump! I feel quite a w'eck! But I am vevy glad you fellows came along. The wotten wascal had me! I should have been knocked out and wobbed if you fellows hadn't come along."

"Jolly glad we turned up, then," said Levison. "It's Cardew you have to thank, though—it was his idea to have a race through the wood."

Clive chuckled.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah a warm aftahnoon for a wace thwough the wood, and not in wunnin' kit, eithah," said Arthur Augustus. "But I am vevy glad of it, as it turns out! I am vevy much obliged to you, Cardew."

Cardew did not speak.

He was pulling himself together, and feeling over his eye very carefully. It felt painful, and it felt swollen. He had lost that "race": his comrades had caught him, almost at the end of the footpath, owing to his crash into Nosey Pilkins. But he was

thinking less of that, than of the state of his eye. Cardew was almost as particular about his personal appearance as his relative, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus had been deeply pained by the conspicuous aspect of his noble nose for several days. Cardew's feelings were almost beyond words at the thought of having a discoloured eye.

Tenderly, he felt over that eye. He realised that it was going to darken—that it was darkening already. He breathed fury.

"I twust you are not hurt, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, considerately. "You have saved me fwom bein' wobbed by cwashin' into that wascal. I weally hope that you are not damaged, deah boy."

"You fool—"

"Bai Jove!"

"What were you in the way for?" hissed Cardew. "Look at my eye! Couldn't you keep out of the way, you burbling dummy!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I wegwet vevy much that you have had a knock in the eye, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "But that is no weason for losin' your tempah and uttewin' oppwobwious wemarks—"

"Idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called an idiot, Cardew," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, indignantly. "I am vevy much obliged to you for cwashin' into that wascally wottah and gettin' wid of him, but I am bound to say that I wegard your wemarks as bein' in the vevy worst of taste."

"Dummy!"

"By gum, you're going to have an eye, Cardew," said Sidney Clive. "You asked for it, old man—you might have crashed into anybody, racing through the wood like that. Lucky it was only a footpad you crashed into."

"Coming back?" asked Levison.

Cardew gave his friends an evil look.

"You've given me this!" he muttered.

"Rot!" said Levison. "You asked for it, as Clivey says. You might have crashed into anybody, and got a punch in the eye for doing it. Are you coming back to the school?"

Cardew almost snarled.

"Think I want to walk into Wayland with a black eye?" he hissed. "I'm goin' back—but not with you. Leave me alone."

Cardew, with a darkening eye and a black brow, tramped away

up the footpath. His intended escapade that afternoon was washed out now—completely washed out. He was no longer thinking of seeing a man about a horse, or of playing banker in an atmosphere of cigarette-smoke. His one thought now was to give that eye attention as soon as he possibly could, in the faint hope that it might not blacken very much after all.

Levison and Clive exchanged a look, and both smiled. They were sorry for the black eye: but they could hardly be sorry that Cardew had been prevented, after all, from indulging in a reckless escapade that might quite probably have resulted in the "sack." That was worth a black eye, in their opinion, though certainly not in Cardew's.

Arthur Augustus glanced from one to the other.

"You fellows been wowin'?" he asked.

"Not exactly—only a difference of opinion," said Levison. "You'd better keep with us going back, Gussy—that brute may be hanging about in the wood."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There had been no sign or sound of the slant-nosed man since he had so promptly vanished from the scene. But it was possible that he might be still hanging about, and Arthur Augustus was glad of the company of Levison and Clive in the walk back to St. Jim's. And, as a matter of fact, their company was a useful safeguard: for Nosey Pilkins was not very far away. The juniors saw nothing of him, and thought little about him: and were not aware that they were followed, at a distance, by the stealthy Nosey: still hoping for a chance of catching Arthur Augustus on his own. Nosey gave up that hope when, still at a safe distance, he saw them turn in at the school gates. How he was going to get hold of that precious paper was a problem for Mr. Pilkins—a problem that required some hard thinking.

Monty Knows How!

“TRIMBLE!”

“You fat villain!”

“By gum!”

“Oh!” ejaculated Baggy Trimble. He jumped up from the table in No. 10 Study, in the Shell, in a great hurry.

Three fellows, coming in at the doorway, gave him grim looks.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had come in, at a rather unfortunate moment for Baggy Trimble. Baggy was aware that they had gone out that afternoon, but he could not be aware at what precise time they would come in. Certainly, Baggy, keen as he was on cake, whether his own or somebody else's, would not have been in No. 10 Study devouring cake, had he been aware that the Terrible Three were scheduled to arrive before he had finished it.

“I—I say—!” gasped Trimble.

His gooseberry eyes popped at the three Shell fellows. On the Study table was the remnant of a cake. Two-thirds of that cake had disappeared inside Baggy, and there was a wedge in his plump paw ready to follow. That cake had arrived only that day, from Tom Merry's old guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett: and it had been intended for tea. It had been used for the intended purpose, certainly: but by Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, instead of by the chums of the Shell.

“Our cake!” said Tom. “You fat, frabjous, fozzling, pilfering, pie-faced porker—”

“I—I say—!” stammered Baggy. “I—I—I—”

“Scrag him!” said Manners.

Baggy dodged round the table. He cast a longing blink at the doorway. But the doorway was barred to Baggy: there was no escape for him. And the looks of the Terrible Three indicated that Baggy was going to have the time of his life before he got out of No. 10.

"Bump him!" said Tom, "and pour the ink down his neck."

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Baggy. "I—I—I say. I—I—I'll pay for the cake, you know. I—I'll get you a new one just as good at the tuck-shop! I—I mean it! My uncle's going to send me a pound note, and—"

"Collar him!"

"Hold on," said Monty Lowther.

"Rot!" said Manners. "We were going to have that cake for tea! We're going to scrag that fat villain bald-headed."

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry, emphatically. "Trimble has got to have a lesson about pilfering tuck in the studies, and we're jolly well going to give him one."

"Hold on, I tell you!" said Monty Lowther: and he grasped Tom and Manners, and pulled them back, just in time to save Baggy from clutching hands.

They stared at him. Why Monty Lowther intervened between Baggy and his just punishment was a mystery to them.

"Look here, you ass—!" said Tom.

"Look here, you fathead—!" said Manners.

"Leave it to me!" said Monty Lowther. "Leave it to your Uncle Montague. Bumping Trimble doesn't do him any good. Does it, Trimble?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Baggy. "No fear."

"Pouring the ink down his neck wouldn't do him any good, either, and it would waste the ink. Leave him to me."

"But what—?"

"We've ragged that fat villain, and bumped him, and scragged him, but what difference does it make?" said Lowther. "He goes right on—no fellow's tuck is safe from him. It's time he was stopped—and I know how—"

"High time," said Tom, "and—"

"We're going to stop him," said Lowther. "Baggy doesn't seem to understand it, but bagging tuck in the studies amounts to pilfering. Well, pilfering is a matter for the police."

Tom and Manners jumped. Baggy gave a squeak of alarm.

"The police!" gasped Tom.

"Don't be an ass," said Manners.

Baggy Trimble's manners and customs were exasperating enough: and very often had he been kicked or bumped for them:

but certainly no fellow in the School House had ever dreamed of visiting him with legal penalties. Tom Merry and Manners almost wondered whether Monty was wandering in his mind.

But he looked very serious and determined.

"I tell you this is going to stop," he said. "I'm going to report this to Inspector Skeat at Wayland."

"You silly ass—!" exclaimed Manners.

"I mean it," said Monty Lowther, firmly. "I'm going to write to the inspector now, and ask him to come here and see Trimble about it."

"You can't!" roared Tom Merry.

"I jolly well can!"

"I—I say," squeaked Trimble. "I—I say, I—I—I shall be sacked if you do—I shall have to go up to the Head—I—I—oh, lor'!"

"That's your look-out," said Lowther. "I'm going to write that letter now. Let him cut if he likes, you men—it's for Inspector Skeat to deal with him, not us! You can cut, Trimble."

Baggy Trimble blinked at him in terror.

He could not believe that Lowther was in earnest. But the mere possibility made the fat Baggy quake.

"I—I—I—I say—!" he babbled.

"You needn't say anything," said Lowther. "Leave him alone, you chaps—he will get enough when Skeats blows in—"

Tom and Manners looked at him, blankly. Monty Lowther closed the eye that was furthest from Trimble.

"Oh!" said Tom. He realised that the playful Monty was pulling Baggy's fat leg. "Come to think of it, jolly good idea."

"Quite!" said Manners, playing up in his turn. "Jolly good idea of yours, Monty—get that letter done now and catch the post."

"I'm going to."

"Oh, crikey!" moaned Trimble.

Monty Lowther sat down at the table, and dipped a pen in the ink. He glanced round at Trimble.

"You needn't hang on," he said. "I've told you you can cut, Trimble!"

"Oh, lor'!"

A few minutes ago, Baggy Trimble would have asked for nothing better than permission to "cut." But he was not disposed to cut now. He was too anxious about that letter that Monty Lowther was going to write.

"I—I say, I—I know you jolly well don't mean it," he burred. Lowther shrugged his shoulders.

Baggy blinked at him as he wrote. His fat face grew longer and longer as he blinked. He could hardly believe his gooseberry eyes. Certainly, this looked as if Lowther was in earnest.

Dear Inspector Skeat,

Will you have the kindness to come over to the school on Monday, to look into a serious case of pilfering in the studies. The suspected person is Trimble. There are three witnesses. Trimble will be here to be taken into custody.

Yours sincerely,

M. LOWTHER.

"That's about right, I think," said Monty, glancing at his chums.

"Puts it into a nutshell," agreed Tom Merry.

"As it was your cake, you will have to charge him, and we shall be witnesses," said Manners.

"I—I say, you ain't going to post that letter!" yelled Trimble.

"I—I might be run in."

"No 'might' about it," said Lowther. "Got a stamp, Manners?"

"Here you are."

Trimble watched in terror as Monty addressed an envelope to Inspector Skeat at Wayland Police-Station, and took the stamp from Manners and attached it. Monty rose from the table, glanced at his watch, and put the letter in his pocket.

"Lots of time to catch the post in the school box," he said. "Come on."

"I—I say—I—" A fat paw clutched at Lowther's sleeve. "I—I say, I'll pay for the cake when I get that pound note from my uncle—"

"You can tell Inspector Skeat that."

"I—I say, you ain't going to post that letter—" wailed Trimble.

"You'll see."

The Terrible Three walked out of the study. Baggy Trimble blinked after them, and then rolled after them. A fat paw grabbed Tom Merry's arm.

