D'Arcy's Cricket Week!

A Grand Long Yarn of TOM MERRY & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy Thinks It a Good Idea!

"YAAS, wathah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made that remark with considerable emphasis.

Now, Arthur Augustus was seldom emphatic. Emphasis did not accord with that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. Naturally, therefore, the other fellows in Study No. 6 glanced at D'Arcy as he spoke.

Besides, D'Arcy's observation was not made in reply to anyone; no one had spoken. That emphatic remark broke the silence of the Fourth-Form study.

Hence there was reason for the surprised stares which Blake, Herries, and Digby proceeded to fasten upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yaas, wathah!" repeated Arthur Augustus, more emphatically than before, and apparently unconscious of the gazes that were focused upon him.

Jack Blake tapped his forehead significantly.

"Off—at last!" he murmured.

"Clean off!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy's unexpected confirmation of Digby's remark tickled the chums, and a gust of laughter went through the study.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the chums of the Fourth inquiringly.

"What's the joke, deah boys?" he inquired.

"Same old joke!" replied Blake.

"What's that?"

"Yourself, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Will you condescend to enlighten us as to what you happen to be jabbering about?" asked Blake with elaborate politeness.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, change the record!" said Digby. "We've heard that one already."

"Weally, Dig——"

"We can't have you cultivating the habit of talking to yourself, Gussy," said Blake, with a serious shake of the head. "That way madness lies."

"Weally, deah boy——"

"Of course, we know it must come sooner or later, but as good chums we want to keep you out of Colney Hatch as long as possible, and——"

"I wegard your wemarks as merely wibald, Blake. I——"

"We'd rather subscribe out of our own pockets for a strait-waistcoat and keep him in the study," said Digby generously.

"I wegard you as an ass, Dig!"

"By the way," said Blake, "talking about cricket——"

"We weren't talking about cricket."

"No, but we're going to. Things aren't looking very lively in that line at St. Jim's. Since we beat the Grammarians——"

"Blake, deah boy——"

"And whopped the village——"

"Blake——"

"And licked the New House, why we haven't——"

"Blake, I insist——"

"Hallo, are you still talking, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, eyeing his chum with considerable indignation. "You know vewy well that I am still talkin', Blake!"

"Well, you generally are," said Blake resignedly. "Are you bound to go on talking at the present moment?"

"Weally——"

"Because if you wouldn't mind going out into the passage and closing the door, and coming in after you've finished——"

"Weally——"

"You could talk without disturbing anybody," concluded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you chaps wefuse to listen with pwopah wespect, I shall have no wecourse but to go and ask Tom Mewwy instead of you."

"Ask him what?"

"To come."

"Come?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come where? Are you wandering again?"

"To come with me, I mean."

"Ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. While you chaps have been chatterwin', I have been thinkin' it ovah——"

"Thinking what over?"

"The ideah, you know. I think it a wippin' one. That was what caused me to make that wemark. It is awf'ly wippin'."

"What is?"

"The ideah. I think I shall take one or two of you fellows——"

"He's off again," said Digby.

"Right off," said Herries, with a nod.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Look here, Gussy——" began Blake.

"Pway don't intewwupt me, deah boy. I wegard the ideah as bein' simply wippin', and I was goin' to ask you fellows. But if you don't want to join in it, I'll go to Tom Mewwy's study and speak to him and Mannahs and Lowthah. I dare say they will be glad enough of a holiday."

"A holiday?"

"Yaas, wathah, with plenty of good cwicket thwown in."

"Cricket?"

"Certainly, deah boy! The suggestion comes just in the nick of time, when it's just what we want, and I must say it's awfully thoughtful of my governah."

"Your governor?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What are you talking about?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ass!"

"Weally——"
"Chump——"
"Blake——"
"Fathead!"
D'Arcy rose to his feet.
"I wefuse to wemain here and listen to these oppwobwious expwessions," he said. "I will go to Tom Mewwy's studay——"
"Frabjous fathead!"
"Vewy well; I will wetire——"
"Collar him!"
"Weally, deah boys——"
"Now, then——"
"Ow!"
Arthur Augustus was promptly collared as he made for the door. Three strong pairs of hands seized him, and he was jammed against the study wall with a force that took his breath away.
"Ow! Yow!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.
"Now, then, ass——"
"I--I wefuse to be called an ass! If you do not welease me instantly, I shall give you a fealhful thwashin'."
"Chump!"
"You howwid wuff wottahs——"
"Now explain——"
"Weally——"
"What were you going to ask us? What are you going to ask Tom Merry? What's the game? What's the wheeze? Explain!"
"Weally——"
"Go ahead!"
"I wefuse! You have tweated me with gwoss diswespect, and wefused to considah the wippin' ideah——"
"But we don't know what the idea is yet!" roared Blake. "You haven't told us that!"
"Bai Jove!"
"We don't know anything about it, chump! We're quite in the dark, fathead! We——"
"Bai Jove, you know! I nevah thought of that!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway welease me, and don't be a set of wuff asses, and I will explain, deah boys!"
The chums of Study No. 6 released him. But they stood round him, with their hands ready to grasp him again in case of necessity, and bending extremely exasperated looks upon him.
"Now go ahead!" growled Blake. "Explain!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
Arthur Augustus seemed in no hurry to begin. He set his collar straight, and adjusted his necktie and smoothed out his sleeves, repairing all the damage that had been done to his elegance by the rough attack of the juniors.
The chums watched him with growing exasperation.
He had roused their curiosity, and his deliberate and leisurely manner would have tried greater patience than the chums of the Fourth possessed.
"Will you go ahead?" roared Blake at last.
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Digby. "Let's bump it out of him."
"Good egg!"
D'Arcy ceased his rearrangement of his necktie at once.
"Hold on, deah boys—I'll explain!"

CHAPTER 2.
No Exit!

JACK BLAKE glared at his elegant chum.
"I'll give you one second to start," he said.
D'Arcy stayed only to jam his monocle into his eye, and started in a great hurry.
"You see, deah boys, it's a splendid ideah——"
"What is?"
"And it will give us a bit of a holiday——"
"What will?"
"But I shall only be able to take good cwicketahs—of course, my patah makes a point of that. Pway don't get excited, Blake, I'm comin' to the point. In short, I have had a lettah fwom my governah."
"Well?"
"He's holdin' a cwicket week."
"A what?"
"Weally, Blake, you surely know what a cwicket week is? My bwother Conway has a party of cwicketin' fwiends down, and they've awwanged some matches for the week. Some of them are jolly good playahs, too—chaps who play for the Zingawi and the Fwee Fowwesters."
"My hat!"
"My patah vewy sensibly suggests I might like to with home for the cwicket week. I think it is a vewy good ideah myself. The house team will be a stwong

one, and I believe the governah has a pwofessional as well. But, of course, I shall expect to play."

"Of course," said Blake sarcastically. "I can see them playing a Fourth-Form junior in a team made up of I Zingari!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"But it will be a holiday, anyway," said Blake.

"Yaas, and the governah suggests that I might take a fwiend or two."

"Hurrah!"

"Of course, I thought of you chaps immediately—to say nothin' of Wally——"

"Good old Gussy!"

"But if you don't like the ideah, I'll go and ask Tom Mewwy——"

"Rats!"

D'Arcy polished his eyeglass and replaced it in his eye.

"Well, I shall be glad to have you chaps, as you play decent cwicket. You may be wanted to play, you know, but of course that's not a pwomise."

Blake chuckled.

"You ass, we shan't be wanted to play; but we can see some good cricket, and have a good holiday, and that's enough. Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!"

"A friend or two," said Digby thoughtfully. "Jolly good idea; but will a friend or two cover three?"

"Oh, yes," said Blake. "It was probably a misprint in Lord Eastwood's letter, and he meant a friend or three."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all wight, deah boys. A fwiend or two is wathah a bwoad expwession, and will covah——"

"A multitude of sins, like charity," said Blake. "We're all going, of course. I suppose Lord Eastwood has asked the Head?"

"Yaas; he says so."

"And the Head consents!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good old Head! He's a brick! That's what comes of being a governor of the school," said Blake. "Now if my pater were on the governing board——"

"I've got to see the Head about it, but that's only formal," said D'Arcy. "Of course, you can all come. I wish we could take Tom Mewwy, too, and the New House chaps. Howevah, it is wathah good for us four to be able to go."

"Yes, rather."

"When shall we start?"

"To-mowwow mornin'."

"Jolly good!" said Herries. "Towser will be pleased."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass suddenly upon Herries.

"Towsah!" he said.

"Yes. Towser likes a change of air as well as anybody," said Herries affably. "He will thoroughly enjoy a run down to Eastwood."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Of course, you want Towser to come?"

"Weally, that wotten bulldog has no wespect for a fellow's twousahs, and——"

"Oh, if you don't want Towser," said Herries huffily.

"I—I will have him with pleasure," said D'Arcy, remembering that he was host now, and that he was bound to concede anything to a guest. "But——"

"But we jolly well won't have him," said Blake, with emphasis. "You're not going to inflict that bulldog on us, Herries, old man. Like to see Lord Eastwood's face when you walked in with a beastly bulldog!"

"He's not a beastly bulldog!" exclaimed Herries indignantly. "He's a jolly fine bulldog, and——"

"Well, he can stop at St. Jim's. If he comes in the train with us, there will be a mysterious death of a bulldog on the railway line," said Blake darkly.

"Look here——"

"Pewwaps I had bettah go and see the Head now," said Arthur Augustus, turning to the door. "Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"The door won't open."

"Rats! Let me try," said Blake.

Arthur Augustus was tugging in vain at the handle of the door. The door did not budge. He stepped aside to allow Blake to get a grip on the handle.

"It's not locked," said Blake.

"Yaas, but——"

"Here you are!"

Blake gave a tug at the door and turned a little pink when it did not budge.

He had caught hold of the handle with the air of a fellow who was going to solve the difficulty off-hand; but the door baffled him as much as it had D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's smiled sweetly.

"Well, why don't you open it, deah boy?" he asked.

"It—it seems to be stuck, somehow!" stammered Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries.

Blake turned a freezing glare upon him.

"What are you making that blessed row for, Herries?"

"Eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the cackle about?"

"Ha, ha! I'm waiting to see you open the door. Ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it! The door's fastened somehow!"

"Go hon!"

"Here, let me try," said Digby.

Blake grunted.

"You can jolly well try, if you like," he said; "but you jolly well won't get it open."

And Blake was right.

Digby tugged at the door with both hands, but it did not budge. It seemed to yield a fraction, and then held fast.

"My word!" said Dig. "Somebody's holding it on the other side."

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course!" exclaimed Blake. "I knew it couldn't get stuck."

"Why, you just said——"

"Oh, don't jaw. Lemme get at the beastly thing again. I'll show 'em!"

"Leave it to me!"

"Rats! Gimme the handle!"

"But——"

"Don't argue, Dig, old chap. Blessed if you wouldn't argue the pendulum off a clock. Lemme get at it."

"Oh, all right!"

Blake grasped the door-handle again and tugged with all his might. But the door did not open. The Fourth-Formers grinned serenely, and Jack Blake's face gradually grew redder and redder.

He let go the handle abruptly and rapped on the door.

"Open this door!" he roared.

There was the sound of a faint chuckle outside in the passage.

"That's Tom Merry," said Digby.

Blake rapped again.

"Let go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know it's you, Tom Merry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll wipe up the passage with you when we get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake breathed hard.

He grasped the handle of the door again with both hands quietly and turned it, and gave a tremendous tug.

"Oh!"

The door flew open, and Blake staggered back. His hands went sailing out wildly, and one caught Digby on the nose, and the other caught Herries in the eye. The back of Blake's head bumped on D'Arcy's waistcoat, and the swell of St. Jim's sat down with a gasp and a bump. Blake staggered, and sat on his legs.

There was a chorus of gasps.

"Oh!"

CHAPTER 3.
An Attack in Force!

FROM the passage came a sound of chuckling, and then footsteps. The practical jokers were gone, after playing that little jape upon the occupants of Study No. 6.

The four juniors gasped and grunted.

Digby was holding his nose with both hands, and Herries had knuckles to his eyes.

D'Arcy was trying to extricate his legs from under Blake, and Blake was staring dazedly at the open door.

A cord was trailing from the handle on the outside of the door.

That explained how the enemy had succeeded in holding it shut so tightly.

They had tied the cord across the passage to the handle of the door of the room opposite, and naturally enough Blake had been unable to pull the door open, as the cord was too strong to break.

The release of the cord had caused the door to fly open as soon as Blake pulled it, hence the disaster in Study No. 6.

"Ow!" said Digby. "My nose is broken, you ass!"

"M-m-m-m!" said Herries. "I shall have a black eye to take down to Eastwood. Yah!"

"Bai Jove! My twousahs will be wuined!"

"Oh!" grunted Blake.

"You ass! What did you punch my nose for?"

"What did you bung me in the eye for?"

"What did you biff my waistcoat for?"

"Oh!"

"Pway get off my legs, deah boy! You are causin' me considewable inconvenience, and wumplin' my twosahs feahfully!"

Blake staggered to his feet.

Arthur Augustus followed his example, and began to dust his trousers.

"M-my hat!" said Blake.

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You've busted my boko."

"You've bunged up my eye."

"Yaas, wathah! And my twousahs——"

"How could I help it?" snorted Blake. "How was I to know that the door wasn't fastened? It was a jape."

"Ass!"

"Cheerful idiot!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah you an ass, Blake."

"Oh, don't go on cackling like a lot of old hens," said Blake wrathfully. "Get hold of something, and follow me and we'll make those Shell bounders sit up."

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake seized a cricket stump, and D'Arcy took up his bat. Digby took the poker, and Herries a dog-whip. Thus armed, they went down the passage in search of the Terrible Three.

As they turned into the Shell passage, they heard the sounds of laughter, and it proceeded from Tom Merry's study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake frowned.

"My hat! They're gurgling over it now," he exclaimed.

"The feahful wottahs!"

"Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of the Fourth rushed on.

The door of Tom Merry's study was open. The Terrible Three — Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—could be seen inside, sitting on the table, and shouting with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Did you see D'Arcy spread himself on the floor?"

"Bai Jove!"

"And Blake spread himself on D'Arcy!" chirped Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go for 'em!" roared Blake.

"Hallo!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The four Fourth-Formers rushed into the study. In a moment the Terrible Three were off the table and ready for battle.

"Here, keep off!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Give 'em socks!"

Three basket-hilted foils lay on the table, with which the Terrible Three had been fighting a three-cornered contest shortly before. The Shell fellows snatched them up, and stood on the defensive.

The wooden foils clashed against the bat, the stump, the poker, and the dog-whip. There was a terrific din in Tom Merry's study.

D'Arcy staggered back as the end of Tom Merry's foil pinked him on the chest.

"Ow!" he gasped, dropping the bat.

Blake gave a yell, and jumped a foot in the air. D'Arcy had dropped the bat on his toe, and it was a heavy bat.

"Gerrooh!" he shrieked. "You ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Yaroooh!"

"I'm sowwy——"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Weally——"

Blake danced on one leg. Arthur Augustus picked up his bat, and rushed to the attack. The end of the bat collided with a vase on Tom Merry's mantelpiece, and brought it in fragments to the floor.

Crash!

"Here, look out!" roared Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

Crash!

The end of the bat went into the looking-glass.

"You dangerous ass——"

"You wottahs!"

"Go for 'em!"

The Fourth-Formers attacked hotly.

But the Terrible Three, standing shoulder to shoulder, with the long wooden foils well to the front, stood their ground well.

Blake & Co. could not get past their defence.

There had been no casualties so far, with the exception of the damage to Blake's toe and the smashing of the vase and the mirror.

But the din was terrific.

The clashing and crashing of weapons, and the trampling of feet, rang through the study and along the Shell passage.

Fellows came out of the other studies to see what the matter was, and the doorway of Tom Merry's study was soon crowded.

"Go it!" shouted Gore. "Ripping! Keep it up!"

"Faith, and ye're winning, Blake!" exclaimed Reilly. "Go for their topknots!"

"Give 'em socks!"

Clash! Crash!

"Hurrah!"

"Buck up, Shell!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

"Cave!" yelled a voice in the passage.

"Phew! It's Railton!"

"Cut!"

The crowd of juniors in the passage vanished, hurling themselves into various studies, or into the box-room, or on the upper stairs. The passage was cleared in a twinkling. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, strode along to Tom Merry's study, and found not a single junior in his path.

CHAPTER 4.

A Slight Mistake!

MR. RAILTON stood at the open study door, and looked in.

The crash of weapons had ceased. It was time!

The excited juniors had done a considerable amount of damage—more to the study than to each other.

The room looked a great deal as if a hurricane had struck it.

Chairs were overturned, the looking-glass and the bookcase glass was smashed, broken vase and inkpot and papers lay on the floor. Tom Merry's foil had been broken in the middle, and Digby's poker was bent.

The Housemaster looked in grimly.

The juniors, looking very sheepish, faced him.

"What is this disturbance about?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry.

"You see, sir," began Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It—it was only fun, sir," said Jack Blake.

"Somewhat noisy fun, I think, Blake."

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"We didn't mean you to hear, sir," ventured Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton smiled. He had no doubt whatever of the exact truthfulness of that statement. But, as a matter of fact, the whole School House had heard the terrific uproar.

"It—it was a--a celebration, sir," said D'Arcy, struck by an inspiration.

"A what?"

"We—we were feeling elated, sir, because—because——"

"Well?"