"I—I—I say, old chap—"

Tom shook off the fat paw. The Shell fellows went down the stairs, and out into the quad. Trimble rolled after them, palpitating. Even yet he could not quite believe that Monty Lowther intended to post that awful letter. But certainly it looked like it. The Shell fellows walked across to the post-box in the school wall near the gate.

After them rolled the palpitating Baggy.

When they arrived at the letter-box, Baggy made a frantic

clutch at Monty Lowther's arm, as he drew an envelope from his pocket. As Monty's hand was over the address on it, Baggy was unaware that it was an old envelope, addressed to Monty himself, and that the letter to Inspector Skeat remained in the pocket. Baggy had no doubt that this was the fatal letter addressed to the police-inspector at Wayland.

"Stop!" squeaked Baggy. "I say—"

"Let go my arm, Trimble."

"But I—I say—oh, lor'!"

Lowther jerked his arm free, put his hand up to the orifice in the letter-box, and dropped the old envelope inside. Baggy, his fat ears pricked up like a rabbit's, heard it drop within. It was like the knell of doom to Baggy's fat ears.

"Oh, crikey!" he moaned.

"That's that," said Lowther.

"Oh, lor'!"

Baggy tottered against the wall, almost overcome. The Terrible Three, with grave and serious faces, walked away, and left him there. Their faces remained serious till they were out of Baggy's sight. Then they grinned.

"Is that fat ass really ass enough to think that that letter's really gone to old Skeat at Wayland?" chuckled Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better get rid of that letter, Monty," said Tom Merry, laughing. Monty Lowther, grinning, drew the letter to Inspector Skeat from his pocket, tore it into small pieces, and dropped the pieces into the granite basin of the fountain in the quad. Which would have been a comfort to Baggy Trimble, had he seen it! But Baggy did not see it: Baggy was leaning limply on the school wall, nothing doubting that that letter was in the post, to be collected and despatched to the Wayland police-inspector—to eventuate in a visit to St. Jim's on Monday from Inspector Skeat, with consequences for Baggy too awful to contemplate.

Often and often Baggy had suffered for his sins: he could never have counted how many times he had been kicked. But all the kickings he had collected in his podgy career, all added up together, were not so bad as this! He could have wished that the Shell fellows had bumped him, scragged him, poured ink down his neck, or anything else, rather than this! This was awful!

There was just one gleam of comfort! Mr. Skeat mightn't

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take any heed of that letter—he might think it a schoolboy jest—surely he wouldn't come, unless called in by somebody in authority! Baggy felt almost sure that he wouldn't! But he could not feel quite sure!

From the bottom of his podgy heart, Baggy wished that he hadn't scoffed that cake in No. 10 Study. A kicking wouldn't have been so bad—the cake was worth that! But it wasn't worth this! Baggy wouldn't willingly have gone through this state of panic for a dozen cakes! Would Mr. Skeat arrive at St. Jim's on Monday? Baggy was almost sure that he wouldn't—but he dreaded awfully that he would! It was a woeful and worried Baggy!—and that day the fattest face at St. Jim's was also the longest!

13

Sudden Alarm!

CRASH!

Bump!

"Yawwooh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was taken quite by surprise.

On Monday, after class, the swell of St. Jim's was sauntering in the sunny quadrangle, in cheerful mood, at ease with himself and all the world. Certainly he was not expecting to be suddenly charged into and hurled spinning.

It was the unexpected that happened.

If Arthur Augustus noticed the fat figure of Baggy Trimble near the gates, squinting out anxiously into the road, he did not heed him. He could not possibly have foreseen that, all of a sudden, Baggy would turn his podgy back on the gates, and bolt across the quad like a runaway lorry.

That was what Baggy did: and as he did not waste time in looking where he was going, and as Arthur Augustus was in his way, the result was a head-on collision.

Arthur Augustus uttered a startled howl, and sat down on the earth. Baggy Trimble, severely jolted by the shock, sat down also, spluttering. They sat and gasped and stared at one another—and several dozen fellows in the quad stared at both of them.

"Oh, cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus, clutching at the eyeglass streaming at the end of its cord. "You mad whinocewos—wow!"

"Oh, gum!" gurgled Trimble.

He heaved himself to his feet. Arthur Augustus was too winded to rise in a hurry. Baggy was winded, too—but he was in haste—hot haste! He heaved up, and rushed on.

Again he was in too much of a hurry to look where he was going. He rushed into Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, who were hurrying to the spot to render Arthur Augustus first aid.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look out!"

"Great pip!"

Baggy's weight was considerable, in a charge. Manners reeled to the right, Lowther to the left. Tom Merry, however, caught the fat Baggy by the collar, and swung him to a halt.

Baggy struggled in his grasp, frantically.

"You mad ass!" roared Tom. "What are you charging about the quad like a mad elephant for?"

"Ow! Leggo!" shrieked Baggy. "He's after me."

"Who—what—?"

"Leggo!" Trimble struggled and wrenched. "I won't be run in—yaroo! I tell you he's coming for me! Leggo!"

"Mad as a hatter," gasped Monty Lowther. "Let's kick some sense into him."

"Let's!" gasped Manner.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus struggled up. "Hold that fat wottah, deah boys I am going to give him a feahful thwashin' for knockin' me ovah."

"Leggo!" roared Trimble.

"Is that fat idiot off his rocker?" exclaimed Jack Blake, as he came up with Herries and Dig, and a dozen other fellows.

"Trimble, you ass—"

"He's after me!" shrieked Trimble.

"Who's after you?"

"Him!"

"You potty walrus, who's him?" asked Levison.

"Leggo!"

With a terrific wrench, Trimble tore loose from Tom Merry's grasp. He bolted the moment he was loose. A crowd of fellows stared after him, as he careered across the quad.

"What on earth—!" exclaimed Clive.

"Nobody's after him! Is there a mad bull or something on the road? Somebody has scared the fat ass!" exclaimed Blake.

All eyes turned on the gateway. Something, it seemed, had frightened the fat Baggy almost out of his fat wits: but nothing of an alarming nature was to be seen, so far at least. The old stone gateway had its usual aspect: Taggles, at the door of his lodge, looked his accustomed self: Wally of the Third Form, who happened to be in the gateway, was not looking alarmed. What had scared the fat Baggy was really a mystery. Nor was the mystery solved when a portly form walked in at the gates. Plenty of St. Jim's fellows knew Inspector Skeat of Wayland by sight: but there was absolutely nothing alarming in the ruddy,

portly aspect of that efficient guardian of law and order.

"There's old Skeat—!" remarked Herries.

"Can't be Skeat that's scared that fat ass," said Digby.

"Hardly!"

"The fat ass seems to have gone suddenly wight off his wockah," gasped Arthur Augustus. "He has knocked all the bweath out of me, and thwown me into quite a fluttah. My twousahs are all dustay."

"Oh, suffering cats and crocodiles!" murmured Monty Lowther. He gazed at the portly form of the Wayland inspector, and then looked at his chums. "What on earth's brought Skeat here, you fellows?"

"Not your letter," said Tom, laughing.

"Scarcely, as it wasn't posted!" Monty Lowther chuckled. "Trimble thinks it was—and now Skeat's blown in—ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three could guess the cause of Baggy Trimble's wild affright, if the other fellows could not.

Why Inspector Skeat had come to St. Jim's, they did not know. But he had happened to come on Monday: and Baggy, seeing him come, had had no doubt that he had, after all, come in response to Monty Lowther's letter. The sight of the portly inspector had caused that sudden stampede. To Baggy's fat brain, one thing was quite clear—Mr. Skeat was after him: Monty Lowther's letter had done it, and there was the police-inspector, after Baggy! Unaware that that letter had never been posted, Baggy could have no doubt about it. What else could have brought so very unusual a visitor to the school?

"By gum, it's worked out better than we could have expected," grinned Monty Lowther. "Who could have guessed that Skeat would blow in to-day—what on earth has he come for?"

"Goodness knows," said Manners.

"What a jolly old coincidence," chuckled Lowther. "Couldn't have worked out better! That fat chump thinks that Skeat has come to run him in for pinching our cake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Maybe a tip to him about pinching tuck from fellows' studies," said Manners. "It will do him good."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Serve him right," he said. "But I think we'd better tell the fat chump that he's scared about nothing."

"Rot!" said Lowther. "Skeat's blown in at just the right moment—let that fat porker go on thinking he's after him."

"Where is he, anyway?" asked Manners.

"He cut round the House! Come on," said Tom. "He's had a scare, and it may do him good—but let's relieve his silly mind."

"Oh, all right," said Lowther.

The Terrible Three followed on the track of Trimble: leaving the other fellows wondering what on earth had been the matter with Baggy—excepting Arthur Augustus, who had gone into the House in search of a clothes-brush. His usually spotless trousers were dusty: and that, for the moment, was a matter that transcended in importance all other considerations, in Arthur Augustus's view at least. Inspector Skeat walked on to the House, quite unconscious of the wild excitement his arrival had occasioned. He was shown into Mr. Railton's study, in happy unconsciousness of the fact that a fat member of the Fourth Form was scuttling frantically round the House, scared out of his fat wits by a mere glimpse of him.

"Here he is," grinned Monty, Lowther, as the chums of the Shell came round to the rear of the School-House. At a little distance, a fat figure was visible for a moment, and then it disappeared behind Taggles' wood-shed.

Chuckling, the three juniors went round the wood-shed. There they beheld the fat form of Baggy Trimble, leaning on the wall, gasping and gulping for breath. He met them with a terrified squeak.

"Keep off! You let me alone! Oh, crikey! I ain't going to be run in—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" howled Trimble. "You keep off! You ain't going to take me to that bobby to be run in! Keep off!"

"You fat ass!" roared Tom Merry. "It's all right, and there's nothing to be scared about! Old Skeat isn't after you."

"Oh, shut it!" snapped Trimble. "I jolly well know! I—I thought he wouldn't come, but he's come—Lowther's letter—"

"That letter wasn't posted!"

"Oh chuck it!" gasped Trimble. "Think you can fool me like that! I saw Lowther post it on Saturday afternoon! You jolly well know he did."

"I didn't," said Monty. "I dropped an old envelope into the box, and left the letter in my pocket."

"Yah!"

"Don't you believe, me you fat ass?"

"No, I jolly well don't! You want that bobby to get hold of me! I know! You posted that letter—I saw you. If you left it in your pocket, show it to me now!" gasped Trimble.

"I tore it up—"

"Yah!"

"You blithering fat chump!" exclaimed Manners. "The letter was torn up and chucked into the fountain—"

"Yah!"

"Skeat never had it, and he hasn't come for you!" howled Tom Merry.

"Why has he come, then?" howled Trimble. "Skeat never comes here. Why has he come on Monday just as Lowther asked him in that letter—?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Well, I jolly well know!" said Trimble. "I'm not going to be run in! I never had that cake, either! I'll pay for it when my uncle sends me that pound note. I ain't going to be run in! You keep off!"

"I tell you Skeat isn't after you, you blithering fat ass!" roared Tom Merry. "I don't suppose he's ever heard of you."

"Yah!"

"You can come back—"

"I'll watch it!" gasped Trimble. "I ain't going to be run in! You fellows let me alone! "You keep off!"

Evidently, Baggy was not to be convinced! It was, in fact, a curious coincidence that Inspector Skeat had come over from Wayland that very day. To Baggy's scared fat mind it was no coincidence. Inspector Skeat was after him, as a result of Monty Lowther's letter: that was fixed in Baggy's fat obtuse mind. And the Terrible Three weren't going to get him back to the House, to be handed over to the grip of the law! Not if Baggy knew it!

"Look here, take him by his silly ears, and walk him back," said Manners.

That was enough for Baggy! He was breathless. He was perspiring. He was winded. But Manners' words seemed to spur him on to renewed energy. He jumped away from the wood-shed wall and bolted.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as the fat Baggy careered wildly across kitchen gardens. "Stop! Trimble! Stop!"

"Stop, you ass!" shouted Lowther.

"Stop, you potty hippopotamus!" roared Manners.

Baggy did not stop! He put on speed, and vanished beyond arrays of scarlet-runners. And the Terrible Three, laughing, walked back to the quad, and left him to his own devices.

14

The Wanted Man!

“GUSSY—!”

Jack Blake looked into Study No. 6 in the School House. He was looking for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus was in that study. He had a clothes-brush in his hand. He seemed, at the moment, to be practising as a contortionist. Blake stared at him.

“Doing acrobatics?” he asked.

“Weally, Blake—”

“New sort of physical jerks?”

“Nothin’ of the sort, you ass,” gasped Arthur Augustus. “That fat tick Twimble knocked me ovah, and I sat down in the dust, and I am twyin’ to get it off. It is not vevy easy to bwush all wound oneself, Blake.”

Blake chuckled. Arthur Augustus, reaching round his noble person with the clothes-brush, looked rather like a cat chasing its tail. He straightened out and held the clothes-brush across to Blake.

“Pewwaps you would like to give me a bwush-down, deah boy. If that is what you came up for, it was vevy thoughtful. My twousahs are vevy dusty—”

“Not on your life,” answered Blake. “I came up because you’re wanted in Railton’s study, and you’re to go at once.”

“Oh, bothah! I can hardly go to Wailton’s study in dusty twousahs. Pway see if the dust is all off.”

“Just a speck left, old chap,” said Blake. “Stand steady, and I’ll kick it off—”

“You uttah ass!” roared Arthur Augustus. And dispensing with that kind offer of assistance, he threw the clothes-brush on the table, and went down to see what Railton wanted.

He found Inspector Skeat of Wayland in his House-master's study, with Mr. Railton.

"You sent for me, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, D'Arcy! Inspector Skeat would like a few words with you," said Mr. Railton.

"Certainly, sir."

"It is about the man who attacked you in Wayland Wood on Saturday," explained Mr. Railton. "After you had reported the occurrence to me, D'Arcy, I telephoned to Mr. Skeat to apprise him that there was a dangerous character in the neighbourhood: and he now desires you to give him an accurate description of the man—as accurate as you possibly can."

"Vewy well, sir. I am quite at Inspectah Skeat's service," said Arthur Augustus, courteously.

And he directed his eyeglass upon the plump, portly inspector. Mr. Skeat, sitting stolidly upright in his chair, scanned the swell of St. Jim's with his keen grey eyes.

"Please tell me exactly what the man was like, Master D'Arcy," he said. "You saw him quite plainly, I suppose?"

"Quite, sir," answered Arthur Augustus. "The howwid bwute collahed me and was goin' to wob me, and I got up into a twee, and he stood lookin' up at me, and I saw him vewy plainly all the time."

"What did he look like?"

"He looked wathah like a tighah, sir, snarlin' up at a chap."

"Oh! Yes." The inspector coughed. "No doubt! But I cannot instruct my men to search for a man who looks like a tiger, Master D'Arcy! We must be a little more accurate. Was he tall?"

"Not vewy tall, sir."

"Was he short?"

"I don't think he was vewy short, sir."

"About medium height?"

"I weally did not notice, Mr. Skeat."

"How was he dressed?"

"In clothes, sir."

"In clothes!" repeated Mr. Skeat. "Oh! Yes! I think I could have guessed as much, Master D'Arcy, without assistance from you. What kind of clothes?"

"I am afwaid I did not notice vewy particulahly, sir," said Arthur Augustus, regretfully. "He gave me an impwession of

bein' d'ressed in vewy bad taste, but I did not notice particulahs."

"Did you notice what he had on his head?"

"Oh, yaas, sir."

"Well, what?"

"A hat, sir."

"A hat! We are getting on," said Mr. Skeat, with a sarcasm that was wholly wasted on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Did you notice what kind of a hat?"

"I am afwaid I did not, sir."

"Was it a bowler?"

"It might have been, sir. Or pewwaps it might not," said Arthur Augustus, thoughtfully. "I am suah it was a hat, but I did not particulahly notice what kind of a hat it was."

"Was he fair or dark in complexion?"

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his noble brow in thought. Then he shook his head.

"I am afwaid I could not say, sir."

"D'Arcy is not a particularly observant boy, Mr. Skeat," remarked Mr. Railton, with a faint smile.

"So I have noticed, sir," said Mr. Skeat, with a grunt. "Did you notice the colour of his eyes, Master D'Arcy? Were they blue?"

"Pewwaps they were blue, sir."

"Or brown?" almost yapped Mr. Skeat.

"Of course, they might have been bwown," admitted Arthur Augustus.

"Or green!" snapped Mr. Skeat.

"Gween eyes are not vewy common, I think, sir, but of course, they might have been gween," assented Arthur Augustus.

"Did you notice his nose? I presume that you did notice that he had a nose," asked the inspector, sarcastic again.

"I should certainly have noticed it if he hadn't one, sir. I feel quite suah of that," said Arthur Augustus, confidently. "You see, it would have been so vewy unusual, and I have no doubt that it would have stwuck me at once."

"What was it like?"

"It was like a nose, sir."

Mr. Skeat breathed rather hard.

"Was there anything unusual about it?" he asked.

"Only that it looked as if it had been knocked sideways, sir."

I did not notice anythin' else, particulahly. It was just a nose."

Mr. Skeat's eyes gleamed. Mr. Railton gave a little nod. The inspector wanted to elicit information from the swell of St. Jim's without prompting him too much. Now he had got something at last.

"His nose looked as if he had had a knock on it, which had caused it to slant a little, is that it?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah."

"You are sure of this?"

"Quite sure, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, a nose slanting sideways is wathah unusual, and wathah odd, and I could not help noticin' it."

"I am sure you would not have noticed it if you could have helped noticing it," said Mr. Skeat, sarcastic once more. "Did you notice to which side the man's nose slanted?"

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his brows again, in an effort at recollection.

"It might have been to the left," he said, at last.

"Are you sure it was to the left?"

"Not quite, sir! It might have been to the wight."

"But you are sure, at least, that his nose had a slant, as if it had been knocked out of shape by a blow at some time or other?" asked the inspector, patiently.

"Yaas, wathah! I am quite suah of that, Mr. Skeat."

"Very well, Master D'Arcy; I will not trouble you any further," said Mr. Skeat, and the House-master made Arthur Augustus a sign to leave the study, which he did.

Mr. Railton looked inquiringly at the inspector, as the door closed on that hopeful member of his House. Arthur Augustus had not shone as a furnisher of descriptions: but on one point, at least, he had been able to give information. Mr. Pilkins' nose was altogether too conspicuous, in its slanted state, for even Arthur Augustus to have failed to notice it. Mr. Skeat's ruddy face had a satisfied expression.

"I hope the boy has been of some use, Mr. Skeat," said the House-master.

The inspector nodded.

"Quite!" he said. "He seems an extremely unobservant boy, and noticed little or nothing about the man—but he noticed the nose, which after all is the important point. Sandy Sanders' confederate, who escaped after the daylight robbery at Wayland

Manor, was seen by several persons who described him—and they all agree that his nose had a conspicuous slant, as if it had been damaged in a fight at some time. The rest of the description D'Arcy cannot help us with—but he did notice the slanting nose, and that practically identifies the man."

"Then the footpad who attacked D'Arcy on Saturday actually is the burglar's confederate who escaped last week?"

"There is little doubt about that, sir," said the inspector. "And we now know that he is still in the neighbourhood—and can guess why!" Mr. Skeat's jaw set grimly. "Why he was so reckless as to come out into the open, and make his presence known, by attacking and seeking to rob a schoolboy, I cannot guess—it was very injudicious, to say the least. His cue was to keep as quiet as he could, and give the impression that he was gone from the locality. Now that we know that he is still here, we know why."

"The loot?" said Mr. Railton.

"Exactly! Several thousand pounds' worth of jewels were taken from Wayland Manor by Sandy Sanders, but nothing was found on him when he was arrested at Abbotsford, getting off the train. We could not know whether he had concealed it somewhere in his flight, or whether he had passed it on to his confederate who had escaped with it. We now know that it was not the latter—for the confederate is still hanging about the locality. If he had the loot, he would be gone. Sanders must have hidden it—and since his arrest he has had, of course, no chance whatever of communicating with his associates. So, you see—"

Mr. Railton nodded, thoughtfully.

"It would appear that Sanders hid the loot, that his confederate does not know where, but is lingering about here in the hope of finding it," he said.

"Exactly."

"He could have no other motive, I suppose," said Mr. Railton. "But how very reckless of him to reveal the fact, by this attack on a schoolboy."

"I can scarcely understand it," confessed Mr. Skeat. "His game was to lie low and hunt for the hiding-place where Sanders had parked the loot—showing up in public was the last thing he should have done, if he had a spot of sense. But he has done it: and we now know that he is still about here—and that the loot from Wayland Manor cannot be far away. Master D'Arcy's adventure on Saturday may turn out to have been extremely useful to us, sir."

"I am glad that the boy has been of assistance, at all events," said Mr. Railton.