"My governah's givin' a cwicket week at his house, sir, and we've got the Head's permission to go," said D'Arcy.

"Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"And so you were feeling elated?"

"Exactly, sir."

"And that is why you have made this terrific din?"

"Well, no, sir!"

"Then there is no connection between your elation and your noisy visit to a Shell study?"

"Well, no, sir!"

"Then how can you advance it as an excuse?"

"You see, sir——"

"Well—"

"As a mattah of fact, sir, it weally amounts to the same thing. Suppose——"

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir. Suppose——"

"We will suppose nothing," said Mr. Railton, frowning, "except that you ought to know better than to make so much noise. Knox has the room below, and he has complained."

"I am vewy sowwy for Knox, sir."

"You have wrecked the study."

"We—we don't mind, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Possibly not. That does not alter the case. Am I to understand that you meant to hit one another with such weapons as that?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then why were you using them?"

The juniors looked rather nonplussed.

They had certainly not intended to hurt one another very much; but it was equally certain that they might have been hurt, and badly, if the conflict had gone much further.

"You will put those things away at once," said Mr. Railton, "and write a hundred lines each."

"Oh, sir!"

"And if I hear any further disturbance, I shall speak to you severely."

"Yes, sir!"

And the Housemaster walked away.

The juniors looked at one another dubiously.

"This is wathah wotten," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "We shall not be able to give these wottahs the thwashin' they deserve. It's weally a pwomise to Wailton."

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

The Fourth-Formers glared at them.

"You can cackle!" said Blake wrathfully.

"Thanks, we will! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wastahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway let us wetiah fwom the studay, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Hold on, Gussy! What's that you were saying to Railton about a cricket week at your governor's?"

"My governor is givin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"You're going?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And these chaps?"

"Yaas. And I'm goin' to fix it for my minah, Wally, if poss."

"And you had come here to ask us?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass frigidly upon the hero of the Shell.

"I am hardly likely to ask you chaps, when you have tweated me with gwoss diswespect," he said. "I wegard you as wottahs! Besides, I have only the Head's permission to take a fwiend or two, and thwee is the limit."

"Rats!" said Manners. "Make it six."

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"We'll come," said Lowther affably. "We may be able to show some of you how to play cricket. You owe some recompense to this study, too, for wrecking it in this way, and making an unprovoked attack upon three innocent youths!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as wottahs! You held the door of our studay shut——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And caused us to fall ovah the floor of our studay in a most undignified mannah, to say nothin' of the pain."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Undah the circs.——"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's Gussy's gratitude to us for cutting the cord, and letting him out, kids!" said Tom Merry.

"Touching, ain't it?" said Lowther.

"Next time we find you tied up in your study, Gussy, we'll leave you to your doom," said Manners severely.

"Bai Jove! Wasn't it you who fastened the door?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" said Blake, starting. "Wasn't it you, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "No! I wondered why you rushed in on us like a set of maniacs. No, it wasn't us."

"Bai Jove! Who was it, then?"

"Figgins & Co.!"

"The New House bounders!"

"Yes. We came along the passage and found 'em! We couldn't help sniggering a little. Figgins & Co. bolted, and we——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "We cut the cord, and, of course, Blake had to yank the door open just then——"

"Ha, ha! And then we saw you tumbling," said Manners. "We came here to get a quiet laugh. You looked funny!"

"Oh, did we?"

"Ha, ha! Yes. Awfully, fearfully funny!"

The chums of Study No. 6 looked sheepish.

They had taken it for granted that the Terrible Three had been the cause of the disaster, and they had certainly acted a little hastily.

The damage done to Tom Merry's study, and the hundred lines apiece for all the juniors, had been the result of the mistake.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

"It was all Gussy's fault, of course!" said Blake crossly.

"Weally, Blake, I don't see how you make that out," the swell of St. Jim's protested mildly.

"You never see anything."

"But——"

"Oh, don't argue, Gussy; you've done enough damage as it is," said Blake. "The worst of it is, that Figgins & Co. have got clear away while we've been wasting time over these duffers!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They're in the New House by this time, cackling at us!" said Digby wrathfully. "I must say you're an ass, Blake, to bungle things like this."

"Yaas, wathah——"

"Look here——"

"But what price us?" demanded Tom Merry. "You've wrecked our study, and got us a hundred lines apiece, all for cutting a cord and letting you out of your study."

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I think we owe Tom Mewwy an apology!"

"You owe us more than that," said Tom Merry. "There's the mirror and the vase and the bookcase—glass costs money!"

"Weally, you know——"

"Still, it's all right, Gussy. Your idea of making it up to us by asking us down to the cricket week at Eastwood is simply splendid!"

"Weally——"

"We accept. Don't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!" said Manners and Lowther together. "It's very kind of D'Arcy to put it in this pressing way."

The elegant Fourth-Former looked bewildered.

"But—but, I haven't asked——" he stammered.

"You haven't asked the Head?" said Tom Merry genially.

"No. I mean——"

"Oh, that's all right! You'll put it to the Head with your well-known tact," said the hero of the Shell. "Use the tact and judgment you are famous for, Gussy, and it will be as easy as falling off a roof."

"Well, weally, you know——"

"We shall be pleased to come—that's all right."

"Undah the circs.——"

"Not a word more," said Tom Merry. "You don't owe us any thanks. It will be a pleasure."

"Quite a pleasure," said Lowther.

"A distinct pleasure!" declared Manners.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the chums of the Shell. For the moment he thought that he must really, in some lapse of mind, have asked the Terrible Three down to Eastwood for the cricket week.

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry affably. "Now, if you fellows like, we'll come with you and have Figgins & Co. out, and punish 'em for their cheek in japing School House chaps."

"Good egg!" said Blake instantly. "We've got a hundred lines to do, and we ought to make the New House bounders sit up for it."

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"Come on, then!"

"But——"

"It's all right, Gussy. Come on!"

And Tom Merry led the way, and the rest of the juniors followed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy still in a state of considerable excitement.

CHAPTER 5.
Caught in the Trap!

THERE was thick dusk in the quadrangle of St. Jim's, and the big elms were looming darkly. Lights gleamed from most of the lower windows in both the Houses, and from some of the upper ones, belonging to the long ranges of studies. From the windows of Figgins' study in the New House a shaft of light fell upon the leaves of the elms, and made them glimmer and glisten. Figgins & Co. were evidently at home, after their raid on the School House.

The band of juniors cautiously crossing the quadrangle looked up at the lighted window, and grinned.

"They're there!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And they won't be expecting us!"

"Hallo, what's that?"

Blake suddenly swung round and glared among the shadowy trees. There was only darkness to meet his view.

"What was it like, Blake?"

"I thought I heard somebody."

"Fancy, my son. Nerves!" said Lowther. "If you're looking for a thick ear, Lowther——"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

The School House juniors hurried on.

Raids between the rival Houses of St. Jim's were common enough, though it was not common for a party to venture into the rival House so boldly as Tom Merry & Co. were now about to do.

But they hoped that the very boldness of the enterprise would lead to its success.

Figgins & Co. would not be looking for that raid, and they would be taken by surprise, and then their door would fall upon them. To bump Figgins & Co., wreck their study, and retreat unscathed to the School House, would be a big triumph for the invaders.

And Fortune seemed to smile upon them.

Blake's suspicion that they had been seen as they came through the elms was apparently without foundation, for there was not a single New House junior waiting for them in the doorway.

They dodged quickly into the House, and ran up the stairs, and still not one of the enemy showed himself.

In the Fourth-Form passage upstairs they were secure from the seniors and prefects, and apparently they were secure from the

juniors, too, for there was none of them to be seen.

Tom Merry looked quickly along the lighted passage.

It was deserted.

"Coast's clear!" he whispered.

"Good egg!"

"Come on! We'll catch 'em on the hop this time, and no mistake!"

"Good!"

The juniors ran quickly and silently along to Figgins' study.

There was a light burning in the room, as they had seen from the quadrangle, and the door was ajar, allowing them to look into the room.

It was unoccupied.

The raiders looked at one another in considerable surprise. Where were Figgins & Co.? Where were all the New House juniors? It was strange that the passage should be deserted at that hour, and that Figgins & Co. should also be out of their study.

"What splendid luck!" whispered Blake. "Get in—quick; before we're seen!"

"Rather!"

They crowded into the study, and left the door ajar.

The room had evidently been vacated recently.

A half-written imposition lay on the table, and some fruit and chocolate was also there. Figgins & Co. had certainly not been gone long.

The School House juniors grinned gleefully.

"It seems to be made for us!" murmured Tom Merry. "This is toffee—just toffee! Figgins & Co. have gone out for something, and when they come back——"

"Ha, ha! We'll collar them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Stand just inside the door. We'll collar them as they come in, and shove something into their mouths so that they can't yell to the others."

"Bravo!"

"Then we'll give them a lesson about fastening chaps up in their studies!" said Digby.

"Hurrah!"

"Quiet!"

All the juniors stood in a group just inside the study, so that they would be hidden from view when the door opened.

They waited.

In a minute or less there was a sound of footsteps in the passage. A subdued chuckle came from afar.

"Ready?" whispered Tom Merry.

The School House juniors nodded, and waited, with tense nerves.

The door opened. But it did not open quietly or gently. It was flung open suddenly, and it biffed heavily against the group of juniors, and they uttered surprised exclamations and reeled one against another.

There was a roar of laughter in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of New House juniors poured in, headed by Figgins & Co.—Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. In a moment the School House raiders were assailed and collared.

They resisted furiously; but they had no chance against the odds.

"Buck up!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Go it, School House!"

"Ha, ha! Down with 'em!"

"Sit on 'em!" roared Figgins.

And his orders were obeyed to the letter. The School House juniors, overwhelmed by numbers, were dragged to the floor, and a couple of New House fellows sat upon each of them.

And Figgins & Co. yelled.

"This is where we smile!" gasped Kerr. "Smile, you fellows!"

And the New House fellows smiled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Their smile could be heard half-way across the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins Accepts!

TOM MERRY & CO. wriggled furiously under the weight of their captors. But they wriggled in vain. They were captured, and they were helpless. Every fellow had two foemen sitting on him, and there were a crowd more foes in the passage, ready to swarm upon them if needed.

The New House fellows laughed loudly.

"Nicely caught!" said Figgins blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You New House rotters!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as feahful wottahs!"

Figgins shook his finger at them playfully.

"Mustn't lose its 'ickle temper," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrup!" gasped Monty Lowther, who was being slowly squashed under the weight of Fatty Wynn. "You're c-c-crushing me!"

"Never mind!" said Fatty comfortably. "It's all in the day's work."

"You—you heavy porpoise!"

"Quiet, old chap!"

"Gerroff!"

"Rats!"

"Came here to take us by surprise," grinned Figgins. "Catch a weasel asleep! Why, Kerr spotted you in the quad., and brought in word!"

The School House juniors bestowed appreciative looks upon Kerr, which made the Scottish junior burst into a series of explosive cachinnations.

"And we got ready for you," said Figgins. "We knew you'd walk into the trap if we left it open—that's the way of you School House chaps."

The School House chaps gasped with helpless rage.

"'Will you walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly?'" chanted Pratt. And the New House fellows roared again.

"Nice of them to walk into the parlour like that," said Figgins. "Never occurred to them that some nice boys about our size were hidden in the other studies, ready to pounce on them as soon as they were safe inside."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom Merry. "Get off my chest, French!"

"Rats!"

"Get this blessed porpoise off me—I'm suffocating!" came in sepulchral tones from Monty Lowther.

"The question is, what are we going to do with them?" said Figgins. "Bumping is too mild a punishment. What price ducking them in sooty water?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Figgins, I twust you will not be guilty of such an extwemely wotten action. I should wegard it as beastly."

"Paint them red, and send them home," said Pratt. "I've got lots of red ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah, Pwatt——"

"Or whitewash them," said Fatty Wynn. "There's a pail of whitewash that Taggles left in the box-room, and——"

"Good egg!"

"Fetch it, somebody."

"Bai Jove, Figgins——"

"Buck up with the whitewash!"

"Weally, Figgins, I wegard this as an extwemely wotten way to tweat a chap who wants to invite you to a cwicket week in the countwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Figgins stared.

So did the School House juniors. This the first they had heard of inviting Figgins to the cricket week at Eastwood.

But D'Arcy knew what he was about.

The swell of St. Jim's could have submitted to many kinds of punishment with the stoicism of a Spartan or a Red Indian. But to have his clothes spoiled, and to be reduced to a dirty and unpleasant state, was too much for his fortitude.

In such a pass, D'Arcy's aristocratic brain worked with unusual quickness.

And the only possible way out of the difficulty occurred to him, and he acted upon the idea immediately.

"What's that?" demanded Figgins, interested at once.

"My governah is givin' a cwicket week at Eastwood."

"What about it?"

"I have permission to go and take a fwiend or two."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"At pwesent," said D'Arcy, "I wegard you as a fwiend—or, at least, I should do so if Kerr would kindly wemove his knee fwom my chest. He is soilin' my shirt and wumplin' my waistcoat."

"Certainly!" said Kerr politely.

A fellow whose father was giving a cricket week in the country, and who had permission to take a friend or two there, was a fellow to be treated with the utmost politeness.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and dusted his clothes.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"Well, deah boy, unless we should happen to fall out, I wegard you as a fwiend, and I should be vewy pleased to have your company for a week at Eastwood."

Figgins grinned.

"Good! I'll come with pleasure. Only I couldn't come without Fatty Wynn and Kerr."

"I shall be vewy pleased to welcome them, too."

"Good egg!" said Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

And Fatty Wynn smacked his lips. He had visited Eastwood House before.

and he knew what an excellent table was kept there. A vision of a long series of gorgeous feeds danced before the eyes of Fatty Wynn.

"Have you fixed it with the Head?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, my governah has."

"Ripping!"

"Good old Gussy!" murmured Blake. "He's saved us from a whitewashing, and from looking a set of first-class goats to the School House."

"We'll come with pleasure," said Figgins. "But—but did you really come over to ask us, Gussy?"

"Not exactly, deah boy. But—but I have asked you, so it's all wight."

"Right as rain!" said Figgins heartily.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in the Co.

"All right, is it?" exclaimed Pratt indignantly. "What about whitewashing them?"

"My dear chap, I'm not going to whitewash one of my best chums," said Figgins.

"Look here——"

"Peace is established in the wigwams of the redskins," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "You chaps can bunk."

"Look here, Figgy——"

"Good-bye!"

The juniors who had effected the capture glared.

This was rather a cavalier way to treat them after their services, and the invitation to Figgins and Co. did not compensate them for being deprived of the pleasure of whitewashing the School House juniors. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were satisfied, but the rest were very far from being so.

But Figgins was monarch of all he surveyed among the junior portion of the New House.

"My dear chaps," he said, "we've licked the School House bounders, and that's enough."

"There's such a thing as tempering justice with mercy," added Kerr.

"Yes; as Shakespeare remarks, 'it's ripping to have a giant's strength, but caddish to use it as a giant.'"

"I don't think Shakespeare puts it exactly like that, Figgy," grinned Kerr.

"Well, that's what he meant, anyway. My dear asses, as we are strong, we should be merciful. We've licked the School House, and what more do you want?"

And the juniors grumbled and went.

"Not so much about licking the School House!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he dusted himself. "We've had a slight reverse——"

"Do you reverse?" murmured Kerr.

"But as for being licked——"

"Yaas, wathah! I uttahly wefuse to wegard myself as bein' licked."

Figgins grinned.

"You can regard yourself as you like, Gussy; you are licked, and that's enough," he said. "Enough for us, anyway. But never mind that; we're jolly good friends now. So you want us to come down for the cricket week?"

"I ask you to come, Figgy."

"We'll come with pleasure. It's jolly ripping of you, Gussy, and any little ups and downs we may have had will be quite forgotten, of course, on both sides," said Figgins, in the frankest way in the world.

"That is vewy decent of you, Figgay," said D'Arcy, mollified at once. "I shall have to put it wathah tactfully to the Head, that's all. Pewwaps I had better go and see the Head now."

"Good! Let's know the verdict."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the School House juniors, looking very dusty and sheepish, quitted Figgins's study.

Figgins closed the door after them, and then the New House trio grinned at one another.

"A week in the country!" chuckled Figgins. "How's that?"

"Ripping!" said Kerr.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, rubbing his plump hands. "Lord Eastwood's housekeeping is done on a proper scale, and a fellow need never be afraid of not having enough to eat. I——"

"Trust you to think of that, Fatty."

"Well, it's an important matter, isn't it?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

Meanwhile, the School House raiders were returning to their own House, feeling much less important than when they set out. They were glad that there were no fellows on the steps or in the doorway to watch them come in, and that they had mentioned to no one their intention of falling upon Figgins & Co. in their own study and making an example of them. The raid had worked out so very differently from their anticipations.

CHAPTER 7.

Thereby Hangs a Tale!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a thoughtful frown as he entered Study No. 6. He looked at himself in the glass, and slowly peeled off his jacket and waistcoat. The other juniors watched him in considerable surprise.

"Aren't you going to the Head?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is that a new dodge—to go in your shirt-sleeves?"

D'Arcy turned his monocle upon Blake with a scornful gaze, as the juniors burst into a general chuckle.

"I wegard your wemark as widiculous, Blake. I am goin' to change my waistcoat and bwush my jacket and genewally set myself to wights before I go to the Head."