Mr. Skeat took his leave, satisfied that what he had learned from Arthur Augustus sufficed to identify the "footpad" as the confederate of Sandy Sanders: and satisfied, too, that the confederate lingering in a neighbourhood so dangerous for him, was as good as proof that the loot from Wayland Manor was still in the locality: but quite puzzled by the man's apparent recklessness in allowing himself to be seen, and so revealing his presence. He would not have been so puzzled, had he known of the mysterious message that had been flung from the train into the old Army hut on the Wayland road, and of Mr. Pilkins's anxiety to get hold of it. But of that Mr. Skeat knew nothing.

15

Baggy is Bagged!

“OH, lor’!” mumbled Baggy Trimble.

He blinked from the half-open door of Taggles’ wood-shed.

His gooseberry eyes bulged with alarm.

At any other time, the sight of Taggles, the ancient porter of St. Jim’s, would not have caused alarm and despondency to Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. But now it did—deep alarm, and deep despondency.

Baggy was in the depths of pessimism.

The fat Baggy had hoped, and indeed believed, that Inspector Skeat would take no official notice of that letter from Monty Lowther. It had been a worried Baggy: but he had hoped for the best. But what was he to believe, or to hope, when Inspector Skeat walked in at the gates of St. Jim’s, on the very Monday when Lowther had asked him to call and deal with Baggy?

That Mr. Skeat had called to question D’Arcy of the Fourth about the man who had attacked him in the wood, Baggy naturally, did not know. Mr. Skeat had been seen at the school before: but he was a very infrequent visitor there—and evidently he must have had a reason for coming. What reason, except in answer to Lowther’s letter?

Baggy had no doubt of it. The Terrible Three had been quite unable to convince him otherwise. Old Skeat was after him—that was fixed in Baggy’s mind. He dared not return to the House. On the other hand, it was tea-time—and missing a meal was scarcely to be counted among possibilities—for Baggy Trimble! Baggy had crept into Taggles’ wood-shed for cover—

and he skulked in that shed in a most unenviable frame of mind. But he forgot even tea when he saw Taggles in the offing.

Taggles was coming to the wood-shed.

That he might be coming there for a dozen reasons quite unconnected with a fat scared junior, Baggy did not realise. Taggles was coming for him! As he was not to be found, he was being looked for—to be handed over to the tender mercies of that awful police-inspector from Wayland. Baggy's eyes goggled in terror at the ancient porter as he came.

He blinked round the wood-shed desperately for a hiding-place. There was none to be seen. But there was a loft over the shed, approached by a steep ladder clamped to the wall. It was a very steep ladder—almost perpendicular, and very unattractive to the fat Baggy. • But it was a case of any port in a storm! Baggy whizzed across to it, clutched at the rungs, and clambered up in hot haste.

He rolled into the loft above, gasping for breath, as Taggles came into the shed below. Taggles, naturally, did not expect anyone to be in that shed, which was out of bounds for St. Jim's fellows. So he was quite surprised, as he came in, to hear a gasping grunt above his head, and, looking up, to see a foot disappearing into the loft from the ladder.

"Ho!" ejaculated Taggles.

He crossed the shed to the ladder, and stood staring up. Somebody had been in his shed, and dodged up into the loft when he came in. Taggles frowned. He did not want schoolboys larking about in his shed.

"'Ere, you, come down, you!" he called out.

Baggy, in the loft, trembled.

He was unaware that Taggles had glimpsed his foot as it disappeared. He tried to still his gasping.

"You 'ear me?" hooted Taggles.

No reply.

"I knows you're there, 'ooever you are!" exclaimed Taggles. "I see your foot, you young rip! You come outer that loft! You 'ear me?"

Baggy certainly heard him. But like the ancient gladiator, he heard but heeded not. He kept quiet and out of sight.

"Young rips!" grunted Taggles. "Larking in a man's shed, and hupsetting of his things! Will you come down outer that, or do you want me to come up arter you! Now, then!"

Baggy certainly did not want Taggles to come up after him. But he did not come out of that! The loft was his last refuge.

"My eye!" said Taggles. "My blinkin' eye! I tell you I'm

coming up to 'ook you out if you don't come down."

Silence!

Taggles gave an expressive grunt. He had no more fancy for mounting steep ladders than Baggy had. But he was not going to leave that young rascal, whoever he was, in his loft.

He grasped the rungs with his horny hands, and prepared to mount.

"Oh, crikey!" breathed Baggy Trimble, as he heard him coming.

Taggles came up slowly. He gave a grunt at every rung. But he was coming up—after Baggy! In his mind's eye, Baggy saw himself marched off to the House and handed over to Inspector Skeat!

There was a truss of straw in the loft. As a last resource, the terrified Baggy crawled under it. It hid him completely from sight. The loft was very dusky, lighted only by one small window. There was a chance—if a very remote one—that Taggles might not find him. Remote as it was, it was the only one Baggy had! Under the thick straw, he palpitated.

"Urrrggh!" grunted Taggles, as he put his ancient head into the loft from the ladder. "Now, then, you young rascal!"

He stared round the loft. Two or three old boxes, and a truss of straw, met his eyes. Nothing else was to be seen.

"Where are you?" roared Taggles, exasperated. "If you're hiding behind them boxes, you may as well come out, see?"

Silence!

"My eye!" said Taggles, more and more exasperated. Taggles was short of wind, and the steep climb up the ladder had used up most of his supply of breath. "My blinkin' eye! You young rascal! I'll get you!"

Taggles clambered off the ladder into the loft. Nothing was to be seen of the intruder he knew was there. Taggles had no doubt that that intruder was hiding behind the old boxes in the further corner of the loft. Before rooting him out, the ancient porter sat down on the truss of straw, to rest his ancient limbs for a few moments and recover his breath.

"Yaroooh!"

Taggles remained sitting for about a tenth part of a second. From under him came a frantic yell that made him jump.

"Oh!" gasped Taggles.

"Ow! wow! Gerroff! Groooogh! Ooooooch!" came a suffocated splutter from under the straw.

"My eye!"

"Urrrggh! Oh, crikey! Oooooch!"

Taggles dragged the straw aside. Baggy, when he selected that hiding-place, certainly had not anticipated that Taggles would sit

down on the straw. Taggles had sat hard and heavy. Baggy had a feeling that he had been reduced to the shape of a pancake.

He sprawled and spluttered as Taggles dragged the straw away, revealing the fattest form in the School House at St. Jim's.

"Urrrrrrrrrrrggh!"

"Young Trimble!" grunted Taggles. "I got yer! 'Iding under the straw, was you? Wot you been doing of in my shed? I got yer—and I'm going to take you to Mr. Railton! Now, then!"

Taggles stooped and grasped. Baggy, in sheer desperation, kicked out. There was a howl from Taggles, as he caught the kick with his shin, and sat down quite suddenly, not on the straw this time, but on the floor of the loft.

"Woouoooooh!" roared Taggles.

Baggy scrambled up.

That loft, evidently, was no place of refuge for him now. But he had a moment, while Taggles sat and roared. He made the most of that moment. He shot across to the ladder, and scrambled out of the loft.

Taggles scrambled to his feet. He jumped after Trimble. But Baggy was a second ahead. He swung down on the ladder, Taggles glaring after him as he swung. Taggles made a clutch, and missed a fat head by inches. Baggy scrambled frantically down the ladder.

But it was a case of more haste and less speed! That steep ladder required negotiating with care. Baggy, in his wild haste, missed his footing, and rolled. He had intended to go down that ladder quickly—but it transpired that he went down much more quickly than he had intended. He whizzed down, and landed in a yelling heap at the bottom.

"Yooo-hoop! Yaroooh! Oh crikey. I'm smashed! Yow-ow! -Help!" roared Trimble. "Oh, lor'! Oh, crumbs! Whooop!"

"My eye!" gasped Taggles.

He descended the ladder—not so quickly as Trimble had descended it. Baggy was rolling and roaring. There was no more fight left in Baggy. Every bone in his fat person was jarred and aching from the fall. He felt as if most of them were broken into several sections. They weren't: but they felt like it. He rolled, and sprawled, and yelled, and roared, and Taggles stooped and grasped him by a fat shoulder.

"Got you!" said Taggles, grimly.

"Yaroooh!"

"Hup you get!" snapped Taggles.

"Ow! wow! I can't get up!" howled Trimble. "My neck's broken—I mean my legs—wow! I—I've broken my backbone in two places! Wow!"

A heave of Taggles' arm, and Baggy was on his feet. Broken or not, he found that he was able to stand on his fat legs. Baggy was hurt: there was no doubt about that. The number of aches and pains distributed over his fat person could not have been counted, without going into high figures. But nothing was broken, as Baggy discovered when Taggles marched him out of the wood-shed, with a grip of iron on his collar.

"Leggo!" howled Trimble, as he was marched out.

"You're going to Mr. Railton, you are!" answered Taggles. "Iding in a man's shed, and kicking of his shins!"

"I—I won't be run in!" yelled Trimble. "You leave me alone! I tell you I ain't going to be run in!"

Taggles blinked at him.

"Run in!" he repeated. "Oo's going to run you in! Mad! Right orf his blinking onion! 'Ere, you come along o' me—you're going to your 'ouse-master, you are, you young idjit!"

Baggy wriggled and struggled. But there was no help for Baggy. In the grip of Taggles' horny hand, he was marched away.

False Alarm!

"BAI JOVE!"

"What's up?"

"What the jolly old dickens—"

A crowd of fellows stared. It was quite an unusual sight in the St. Jim's quad. Never before, probably, had the sight been witnessed, of a St. Jim's junior marched along by the collar in Taggles' horny hand. As the ancient porter of St. Jim's marched his prisoner to the School House, he and Baggy were the cynosure of all eyes.

Baggy, indeed, could scarcely have failed to draw attention. He was wriggling and spluttering in Taggles' grip, and uttering a series of howls. Baggy's idea was that he was going to be handed over to Mr. Skeat, and taken away in custody. In his terror he almost forgot the aches and pains he had collected in tumbling down the ladder in the wood-shed.

Taggles' face was grim. Taggles' shins had been kicked. Taggles had a pain in those shins, and a still more severe pain in his temper. Taggles was going to take Baggy to his House-master for stern justice. Unmoved by his squeaks, wriggles, and howls, Taggles marched him to the School House, heedless of the gathering crowd.

"I say, draggimoff, you fellows!" yelled Trimble. "Make him leggo! I say, D'Arcy—I say, Tom Merry—look here, Lowther—I say, Blake—you make him leggo! I won't be run in!"

"Bai Jove! Has Twimble gone pottay?" asked Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"He hadn't far to go!" remarked Blake.

"What's up, Taggles?" asked Tom Merry.

Snort, from Taggles.

"That there young rip 'iding in my wood-shed, and kicking of a man's shins when he rooted him out!" he grunted. "I'm taking him to his 'ouse-master—"

"Leggo!" yelled Trimble. "You fellows make him leggo! I won't be run in—I ain't going to be took—I mean taken—away— by a bobby! Yaroooh!"

"Mad as a hatter," said Herries.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "That fat chump still thinks that Skeat came here after him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You kim on!" growled Taggles, as Baggy gave a frantic wrench. "You ain't getting away, you ain't! Kicking of a man's shins—"

"Leggo! Make him leggo, Tom Merry! You drag him off, Manners! I never had that cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I never had that cake—never saw it—I say, Tom Merry, you tell old Skeat that I wasn't in your study at all on Saturday—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, here comes Railton!" said Blake, as the House-master of the School House appeared in the doorway.

Mr. Railton stepped out, frowning. He had seen that extraordinary sight from his study window, and hurried out to inquire. He came out of the School House with a frowning brow.

"Taggles! What does this mean? Release that boy at once!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I'm a bringing of him to you, sir—"

"Release him!"

Taggles grunted, and released his grasp on Trimble's collar. Mr. Railton, naturally, expected Trimble to remain where he was, when he was released, while he inquired into the matter. But Baggy did not remain. All he wanted was Taggles' grasp to be relaxed. The moment it was relaxed, he shot away.

The School House-master stared after him blankly, as he shot.

"Trimble!" he thundered.

Baggy did not heed. He shot on.

"Trimble!" roared Mr. Railton. "Stop!"

Baggy did not stop! Stopping was the very last thing that Baggy was likely to do! Baggy was not going to be run in! He careered on.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What is the matter with the boy? Merry—Blake—Levison—Ridd—fetch Trimble here at once."

"Yes, sir!"

Half a dozen juniors chased after Baggy, as he careered across the quad. But Baggy was putting on frantic speed. He was heading for the gates, apparently seeking the open spaces in his terror. Never before had Baggy Trimble carried his extensive weight at such a speed. Now he fairly whizzed, and even Tom Merry and Blake did not gain on him.

"Stop!" shouted Tom.

"Stop, you ass!"

"Stop, you potty rhinoceros."

"Stop, you blithering cuckoo!"

The shouts behind seemed only to spur Baggy on. With his mouth wide open, perspiration streaming down his fat face, gulping for breath, he flew for the open gates, with the pursuers speeding behind.

"Stop him, Cutts!" shouted Tom Merry, as Cutts of the Fifth appeared in the gateway, coming in from the road.

Cutts stared, and did not seem, for the moment, to grasp the situation. He had only one moment—the next, Baggy Trimble was crashing into him, and Cutts of the Fifth went rolling. Baggy spun over and sat down.

Tom Merry put on a spurt, and arrived. He clutched Baggy's collar as the fat junior scrambled breathlessly up.

"Come back, you fat idiot!" he gasped.

"Leggo!" yelled Trimble.

"I tell you—"

"Will you leggo! I'll kick your shins! I won't be run in!" yelled Trimble. "I ain't going to be taken away by a bobby! Leggo!"

Baggy struggled frantically.

"Lend a hand, you fellows," gasped Tom Merry.

"We've got him!"

Five or six fellows came up, panting, and Baggy was collared on all sides. Cutts of the Fifth sat up in the gateway, gurgling for breath. But nobody heeded Cutts. Baggy was their game, and they had him at last. In the grasp of many hands the spluttering Baggy was marched back to the House.

"Here he is, sir!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Leggo!" roared Trimble. "I ain't going to be run in—"

"Trimble!" thundered Mr. Railton. "What is the matter with you? Keep hold of him, my boys—do not let him run away again—"

"We've got him, sir."

"Trimble, explain yourself! Taggles tells me that you were

hiding in the loft over his wood-shed, and kicked him when he found you—”

“He sat on me!” gasped Trimble. “I was under the straw and he sat down on me, and squashed me—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Why were you there at all?” thundered Mr. Railton. “Why were you hiding, Trimble? Are you out of your senses?”

“Yes, sir—I—I mean, no sir!” gasped Trimble. “I—I—leggo, you fellows! You leggo! I ain’t going to be run in—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Upon my word!” exclaimed Mr. Railton. “The boy appears to be suffering from some extraordinary delusion. Trimble, calm yourself! What has put this extraordinary idea into your foolish head?”

“Old Skeat’s after me, sir—” spluttered Trimble.

“Do you mean Inspector Skeat?” asked the amazed House-master. “In the name of all that is absurd, Trimble, why should you suppose that Inspector Skeat’s call this afternoon had any connection with you?”

“I never had the cake, sir—”

“The cake?” repeated Mr. Railton, almost dazedly.

“I never had it sir! They thought I had it because they found me eating it in their study—”

“Bless my soul!”

“But I never didn’t, sir—I mean I hadn’t wasn’t—I—I—I mean—I—I wouldn’t never didn’t—!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“This is most extraordinary,” said Mr. Railton. “You utterly stupid boy, you appear to have been pilfering food in the junior studies—”

“I didn’t!” howled Trimble. “I wasn’t! It wasn’t me, sir! They thought I had the cake because I ate it, but—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Silence! Is it possible, Trimble, that you are so stupid, so obtuse, so utterly senseless, as to suppose that Inspector Skeat’s visit here had anything to do with a—a—a cake!” gasped Mr. Railton.

Trimble blinked at him.

“Oh! Hadn’t it, sir?” he gasped.

“Certainly not, you stupid boy.”

“Oh! Ain’t he after me to run me in, sir?” gasped Baggy.

“I—I thought he was after me to run me in, over that cake, sir—”

“Bai Jove!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

"You ridiculous boy, Inspector Skeat has gone, and his call had no connection with you!"

"Oh, good!" gurgled Baggy. "You leggo, you fellows, it's all right if old Skeat ain't going to run me in—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My eye!" said Taggles, staring at the fat Baggy. "Mad as a 'atter! Kicking of a man's shins, cause he thought a bobby was arter him! Mad as a March 'are!"

"Trimble!" rapped Mr. Railton.

"Oh! Yes, sir! It—it's all right sir, if old Skeat ain't after me! I—I—I thought he was going to run me in, sir—"

"Follow me to my study, Trimble! On your own confession, you have purloined a cake from a junior study—"

"Oh! No, sir," stuttered Baggy, in alarm. He was no longer alarmed about Inspector Skeat. His alarm had taken a new direction. It was now his House-master who alarmed him. "I never had the cake, sir! It—it was all a mistake! You can ask Tom Merry, sir—he saw me eating it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Follow me to my study at once, Trimble!"

"Oh, lor'!"

Baggy Trimble followed the House-master to his study. A roar of laughter followed Trimble. A few moments later there was another roar—from Railton's study. But it was not a roar of laughter. Baggy Trimble was not feeling like laughing!

17

No Go!

"TWICES of game—"

"Eh?" yawned Blake.

"Have gone up—"

"Have they?" asked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I don't know whethah they have or not—"

"You just said they have?" said Herries, staring.

"I heard you," agreed Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Well, didn't you?" demanded Herries.

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Gussy's on to that jolly old cryptogram again," he said. "If it is a cryptogram! Looks to me more like a lark."

"Oh!" said Herries and Dig.

They were in Study No. 6, after tea. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had taken a crumpled paper from his pocket, and, with the aid of his celebrated eyeglass, was scanning it intently.

Study No. 6 had heard all about that mysterious document. But they were not deeply interested: and Herries and Dig, in fact, had forgotten it. They had looked at it, and it seemed to them mere gibberish. But Arthur Augustus, after his talk with Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther on the subject, had no doubt that it was a cryptogram of some sort: and he had made up his noble mind to worry out the meaning of it somehow.

True, every time he looked at that mysterious paper, it seemed as mysterious as ever. But Arthur Augustus was a stickler. Now he had fished it out once more for another shot at deciphering it.

"I am assuahed that it means somethin', deah boys," he said. "A man wouldn't w'ite it, and pitch it out of a twain, for no weason at all."

"Unless it was a lark," said Blake.

"I fail to see where the lark comes in, Blake, if it was a lark."

"Might have thought that some ass would pick it up, and try to puzzle out the meaning," suggested Blake, blandly: and Herries and Dig grinned.

"Weally, Blake—"

"If that was the idea, he got away with it," remarked Herries. "There's the ass puzzling it out!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Silly asses do play such larks," said Dig, with a nod. "Like putting a spoof message in a bottle and chucking it into the sea. I expect that's all it is—just a lark of some silly ass."

"I wathah think not, Dig! Mannahs thought it might be somethin' shady—some cwook communicatin' with anothah cwook in a secwet code, you know. I wathah think Mannahs was wight."

"Um!" said Blake. "Could be! If it means anything, it beats me to guess what it does mean. Something about poaching, perhaps, as they mention game."

"There are other sorts of game, as well as birds and things," remarked Dig. "Cricket's a game. Might be something about cricket."

"Well, a cricketer wouldn't be likely to be a crook, using a secret code," said Blake, shaking his head. "Besides, no need to keep a message about cricket a secret, even if he was a crook. Besides, there's something about profits on birds—that shows the sort of game it refers to."

"Yaas, wathah! But—" said Arthur Augustus, thoughtfully, "if it is a cwryptogwam, one word may be used to mean somethin' else. The word 'game,' fwinstance, might mean 'swag' or 'loot,' or somethin' like that."

"It might!" said Blake, doubtfully. "But if the words mean something they don't usually mean, you won't get on to what they mean in a month of Sundays. Might mean anything at all."

"Well, if it was w'itten by a cwook—"

"If!" said Herries.

"I said 'if,' Hewwies! If it was w'itten by a cwook, it is vevy likely about a wobbewy of some kind," said Arthur Augustus. "In that case I think vevy likely one word stands for 'swag,' which is a name they give to loot. Suppose 'game' means 'swag'—"

"Suppose away!" said Dig, encouragingly.

"And suppose 'pwices' means, say, 'got,' and 'of' means 'the'—"
said Arthur Augustus. "In that case it weads 'Got the swag'."

"Got the swag?" repeated Blake. "Hear, hear!" He winked at Herries and Dig. "Go on, Gussy! Give us the next lot."

"Next comes 'have gone up'," said Arthur Augustus, wrinkling his noble brow in thought. "Suppose 'have' is taken to mean 'on,' and 'gone' to mean 'this' and 'up' to mean 'twain.' Then the whole sentence weads 'Got the swag on this twain'. See?"

"You're supposing a jolly lot," said Digby. "Might as well suppose anything else, so far as I can see."