"Oh, I see! Then you're not going this evening?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But it's bedtime in an hour, and it will take you longer than that to change your waistcoat and make a final decision about your necktie."

Arthur Augustus deigned no reply to that remark.

He selected a waistcoat and put it on, and then brushed his jacket, removing every atom of dust that had lodged upon it in the combat in Figgins' study.

Then he dusted his trousers, and gave his shoes a rub.

"Now I feel bettah," he remarked. "I shall have to wash my hands, that is all."

And he left the study.

He returned in five minutes, to find the seven juniors eating fruit. He looked as clean as a new pin now.

"Do you think I will do, deah boys?" he asked.

They surveyed him critically.

"It depends," said Lowther.

"How do you mean, deah boy?"

"I mean, it depends upon what you want to do for. If you're thinking of getting a job on top of an organ you'll do admirably."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon the whole," said D'Arcy, "I don't think it's a good ideah to be slovenly to save time. Pewwaps I had bettah go up to the dorm. and have a thowough change."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know——"

"Gussy, old man," said Tom Merry solemnly, "you'll do. You'll do first-rate. The Head will be simply ravished."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You're as right as rain, Gussy," said Blake. "Do go to the Head, and let's have the verdict; we're dying of anxiety."

"This suspense is killing, as the nigger remarked when they were hanging him," said Monty Lowther.

"Vewy well, deah boys, I will go."

"Just a moment," said Lowther, as D'Arcy was turning to the door. "Is that a speck of dust on your shoulder?"

He reached over to D'Arcy, and brushed the shoulder of his jacket.

"That's all right," he said.

"Thank you vewy much, Lowthah."

"Not at all, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus left the study. The juniors burst into a chuckle. Monty Lowther, in brushing that imaginary speck of dust off his shoulder had inserted a bent pin into the jacket, and to the pin was attached a long cord with fragments of twisted paper tied on it at intervals, in the manner of the tail of a kite.

The kite-tail hung down behind Arthur Augustus, and the end of it trailed on the floor, as he walked out of the study.

Nobody but Monty Lowther would have thought of sending D'Arcy into the Head's study with that curious attachment trailing behind him.

"You—you ass!" muttered Blake.

"Leave him alone!"

"Don't stop him now," said Tom Merry. "He'll be too late to see the Head if he doesn't buck up, after wasting so much time, and then we shan't know till morning."

Blake hesitated a moment.

While he hesitated D'Arcy was lost.

The swell of St. Jim's having once started lost no time. He strode along the Fourth-Form passage to the stairs.

Some fellows who were on the staircase stared at him.

"My only hat!" said Kerruish. "Look at it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy paused, jammed his monocle in his eye, and stared haughtily at the grinning juniors.

"Pway acquaint me with the subject of

your mewwiment, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kewwish——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cacklin' at?"

"Ha, ha! Thereby hangs a tail!" chuckled Kerruish.

And the juniors yelled again.

Arthur Augustus had some thoughts of rushing upon them and giving them all a fearful thrashing, but he restrained his wrath, and went on downstairs.

Lefevre of the Fifth was in the hall, chatting with some other Fifth-Formers, and they all stopped and stared at the elegant junior as he passed.

"Great Scott!" said Lefevre.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! That's what I say! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lefevre.

Arthur Augustus swung round.

"Weally, you wottahs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus swung on.

He hadn't the faintest idea that there was a remarkable appendage trailing behind his jacket, and the cause of the general mirth that greeted his appearance was a mystery to him.

"Hallo, look there!" exclaimed Gore of the Shell, in the lower passage.

And there was a fresh yell of laughter.

"Goah, deah boy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the mattah?"

"Ha, ha! Look behind you."

Arthur Augustus swung round. Of course the tail swung round with him, and he saw nothing of it.

"Weally, Goah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's strode on loftily.

He made up his mind that it was a rag, and he determined to take no more notice of the laughter which greeted him wherever he passed.

He reached the door of the Head's study, and tapped at it.

Dr. Holmes' deep voice bade him enter.

D'Arcy entered the study. Dr. Holmes glanced up at him kindly. He could not see D'Arcy's absurd appendage while the elegant junior was facing him.

"Ah, I wanted to see you, D'Arcy!" he remarked. "You have doubtless come about the matter mentioned to me by Lord Eastwood?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"I shall make no difficulty in granting Lord Eastwood's request," said the Head. "You are at liberty to visit your home for the cricket week, and to take a friend or two as Lord Eastwood wishes."

"Thank you vewy much, sir."

"The selection of the friend or two may be left to you, I suppose?" said the Head. "You will let me know the names, so that I can communicate them to their Form-master."

"Thank you, sir."

D'Arcy hesitated.

Should he tell the Head then how many fellows he had decided to take, or leave Dr. Holmes to make the discovery when he sent the list in?

The latter would probably be the safer course.

"Of course, you will not be limited to one friend or two," said the Head, with a smile. "You may take more than that."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said D'Arcy, relieved. "You are awf'ly good, sir."

"The only condition I make is that their Form-master shall be sufficiently satisfied with their progress to raise no objection," said the Head.

"Vewy well, sir."

"Very good! Dear me!" said the Head, putting on his glasses and looking at D'Arcy very curiously, as he caught sight of the kite-tail trailing on the carpet beside his feet. "What—what is that?"

"What is what, sir?"

"That! Turn round!"

"T-t-t-turn wound, sir?"

"Yes, at once."

Arthur Augustus, astonished by the curious order, turned round at once. The kite-tail followed him round with a graceful sweep.

The Head's face relaxed.

He tried to frown, but he could not—his lips would smile instead, and the smile became a laugh in spite of himself.

"Dear me! Ha, ha, ha! This is very absurd!"

"Sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy swung round again, and again the tail swept in a circle. This time it caught on a chair, and D'Arcy heard the sound, and swung round to see what it

was. The tail swung away, of course, but the junior caught a glimpse of it, and turned round and round trying to see what it was.

The sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chasing his tail like a kitten was too much for the Head.

He burst into a hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Dear me! You—you have something attached to your jacket, D'Arcy. This is most absurd! Come here, and I will take it off for you."

The junior approached, and Dr. Holmes unhooked the pin. D'Arcy's face was a study as he beheld the kite-tail.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Was—was that fastened to me, sir?"

"Yes. It was some absurd trick!"

"Then that is why the fellows were laughin'."

"It is most absurd," said the Head. "Take it away with you, D'Arcy."

And the swell of St. Jim's left the study with the kite-tail in his hand, and grim vengeance in his face.

CHAPTER 8.

Lowther Makes His Will!

"HERE he is!"

"What's the verdict?"

"Get it off your chest, Gussy!"

"Are we all going?"

"Get it out!"

"Go it!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle with the greatest care, and stared at the excited juniors in Study No. 6 without replying.

"Why don't you speak, image?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Go it!"

"Get it out!"

"Nevah mind that mattah now," said Arthur Augustus. "There is a more important mattah to be settled. Look at this!"

He held up the kite-tail.

The juniors looked at it with grave faces and great interest.

"Well?" said seven voices in unison at last.

"Well!" said D'Arcy.

"Well!" repeated the seven.

"Weally, you wottahs——"

"What does the Head say?"

"What's the verdict?"

"I went into the Head's studay with that widiculous thing hangin' on to my jacket behind," said Arthur Augustus.

"What did you do that for?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

This question was almost too much for the swell of St. Jim's. He remained silent for at least two seconds, giving the humorist of the Shell a withering look.

"Somebody tied it to my jacket," he said at last.

"Oh!"

"And when the Head dwew my attention to it, I chased it wound and wound in the most widiculous mannah, and even the Head laughed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I wish I had been there! I should have laughed, too!"

And the juniors roared.

"I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect, and placed in a widiculous posish," said D'Arcy. "I want to know which of you wottahs tied this thing to my jacket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to give the culpwit a feahful thwashin'."

And Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs in an exceedingly businesslike manner.

Monty Lowther slipped off the table.

"Do you mean that, D'Arcy?" he asked solemnly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I suppose there's nothing to be done," said Lowther. "I must take it quietly."

"Did you do it, Lowthah?"

"Yes."

"Then I am goin' to thwash you."

"Hold on a minute," said Lowther, backing round the table with an appearance of great alarm. "Just a tick——"

"I wefuse to hold on," said D'Arcy, following him. "I am goin' to thwash you. I wequest you to stand still while I do so."

Lowther still backed away, going right round the study table, and D'Arcy followed him. The swell of St. Jim's increased his speed, and so did Lowther, and the peculiar race went on, while the juniors yelled with laughter.

"Lowthah, you ass——"

"Hold on," said Lowther "I want to

make a few preparations before I am slain. Tom, will you take down my last will and testament if I dictate it?"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, weeping.

"You uttah asses——"

"That's only fair," said Blake solemnly. "You know what a terror you are when you are roused, Gussy. Suppose you should slay Lowther by an unlucky blow, as frequently happens in novels——"

"Don't be an ass, Blake!"

"Then what would you feel like if you had not given him time to make his last will and testament?"

"You duffah——"

"I claim the right to make my will before I am slain," said Monty Lowther. "If Gussy refuses, I decline the meeting!"

"You ass!"

"It's quite in order, and is done in the best six-shilling novels," said Manners. "Hold that bloodthirsty avenger back while Lowther makes his will!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

But D'Arcy was held back, and Tom Merry produced a crumpled sheet of paper and a fountain-pen, and Lowther began to distate his will.

"The last will and testament of Montague Lowther——"

"You ass!" shouted D'Arcy, trying to get past Digby and Manners and Herries, who were holding him back.

"Quiet, Gussy!"

"You duffahs——"

"Gussy," said Blake severely, "I am surprised at a fellow of your birth and breeding interrupting a solemn proceeding like this."

"I wegard you as a wottah."

"Go on, Lowther."

"I leave my cricket bat to Tom Merry, and my camera to Arthur Augustus Adolphus Aubrey D'Arcy——"

"Let me get at the wottah!"

"With the condition that he does not try to take his own photo with the camera, as I do not wish it to be broken," went on Lowther.

"You wottah——"

"I leave my football boots to D'Arcy, if they are not too small for him——"

"You fearful wottah, they're thwee sizes too large!" howled D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"I leave my——"

"I wefuse to take part in these widiculous pwoceedings. Lowthah, you are an uttah wottah. I wegard you with pwofound contempt."

"Go hon!"

"Don't interrupt a chap making his last will, Gussy——"

"I am willin' to allow the mattah to dwop," said D'Arcy, with an indignant glare round the study.

"Hear, hear!"

"Do you apologise?" demanded Lowther.

"Eh?"

"Do you apologise?"

"You utter ass!"

"I am in the hands of my friends in this matter," said Lowther, in the best manner of a novel hero. "If it is their opinion that I can let the matter drop without receiving an apology, I shall not insist."

"I wegard you——"

"Of course, Gussy ought to apologise," said Tom Merry. "Still, I think you might be magnanimous, and waive the apology. Consider it made."

"Very well; I consider you to have apologised, D'Arcy."

"You wank outsidah——"

"The matter is now settled," said Tom Merry. "It is settled to the credit of all parties concerned, without anybody being hurt, and with everybody's honour unstained—just like a French duel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus frowned darkly. The juniors chuckled, but the swell of St. Jim's did not join in the chuckle. D'Arcy was on his dignity.

Blake gazed at him with an expression of surprise.

"Is anything the matter, Gussy?" he asked, with solicitude.

"Oh, nothin'!" said D'Arcy loftily.

"You are perfectly satisfied with the proceedings, I suppose, or would you like them to be gone through again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, then, what's the verdict? What did the Head say?"

"It's all wight."

"We're going?"

"Yaas!"

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Wants to Go!

KANGAROO—otherwise Harry Noble—put his head into Study No. 6 as the cheer rang along the Fourth Form passage. The Cornstalk looked inquiringly at the juniors.

"What's the row?" he asked. "Wherefore hurrah?"

"Good news, my son! Hurrah!"

"Hip pip——"

"What is it, then, you asses?"

"Gussy's guv'nor is giving a cricket week at Eastwood, and he's got the Head's permission to take a friend or two."

"Jolly good," said the Australian junior. "How fortunate that I chummed up with Gussy the moment I came to St. Jim's."

"Weally, Kangawoo——"

"How lucky that we took to each other like ducks taking to water, and have been inseparable ever since."

"Bai Jove!"

"You know, I have always liked and admired Gussy, and tried to—to tie my necktie as he does," said Noble. "I'm so glad you've got permission to take a friend or two, Gussy. Of course, I'm the friend—the two can be anybody you please."

"Weally——"

"'Nuff said, old chap. I'll come."

"Gweat Scott!"

"When are you starting?"

"To-mowwow. But——"

"What train?"

"The thwee-thirty fwom Wylcombe. But——"

"All right; I'll be ready."

"Weally——"

"Any of you fellows coming?" asked Kangaroo, with an affable look at the grinning juniors.

"Yes, a few," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"The friend or two amounts to nine chaps so far," said Blake. "Blessed if I see why there shouldn't be a tenth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it ten, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, Kangawoo is a weally wippin' cwicketah. He bowls vewy neahly as well as I do——"

"Awfully nearly, if not quite," murmured Tom Merry.

"And his battin' isn't bad——"

"Thanks awfully," said Kangaroo gratefully.

"Not at all, deah boy. I am only statin' the facts," said D'Arcy. "I don't know whethah there will be twouble in the mornin' when the Head discovahs how many chaps are goin', but I suppose it will be as easy to take ten as nine."

"Yes, rather!"

"Then I shall be vewy glad to take you, Kangawoo!"

"Shake!" said the Cornstalk.

He grasped D'Arcy's hand, and gave it a squeeze that made the swell of St. Jim's jump clear of the floor with a wild howl.

"Ow! Ow! Yow! Yawooh!"

"Anything the matter?"

"Yawooh! My—my—my hand!"

"Well, I'm glad it's settled nicely," said Kangaroo. "I'll go and tell Glyn and Dane."

And he went down the passage, whistling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caressed his injured hand tenderly.

"I am wathah inclined to think that Kangawoo was japin' me," he said. "I weally think I ought to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Is it a custom of yours to thrash your guests?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned an indignant glance upon the Terrible Three as they quitted the study, to return to their interrupted prep. to finish it.

Blake glanced doubtfully at the table.

"I don't know whether it's worth while doing the prep.," he remarked. "It's useless if we're going to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If anything goes wrong, it's better to have the prep. done," said Digby cautiously.

"Besides, it will look as if we want to do all we can," said Herries. "After all, it isn't much, if we're going to have a week's holiday."

"Yaas, wathah! Let's get on!"

And they got on.

But that prep. was fated to be interrupted again. There was a sound of snapping and yapping in the passage, and the door was opened, and Wally—D'Arcy minor of the Third Form—came in with Pongo under his arm.

He closed the study door quickly.

"You don't mind my lying low in here

for a few minutes, do you, chaps?" queried the hero of the Third affably.

"Weally, Wally——"

"You see, Pongo's forbidden in the House, but, of course, I have him in the Form-room after lessons," said Wally. "Like to see the school where I couldn't have Pongo in to talk to."

"But——"

"He got out into the passage, and he's tripped up Kildare," said Wally. "I collared him and ran. I believe Kildare's looking for him."

"You young bounder, and you've brought him in here!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

Wally held up his finger cautiously.

"Hist!"

"What the——"

"I can hear Kildare coming!"

"Better bunk."

"Can't; he'd spot me. Where can I hide Pongo?"

"Shove him in the cupboard," said Blake, "or in Gussy's hat-box."

"I uttahly wefuse to have that howwid animal shoved into my hat-box."

Wally grinned, and darted towards the cupboard.

He pushed Pongo inside—Pongo going very unwillingly, apparently seeing no reason why he should hide—and closed the door. He leaned against the door in an attitude of assumed carelessness.

"Yes, Gussy," he said in a loud voice, as the study door opened, "I shall certainly come home for the cricket week——"

"Weally, Wally——"

Kildare of the Sixth looked into the study. Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, was generally good-tempered. He did not look good-tempered now. Perhaps stumbling over Wally's dog in the passage had not improved his temper.

"Is D'Arcy minor here? Ah, here you are! Where is that dog?"

"Dog!" said Wally.

"I fell over Pongo in the passage."

"Did you?"

"Yes, I did!" roared Kildare.

"Was he hurt?" asked Wally.

Kildare glared at the cool junior.

"I was hurt," he exclaimed. "You know you are not allowed to have that brute in the house, D'Arcy minor. Where is he?"

"I can't see him."

"The brute ran upstairs."

"Did he?"

"And I saw you in the upper passage."

"Did you?"

"Where is that dog?"

Scratch! Scratch! Scratch!

It was Pongo inside the cupboard, trying to get out. Blake & Co. grinned. Kildare uttered an exclamation.

"Why, you young rascal, you have him in the cupboard there!"

Wally turned red.

"Open that door!" commanded Kildare.

Wally opened the cupboard door. Pongo frisked out in great glee, and barked. He ran between Arthur Augustus' legs, and nearly upset the swell of St. Jim's.

"So he was here all the time!" said Kildare grimly.

"You see——"

"Come to my study, D'Arcy minor."

"You're not going to whack Pongo," said Wally, gathering his shaggy favourite up in his arms protectingly. "I brought him in. You can lick me if you like."

Kildare smiled grimly.

"That's what I'm going to do. Follow me."

D'Arcy minor made a grimace as the captain of St. Jim's quitted the study.