"Cwyptogwams are worked that way, Dig. You make a list of words standin' for othah words, and anyone who has the list can wead it," said Arthur Augustus. "If we had the list heah, we could wead it wight off."

"Lots of kinds of cryptograms," said Blake. "Sometimes you have to read only the initials of the words. Like this!"

Blake took pencil and paper, and after a moment's thought, scribbled two sentences. His three friends looked at it, and read:

Give us six simple young Indians. Stop any noise at seven sharp.

D'Arcy and Herries and Digby looked at that sentence. Herries and Dig chuckled. Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.

"Bai Jove! That looks as mystewious as my papah, Blake," he said. "If it means anythin'—"

"It does!" said Blake. "Read the initials of the words, and they make a sentence. Only the first letter of each word."

Arthur Augustus read out the initials.

"G-U-S-S-Y-I-S-A-N-A-S-S—Bai Jove! I wegard you as a silly fathead, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy is an ass!" chuckled Herries. "Right on the wicket! Perhaps your jolly old cryptogram will turn out something of the same kind, Gussy!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I will wead the initials of the words, as it may be a clue, though Blake is a fat-head."

Arthur Augustus scanned the mysterious document, and read out the initials of the first six words.

"P-O-G-H-G-U. That doesn't sound much like a word—unless it is in Wussian! Bai Jove! The man on the twain may have

been a foweigner, and that may be a Wussian word!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Any of you fellows know any Wussian?"

"Not a lot!" grinned Blake. "I think I know one Russian word—Stalin! Can't be a mysterious message from Moscow, can it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, there are lots of Wussian spies about you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I will twy the next lot, and see whethah it looks like a Wussian word."

"Go it!" grinned Blake.

"W-C-C-G-P-O-B-I-T-M. Bai Jove! That cannot be even Wussian! It is not a Wussian message!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "It is no good reading the initials, Blake—nothin' in that!"

"Try reading it backwards!" suggested Blake, with a wink at Herries and Dig.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the mysterious message again, and began to read it from the last word backwards.

"'Road Roman the from north leading footpath old the on May of tenth the dated.' That doesn't seem to make much sense, Blake."

"Well, it could be clearer," admitted Blake.

"Anybody coming down to the nets?" asked Herries, getting up and picking his bat from a corner of the study.

"What-ho!" agreed Dig.

"Come on, Gussy," said Blake. "That jolly old paper doesn't mean anything—you can try it a thousand ways and it won't mean anything. What about a spot of cricket?"

"It must mean somethin', Blake! I am goin' to wowwy it out somehow," declared Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs thinks it is a cwryptogwam, and Mannahs is wathah a bwainy chap! I am wesolved to work it out somehow."

"Let Manners have a shot at it," suggested Blake: possibly tired of the mysterious document in Study No. 6. "He's frightfully good at mathematics, and maths may help. Let him have it. Manners may have the brains for it."

"I twust I have as much bwains as Mannahs, Blake."

"What a trusting nature!" said Blake.

"Weally, you ass—"

"My dear man, if you're going to play in the Carcroft match, you want cricket, not cryptograms," said Blake. "Come on."

"Wats!"

Blake and Herries and Dig quitted the study, evidently preferring cricket to cryptograms. But Arthur Augustus sat tight,

wrinkling his noble brow over that incomprehensible document. He was going to worry out its meaning, if any, if he could. He refused to admit the possibility that it was merely a practical joke on the part of some playful joker. He concentrated on that worrying paper, concentrating all the powers of his aristocratic intellect upon it. But after another half-hour of those mental efforts, he began to feel something like a head-ache coming on: and the result so far being precisely nil, he decided to take Blake's advice and go down and change for cricket. He put that mysterious paper back into his pocket, and ambled out of Study No. 6, determined, however, to have another "go" later on. Leaving the puzzling problem over for the present, Arthur Augustus sallied forth to join his chums at the nets: and as a matter of fact found that he enjoyed cricket much more than cryptograms.

Light in the Night!

TOM MERRY awoke suddenly.

Nosey Pilkins stood quite still.

His heart was beating unpleasantly.

At the sound of the schoolboy stirring, he had instantly shut off the light of the little electric torch in his hand. All was dark in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's. In the darkness, Nosey, in his dark clothes, was invisible. He made no sound: he knew that the schoolboy on whose face he had, for a moment, flashed a light, was awakening.

It was not the first time, by a good many, that Mr. Pilkins had been in strange places at midnight: either on his own, or in company with his associate, Sandy Sanders, now reposing behind bars at Wayland. But although Nosey's presence under somebody else's roof at midnight was not unusual, his errand was unusual. It was not the "cracking" of a "crib" that was in Nosey's mind. Nosey was after a document that had been thrown from a train nearly a week ago—and which he knew to be in the possession of a junior at the school.

Exactly where to look for that document Nosey did not know. He knew that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy belonged to St. Jim's: and his prying eyes, since he had made that discovery, had been on the school a good many times. He had picked up that D'Arcy was in the School House: but that was the limit of what he had been able to discover by peering over walls and round corners. Where in that rather extensive building to look for him, Nosey did not know—but he was going to know!

Still as a mouse with the cat at hand, Nosey stood in the darkness, and heard Tom turn in bed. That D'Arcy would be in

a dormitory at night he could easily guess: and he had to learn which and where. Already he had explored the Third-Form dormitory, without giving the alarm. Now he was in the Shell dormitory, on the same quest. Face after sleeping face had glimmered for a moment under his torch—a glimpse was enough for him. But he had not yet discovered the schoolboy he sought.

He waited, his heart beating. And he gritted his teeth as a voice came out of the darkness close at hand.

“Who’s that? Is that some fellow larking?”

He heard the sounds as Tom Merry sat up in bed. His eyes gleamed like a cat’s in the dark.

Up to that moment, he had flitted, silently, stealthily, watchfully, and there had been no alarm. But his luck had not held. One of the schoolboys had awakened, and was sitting up in bed.

“Lowther! Manners! Anybody up?”

A sleepy voice followed:

“Hallo! That you, Tom?”

“Yes. Have you been up?”

“Hardly.” Monty Lowther, awake now, sat up. “What’s the row, Tom? Nobody’s up, that I know of.”

“You fellows awake?” It was another sleepy voice, from Manners’ bed.

“Something woke me up,” said Tom Merry. “I thought a light flashed on my face.”

“Dreaming, old chap.”

“Well, I don’t think it was a dream,” said Tom. “I’m pretty certain there was a light, when I opened my eyes, but it went out instantly. If it’s some fellow from another dorm larking—”

Two or three murmuring voices joined in. Nosey Pilkins breathed hard and deep, but silently. His eyes glittered in the dark in the direction of Tom Merry. He would have been glad to silence the awakened junior by crashing his fist on him. But that was hardly practicable. He could only wait, tensely, hoping that the schoolboys would settle down to sleep again. Tom Merry, peering into the darkness round his bed, could see nothing of him, and little dreamed of the enraged ruffian standing only a few feet away.

“Might be some Fourth Form ass larking,” said Manners. “If it is, we’ll jolly well boot him back to his own dorm. I’ve got some matches.”

There was a sound of fumbling.

Nosey's heart almost missed a beat. He was standing between Tom Merry's bed and Manners', and the striking of a match could not fail to reveal him. That meant instant flight, and abandoning his quest.

He had little time to think. As Manners fumbled for the match-box, Nosey dropped silently on his hands and knees, and crawled under the nearest bed—Tom Merry's. He made no sound as he crawled—he was accustomed to moving in stealthy silence. He was out of sight when the match scratched, and glimmered in the hand of Harry Manners, sitting up in bed. Manners put the flame to a candle-end, and held up the light.

Nine or ten fellow were awake now. They sat up in bed peering round into the shadows, dimly illumined by the flickering candle.

"Nobody here," said Talbot.

"What's the row?" came a grunt from Gore. "Some silly ass with a nightmare, waking us all up?"

"Somebody was in the dorm," said Tom Merry. "I'm sure of that! A light flashed in my face—"

"Rot!" said Gore. "Nerves! Go to sleep and forget it."

Tom Merry's face flushed angrily. He was not in the least given to nerves, and he was certain of what he had said.

"If you want me to get up and punch your head, Gore—!" he began.

"Think it was a burglar?" jeered Gore. "Think a burglar would come up here after our pocket-money, or Skimmy's spectacles.

There was a sound of a chuckle from some of the beds. Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"I don't think it was a burglar, you fathead, but I'm sure that somebody came into the dorm," he snapped.

"Bosh!" said Gore.

Manners stepped out of bed.

"I'll look round, at any rate," he said. "Might be some ass larking. Young Wally came along one night and mixed up our clothes."

"D'Arcy minor's fast asleep at this time of night, and so should we be, if Tom Merry hadn't had a nightmare," grunted Gore.

"Oh, rats!"

Manners moved about the dormitory, holding up the candle. Under Tom's bed, Nosey Pilkins crouched, hardly breathing. Almost all the Shell were awake now. Nobody was thinking of burglars, in a junior dormitory: but it was quite possible that

some fellow from another dormitory might be practical joking. Such things had happened.

"Nobody about!" said Manners, at last. "If anybody was here, he's gone."

"Somebody was here," said Tom.

"Well, he's gone, then."

"Oh, look under the beds," said Gore, sarcastically. "Tom Merry won't be able to sleep if you don't. He's scared, and—"

Whiz!

Crash!

Yell from Gore! Tom Merry's pillow, deftly aimed, caught him on the side of the head, suddenly interrupting his sarcastic remarks.

"Good shot!" said Monty Lowther, approvingly. "Have another, Gore?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck that pillow back, Manners, before you get in," said Tom. Manners, laughing, fielded the pillow, and tossed it back to Tom. Gore sat spluttering.

"I've a jolly good mind—!" he gasped.

"Rot!" said Lowther. "You haven't one at all, old bean, let alone a jolly good one! Dry up!"

"Gore may be right, though," said Manners. "If anybody was here, he may have dodged under a bed. I'll look."

He stooped with the candle, and glanced under his own bed. Again Nosey Pilkins' heart missed a beat. In another moment Manners would be looking under the next bed—Tom Merry's: and the candle-light would reveal the slant-nose man crouching there in hiding!

Nosey had that moment: and he used it. Manners' back was to him: and he suddenly reached out, grasped the Shell fellow's ankle, and dragged at it. Manners gave a startled yell, as he tumbled headlong over, the candle going out as he fell.

"Oh! Who's that? What's that—Oh—!"

Nosey did not lose a second. He whipped out from under the bed, and streaked for the door. It opened and shut, and Nosey was gone, while Harry Manners was struggling breathlessly to his feet.

"What—?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Somebody was here," gasped Manners. "He grabbed me suddenly and tipped me over. He was here all right."

"Somebody was here," said Talbot. "I heard the door open and shut. He's bolted."

Manners, on his feet again, struck another match, groped for

the candle-end, and re-lighted it. He held it up and stared round.

"Gone!" he said. "But he was here—some Fourth-form fat-head, I suppose—must have dodged under a bed—"

"I knew somebody had been here," said Tom. "If I knew which dorm he came from, I'd jolly well go after him, and punch his silly head. Don't you believe that somebody was here, now, Gore?"

"Oh, let's go to sleep!" growled Gore: and he laid his head upon the pillow.

The other fellows followed his example, Manners blowing out the candle and getting back into bed. The Shell settled down to sleep again—little dreaming that a midnight intruder was stealing away on tiptoe down the dark corridor without.

19

One Awake!

BAGGY TRIMBLE mumbled dismally.

It was a restless Baggy.

In the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House, every other fellow was fast asleep. There were awakened fellows in the Shell: but in the Fourth, all was silence and slumber: with the exception of Baggy Trimble. Generally, Baggy was a sound sleeper. Seldom did his gooseberry eyes open once they had closed till the rising-bell rang in the dewy morn. But on this particular night things were not as usual with the fat Baggy.

A fellow couldn't roll down a steep ladder, and bump on a hard floor, without collecting aches and pains. Baggy had collected more than he could have counted. There were aches and pains all over Baggy. Sleep, the sweet restorer, refused to come. If Baggy nodded off for a minute or two, a twinge or a pang supervened, and his gooseberry eyes re-opened.

It was horrid for Baggy. He was quite unaccustomed to hearing the chimes at midnight. Now he had heard them: and had heard the stroke of one. It looked as if he would hear them all, till he heard the rising-bell. It was no wonder that the fat Baggy mumbled dismally. It was irritating to hear the steady breathing from other beds. Every other fellow was safe in the embrace of Morpheus. Only Baggy was awake and mumbling.

But suddenly, Baggy ceased to mumble.

A sound from the darkness came to his ears: and it was a startling sound, when it was past one o'clock, as he knew from the last chime he had heard. It was the sound of the door softly opening.

Baggy, had he been asleep, would have heard nothing. The

others, sleeping, heard nothing. But Baggy, being wide awake, did hear—and that soft and stealthy sound of a door cautiously opened startled him.

His fat heart gave a jump.

He peered into the gloom with his gooseberry eyes almost popping from his fat face, his heart beating fast: listening with all his fat ears.

In the deep, dead silence, the faintest sound was audible to straining ears. Baggy heard the door softly close.

Somebody had come into the dormitory! It was unimaginable that somebody outside had merely opened the door and shut it again. He had come in, and shut the door after him.

Baggy's hair stood almost on end. His fat thoughts ran at once to burglars! But the improbability of a burglar visiting a junior dormitory, where there was nothing to burgle, occurred to him. And he remembered that there was at least one fellow in the Fourth Form who might be coming in late after breaking bounds. It was a relief to Baggy to think that very likely it was only Cardew coming back after one of his disreputable nocturnal escapades.

He peered into the darkness. The faintest of faint sounds came to his straining ears. Someone was moving in the dark—was it Cardew creeping silently back to bed? Cardew was not wont to be so stealthy in his movements. And Baggy remembered that, since Cardew's eye had been blacked, he had not gone out of gates at all. Had he taken that black eye on a visit to his sporting friends at the Green Man? It was not likely. Baggy's terrors revived.

There was a sudden tiny gleam of light in the dark.

It came from a little electric torch in an unseen hand. Baggy felt his fat heart give a jerk.

His eyes popped at that light.

It was at a distance—at the last bed in the long row. That was not Cardew's bed. It was not Cardew who held the light.

Who was it?

Baggy watched, spell-bound. Who was it, and what was he doing? The gleam of light rested, for a moment, on a sleeper's face—that of Ridd, the new fellow in the Fourth. Then it was shut off.

But in a few moments more, it gleamed again, on the face of the sleeper in the next bed. Then again it was shut off, and all was dark.

Baggy watched, speechless with amazement and terror.

Somebody—he could not begin to imagine who or why—was coming along the long row of beds, flashing the light on sleeper after sleeper, glimpsing face after face in the quick flash of the torch.

The light glimmered on face after face, for a brief moment each time. Gleam after gleam, at bed after bed, slowly but surely coming along—towards the staring, terrified Baggy!

Baggy's fat heart almost died within him.

Obviously, this could not be a Fourth-Form fellow, or a fellow from another dormitory. Amazing as it was, so amazing that Baggy almost wondered whether he was dreaming, the unseen man was looking for somebody, and did not know in which bed to find him. Any occupant of the School House could easily have ascertained which was any special fellow's bed, without this midnight quest with a flash-lamp. This was a stranger in the House—a midnight intruder: Baggy's first terrified impression, when the door had opened, had been the right one after all.

The perspiration clotted on Baggy's fat brow.

He watched, petrified.

The man was coming nearer.

He was after somebody—some fellow in one of the beds! Suppose it was Baggy! At that thought, Trimble could hardly repress a squeak of terror!

But he dared make no sound. He dared not stir! Terror kept him motionless—as motionless as if a gorgon's glare had turned him to stone.

With distended eyes, he watched.

A few beds away, as the light gleamed, he caught a glimpse of the man's face, as the light moved. It was a hard, set face, with glittering eyes like a rat's, and a slanting nose.

It vanished the next moment, as the light was shut off. Baggy was hardly breathing. The man was after somebody—that was clear. What was he going to do when he found him? If it was Baggy he was after—!

Of the mysterious document that had been thrown from the train, now in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's possession, Baggy knew nothing: and nothing of Nosey Pilkins's keen desire to lay hands on that document. He had not the remotest idea that the intruder was the man who had attacked Arthur Augustus in Wayland Wood, or that he was making this desperate venture as the only means of getting hold of the document his confederate had

thrown from the train into the old Army hut. But for the fact that Trimble was awake that night, Nosey would certainly have found what he sought: he had only to pick out Arthur Augustus and then to go through the pockets of his clothes: and he would have gone as silently as he had come. That mysterious document was in the pocket of Arthur Augustus's jacket, folded with his other garments neatly on the chair beside his bed. Had Baggy Trimble been asleep like the rest, it would have been "pie" for Nosey—all he needed was time and patience. But Baggy Trimble, for once, was not asleep—he had never been wider awake! Palpitating with terror, he lay on his fat elbow, his eyes bulging at Nosey Pilkins. Nosey, unaware of that petrified stare, moved on silently: the deep silence of the dormitory assuring him that all were still sleeping!

Had Nosey arrived at Arthur Augustus's bed before he reached Baggy's, all would have been well for Nosey: for terror held Baggy dumb.

But he had to pass Baggy's bed before he arrived at D'Arcy's. And, nothing doubting that the occupant of that bed was fast asleep like the rest, he flashed the light on the face on the pillow, to ascertain whether it was the junior he sought.

But this time the light did not gleam on a sleeping face.

It gleamed on a fat face blanched with terror, on wide-open eyes that goggled like an owl's.

Trimble yelled.

The light was instantly shut off. There was a muttered savage oath in the darkness. Baggy, yelling in frantic terror, rolled out of bed on the other side.

He bumped on the floor, still yelling frantically.

"Help! Burglars! Oh, help! Keep him off! Help! Help!"

Baggy's wild yells rang far and wide, waking every echo in the Fourth-Form dormitory, and waking every fellow in every bed.

"Help! Burglars! Help!" roared Baggy.

"Bai Jove!"

"What—"

"Who's that?"

"Help! Help! Help!" Baggy rolled in a tangle of bed-clothes, yelling with all the force of his lungs. "Help! Burglars! Help!"

"That's Trimble—what's the mattah, Trimble?"

"Help! Help!"

"That ass Trimble—!"

"Help! Help!" shrieked Baggy.

Nosey Pilkins stood, for a moment, with clenched hands, breathing fury. Among the startled voices, he heard one he knew—that of the schoolboy he had “tree’d” in Wayland Wood a few days ago. He was on the right spot—a few minutes more and he would have found what he sought. But it was too late now—the whole dormitory was awake: fellows were turning out of bed on all sides: in a few moments more there would be a light, and then—! Nosey’s cue was to go while the going was still good: and trust to better luck next time! Breathing fury, Nosey darted away to the door: it opened and shut swiftly, and the intruder in the Fourth-Form dormitory was gone. He left the dormitory behind him buzzing with excitement.

Manners Does the Trick!

"MANNNAHS, deah boy!"

"Trot in," said Manners.

The Terrible Three had just finished tea, the following day, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ambled gracefully into No. 10 in the Shell. The swell of St. Jim's had a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow, and a crumpled paper in his hand.

"Just in time, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, hospitably. "There's half a sardine left—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Sit down and tuck in, old chap!"

"I have not come to tea, deah boys! I have come to speak to Mannahs about that beastly papah that was thwown fworn the twain. Blake thinks that Mannahs might be able to make it out, bein' a mathematical sort of chap, you know."

Manners smiled.

"I'll hâve a shot at it, if you like," he said.

"Manners is the man!" agreed Tom Merry. "If anybody can make anything out of it, Manners can."

"Blake and Hewwies and Dig think it is all wot," said Arthur Augustus. "But I feel suah that there is somethin' in it. I have been cwackin' my bwain ovah it, but I cannot make head or tail of it. If you feel like havin' a go, Mannahs—"

"Chuck it over," said Manners.

"Heah you are!"

Manners took the mysterious paper, and wrinkled his brows over it. He had gone through it once before, without being able to make head or tail of it. But Manners was good at problems, and he had no doubt of his ability to make out any cryptogram

if he worried it long enough—if, indeed, that mysterious paper was a cryptogram at all.

Arthur Augustus sat gracefully in the study armchair, crossing one elegant leg over the other, with a careful regard to the crease in his trousers. Tom Merry rose from the table.

"You're going to be busy, Manners," he remarked. "Coming down to the nets, Monty?"

"Bai Jove! Aren't you intewested in that cwryptogwam, Tom Mewwy?"

"Oh! Yes! Make anything of it, Manners?"

"Not in a minute and a half!" said Manners, sarcastically.

Tom Merry laughed, and sat down again.

"I hear there was a row in your dorm last night, Gussy," remarked Monty Lowther. "That ass Trimble—"

"Yaas, wathah! Twimble fancied that there was a burglah, and there was a feahful wow, and Wailton came up," answered Arthur Augustus. "I suppose the fat duffah had a nightmare."