"Curious thing that I'm always in hot water," he exclaimed. "People seem to pick on me because I'm harmless and inoffensive."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake, with a grin. "Mind, that beast is trying to get away!"

"Quiet, Pongo! Look here, Gussy, I have heard from the dad about that cricket week at home, and it seems that he hasn't made it a point to ask the Head for me to be let off."

"Vewy pwob."

"Some rot about my not being sufficiently well reported by my Form-master, to justify him in making such a request."

"Yaas, I suppose so."

"Of course, it's all piffle. Selby never gives me good reports. He dislikes me for some reason."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Perhaps it was because you covered him with tar once."

"Well, that was really only a joke."

"You couldn't expect Selby to have a sufficiently developed sense of humour to appreciate it as it deserved," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"Well, it's rotten that I'm not to have

leave," said Wally. "Of course, I'm going."

"I'm sowwy, Wally, but it seems to me imposs."

"Kildare told you to follow him, Wally," suggested Digby gently.

"Well, I'm going to. The guv'nor has left it to the discretion of the Head and my Form-master whether I am allowed to go," said Wally.

"Then you had bettah behave yourself, deah boy."

"I was thinking of that," said Wally. "If I set up as a shining light in the Third Form, and drew all eyes upon me by my goodness and meekness, like Georgie in the story-book, it might work—only there isn't much time. Besides, it isn't in my line."

"I think I heard Kildare call," said Herries.

"Blow Kildare! You see, I must go, and I shall have to work it somehow. I should hate to have to do a bolt."

"I uttahly wefuse my permish. for you to do a bolt, Wally."

"Rats! Look here, Gussy. I want you to write a persuasive letter to the guv'nor, and at the same time put it sweetly to the Head."

"But——"

"I'll be on my best behaviour, and win golden opinions from all sorts of people, like that chap in Virgil—or was it Homer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "It was Shakespeare."

"Well, I knew it was one of the old bounders," said Wally irreverently. "Well, that's my little game. See?"

"D'Arcy minor!"

It was Kildare's voice from the distance.

"Hallo, there's Kildare doing vocal exercises. I shall have to cut. But I shan't see you again before bedtime, so I must finish now," said Wally.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Now, don't you begin, Gus! It's too bad of you to waste time talking when there isn't a minute to spare. Remember what I want you to do, that's all. I'm going to play gentle Georgie, and win golden opinions. Then, if I can't come with you to-morrow, I shall be able to follow a day or two later. See?"

"Yaas, but——"

"I can hear Kildare coming," said Blake.

"My only Aunt Jane! I——"

Wally made for the door just as Kildare reached it again. The captain of St. Jim's frowned into the study.

"I think I told you to follow me, D'Arcy minor," he said.

"Just coming, Kildare. Ow!"

The St. Jim's captain took a firm grasp upon Wally's ear with his finger and thumb, and led him from the study. Wally wriggled painfully, and Pongo took advantage of the diversion to skip out of his arms and dash for liberty.

"Ow!" murmured Wally. "You needn't hold me so tight, Kildare; I'm not going to bolt."

But Kildare's grip did not relax till he had led the scamp of the Third Form into his study. There he took down a cane, and the next five minutes were decidedly painful for D'Arcy minor.

CHAPTER 10.

Jolly Good!

"WHERE'S Wally?"

Tom Merry asked the question on the following morning. The Shell and the Fourth Form had come out after morning lessons, and Tom Merry & Co. had gathered together, in the highest spirits.

It was a glorious day, and they were to have a glorious week, and what more could they desire to make them happy?

"Where's Wally?"

"I weally don't know," said D'Arcy. "The Third Form are out, but Wally doesn't appeah to be in the quad. with them."

"I don't think he's gone out," said Kangaroo.

"Where is the young duffer, then? Here's young Jameson. Jameson, where's Wally?"

"In the Form-room."

"Bai Jove! What is he doin' there?"

"Rubbing his hands."

"Wubbin' his hands! What for?"

"Better ask him."

And Jameson went out. D'Arcy turned his monocle on his chums in great surprise.

"I hardly compwehend this," he re-

marked. "Why on earth should Wally stay in the class-woom to wub his hands?"

"Let's go and see, anyway."

They hurried to the Third-Form room. Sure enough, Wally was there. He was sitting on a form engaged as Jameson had said, rubbing his hands together slowly and ruefully. He grunted as he looked up at Tom Merry & Co.

"Licked?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," replied Wally, with equal brevity.

"Badly?"

"Yes."

"What for?" asked Digby.

"I've been in trouble," said Wally. "Everything's gone wrong. Selby's slated me awfully to the Head, and I've been licked, and I'm gated for a fortnight, and there's not the ghost of a chance of getting leave to go home for the cricket week."

"Phew!"

"What a giddy chapter of misfortunes!" said Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, it's wathah wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I should say it is!" said Wally. "This is what comes of trying to be good. It's the first time I've ever tried it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it doesn't pay. I'm jolly well never going to be beastly good again!"

"It's wathah unfortunate," said Arthur Augustus distressfully. "You won't be able to come home for the cwicket week now, Wally."

Wally snorted.

"Won't I?" he said. "That's all you know, Gussy. I'm going to work it somehow"

"I hope you are not thinkin' of boltin'?" said Arthur Augustus. "The patah would only send you stwaight back, Wally."

"I shall work it somehow, I tell you!"

"I hope you will, deah boy. I twust your hands do not hurt."

Wally sniffed.

"No. I'm rubbing them for fun," he remarked.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Oh, scat!"

Wally was evidently not in a mood to be condoled with. The juniors left him rubbing his hands.

They were sorry for Wally; but there was no doubt that it was his own past delinquencies that caused his bad luck.

If he had been more accustomed to trying to be good, probably it would have come easier to him, and would not have led to such an unfortunate series of catastrophes.

"Look here, Gussy," said Kangaroo. "You'd better cut in and see the Head, and let's have the verdict about that list you've got for him."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I'll send in the list by Binks," he said. "It will save a personal interview, which might be awkward undah the circs."

"Leave it till after dinner," said Tom Merry. "Better to catch the Head in the best possible temper."

"Yaas, wathah! That is weally vewy thoughtful of you."

And the juniors did what packing they had to do, and persuaded Arthur Augustus that a couple of large bags would answer his purpose, instead of burdening the party with a trunk.

As he was going home, he did not need a hat-box, which was a great relief, for it appeared that he had a reserve of toppers under the parental roof.

After the dinner, Arthur Augustus made out the list of the "friend or two" who were to go with him to Eastwood.

There were ten names on the list, and when it was written out D'Arcy looked at it with a thoughtful eye.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "The Head may think it is wathah cool of me, you know."

"So it is!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Weally——"

"But that's all right. If there's any objection, you must pile it on that your pater will be awfully pleased, and that you expected to take your dearest friends——"

"Bai Jove!"

"Binks, come here, old man! Give him a tanner, Gussy, and let him take the paper."

The School House page, who was passing just then, took the paper and the sixpence, with a grin.

"Take that to the Head, Binks," said D'Arcy anxiously, "and bwing me back his answer, if there is one. But don't tell him I expect an answer."

Binks grinned.

"Werry well, Master D'Arcy."

And he vanished.

The juniors waited patiently in the School House hall for his return. Figgins & Co., who were just as anxious as the School-House fellows, came in and joined them. It was three minutes before Binks returned.

"Any answer?" demanded eleven voices in unison.

"The 'Ead wants to see Master D'Arcy in his study," said Binks.

Arthur Augustus sighed.

"Now for the tug-of-war!" he murmured. "Pitch it to him tactfully, Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely upon my usin' the pwopah amount of tact and judgment, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus took his way to the Head's study.

He tapped timidly on the door, and entered. Dr. Holmes was sitting with the paper in his hand. He glanced at D'Arcy over his spectacles.

"Ahem, D'Arcy! Is this the—er—the list you promised me?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Is it not rather a long one?"

"Weally, sir——"

"Have you put down the names of all the juniors you would like to take with you?" asked the Head, with a slight tinge of sarcasm, which was quite lost upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Oh!"

"I should like to take Weilly, sir, and Kewwuish, and Evans, and Hancock, and Pwatt, and young Jones, sir, but—but I thought I ought to be modewate, sir."

The Head coughed.

"I should like to take Clifton Dane, sir, and Glyn, and Goah, and Skimpole, and ——"

"Ahem! You need not continue, D'Arcy. I have no doubt you would like to take the whole junior portion of the School House."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"I suppose, therefore, I may look upon this list as really moderate?" he said.

"I am glad you look upon it in that light, sir," said D'Arcy, looking greatly relieved. "Thank you vewy much, sir."

"But—but—I did not say——"

"I should not like you think I was imposin' upon your gweat kindness, sir," said D'Arcy. "I am glad you wegard the list as modewate."

"D'Arcy!"

"I can only thank you vewy much, sir, in the name of my fwiends and myself."

The Head looked hard at the elegant junior. He was quite serious. Dr. Holmes hesitated a few moments, turning the paper over in his hands.

"Very well, D'Arcy," he said. "The number you were to take was not specified either by your father or myself. Perhaps I should have been a little more precise. I consent—and I hope you will have a most enjoyable week."

"Thank you vewy much, sir. I——"

"Well?"

"If you would allow me to say a word for Wally, sir—my minah——" faltered the swell of St. Jim's.

Dr. Holmes shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible, D'Arcy! His record for the last twenty-four hours is worse than it has ever been, and he has greatly incensed his Form-master. He has been in trouble with his Housemaster, his German-master, his head prefect, and his Form-master, and really he is much more deserving of punishment than of a holiday. Good-bye, D'Arcy!"

"Good-bye, sir, and thank you vewy much!"

And D'Arcy left the Head's study.

He returned to his chums.

"It's all wight, deah boys!"

"List passed unanimously?" asked Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!"

"Hip-pip!"

"Hurray!"

"I'm only sowwy about Wally," said D'Arcy, and he went in search of his minor.

Wally heard of his major's last appeal for him with a grin.

"It's all right, Gussy," he said. "You've done your best, and you're a good little ass!"

"Wally!"

"But I shall manage it somehow."

"Well, I hope you will," said Arthur Augustus, after quite a long pause; "and if you do come home, Wally, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' for that diswespectful wemark you have just made."

Whereat Wally chuckled.

CHAPTER 11.

A Railway Tragedy!

THE rest of St. Jim's was busy with afternoon lessons when Arthur Augustus and his friend or two—numbering eleven in all—made their way to the gates of St. Jim's, each of them carrying one or more bags.

Tom Merry & Co. tramped down to the station in a merry party.

Arthur Augustus was still thinking of his minor, but he could not help admitting that it was a comfort not to have Pongo attached to the party.

"Of course, I'm awf'ly fond of dogs," he remarked; "but Pongo is like Towsah, and he has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Towser would have liked to come," said Herries. "I don't feel half safe about him, leaving him to Taggles to feed."

"Towser wouldn't have liked the result if he had come," said Blake. "He would have been found drowned in the lake at Eastwood."

"Look here——"

"Yaas, wathah! I must say that the partay is wathah impwoved by the absence of Pongo and Towsah."

Herries grunted.

"Bless Towser and Pongo!" said Fatty Wynn. "I hope you fellows have brought some sandwiches."

"I thought I saw you laying in a supply of grub at the tuck-shop," said Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn looked alarmed.

"Oh, no! That was only a little snack for myself," he said, and he glanced down at a somewhat bulky parcel that swung on his arm. "Of course, I'd share out with you fellows like a shot if you want any, but I got only enough for myself, as a matter of fact. In fact, I didn't get quite enough, because the funds wouldn't run to it."

Figgins looked at the bulky parcel.

"You must have a good bit there!" he remarked.

"No," said Fatty Wynn innocently. "Only three pork pies, some chocolate eclairs, a beefsteak pudding, half a dozen hard-boiled eggs, a currant cake, half a dozen dough-nuts, and a pound of mixed biscuits, and some nuts."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll be famished before we get to Eastwood, if that's all you've got," said Monty Lowther sympathetically.

"Yes, I hope you chaps have some sandwiches," said Fatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They reached the station and boarded the local train for Wayland. At Wayland Junction they had to change, and as there was ten minutes to wait, Fatty Wynn paid a visit to the buffet.

The juniors entered the train, securing a carriage to themselves—which was pretty well crowded by them—and Figgins and Kerr looked anxiously for Fatty.

"The ass!" Figgins exclaimed. "He'll lose the train!"

"Yell for him!"

"Fatty, you ass!"

"Coo-ee!" roared Kangaroo.

"This way, Fatty!"

"Buck up!"

"On the ball!"

And still Fatty Wynn did not appear. He was evidently too deeply and seriously occupied at the buffet to hear or heed the calling.

Figgins jumped out of the train and beckoned to Kerr.

"We shall have to fetch him!" he exclaimed. "Come on! Mind you don't let them start without us, Tom Merry!"

"I'll do my best. Buck up!"

Figgins and Kerr rushed off to the buffet. It was a considerable distance down the platform, and the porters were slamming the doors of the train as they reached it.

They rushed in.

Fatty Wynn was standing at the counter. He had just paid a half-crown, and there was a penny change; and Fatty Wynn was debating in his mind what he would have for that penny. It never occurred to him to put the penny in his pocket.

"Come on!" roared Figgins.

Fatty Wynn started.

"Eh?"

"Train's starting!" roared Figgins.

"I—— Oh! Ow! Leggo!"

Kerr and Figgins seized him by the arms. They rushed him violently out of the refreshment-room, at a speed that took his breath away. Fatty Wynn, at the last moment, had snatched up a bun, deciding upon that, but in doing so he had let fall his parcel of provisions, which rolled upon the floor. Figgins and Kerr whisked

him out of the buffet too quickly for him to recover it.

Fatty struggled as they whirled him along.

"Hold on——"

"Ass! Buck up!"

"But my grub——"

"Shove him along!"

"Buck up!" roared Tom Merry, from the open carriage door. "Buck up! Put it on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Fatty Wynn, still breathlessly resisting, was whirled on by his chums towards the train. A porter ran along shouting:

"Stand back there! Stand back!"

"Quick!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

Figgins gasped as he whirled Fatty Wynn to the carriage door. Fatty was grasped from within, and shoved from without, and went headlong into the carriage.

Figgins and Kerr bundled in after him, just as the train began to move.

The guard slammed the door.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "That was a narrow squeak!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You asses!" roared Fatty Wynn. "You chumps! You frabjous cuckoos!"

"Eh?"

"You ass! You've left the parcel behind!"

"The what?"

"The parcel of grub! My grub! Now I haven't any!"

The juniors looked at the wildly-excited Fatty, and burst into a roar of laughter. The fat Fourth-Former sat on the floor of the carriage, staring at them in withering indignation.

CHAPTER 12.

D'Arcy Arrives with a Friend or Two!

TOM MERRY & CO. laughed, and laughed again.

They could not help it.

Fatty Wynn picked himself up, with a grunt.

"You utter asses!" he said. "What the dickens am I to do for grub on the journey now? I hope you've brought a decent lot of sandwiches, that's all. I shall want them."

The train was whirling out of the old town of Wayland, gathering speed as it went. The laughter of the juniors mingled with the rolling and whirling of the express.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous asses! I shall be awfully hungry!"

"Here you are, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, opening one of his bags. "Pway leave me a couple—two will be enough for me. We shall have a good early suppah at Eastwood."

"Right-ho!"

Fatty Wynn started on the sandwiches. Ten minutes later his voice was heard again.

"Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"I suppose a couple of Figgy's sandwiches will do for you instead of your own."

"Certainly."

"That's lucky, as I've finished the lot. I forgot!"

"Gweat Scott! Nevah mind, Wynn, you won't be hungwy again before we get to Eastwood, that's one comfort."

But Arthur Augustus was wrong. Fatty Wynn was ready for a meal by the time the juniors were ready to sample the provisions they had brought. They shared out with him, of course, and Fatty took the lion's share.

"What time do we get into Eastwood?" he asked.

"Well, there will be a conveyance at the station to meet us," said D'Arcy. "We shall get in pwetty early in the evening."

Through the dusk of the summer evening the train rushed on. It was dark when they stopped at last, and changed for the local line which took them to Easthorpe, the station for Eastwood. Fatty Wynn made a rush for the buffet the moment he was out of the train, but Figgins and Kerr fastened upon him at once.

"Leggo!" growled Fatty. "There's three minutes to wait, and——"

"And you're going to wait with us!" grinned Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here——"

"You can talk till you're black in the face, my son!" chuckled Figgins. "But you're not going to leave us for the tenth part of a tick."

"But——"

"This way!"

And Fatty Wynn was bundled into the local train, and it started. He cast a pathetic glance round the carriage.

"Any of you got a slab of toffee, or anything?" he asked.

Monty Lowther felt in his pocket.

"Milk chocolate do?" he asked.

"Yes—yes! Hand it over!"

Monty Lowther handed over a cake of milk chocolate. Fatty Wynn seized it, and jammed it straight into his mouth.

The Falstaff of St. Jim's grinned; he could afford to grin so long as the milk chocolate lasted. But it was gone in a minute or two.

Then Fatty Wynn counted the minutes. The train stopped at last. The crowd of juniors bundled out, and found a conveyance waiting for them. The coachman stared at the crowd that bundled out of the station laden with bags. The trap was large enough to hold four with comfort, or six at a pinch. There were eleven.

He touched his hat to D'Arcy.