"It's queer, though," said Tom Merry, thoughtfully. "Somebody was wandering about the House last night. Somebody came into our dorm, and dodged under a bed when Manners lighted a candle. He got away by up-ending Manners suddenly, and we never saw him. But he was there all right."

"Nobody saw the man Twimble thinks he saw," said Arthur Augustus. "If some ass was larking, Twimble may have seen somethin'. He makes out that he saw the man's face, and that he had a nose that looked as if it had been knocked sideways. I expect he was dweamin' about that man the police are lookin' for, that wottah with the slanting nose who twied to wob me in Wayland Wood. Then he woke up and fancied that he saw him."

"He couldn't have come here last night after your wallet, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Hardly, deah boy! He vevy neahly had it in Wayland Wood on Saturday, when Cardew cwashed into him, and he bolted. But—" Arthur Augustus looked very thoughtful. "Twimble says that the man—if there was a man—was goin' fwom bed to bed with a flash-lamp, lookin' at the fellows, as if he was twyin' to pick out some fellow he wanted to find. I suppose the fat ass imagined it, but it's queeah—"

"Very queer," said Tom. "Whoever it was in our dorm, had a flash-lamp—it was that that woke me, flashing on my face. And Trimble thinks he saw that johnny who's described as having a prize boko?"

"Yaas, wathah! But he was fwightened out of his wits, and he

is a howlin' ass anyway. How are you gettin' on with that papah, Mannahs?"

Manners looked up from the mysterious document.

"Might take minutes, and might take hours—or days!" he said. "Lots of ways of making a cryptogram, but I don't believe there ever was one that couldn't be spotted in the long run. "I've worked out a good many at times. I don't suppose this is very deep."

"I've twied weadin' the initial lettahs—"

"It's not that," said Manners, "and it doesn't read backwards—it's not so simple as that. One dodge is to take alternate words—"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

"Try that, and see what it's like," said Tom.

Manners proceeded to read alternative words on the mysterious paper. The result was not very encouraging.

"Prices game gone we cop profits birds this just Fred—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Mysteriuser and mysteriuser," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! It weally sounds more mystewious than evah that way, Mannahs."

"Now I'll try beginning on the second word, and taking alternate words," said Manners and he read: "Of—have—up—can—good—on—in—market—"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"We seem to be getting deeper, instead of getting through," he remarked. "Make anything of that, anybody?"

"Wathah not!"

"Looks as if you're bottled, old man," said Lowther.

"Give a man a chance," said Manners. "I'll try reading every third word, and see what that makes."

"Go it!"

Tom Merry cast a glance at his bat, standing in a corner of the study. Then he glanced at Monty Lowther, who nodded and grinned. Tom rose again.

"We'll leave you to it, Manners, old man" he said. "We can't help, and we may as well get down to the nets—"

"Quite as well," agreed Lowther. "Keep your teeth in it, Manners, old man, till you chew it out."

"Oh, gum!" exclaimed Manners, suddenly.

He fairly jumped.

Tom, who was stepping towards his bat in the corner, stopped and turned back. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat bolt upright in the armchair, his eyeglass fixed on Manners. Monty Lowther stared. Harry Manners' face, usually sedate, was blazing with

excitement. Evidently he had succeeded in extracting some meaning from that mysterious paper, and it startled him.

"Oh, gum!" he repeated, quite breathlessly.

"Bai Jove! Have you done it, Mannahs?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Easy!" said Manners.

"You've got it?" asked Tom.

"Sort of!"

"Anything in it?" yawned Lowther.

"Lots!" Manners gave the paper another keen scrutiny, and then looked at his friends, excitement and satisfaction mingled in his face. "By gum! Lucky you got hold of this, Gussy, instead of the man it was meant for. 'Member that man Sandy Sanders that we collared at Abbotsford last week, Tom?"

"What about him?" asked Tom.

"It was he that threw this paper from the train."

"Well, I jolly well said it might be," said Monty Lowther. "But how the thump do you know—if you do know? Not from that paper?"

"Just that!" said Manners, coolly, "and I know to whom he threw it—that man with the slanting nose that the police are after. He expected him to be at that old Army hut—or at least hoped that he would be there—and he put the message into a code they both knew, in case it fell into the wrong hands—as it did! And I can tell you a little more, too!"

"Go it, Sherlock Holmes!" said Lowther.

"Trimble wasn't dreaming when he thought he saw that man with the boko last night. He did see him—"

"How—why—what—?"

"And he wasn't after Gussy's wallet the day he tree'd him in the wood," said Manners. "He was after this paper. Somehow or other, he must have found out that Gussy had it—spying and prying, I suppose—and ever since, Gussy has been in danger from him."

"Bai Jove!"

"He would have had it that day in Wayland Wood, if Cardew hadn't crashed into him," said Manners. "And he would have had it last night, if Trimble hadn't been awake in the Fourth-Form dorm. Too late for him now—and we've spotted the secret!"

"Now you have, you mean," said Tom. "We're still in the dark, fathead! If you have found all that out from that paper—"

"No 'if' about it," said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, this is vewy wemarkable if cowwect," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been cwackin' my bwains ovah that

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papah, and could not make head or tail of it, though I have cwacked my bwains ovah it for houahs and houahs and houahs—"

"Read it out, if you've got it," said Tom.

"It's easy," said Manners. "You take every third word, and leave out the others. I'll write it out, putting every third word in capitals—then you'll see it at a glance."

Manners picked up a pen, and wrote on a sheet of impot paper. The other three fellows watched him eagerly. They were all excited now.

Prices of GAME have gone UP. We can COP good profits ON birds in THIS market. Just TRAIN Fred to STUFF the partridge LEFT much too HOLLOW, and take OAK logs to WAYLAND if needing WOOD. Dated the TENTH of May ON the old FOOTPATH leading north FROM the Roman ROAD.

"Read out the words in capitals," said Manners.

Tom Merry read them out:

Game up. Cop on this train. Stuff left hollow oak Wayland Wood. Tenth on footpath from road.

"Great pip!" gasped Tom.

"Gweat Chwistophah Columbus!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther whistled.

"See?" Manners grinned. "You can guess what the 'stuff' is—the loot from Wayland Manor, which they didn't find on Sandy Sanders when he was run in. He hit it on the run, and got into that train—and found there was what he calls a 'cop'—a policeman, on the train—the constable who got him at Abbotsford when we collared him. See? This message was to put his pal wise where to find the loot he had hidden if his pal got away. See?"

"By gum!" said Tom. "If you're right—"

"Wash out the 'if'!" said Manners.

"But—but—but—!" stuttered Monty Lowther. "If you're right, old man, Sandy Sanders hid the loot from Wayland Manor in a hollow oak, on the footpath in Wayland Wood — and it's still there!"

"Quite!" said Manners.

"Still there!" repeated Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat!"

Manners drew a deep breath.

"Jolly lucky we got on to this," he said. "That blighter with the boko knows that D'Arcy had this paper—that's plain enough. He's tried twice to get hold of it! Gussy would have been in danger every time he stepped out of gates—and not safe even in this House, in bed in his dorm. Might have been knocked on

the head any minute, day or night, by that villain trying to get hold of this clue to the loot."

"Bai Jove!"

Manners rose.

"We're going to look for that hollow oak," he said. "Tenth tree from the road, according to this! Inspector Skeat will be glad to hear if we find anything there—what? "I'm going on my bike—you chaps can get down to the cricket now," added Manners, with a grin.

"Fathead!" said Tom.

"Ass!" said Lowther.

Arthur Augustus almost bounded out of the armchair.

"Come on, deah boys!" he ejaculated.

Four fellows rushed from the study. Even Tom Merry was not thinking of cricket just then! Under a minute, they were wheeling out their bicycles, and—forgetful for once of the local bye-law which prohibited cycling on the woodland footpath—pedalling at top speed by that path in the direction of the Wayland road.

21

Found!

“**Bai Jove!** That vevy twee!” exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

“What—?”

“The vevy twee I was twee’d in, when that nosey wascal was aftah me last week!” exclaimed Arthur Augustus. “Bai Jove! If he could have guessed what was hidden in the twunk—!”

“Well, he couldn’t,” said Tom Merry. “But we know, now—”

“Yaas, wathah!”

It was the same tree! The juniors had counted carefully, and the massive old oak was the tenth tree from the road. That very oak, in the branches of which Arthur Augustus had clambered for refuge a week ago was the hiding-place of the loot—if Manners had read the mysterious message aright. Certainly neither Arthur Augustus nor Nosey Pilkins could have dreamed that it was so.

“That’s the tree,” said Manners. “Jolly old tree—lots of cavities in the trunk. Jolly good hide-out, too, for the loot—who’d have guessed it? Get going.”

The four juniors surrounded that old oak, almost breathless with excitement. There were many hollows in the ancient trunk, and four fellows groped in them, one after another. For some minutes they were very busy, stirring up chiefly dust and insects. Then there was a yell from Arthur Augustus, whose right arm was buried almost to the shoulder in a deep cavity.

“Somethin’ heah!”

Out came Gussy’s arm, and in his hand was a leather bag. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther surrounded him eagerly.

“That’s it,” said Manners.

“Good egg!”

“Let’s look!”

“Yaas, wathah,” chuckled Arthur Augustus, and he whipped

open the bag. There was a sudden flash and sparkle in the summer sunlight that filtered through the branches overhead.

"Diamonds!" gasped Tom Merry.

"The jolly old loot!"

"Hurray!"

There was no doubt now. The leather bag was crammed with jewels: the loot of the daylight raid at Wayland Manor. The four juniors stared at the flashing, gleaming gems, and looked at one another.

"We've got it!" said Tom.

"We have—we has!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"One up for St. Jims!" said Manners.

"One up for you, old man," said Tom. "Let's cut off to the police-station, and hand this stuff over to Inspector Skeat. It won't be safe till it's there. Will old Skeat be glad to see it?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

And the juniors remounted their bikes, and pedalled away into Wayland, and up the High Street to the police station.

It was an amazed but highly pleased Inspector Skeat, who listened to the strange story, stared at the mysterious document—no longer mysterious—and took in charge the bag crammed with jewels. And there were four juniors who were feeling very pleased with themselves as they rode back to St. Jim's.

THERE was one person who was far from pleased. That was Nosey Pilkins, when he read in a newspaper next day that the loot from Wayland Manor had been recovered by the police. Nosey's feelings were deep as he took his departure from a locality where it was useless now to linger. But nobody was likely to bother about Mr. Pilkins' feelings on the subject.

THE END

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