"His lordship said—that——"

"Bai Jove, I weally ought to have wiahed to the governah," said D'Arcy. "He was expectin' me with a fwiend or two, of course. That twap won't hold us. Get another twap at the inn, Joyce, and buck up, deah boy!"

"Yes, Master Augustus!"

"Let us start first in this one," murmured Fatty Wynn; but Figgins stamped on his foot, and they waited for the others.

The second trap was soon forthcoming, and the two vehicles rolled off in the darkness of the scented country lanes towards the great house of Eastwood.

"Here we are, Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins encouragingly, as they rolled in at the lodge gates. "Cheer up!"

And Fatty Wynn brightened as the lights of Eastwood House burst upon his sight. He thought of the supper waiting within those hospitable walls, and smiled.

The roll of wheels was evidently heard in the house, for the great door was opened, and a handsome old gentleman with a white moustache appeared in the wide, lighted hall to welcome the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! It's the governah!"

The juniors alighted.

Lord Eastwood was wearing a welcoming smile. It slowly changed to a look of amazement as the crowd of juniors came into view.

"Dear me!" murmured his lordship.

"How are you, patah?" said D'Arcy affectionately. "I've awwived all wight, you see, and I've bwought a fwiend or two!"

His lordship recovered in a moment.

"I see you have, Arthur," he replied. "I am glad to see you—and your friend or two. Please come in, my boys—all friends of my son are welcome here, and I am heartily glad to see you all!"

And Lord Eastwood shook hands cordially with Tom Merry & Co.

"Your pater's a brick," said Tom Merry, as they went in to supper; to which remark the swell of St. Jim's replied cheerfully: "Yaas, wathah!"

A few minutes more, and Fatty Wynn was happy. He smiled sweetly over the well-spread board, and did not leave off eating till it was time to go to bed; and then Figgins and Kerr had to use almost force to detach him from the supper table.

"Well," said Tom Merry, as he kicked off his boots that night. "This is ripping. You're a brick, Gussy, and your governor's a brick, and I rather think we're going to have a jolly cricket week!"

And Tom Merry was right.

CHAPTER 13.

Well Bowled, Lovell!

THE Eastwood House party were a very cheery crowd. Lord Conway's cricket team was composed of young amateurs of some note in the world of cricket, together with a young professional named Lovell. Lovell had been engaged by Lord Eastwood to give strength to the house team for the cricket week. He was a first-class bowler who had done execution among county bats on the historic ground at Lord's. Moreover, the young professional had a very pleasant manner, and he quickly won the favour of the St. Jim's juniors by cheerfully putting them up to many useful cricket wrinkles.

On the first morning some of the cricketers were practising at the nets, and Lovell gave a taste of his quality. He was bowling to Lord Conway, and in a couple of minutes he had twice knocked the batsman's wicket flying. The St. Jim's fellows

looked on in admiration, and Lord Conway laughed as his wicket fell the second time.

"Jolly good, Lovell!" he called out.

"Glad you are satisfied, sir."

"Bai Jove, he's a wonderful bowlah, and an awf'ly decent chap," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I could not stand up to his bowlin' vewy long myself."

"You couldn't," agreed Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Here, take the bat, Berkeley!" exclaimed Lord Conway, as a tall, handsome cricketer came down from the house. "Let's see how you can stand up to Lovell's bowling."

Berkeley took the bat with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

He was a handsome man, but there was a look about his face that would not have prepossessed a close observer in his favour.

The said close observer would have concluded that Cecil Berkeley was an arrogant man, given to thinking a great deal of himself, and to thinking too little of others, especially if they happened to be below him in social station.

He glanced at the professional bowler with a glance that Lovell appeared not to notice, though Tom Merry saw it, and knitted his brows.

To Berkeley, a professional bowler evidently was of about as much account as a cricket bat or a set of stumps.

He laughed lazily.

"I don't think Lovell will take my wicket easily," he remarked.

"I don't know; he's a wonder."

"Hang it all, Conway, don't tell me you let a professional bowler knock out the best amateur bat in the team."

"Well, Lovell has knocked me out twice."

"Then it's time somebody stood up for the amateurs," said Berkeley. "Let him bowl."

Lord Conway frowned a little.

Berkeley's manner, without having anything in it that could actually be complained of, was disdainful towards the professional cricketer, which was all the more unpleasant because Lovell, being paid for his services at Eastwood House, was not in a position to resent it.

"That chap Berkeley is wathah a boundah," Arthur Augustus confided to his chums. "He doesn't tweat Lovell decently. As a mattah of fact, Lovell can play his head off at cwicket."

"It's caddish to take the upper hand of a man who can't hit back," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Just what I was thinking," Figgins remarked.

"Who's Berkeley, anyway?" asked Kerr.

"He belongs to an awf'ly old family," said Arthur Augustus. "All wight on that score."

"Traces his descent a long way back, eh?" said Kangaroo. "I wonder if his goes further back than mine."

"That depends, deah boy. How far does yours go?"

"As far as Adam and Eve," said the Cornstalk seriously. "Further back than that, it's lost in antiquity."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't wot, deah boy."

"I'm not rotting," said Kangaroo. "If Berkeley can trot out a longer pedigree than that, I'll give him best, but it's my belief he can't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's an amateur cwicketah," said Arthur Augustus, changing the subject. "He plays for his county, you know."

"Oh, I know," said Kerr. "One of those giddy amateurs, I suppose, who picks up twice as much in expenses as a professional picks up in wages."

"Well, pewwaps so. I believe he's a wathah expensive chap," said D'Arcy. "I can't say I like him myself much; but he's a good bat."

Tom Merry was silent.

He knew that in giving a cricket week, Lord Eastwood would be guided rather by the cricket form of the young men among his guests than by any other consideration. As a cricketer, Berkeley was doubtless all right.

But his manner in speaking to Lovell was very different from Lord Conway's, and it was not what Tom Merry would have called decent.

The juniors watched the bowling with great interest.

There was so much swagger about Cecil Berkeley as he went to the wicket that they were all prepared to be pleased if his wicket went down.

And down it did go.

The first ball from Lovell knocked it to

pieces, and Berkeley started and stared at his reclining stumps in angry astonishment. That he was angry could hardly be disguised—in fact, he took little trouble to disguise it.

D'Arcy clapped his hand.

"Well bowled!"

"Yes, well bowled, indeed," said Lord Conway. "Had you there, Berkeley."

Berkeley bit his lip.

"It was a fluke," he said.

"Let him try again," said Lord Conway with a grin.

Lovell took the ball that was tossed back to him. His lips were set in a tight line, from which Tom Merry gathered that he was inwardly, if not outwardly, ruffled by the manner of the swaggering amateur, and meant to give Berkeley the hottest bowling he was capable of.

Berkeley stood well on the defensive.

But he was no good against that ball.

It broke in at an impossible angle—or so the batsman deemed it—and swept his middle-stump out of the ground.

Berkeley uttered an oath.

"I'm out of form to-day!" he exclaimed angrily, and he threw the bat on the crease and walked away towards the house.

Lovell smiled grimly.

Lord Conway's brows came together. He was surprised that a fellow should lose his temper so easily, and he was annoyed at such an exhibition before the juniors.

He picked up the bat.

"Thanks, Lovell!" he said. "You're in wonderful form. I only hope the Gipsies' wickets will fall as easily."

The juniors of St. Jim's strolled away. Tom Merry chuckled.

CHAPTER 14.

A Case of Personal Dignity!

IT was after tea the next day that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been looking thoughtful for some time, rose suddenly and carefully arranged his monocle in his eye.

"You fellows coming out?" he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I'm not!" said Manners. "I've got some photographs to develop."

"Wats!" said D'Arcy.

Manners glared at him.

"I've been taking photographs for two days," he said. "I've got a lot of ripping pictures. I've got that chap Lovell at the wicket, just making a late cut that was a perfect daisy, and I believe it's come out all right. Then I've got him bowling. I took a series of snaps in the Woodford match when he did the hat trick. Then I've got Mr. Berkeley——"

And Manners laughed.

"What's the joke, deah boy?"

"Oh, I snapped Berkeley muffing a catch, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young scamp!" said Lord Conway, who happened to overhear the remark. "You may as well leave that negative undeveloped till you're back at school."

Manners grinned.

"So I will," he said.

"Pewwaps you won't mind leavin' the development ovah a bit, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I particulahly want all you fellows to come out."

"What's on?"

"I will explain."

"Oh, all right! Follow the man from Cook's!" said Monty Lowther.

And the juniors of St. Jim's followed D'Arcy out.

They were all looking and feeling very cheerful, with perhaps the exception of Herries, who had a thoughtful cloud upon his brow. Jack Blake slapped his chum on the shoulder.

"Penny for your thoughts, old man!" he remarked.

Herries started a little.

"Oh, I was just thinking!"

"Anything wrong?"

"I hope not."

Blake stared at him.

"You hope not. What do you mean?"

"I was thinking of Towser."

"Oh, Towser!"

"Yes," said Herries, a little nettled; "Towser. You know, I trust Taggles to feed him when I'm away from the school, and once when I was away Taggles gave him the wrong kind of biscuits."

Blake grinned.

"Awful!" he said.

"No; it wasn't exactly awful," said Herries seriously. "But it was rotten, you know. I'm rather particular what Towser eats. You know, he bit Taggles one day, and I was awfully anxious about him."

"Taggles wasn't hurt much?"

"Taggles! Who's talking about Taggles? I was anxious about Towser. I didn't know whether he mightn't have been poisoned or something; you never know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"I can't see anything to cackle at. If you had a splendid bulldog like Towser you'd feel anxious about him when you were away. It was awfully kind of D'Arcy to ask us down here for the cricket week, but, really, I felt a bit doubtful about leaving Towser. But you fellows were so set against his coming here."

"I should rather say so!"

"What-ho!" chimed in Digby, with great feeling.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Towsah hasn't the slightest wespect for a fellow's twousahs, Hewwies, and you must acknowledge that yourself."

"Well, I can't help thinking about him a bit," said Herries. "I think I'll stroll down to Easthorpe presently and send Taggles a wire, and warn him to be careful to keep to the biscuits I told him about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors had reached the cricket ground. A number of Lord Eastwood's guests were there, going to practice. The days were very long and light, and there were hours of daylight yet, and Lord Conway's team was meeting a dangerous side on the following day. The Gipsies were an amateur side of great strength, and it was a little risky for a country-house team to meet them at all, but Lord Conway had confidence in his side, more especially as it had been strengthened by the engagement of the professional bowler Lovell.

The Gipsies—who, needless to say, were not gipsies, that simply being the name of the club—had been famed for their victories that season, and they fully expected to wipe the Eastwood side off the ground.

But Lord Conway, when he watched the performances of Lovell, chuckled to himself at the thought of a surprise in store for the visitors.

"The team are going to practise now, Gussy," Tom Merry remarked. "We'd better keep off the grass."

"Oh, there's room for us at our end of the ground!" said Blake. "We shan't interfere with a match on this side."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'd rather watch the players," said Tom Merry. "There's a jolly lot to be learned by watching that chap Lovell."

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, who, as the junior champion bowler of St. Jim's, was supposed to know something about it. "I believe I pick up a new wrinkle every time I see him deliver the ball."

"And his batting's good, too," Figgins remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then let's watch instead of playing," said Blake.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"We're going to play them," he said.

"Eh?"

"We're going to play the house team."

"Dreaming, old chap?"

"I am not dweamin', deah boy," said D'Arcy calmly. "We're goin' to play the house team. There are eleven of us——"

"My dear ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"But you are one, you know," said Kangaroo. "Why, there are Oxford Blues in Lord Conways team."

"All the bettah!"

"And they won't play us."

"Yaas, they will. This is how the mattah stands, deah boy; Mr. Berkeley——"

"Oh, Berkeley!"

"Yaas, Berkeley, this aftahnoon, had the awful cheek to speak diswespectfully of our cwicket."

"Go hon!"

"My opinion is that he knew perfectly well that I was there and heard what he said, and he said it on purpose," said D'Arcy. "If he wasn't my governah's guest I should chawactewise him as an impertinent wottah."

"Hear, hear!"

"Of course, as he's my governah's guest, undah the family woof, I cannot chawactewise him as anythin' of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I think so, all the same."

"Good!"

"Berkeley made a most contemptuous wemark about kids' cwicket," went on D'Arcy, warming to the subject. "I immediately took him on."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Good old Gussy! Did you leave a whole bone in him?"

"I do not mean to say that I thwashed him, Tom Mewwy. It would be imposs. for me to tweat a guest of my governah with diswespect."

"Hear, hear!"

"But I took him on, and challenged him to meet us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I said that a junior side at Jim's could meet any side and give a good account of itself; and that after his wemarks our personal dig. wequired that we should meet them!"

"Good old Gus!" said Figgins. "But we shouldn't have a look-in against a side like this. Lovell would take the wickets six to an over."

"That's where I had him!" said D'Arcy, with a smile of great wisdom. "I said we would meet any amateur side. That bars Lovell—and, as a matter of fact, Lovell is the only weally good bowlah they've got."

"Good old Gussy!"

"He laughed—yaas, laughed at my wemarks!" said D'Arcy warmly. "He said that the side would wipe us all off the gwound in a quartah of an hour."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "We'd give them a tussle."

"Yaas, wathah! And we're goin' to give them a chance to make good the swank. If they don't wipe us out in a quartah of an hour, Berkeley will have to sing smallah."

"But they won't play us."

"Yaas, they will. I'm going to speak to Conway."

And Arthur Augustus strode away towards his elder brother, who had just come down from the house with his father.

Lord Eastwood took a great interest in the cricket, having been a great cricketer himself in earlier days, and he still spent a considerable amount of time in the enclosure at Lord's. Lord Eastwood had arranged the cricket week for the entertainment of his guests; but, as a matter of fact, he enjoyed it himself as keenly as anyone.

Tom Merry & Co. grinned as they watched Arthur Augustus.

"They won't meet a junior team," said Kerr—"it stands to reason."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Well, they're out for practising, and we should be a good scratch side to practise on," he remarked. "Lord Conway may look at it in that light."

"Well, yes; but——"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't been any more pleased than Gussy has by the side some of these cricketers put on," said Tom Merry seriously. "I know we're a junior side, and they're big players; but I don't like being patronised."

"Hear, hear!"

"And—as Gussy isn't present—I must say that I don't like that chap Berkeley, and I privately consider him a swanking cad!"

"You've got him right," said Kangaroo. "That's just what he is! Lovell always treats him with respect, and yet he's always going out of his way to show by his manner that he looks on Lovell as a chap paid to be here. I've noticed that."

"Yes, I was thinking of that. Lovell's a professional, but he's jolly well the better gentleman of the two."

"Yes, rather!"

"I hope they'll play us," said Tom Merry. "There's plenty of daylight left for as long as the match is likely to last, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy's pitching it to his governor."

And the group of juniors watched Gussy with great interest. The cricketers were standing about, and they, too, looked towards the swell of St. Jim's. They were ready for the practice to begin, and Arthur Augustus was detaining their skipper.

CHAPTER 15.

D'Arcy Puts it Plainly!

"I WANT to speak to you, Conway," said Arthur Augustus seriously.

Lord Conway smiled.

"Buck up, then, Gussy; the fellows want me."

"I won't detain you long, and it's vewy important," said D'Arcy. "You are goin' to pwactise now?"

"Yes."

"Vewy well! It would be a good ideah for you to take your pwactice by playin' us."

"Eh?"

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"My dear Arthur," he said, "you would not ask the team to play a junior side from school?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But——"

"We would give them all the pwactice they want," explained D'Arcy.

Lord Conway grinned.

"Well, there's something in that!" he said. "It would give the side some combined practice, father."

"Yes, but——"

"Berkeley has expwessed the opinion that you could wipe us off the field in a quartah of an hour," said D'Arcy. "I want to see it done."

"But——"

"If you fail to do so, Berkeley must admit that he swanked."

"My dear Gussy——"

"Leavin' out pwofessionals, too—Berkeley is stwong on amateurs playin', and you can put anothah amateur in instead of Lovell. We don't undahtake to play him."

"But——"

"You cannot wefuse, Conway. Aftah what Berkeley has said, it would be wotten bad form not to give St. Jim's a chance to show what they could do."

Conway laughed again.

"Well, if you were a senior side," he said—"if you were a senior side, and had Sixth Form cricketers—fellow like Kildare and Darrell at St. Jim's. But——"

"We can put up a good game, deah boy."

"But——"

"I wefuse to be wefused!" said D'Arcy firmly. "If you wefuse to meet us, aftah what Berkeley has said, I shall wegard you as a lot of swankahs, and shall look upon you all with pwofound contempt."

Lord Conway gave his father a comical look.

"Shall I speak to the fellows, dad?" he asked.

"Yes," said Lord Eastwood, laughing softly. "It will be practice—and amusing."

"Well, I'll see, Gus."

"Vewy good, Conway!" said D'Arcy, in a stately way.

Lord Conway strolled off towards the cricketers. His father went to one of the seats, where there were a good many spectators for the practice. Most of the guests at Eastwood House, if not all, were greatly interested in cricket.

Arthur Augustus waited for Conway to rejoin him. He saw Conway talking to the cricketers, and most of them were laughing—a fact that made the swell of St. Jim's look more stately than ever.

Conway came back in a few minutes.

"The fellows are agreeable," he said.

"Vewy good!"

"We'll play you, leaving Lovell out of the side."

"That's wight!"

"Then come on!"

"Excuse me a moment. I must explain to Lovell. I should not like him to fancy that he was bein' left out fwom any sort of diswegard, you know."

Lord Conway smiled as D'Arcy walked over towards Lovell.

The young professional was standing by himself, not joining in the talk and laughter of the cricketers. He was the only professional in the side, and, of course, very much alone. Although most of Lord Eastwood's guests were civil enough to him, there was, of course, no bridging the gulf between them. But only Cecil Berkeley ever made it apparent by his manner that he looked upon the professional bowler as a paid employee.

"We're playin' Conway's side, Lovell, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

Lovell smiled.

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah! And they're goin' to give you a west. I stipulated that you should be left out of the team, because I know you're too good for us. I thought I would explain, Lovell, deah boy!"

"Thank you!" said Lovell quietly.

And D'Arcy, with a friendly nod, returned to his chums. They greeted him with a grin, and a general monosyllabic inquiry:

"Well?"

"It's all wight," said D'Arcy. "They're playin' us."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "We'll give them a run for their money, anyway."

"You fellows can bat first!" called out Lord Conway.

Tom Merry smiled grimly. He knew he was given the batting so that the senior side would not have to pile up a crowd of useless runs. Conway intended his men to take one run in excess of those scored by the juniors.

But Tom Merry was not to be treated in this off-hand way. The house team had chosen to play St. Jim's juniors, and Tom Merry meant that his eleven should be treated with proper respect.

"Thanks!" he said. "But we'll stick to the rules, if you don't mind. We'll toss you for choice of innings."

Lord Conway grinned at his companions.

"Oh, very well!" he said.

And they tossed, and it fell to Tom Merry to choose.

"You chaps can go in first," he said.

Lord Conway nodded.

"What the dickens are you sendin' them in first for, Tom Mewwy?" asked D'Arcy.

"I know what I'm about," said Tom

cheerfully. "Fatty Wynn is the chap who's going to cover us with glory. They think we're no good, and while they're swanking Fatty is going to take their wickets. See? When we have to stand up against their bowling, I don't suppose we shall last long; but one thing's jolly certain, we won't give them a chance to declare."

"Good!" said Figgins.

"We depend on you, Fatty."

Fatty Wynn wetted the palms of his hands, and rubbed them.

"I'll do my best," he said.

"Mind you do! If you don't do hat tricks galore we'll scrag you," said Kangaroo.

"I'm feeling in awfully good form," said Fatty Wynn.

And Tom Merry brightened. He knew what the Welsh junior could do when he was in form, and, unequal as the match was, he felt that there was a surprise in store for the Eastwood House team.

CHAPTER 16.

Something Like a Surprise!

LORD CONWAY looked at the House team with a comical expression. Most of them were in high good-humour, taking the whole matter as a joke. Berkeley was inclined to be annoyed, as if not considering the affair quite consistent with his dignity.

"We're to bat first," said Conway.

"Rot!" said Berkeley. "What are you playing them for?"

"Well, that's cool, as it was a remark of yours to my young brother that's the cause of it, Berkeley," said Conway.

"It's ridiculous!"

"Oh, I don't see that!" observed Sir Frank Monson, a handsome young cricketer, who was one of the best bats in the House team. "It will be practice."

"They can't stand up to us for a minute," growled Berkeley. "We shall knock up runs, and then dismiss them for nothing, and have our trouble for nothing. Confound it if I feel like knocking up runs against a baby team!"

"Stuff!" said Raby, who was an old St. Jim's fellow, and had been a great cricketer in the Fifth and Sixth in his time. "The old school always turns out good stuff, and kids as they are, they'll play like anything but babies. I promise you."

"That's right!" said Conway. "I know they put up a good game for a junior side."

Berkeley sniffed.

"Let Berkeley open the innings," suggested Sir Frank Monson. "He's got us in for this, and it's only fair that he should get the runs we want."

"Good!"

"Quite right!"

"Berkeley begins!"

It was a chorus from the House team.

"Stuff!" said Berkeley.

"You can't refuse," said Raby. "You've let us in for this match, and, between ourselves, it wasn't a nice thing you said to young Gussy."

"We only want a dozen runs," said Lord Conway pacifically; "then we'll declare, and let them bat. They won't knock up a dozen against us."

"Hardly!"

"Oh, I'll get them if you like!" said Berkeley ungraciously.

"Go it!"

And Berkeley went out with Pelham to open the innings, Pelham taking the bowler's end.

Tom Merry had already taken his men into the field, and disposed them, and Fatty Wynn was given the ball, with dire threats as to what would happen to him if he failed his side in this emergency. It wasn't often that the juniors of St. Jim's faced a team of grown-up men—in fact, never. The senior eleven at St. Jim's would not have expected victory in such a tussle. Tom Merry & Co. didn't expect it. But they meant to give a good account of themselves, and to steal as many wickets as possible before the House party woke up to the fact that they needed to be careful.

Fatty Wynn said he would do his best, and grinned at the dire threats. They weren't needed to make the sturdy Welsh junior stand up for his side.

Tom Merry grinned as he saw that Berkeley was taking the first over. The swaggering batsman of the House team imagined that he had no difficulties whatever ahead of him. He was all swank. And Tom Merry felt that if Berkeley could be dismissed for a duck's-egg, he would not have lived in vain.

Berkeley took his place with his usual manner, suggestive of being monarch of all he surveyed, and quite incapable of being moved by a mere human bowler. As he

was a man of nearly thirty, and the bowler in question was only half his age, there should have been some grounds for his confidence in this case. But it was said of old that pride goeth before a fall.

Fatty Wynn took Berkeley's measure. He had sent down several trials to the wicket-keeper, and he felt that his hand and eye were in their finest trim. Fatty Wynn would have taken wickets galore against a junior side this afternoon. He hoped that his bowling would be effective even against batsmen who had batted at Lord's and the Oval. But that remained to be seen.

The fat Fourth-Former gripped the ball, and walked back from the wicket to get his run. Then he came loping forward, and turned himself into a catherine-wheel.

The ball flew from his hand like a pip from an orange.

Berkeley swiped at the place where he supposed it to be. He certainly was careless, but perhaps if he had been careful the result would have been the same, for the ball was a very tricky one. Berkeley meant to show the juniors that they were taking on an impossible contract by swiping the ball away for a boundary.

But it didn't work out exactly like that.

The willow swept empty space with a mighty sweep, and then a soft click astounded the ears of the batsman.

He looked at his wicket.

The bails were on the ground; the leg-stump was reclining at an intoxicated-looking angle. From the group of fellows waiting their turns to bat came an irresistible chuckle. They couldn't help it.

After Berkeley's manner, it was too comic to see him dismissed at the first ball of the first over.

Berkeley gazed at his wrecked wicket. His face flushed with rage as he heard the chuckle of his fellow-batsmen.

"My hat!" ejaculated Sir Frank. "This is too good!"

"Comic!" said Raby. "I told you the old school turned out good cricketers."

"You did."

"How's that?" shouted Tom Merry.

And a white-whiskered Indian colonel who was umpiring at the batsman's end chuckled grimly, and said "Out!"

"Out!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from short-slip. "Fatty Wynn, I wegard you as havin' nobly sustained the cwedit of the old school."

And Fatty Wynn grinned cheerfully.

Berkeley carried out his bat. There was nothing else for him to do. But his face was very dark; he could not conceal his anger and chagrin. His friends looked at him with comical expressions, but did not speak to him as he came off. Berkeley was not in a mood to be chipped just then.

"Next man in!" said Lord Conway, with a droll look at Sir Frank Monson.

Sir Frank laughed, and went down to the wickets.

The young baronet was not likely to be dismissed so easily as Berkeley. He put on much less side, but he was a surer bat. Fatty Wynn knew from the look of him that he would take some moving. But there were clever fieldsmen as well as a good bowler in the St. Jim's side.

Fatty Wynn sent down the ball, and Sir Frank smiled and cut it away. He cut it into slip, and there was a sudden spring into the air of an elegant form; an eyeglass dangled out to the end of its cord, but the ball was in the hand of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And then there was a roar.

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

D'Arcy held up the ball with his left hand, and adjusted his monocle with his right. He smiled serenely at his comrades' yell of delight.

"Oh, ripping, Gussy! Ripping!"

"Gorgeous!"

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Sir Frank grinned rather ruefully as he made his way back.

"They're a set of tough young rascals," he said. "You'd better look out, Raby."

Raby grinned, and took his place at the wicket.

He did look out, and the juniors were not given many more chances. Raby and Pelham began to make the running now.

Seven runs were taken for the rest of the over, and when the field crossed Raby still had the bowling. Then Tom Merry bowled, and the over added a single to the score.

"Get him out, Fatty, there's a good porpoise," said Tom, tossing the ball to the Welsh junior.

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"I'll try!" he said.

And he did try, with surprising results to Raby. The middle stump went out of

the ground, and reposed on the grass, and Raby whistled.

"Out, by Jove!"

And he walked away.

Three down for 8 runs. Lord Conway burst into a laugh.

"We shall never get over this," he said. "Those cheeky youngsters will be cackling over it for ever and ever."

"Go in and make up the dozen, Conway."

"I suppose I'd better."

Lord Conway went to the wicket. He added two 2's to the score, and then the figure stood at 12.

Then Conway declared.

The House innings closed for 12 runs, and Tom Merry's side had to bat. But Tom Merry & Co. meant to make the seniors repent their confidence.

"They've declared!" Tom Merry remarked. "We'll make them bat a second time, anyway. We must get 13 runs at least."

And the juniors vowed that they would.

CHAPTER 17.

St. Jim's on Their Mettle!

TOM MERRY opened the innings with Figgins. They were two of the best hitters in the junior side, though Jack Blake made a good third. They went to the wickets with the determination to stand up for St. Jim's, and do the best that in them lay. It would be no small triumph for a schoolboy side to compel the House eleven to bat a second time, and thus virtually to admit that they had been too cocksure in declaring their innings closed for a dozen runs.

The cricketers went out to field, most of them grinning. Berkeley was still grim, but Sir Frank and Raby had taken their defeat quite good-humouredly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy patted Fatty Wynn on the back as they stood looking on.

"It was jolly good, Wynn!" he remarked. "You hadn't a chance to show all you could do as they declared so soon, but in the next innings——"

"And there will be a next innings," said Kangaroo. "They mean to dismiss us for about one or two, and make us follow our innings with another one or two. But they'll find St. Jim's bats a little tougher than that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You bowled remarkably well, Wynn," said Lord Eastwood. "I have never seen a lad bowl better."

And Fatty Wynn coloured with pleasure.

Raby went on to bowl. He bowled to Tom Merry's wicket. Tom was well on his guard. He stopped three balls of the over with success, and then he hit out. It was a big swipe, such as had often called forth cheers on the cricket ground at St. Jim's. Tom Merry waved Figgins back as he made a motion to run.

"Stay where you are, Figgy."

And Figgins grinned.

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry knew, without looking, that it was a boundary. And so it was. Four for St. Jim's! They had opened well.

The over finished, and then Pelham bowled to Figgins. Figgins knocked up two runs, and was then clean bowled by Pelham. He looked a little grim as he carried out his bat, but Tom Merry gave him an encouraging grin in passing.

"It's all right, Figgy."

"Out for 2!" growled Figgins.

"If everybody does as well, we're all serene."

"Well, that's so, too."

Kangaroo came in.

Kangaroo lived through the rest of the over, and added one, and had the bowler from the other end. Monson took the ball.

Kangaroo put in some hitting that would have done credit to a senior team, if not to a county side. A boundary was followed by two 2's, and St. Jim's roared.

The House cricketers looked grim.

With the junior score at 15, it was evident that the seniors would have to bat again. They had expected to dismiss Tom Merry & Co. for 2 or 3. Then the juniors would have followed on, and been dismissed again for 2 or 3 more. That was the programme, but it hadn't worked out like that.

The juniors were naturally jubilant.

They were putting up a better show than they had expected.

The waiting batsmen watched eagerly as the batting went on. Tom Merry and the Cornstalk were standing up wonderfully to the bowling.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Figgins, as Tom Merry cut the ball away, and the batsmen ran, and ran again. "Ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll give 'em a tussle!" said Monty

"If Lovell drops out of the match the Gipsies will win," said Berkeley, "and your money will be safe." "But how are you going to prevent Lovell from playing?" asked the bookmaker. "That's my business," answered Berkeley. Wally D'Arcy, crouching unseen behind the chair, heard every word. (See Chapter 25).

Lowther, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I say, Figgy——"

Lowther paused.

Figgins had suddenly left his side, and was bolting away at top speed, as if in pursuit of a ball upon the fielding of which a county match depended.

"What the dickens——"

"Bai Jove!"

"What the——"

"It's Cousin Ethel!"

A graceful girlish figure was coming towards the cricket-ground. It was Ethel Cleveland, D'Arcy's cousin. Figgins had sighted her first. It was extraordinary what a keenness of vision Figgins had when there was the slightest chance of seeing Cousin Ethel. He had reached her side before the other juniors knew that she was there.

"Oh, Miss Ethel!" he exclaimed breathlessly, as he dragged off his cricket cap.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

She shook hands with Figgins. Her little slim hand entirely disappeared within Figgins' big brown one, and Figgins touched it very gently, as if afraid of hurting it.

"So jolly glad to see you," said Figgins, bubbling over with delight. "Gussy said you would be here for the cricket week, you know."

"Yes, I've just arrived," said Ethel brightly. "I heard there was a match on, so I came out at once."

"We're playing the House team," said Figgins, as they walked down to the field. "Of course, it's an awful cheek on our part. But we're showing them that even juniors can stand up for a bit."

"I am sure of that."

"Jollay glad to see you, Ethel, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said Arthur Augustus. "There's a wathah good match on."

"Hallo, there goes Tom Merry's wicket!" exclaimed Digby.

But Figgins did not even look. He was looking after Cousin Ethel, and finding her a comfortable seat beside Lord Eastwood, her uncle.

Tom Merry carried out his bat. The score stood at 22.

Lord Conway laughed awkwardly.

"We must stop this," he remarked. "It's absurd. Go and get the Cornstalk out, Berkeley."

"Oh, good!"

Berkeley took the ball and went on. Lovell, the professional, stood looking on. Lovell had an eye to a batsman's form, and he knew by Harry Noble's look that he would not be easily disposed of by a bowler of Berkeley's calibre.

Berkeley sent down the ball, and Kangaroo cut it away over the boundary. He tried again, and 3 resulted.

Lovell smiled softly.

But the smile died away from his face as he looked at Kangaroo with more attention. He had not particularly noticed the Australian junior before, in the crowd of boys, with whom the professional bowler came naturally little in contact.

Now, as he watched the Cornstalk, he seemed to find something strangely interesting in his face, and he no longer smiled.

Kangaroo was out at last, not to Berkeley's bowling. Raby took his wicket, and the young Colonial came out, leaving the score at 34.

Then the cricketers set to work in deadly earnest, and wickets fell faster.

Kangaroo was standing looking on, when Lovell joined him. The Cornstalk glanced up at the handsome, sturdy professional bowler.

"Excuse me," said Lovell quietly, "you are from Australia?"

Kangaroo nodded.

"What-ho!" he said. "I hail from Victoria."

He looked at Lovell keenly.

"You have been in Australia," he said.

Lovell nodded.

"I thought I'd seen you there," said Kangaroo eagerly. "Weren't you a Cornstalk? I'll stake anything I've seen you playing at Melbourne."

"I am not an Australian."

"No. They tell me you're a Surrey man," Kangaroo remarked.

"I was born in Surrey."

"But you've been over the water?"

"Yes."

"Played there?"

"I've played cricket everywhere I've been," said Lovell, with a smile.

Kangaroo nodded. Lovell's manner was frank, but he could not help seeing that the bowler had not replied to his question. Lovell had not stated whether he had played as a professional cricketer in Australia.

"I used to go down to the matches a lot at Melbourne," said Kangaroo, "especially when the English teams were visiting

us. I saw a lot of the big matches. There was a professional in one of the home teams who was wonderfully like you, and had just your style of delivery. It wasn't a common style."

"No?"

"He used to take the wickets in fine style, too—just as you do."

"Thank you!" said Lovell, laughing.

"Hallo, there goes Lowther's wicket!" said Kangaroo, glancing at the field for a moment. Then he turned to Lovell again. "I suppose you couldn't be the same chap, for if I remember, his name wasn't Lovell."

"Do you remember his name?"

Kangaroo scratched his head.

"I don't know—yes—it was—a name something like yours in sound—Lovell—no, it was Luttrell. That's it—Luttrell."

"That settles it, doesn't it?" said Lovell, with a curious smile.

And he turned away. Kangaroo looked back into the field. Berkeley was fielding close to the spot where the two had been talking, and he had lounged back towards the ropes, with his hands in his pockets, evidently careless of his fielding duties.

Kangaroo met his glance.

Berkeley turned away quickly.

But Kangaroo had caught the strange expression on his face, and he knew that Berkeley had heard his talk with the crack bowler—and that Berkeley attached some importance to it. The Cornstalk felt annoyed for a moment. He knew that Berkeley did not like the professional, and he was irritated that the disdainful amateur had heard what he said. Yet surely there was nothing in it that Berkeley could use—even if he wished—to Lovell's detriment.

Surely—yet Berkeley's expression made the Cornstalk feel uneasy for the moment. But his thoughts were soon taken elsewhere by the fall of the St. Jim's wickets.

The tail of the junior innings had not taken the men long to dispose of. Tom Merry & Co. were all down for 40.

CHAPTER 18.

Snatching a Victory!

ALL down for 40!

Considering the side they were playing, Tom Merry & Co. had done wonderfully well, and the cricketers were not grinning now. They had had a tussle to get rid of the youthful batsmen, and they had been taught to respect the St. Jim's eleven. A junior side that could knock up 40 runs against a team including several county players was not to be despised.

And the great men were in rather a difficulty now. They had to bat again; that was inevitable. If they batted to their full strength, there was no doubt that they would pile up a total of runs that would make it impossible for the schoolboys to equal the total. There was no doubt about that; but there was equally no doubt that if they took the time to pile up enough runs to make their position secure, it would be dark before the match was ended, and the match would count as unfinished—that is to say, a draw.

To draw with a schoolboy team was a bitter pill to swallow!

Berkeley snapped his teeth at the idea.

The other fellows were annoyed, too. They had taken the match as a huge joke; but there was no doubt that a draw was a draw; and this team, composed of fellows not one of whom was over fifteen, and many much below that age, would be able to declare truthfully enough that they had drawn with a side composed of county players and M.C.C. members.

And the men did not like it.

"We declared too soon," said Raby ruefully.

"No doubt about that," remarked Sir Frank. "It's all Berkeley's fault. What the deuce did he get us into this absurd position for?"

"I was against playing the young fools," said Berkeley.

"But you were the cause of it."

"Well, it's no good talking of that now," said Lord Conway. "We're committed to the match. The question is, shall we risk declaring the second innings? If we declare for, say, 50, the boys won't have a chance of coming up to us, and we shall have time to finish before dark."

"They might just top it," said Pelham.

"Well, if we take the time to put on a safe score, we shall have to leave it unfinished."

"It's a giddy puzzle," said Raby.

"Oh, declare at 50!" said Berkeley.

"I suppose that's the best," said Lord Conway. "It would be too ridiculous to draw with a schoolboy side."

And the house team batted again.

Tom Merry pinched Fatty Wynn's plump arm as he led his men into the field.

"Go it your hardest, Fatty!" he said.

And Fatty Wynn said:

"What-ho!"—as if he meant it.

"Go in and win," said Cousin Ethel, with a bright smile to Figgins, and Figgins went on the field feeling as if he could make the most astounding catches, with Cousin Ethel's bright eyes watching his achievements.

The men were playing now as hard as if they were already meeting the Gipsies, who were due the next day. The unexpected tussle the schoolboys had given them had quite changed their views and their plans. They had not expected to have to work for a victory, but they had to work now, and there was no mistake about that.

Tom Merry & Co. were gleeful.

To have a first-class cricket side on their mettle was an achievement they might well be proud of.

Lord Conway specially selected his batsmen to start, with the idea of knocking up a decent score as quickly as possible, and declaring, so that there would be still time to take all the St. Jim's wickets before dark.

He was bent upon that.

Country house cricket is seldom first-class, but, as it happened, the team got together for the Eastwood cricket week was first-class, and they felt it to be impossible to allow junior schoolboys to claim to have drawn with them.

And they worked hard.

Lord Conway opened the innings with Raby, and batted as hard as if he had been batting against Surrey or Lancashire at Lord's.

The runs piled up.

But the wickets fell, too. Fatty Wynn soon accounted for Raby, and Pelham was caught out by Tom Merry. Kerr, with a lucky throw-in, accounted for Berkeley, the lofty amateur again having the cruel luck to be dismissed for a duck's-egg.

He strode off the ground in a temper he could not conceal, and left the spot immediately. He returned to the house to console himself with a cigar and a whisky-and-soda, neither of which was a good preparation for a tough match on the morrow.

The runs piled up at a pretty good speed, but at a good expense of wickets, and they were six down for fifty runs.

There was certainly not an hour left of daylight sufficient for the game. Now, the St. Jim's first innings had lasted an hour. If the second lasted the same time, the match would be unfinished, even if a single wicket remained to fall. Lord Conway had only fifty runs to add to the first score of twelve; but he could not afford to stop for more, if he was to win. At the risk of being beaten, he resolved that the match should not be a draw.

He accordingly declared the innings closed.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Gussy, old man, you're a genius!" he said. "If you'd sprung this on them earlier in the day, they'd have made sure of it. Now they're between the devil and the deep sea. They must leave something to chance, or leave the match unfinished."

"I nevah thought of it in that light, Tom Mewwy."

"I know you didn't; but it's just as good as if you did!" grinned Tom Merry. "My lads, we're going to beat them."

"Beat them!" said Figgins, with a deep breath.

"Yes, beat 'em," said Tom Merry firmly. "Don't you see, we want only twenty-three runs to win. They've had to give us the chance. We've got an hour to get them in. We're going to get them."

"Bai Jove!"

"They've cut it too fine!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's not often a schoolboy team has a chance of licking a side that's really and practically an M.C.C. side. But we're going to do it."

The juniors chuckled.

It was curious, but owing to the peculiar circumstances of the case, there was a real possibility that they would win.

The thought was almost intoxicating.

Of course, if there had been ample time, and the opposing captain had not felt bound to declare in each innings, they would have had no chance. They had not expected to have one, but Fate was working for them, and a victory was a victory, so long as it was brought about by fair means. And there was no doubt that a victory won by reason of the over-weening confidence of the opposite side was a real one. It counted!

Tom Merry & Co. began their second innings in a mood of grim determination.

The house bowlers were determined, too. Berkeley reappeared, and did some bowling, but not of a kind that reflected any credit on his side. Tom Merry knocked up eight runs in a single over from Berkeley's bowling, and the lordly amateur was not entrusted with the ball again by his captain.

The score crept up, and the wickets went down. Seven down for twenty runs, but Tom Merry was still at the wicket, and Kangaroo was his partner. Two runs wanted to tie, and three to win.

Lord Conway's lips set hard.

He sent Raby on to bowl, regretting that Lovell was not in the team. Even Berkeley was regretting that now. The professional would have knocked over every wicket without another run being scored, and saved the match. It was extremely doubtful if the amateurs would succeed in doing so.

Tom Merry's wicket went down, and Figgins took his place. Figgins was inspired by the knowledge that Cousin Ethel's eyes were upon him.

How glorious to make the winning hit under the eyes of Cousin Ethel! And he felt, rather than saw, the girl make a movement of keen interest; he knew that her eyes were on the game, that she was almost breathless now.

Pelham bowled to Figgins.

Figgins marked that ball. He simply could not miss it. He could not fail while Cousin Ethel was watching him.

Smack!

The willow met the leather, and the leather went on its journey—far, far from the grasp of the fieldsmen. Tom Merry threw his cap into the air with a wild yell.

"Hurray! A boundary!"

"Hurrah!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Boundary—boundary!"

The juniors yelled.

A boundary it was!

Figgins had made the winning hit. The total of the St. Jim's score was at sixty-four now, and the men's total was sixty-two. The juniors had a run more than they wanted, and a couple of wickets they did not need.

They had beaten the men by wickets!

Cousin Ethel was on her feet now, clapping her hands, her eyes dancing with delight. Lord Eastwood laughed, and shouted hurrah as heartily as any boy there.

The faces of the men were a study.

They had been beaten.

It was owing to an odd conjunction of circumstances, true; but there it was—they had been beaten, and the schoolboys had wickets to spare.

"Bettah luck next time, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an air of consolation that made the best-tempered fellows there want to kick him. "We can't all win, you know."

"You young ass!" said Lord Conway, half laughing.

"Weally, Conway——"

"It's all your fault, Berkeley," said half a dozen indignant voices, as the juniors of St. Jim's trooped off, grinning and gleeful.

And Berkeley growled, and went off to find another whisky-and-soda.

CHAPTER 19.

Wally's Wheeze!

"WHAT'S the wheeze?"

Jameson asked the question. Curly Gibson was just as eager, but he did not speak. Wally had led them from the class-room with the information that he had a wonderful wheeze. Only the three special scamps of the Third were to share in the scheme, and to get a holiday if it succeeded, and a licking if it failed.

Wally stopped in the window recess in the passage, and looked up and down like Moses of old to make quite sure that no one was nigh.

"Well?" said Jameson.

"It's all right," said Wally. "I think it will work. We're going to touch Selby's heart, and make him shed tears of gratitude and affection."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Fact! When he loves us, he will intercede with the Head for us, and we shall get permission to go down to Eastwood for the cricket week."

"H'm!"

"I'll believe that when I see it," said Curly Gibson.

"You'll see it soon, fathead," retorted Wally. "Do you suppose that Selby hasn't got any feelings? It stands to reason that he has."

"Well, get on!"

"When three kids save him from a harrowing experience at the hands of a

fierce, frabjous bulldog, he is bound to be grateful."

"Never knew a bulldog had any hands!"

"If you're going to be funny, Jameson——"

"Oh, get on!"

"You know that Selby goes to read in the Head's garden on sunny evenings like this," said Wally. "He sits in the garden chair under the giddy wistaria, and studies some blessed book or other—trigonometry, very likely. It would be like him, and that's the sort of fodder he thrives on. Well, suppose Herries' bulldog got loose?"

"Why should it?"

"Suppose it got into the Head's garden!"

"That's not likely, even if it did get loose. The Head's garden is a long way from the kennels."

"And suppose it attacked Mr. Selby in a savage and frabjous manner——"

"It never attacks a master."

"And suppose——"

"You're doing a jolly lot of supposing," said Curly Gibson.

"Suppose," went on Wally imperturbably—"suppose three kind youths about our size heard the wild yells of the beloved teacher——"

"Oh, leave that stuff for Blake's serial in 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' and talk English!" growled Jameson.

"Suppose we heard the wild yells of the beloved teacher," said Wally firmly, "and rushed to the rescue."

"No fear!"

"Not much!"

"Ass! That's the act where Selby gets grateful!"

"Oh!"

"We rush in, and drag off the savage beast. He bites you."

"Does he?" said Jameson emphatically. "He's jolly well not going to bite me!"

"Now, look here, Jameson, you're not going to spoil a good scheme by any of your rotten selfishness," said Wally warmly. "If it all happens like this, the bite will give the bizney the finishing artistic touch, and Selby will simply have to do the touching gratitude act."

"He's not going to bite me."

"Now, be sensible."

"Rats!"

"If you're going to spoil a ripping good wheeze——"

"I'm not going to be bitten by any old bulldog!"

"I suppose it had better be Curly, then."

"I suppose it hadn't!" said Curly, with great promptness.

"Look here, Curly——"

"No fear!"

"Let him bite you, Wally!" exclaimed Jameson suddenly, as if struck by a really brilliant idea. "If he bites you it will be just as good, and as originator of the idea, you ought to have the bite."

"Don't be an ass!"

"Let him have a go at your leg——"

"If you're going to talk rot, Jameson ——"

"I don't see it!" exclaimed Curly Gibson. "My view is that Jameson's idea is a jolly good one. I don't see why he shouldn't bite you, Wally."

Wally snorted.

"Well, we'll give up the idea of a bite, as you chaps don't seem to catch on to it," he said. "We'll do the best we can without it."

"But——"

"Nuff said. I can't stand here talking all day," said Wally. "It's time we carried out the wheeze. Selby will be in the garden soon. He always goes out after tea, and sticks in the same giddy chair."

"But how is Towser going to get loose?"

"You're going to unfasten his chain, Jimmy."

"Oh!"

"And how will he get into the Head's garden?"

"You two kids will lead him there."

"I suppose we could," said Jameson, a little dubiously. "But he's a jolly sight more likely to attack us than to attack Selby. Why should he go for Selby?"

"I know Selby's got a chivvy enough to make dogs bark," said Curly Gibson; "but I don't suppose Towser will go for him."

"There will be something under Selby's seat that Towser wants," said Wally. "I've got some specially strong cat's-meat. It's a bit too wangy for Pongo, but there's no reason why Towser shouldn't have it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be under Selby's chair, and you bet Towser will niff it the moment he gets into the garden. He'll go for it like a shot; you know what a hungry beast he is, and Taggles is feeding him only on biscuits while Herries is away, and Towser isn't a vegetarian. Now, when Selby sees Towser coming bolting for him, he won't guess that it's a niffy bit of cat's-meat;

he'll think it's himself, and he'll bolt. I shouldn't wonder if he kicks Towser, and then——"

"My hat! There would be fireworks!"

"Yes, rather! We rush in and seize Towser, and drag him away, and then there's the gratitude act, and permission to go home for the cricket week. Selby couldn't do less."

Jameson nodded thoughtfully.

"Well, it sounds all right," he said, "only remember how rottenly all your wheezes have been working out lately. It's my belief that Selby hasn't got a heart."

"Rats! He must have some sort of one, and we're going to touch it," said Wally.

"Well, we'll try."

"I'll buzz off and get the cat's-meat, and you chaps go and get Towser out without letting anybody see you, of course."

"What-ho!"

And the three young rascals hurried off to carry out the "wheeze." Five minutes later, Wally was in the Head's garden with the cat's-meat, carefully wrapped in thick brown paper, for the scent of it was trying, even to Wally, who had strong nerves.

Well did Wally know Mr. Selby's favourite seat. He had "japed" his Form-master there before. In excuse for the scamp of the Third, be it said, that Mr. Selby was really a most unpleasant-tempered man, and he was generally down upon Wally, whether that hopeful youth deserved it or not. He generally did deserve it, and perhaps Mr. Selby thought the few odd times when he didn't did not count. Wally couldn't be expected to see it in that light.

The cat's-meat was soon reposing under the seat, and certainly the aroma it cast upon the evening air was sufficiently strong.

Wally disappeared into the shrubbery.

There he waited.

About five minutes passed, and a whistle from the direction of the quadrangle warned the scamp of the Third that his chums were ready with Towser. He whistled back, to show that the coast was clear, and Jameson and Gibson came plunging into the thick, high shrubbery, leading Towser between them.

Towser seemed a little excited.

Perhaps it was merely the sense of freedom, for he had missed his usual runs since Herries had gone away. Perhaps the aroma of the cat's-meat had already caught him. He had his nose to the ground, and was sniffing.

Wally chuckled softly.

"He's on the track," he murmured. "Herries always said that Towser could track down anything or anybody, and I know he tracked down a kipper once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet! It's time for the Selby bird to settle."

And the juniors waited.

Towser was making efforts to get loose now, and his straining was in the direction of the seat which was the favourite resort of Mr. Selby on a summer evening. It was pretty clear that he had scented his prey. Wally took a turn of his chain round a trunk, or the three fags would have found it difficult to hold him in.

"Quiet, good doggy," whispered Wally soothingly. "Good dog!"

"Hist!" Jameson held up his hand.

Through an opening of the shrubbery, the three fags caught a glimpse of a figure in cap and gown.

Mr. Selby was coming.

CHAPTER 20.

And How it Worked!

MR. SELBY came up to the seat with a book under his arm. The labours of the day were over, with the exception of taking his class for an hour's preparation in the evening, and Mr. Selby's usually corrugated brow had cleared a little. He sat down upon the seat with a sigh of comfort.

Mr. Selby opened his book, and then looked up from it, and sniffed in a suspicious way.

"Dear me," he said aloud, "what an extremely strong scent the flowers have this evening. It is quite remarkable."

Three youthful visages wrinkled up into grins in the shelter of the shrubbery.

"It is really far from pleasant," went on Mr. Selby. "One might almost suppose it was not merely the may blossom. It is positively annoying."

"Time!" muttered Jameson.

Wally nodded.

He loosened Towser's chain.

The bulldog darted away like an arrow from a bow. In a few seconds he burst upon the astonished and horrified vision of Mr. Selby.

The Third Form-master stared blankly at the bulldog as the animal bore down directly upon him.

"Goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "There is that savage animal loose, and —and it is going to—to attack me!" Mr. Selby turned pale. "Shoo!" he exclaimed desperately, throwing up his hands.

He might as well have "shooed" a motor-car or the rising tide. Towser was on the track of the cat's-meat. Right at the seat he came.

Mr. Selby made a motion to kick him, and Towser paused and growled. Then he came on again, growling fiercely.

Unconscious of the cat's-meat under the seat, Mr. Selby naturally imagined it was his calves Towser was after. His heart failed him.

"Help!" he shrieked. "Help! Help!"

"Rescue!" shouted Wally.

"What-ho!" murmured Jameson.

And the scamps of the Third rushed to the rescue.

Mr. Selby had jumped upon the seat, and was waving his book wildly at Towser, who took not the slightest notice of him.

Wally rushed up and caught the trailing chain of the bulldog.

"Lend a hand, chaps!" he shouted.

"Right-ho!"

"Gr-r-r!" said Towser.

"Drag him away!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"All right, sir."

"It's all right, Mr. Selby!"

"Come on, Towsy."

"Gr-r-r-r!"

It required some pluck to drag Towser away from the cat's-meat. But Wally artfully kicked the prize out from under the seat, with a good passing kick that sent it into the shrubbery, and Towser rushed after it. The fags rushed after Towser, holding on the chain.

Mr. Selby gave a gasp of relief.

"The horrible animal!" he exclaimed. "I—I will speak to Dr. Holmes about it. I—I will not have it allowed to remain at the school. It is scandalous."

Wally came rushing back. Towser, quite satisfied now that he had the cat's-meat, was being led away by Jameson and Gibson.

"All right, sir," exclaimed Wally. "He's gone."

"Oh, dear!"

"We've got him, sir. I hope you're not hurt, sir."

"N-n-no, I think not."

Mr. Selby descended from the seat.

He began to realise that he was looking very foolish.

He had betrayed an unreasoning terror of the bulldog, and three fags had shown a courage far in excess of his in tackling the bulldog and dragging Towser away.

The Form-master was very red.

He felt that he looked absurd in the eyes of his pupils, and that feeling far outweighed any sentiment of gratitude.

It was what the young schemers might have expected, if they had had a riper knowledge of human nature, and especially of Mr. Selby's nature.

The Form-master fixed a stern glance upon D'Arcy minor.

"How did that wretched dog get loose, D'Arcy minor?" he asked.

"Looks as if the chain came off the lock, sir."

"That is very odd. Somebody must have been taking the dog out, and allowed it to run loose."

"Yes, sir."

"How did you come into the garden, D'Arcy minor?"

"I came in at the gate, sir," said Wally innocently.

"I do not mean that. Where were you when I called?"

Wally shifted uncomfortably.

He had come there to be thanked with affecting gratitude, if not to be hugged by the rescued Form-master, and here he was being put through a catechism instead.

He began to feel that there was something amiss with the scheme somewhere, and that he had counted too confidently upon the softening effects of gratitude.

"I—I was in the shrubbery, sir," he said.

Mr. Selby frowned.

"Trespassing, I suppose."

"Well, sir——"

"Juniors are not allowed in the Head's garden without special permission. Had you special permission, D'Arcy minor?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"Had Jameson and Gibson?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then you were all three trespassing."

Wally was silent.

"It is very odd that you should be all three trespassing just when I was here, and

that wretched dog was let loose," said Mr. Selby sourly. "Should I be doing you an injustice, D'Arcy minor, in suggesting that you set the dog loose purposely?"

Dismay sat in the face of D'Arcy minor. It occurred to him that Mr. Selby had mistaken his vocation, and that he ought to have been a detective instead of a Form-master in a public school. But he had nothing to say.

"I think I have the facts now," said Mr. Selby, with a sour smile. "But having played this disrespectful and outrageous trick, D'Arcy minor, why did you prevent the dog from attacking me? I presume you were frightened at the possible results of your wanton rascality."

"Oh, sir!"

"You were afraid that some serious injury might be done, and——"

"Towser wasn't going to hurt you, sir," said Wally desperately. "There was nothing to be afraid of."

It was a most unfortunate speech. Mr. Selby turned from pink to crimson.

"I think you are the most insolent boy in the school, D'Arcy minor," he exclaimed. "I shall have no recourse but to punish you very severely for this outrage."

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, thinking of the cricket week at Eastwood.

"What did you say, D'Arcy minor?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You will go to the Head——" Mr. Selby checked himself. He knew D'Arcy minor. If Wally were sent to the Head to be caned, he would make it a point to explain what his offence was, and to make Mr. Selby look as absurd as possible. "Ahem! You will stay in for the next two half-holidays, D'Arcy minor, and will write five hundred lines. Jameson and Gibson will write a hundred lines each. You may tell them so. Now go!"

And Wally went!

CHAPTER 21.

A Mysterious Meeting!

TOM MERRY chuckled as he went up to his room at Eastwood House. The Terrible Three shared a room together, the other fellows being in different rooms on the same floor, along the corridor. Kangaroo was in the room with the Terrible Three, four beds being placed in a row. From the windows there was a wide view over the rolling parkland, with the river winding like a silver streak beyond. The four Shell fellows of St. Jim's were going up after that peculiar cricket match with the house eleven, and they were all in high spirits.

Tom Merry could not help chuckling.

Owing to a peculiar conjunction of circumstances they had beaten Lord Conway's eleven, and it was a cause for rejoicing.

"It's ripping!" said Monty Lowther, as he kicked off his shoes. "Simply ripping!"

"Gorgeous," said Manners, plunging his scarlet face into a basin of water—"gorgeous, my sons!"

"It's the joke of the season," said Kangaroo, grinning. "I wonder what the Gipsies will say, when they learn they're playing a side that's been licked by a schoolboy team?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll think they have an easier job than ever," Tom Merry remarked. "I've heard that the Gipsies are in great form, and they're making a remarkably successful tour. Country-house cricket is hardly up to their form."

"They'll find a hard nut to crack in Lovell."

"Yes, rather!"

"Between ourselves, I rather think the Gipsies will be beaten," said Kangaroo. "The house team here is a good one. Lovell is magnificent. Even Berkeley can play if he chooses, and he'll choose this time—he's got his reasons, I think, for particularly wanting to beat the visitors to-morrow."

The Shell fellows looked at the Cornstalk.

"What do you mean, Kangy?"

"I mean, Berkeley's one of those bounders who bet on the game," said Kangaroo.

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"You think he's got money on the match?"

"I know he has."

"How do you know?"

"He said so to Pelham in my hearing. He doesn't make a secret of it."

"The rotter!"

"Yes, it's rather rotten," agreed Kangaroo, towelling his glowing face.

"It's rotten to turn a game like cricket into a gamble. But Berkeley's just that kind of chap. As a matter of fact, I'm pretty certain that he's one of the gentlemen players who live on cricket, just as the professionals do, and he probably makes as much by betting as in expenses. More honest to come out into the open and call himself a professional, to my mind."

"Yes, rather!"

"Who says a run out into the woods?" said Manners, glancing from the window. "I want to select a place for taking photographs. I'm going to have a complete set of pictures of this place."

"Gussy and the rest are going to the village, I think," said Tom Merry.

"That's all right—we'll see 'em later."

The four Shell fellows left the house, and strolled through the gardens into the park. The deep, scented woods reminded them of the surroundings at St. Jim's. Mile on mile of shady woods lay around Eastwood House.

The juniors strolled easily along in the dusk. They were not inclined to exert themselves after the match. They came out on the bank of the river, and Tom Merry threw himself down in the deep grass.

"This is a lovely place," he remarked. "Let's take a rest. I've used my legs enough for one day, I think."

"Right you are!"

And the juniors rested in the deep grass and ferns, under the overhanging trees, with the stream running and rippling almost at their feet. They chatted about St. Jim's as they rested, till the stroke of an oar in the water caught their ears.

"Somebody out for a row," said Tom Merry lazily.

"One of the fellows, perhaps."

"Very likely."

From the deep shadows where they lay they glanced out on the river. A boat came into view, but not from the direction of the house. A man was in it, pulling from the village. He rested on his oars as he came opposite the bank where the juniors were.

Tom Merry whispered:

"He's waiting for somebody!"

"Phew! Poachers—eh?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

The Shell fellows lay very quiet. They knew that there had been a great deal of poaching lately on Lord Eastwood's estate—not the petty poaching of a rabbit or two by the country people, but a systematic poaching by fellows who disposed of their plunder to rascally agents who sold the game in the neighbouring towns to dealers who did not ask questions. If anything of that sort was intended now, Tom Merry & Co. meant to interfere. They lay quiet and watched.

A gleam of light played on the face of the man in the boat. It was a thick, red, coarse face, but not like the face of a countryman—it was evidently a town-bred man's countenance, and not a pleasant one.

For several minutes the boat remained there, the oars moving sufficiently to counteract the draw of the current. Then the man, who had been searching the bank with his eyes, pulled close to the reeds and jumped ashore. He was standing within three yards of the juniors, but the bulk of a big tree interposed, and the shadows swallowed them up. He stood waiting, grunting to himself with impatience the while.

There was a sound of footsteps in the wood, and a man came brushing through the foliage.

Tom Merry drew a quick breath.

This was evidently the poacher. But the juniors had to make sure before they acted. Tom Merry sat up in the grass, ready.

"I've been waiting for you," said a thick, unpleasant voice. "I've been here some time. Oh, all right; it doesn't matter! Have you got the tin?"

The reply was probably a shake of the head, for the juniors heard nothing, and the thick voice went on more loudly.

"You've not! Then you'll have to take the consequences. You mean to say that you've put me to all this trouble for nothing?"

There was a low murmur of a voice in response.

The thick tones went on.

"Speak out, old man, there's no one to hear us! We're alone in the wood—nobody within a mile. You've owed me, and owed me again—and it's coming to an end."

Another murmur.

"The match to-morrow," went on the loud tones. "Yes, I shall make a good bit over it. I've got a bet on with half a

dozen fools who backed the house team—and the Gipsies will make hay of them."

Tom Merry started.

These words showed him that his first supposition had been incorrect. The men who were holding this mysterious meeting on the river-bank were not poachers. The man who had come in the boat was a bookmaker; and the other man—who was he?

The other voice murmured again.

"Rot!" broke out the bookmaker. "The house team win—and against the Gipsies! Rot!"

"It's true."

The juniors caught the voice this time. Low as it was, it struck them that there was something familiar in the accents.

"Impossible!"

"It's true, Banks. That professional chap, Lovell, is a terror, I tell you. I don't like the man, but I can see what his form is like. He will make hay of the Gipsies' wickets to-morrow. The Gipsies will lose."

"Lose!"

"Yes. The men you've been betting with have fooled you—they know Lovell's form, and that is why they were willing to take you on."

"You think I've been taken in?"

"I know you have."

There was a short silence.

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I know that voice," he muttered.

"So do I," said Kangaroo. "It's Berkeley's."

"Yes, and Banks, the bookie!"

"Jolly curious, this," said Manners.

"Yes; but we can't let 'em go on talking and hear what they say. It's no bizney of ours," whispered Tom Merry. "Let's slide."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors were curious. They could not help being so. There was something very mysterious in Berkeley meeting the bookmaker in this secret way and warning him that he was about to lose his money on the Eastwood match. But common principles of honour forbade them to play the eavesdropper.

They rose from the grass, and moved away into the wood.

They did not desire to show themselves—that would be very awkward for Berkeley, if he knew they had seen him there with the bookmaker.

But, quietly as they moved, there was some rustling of the bushes, and as they went, they heard a sharp exclamation.

"What's that?"

It was Berkeley's voice.

"Only the wind in the trees," said the bookmaker mockingly. "You're all nerves."

That was all the juniors heard as they disappeared.

CHAPTER 22.

The Traitor!

BERKELEY ran into the shadowed thicket and listened. The rustle died away, and quiet reigned in the wood.

After listening a few moments, the cricketer returned to where the bookmaker was standing. Mr. Banks had not moved, excepting to light a cigar.

He looked at Berkeley contemptuously through the smoke of it.

"You're as nervous as an old woman," he said.

Berkeley gritted his teeth.

"I've got my reputation to consider," he said. "If it were known that I had dealings with you, Banks——"

"It will be known pretty soon," said Banks coolly.

"What do you mean?"

"Either that, or you settle up."

"Don't be a fool, Banks. Can't you see I'm putting you on to a good thing?" said Berkeley. "I owe you—what?"

"Two hundred pounds."

"And how much have you got on the match?"

"Twice as much."

"Then you stand to lose four hundred pounds if the Gipsies are beaten?"

"Exactly."

"You will lose it."

The bookmaker removed his cigar from his mouth.

"Are you trying to scare me, or is there really something in it?" he demanded. "I've heard of this chap, Lovell, and know his form, but I did not know he was in Lord Conway's team."

"He is, and he will take wickets as easily as he pleases. Hang it, I've played the Gipsies many a time, haven't I? Yorke, their captain, may stand up to Lovell's bowling, but they haven't another man who

can. It's intended to be a two-day match; my belief is that it will last only one day."

"And the house will win?"

"Yes."

The bookmaker smoked for some minutes, silent and thoughtful.

"If that is so, you've given me a good tip," he said. "I suppose there's still time to hedge, as public opinion is strongly in favour of the Gipsies, but——"

"You'll stand to lose a lot."

"I'm afraid so."

"Well, I've got a scheme."

"To save the tin?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

Berkeley lowered his voice.

"Suppose the house lost, after all? I could fix it."

Banks started.

"You—you mean——"

"That would save you four hundred, and bring in the profit you expected—pretty long odds, probably."

"Yes; I get eight hundred if the Gipsies win."

"Out of that you can cancel my debt to you, and hand me a hundred," said Berkeley. "That's fair."

"It's fair, if you can do as you say. I suppose you could let yourself be bowled——that would be easy enough, but—excuse me—you're not the backbone of the team. If Lovell's in such splendid form as you say, your throwing away a wicket in the innings won't make much difference to the result."

"I could stop Lovell playing."

"How?"

"I needn't explain," said Berkeley coolly; "I believe I can do it. And if you agree to my terms, I will. If not——"

The bookmaker pursed his fat lips.

"That's all very well," he exclaimed, "but I've only got your word for it that Lovell is as dangerous as you say; and if he doesn't play, how am I to know that you haven't been rotting?"

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"If he does play, you can say good-bye to your money, that's all," he replied.

"It's not good enough."

Berkeley reflected.

"Well, let the first day be played, or, rather, the first innings, if the Gipsies bat first," he said. "As soon as Lovell has bowled you'll see his form. I suppose you can see the match, or keep yourself posted how it's going on."

"I shall be down here."

"Good! Lord Eastwood has arranged for all the tenants and the country people to come and see the match, if they choose, and you can easily get in with the crowd. As soon as Lovell bowls you'll see that he's bowling your four hundred away."

"And then——"

"Then, if you want to save your bacon, you'll have to come to terms with me, and I'll see to it that Lovell's teeth are drawn."

The bookmaker nodded.

"That's a fair arrangement," he said. "You're sure you can manage Lovell?"

"Quite sure."

"Money, eh?"

"Oh, no!" said Berkeley, with a slight laugh. "If he sold the match, he would want more money than I could pay; and, as a matter of fact, I'll do the outsider this justice, I don't believe he'd even think of selling a match."

"Then how——"

"That's my secret."

"You mean that you know something about him—something that gives you a hold over him," said the bookmaker curiously.

"Perhaps."

"Well, keep your secret," said Banks abruptly. "If it turns out as you say, and you save my tin by stopping Lovell playing, I'll stick to the terms you suggest. We'll arrange it after the first innings of the Gipsies."

"That's right!"

"Then I'll meet you after that innings," said the bookmaker. "When the Gipsies have batted, if Lovell is dangerous, as you say, I'll meet you."

"And we'll have the agreement down in a businesslike way."

"Yes."

"That's satisfactory. After the Gipsies' first innings, then, I'll be here, as soon as I can fix it," said Berkeley. "Or, rather, we'd better meet somewhere nearer the house. We may have to bat soon after the Gipsies, and in that case I mayn't be able to get away for more than a quarter of an hour."

"True! Where shall I be?"

Berkeley reflected for a moment.

"Come to the summer-house in the gardens, near the river. There will be no one there on the day of the match."

"Good!"

"Then it's settled!"

"Right!"

The bookmaker stepped into the boat. Berkeley watched him as he went down the current, and the dusk of the river swallowed him up.

There was a bitter look upon the amateur's face.

He turned away to walk through the woods back to the house with a gloomy brow.

"What would the fellows say if they knew?" he muttered. "I should be cut dead—kicked out of the club, kicked out of society, except that of men like Banks. And I suppose I should deserve it. But I'm in a hole; it can't be helped. I've had such rotten luck that I can't afford to be particular."

And with that reflection Berkeley tried to dismiss the matter from his mind.

When he came into the house, Tom Merry saw him, and he gave the amateur a curious glance. He could see the signs of gloomy thought in Berkeley's face.

Berkeley did not even look at the junior.

"Under the thumb of a blessed bookmaker," murmured Monty Lowther. "It's a rotten position, Tommy; don't ever get into it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm not likely to," he said. "But if that's how things stand with Berkeley, one can forgive the chap for not being specially sweet-tempered. That fat bounder doesn't look the kind of chap one would like to owe money to."

"You're right."

Arthur Augustus came towards the Shell fellows with a beaming smile.

"The Gipsies are awwivin' to-night," he announced. "The match begins early to-mowwow mornin'. I wondah what they will say when they heah that we have licked the House team?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 23.

Wally Bolts!

"WELL?"

Jameson and Curly Gibson uttered that monosyllable together as Wally joined them. They had tied up Towser once more in the kennel, and come back to meet their chum. They looked anticipative.

The scheme had worked out so well, as far as they knew, that success seemed certain, if Wally's confidence in Mr. Selby's capacity for gratitude was not misplaced.

"Well?"

Wally grunted.

"Well?" he replied.

"Are we going this afternoon?" asked Jameson. "There's time to catch the evening train."

"Heaps of time, and to do a little packing first," said Curly Gibson. "I suppose we'd better take bags, not a trunk?"

"Bags!" said Wally vaguely.

"Yes, bags. It will save trouble."

"May as well pack 'em now," said Jameson.

"Yes; come on."

"Hold on!" said Wally.

"What's up?"

"We're not going."

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" said Wally pleasantly. "We're not going."

"N-n-not going?"

"No."

"But——"

"It hasn't worked," said Wally gloomily. "Selby's a beast, and an unjust beast. He ought to have been a policeman, not a Form-master. He's a rotter!"

"I know he is, but——"

"He wasn't grateful."

"Not after we saved him?" exclaimed Jameson.

Wally shook his head.

"No. He only slated me for being in the Head's garden without permission, and made a guess about how Towser got loose."

"My hat!"

"And wasn't he grateful for being saved?" demanded Curly Gibson.

"He hasn't any gratitude in his composition, I believe," said Wally bitterly. "I don't believe he's human at all; he's just a mathematical machine."

"And we're not going?"

"We're not."

"Great Scott!"

"He's gated me for two half-holidays ——"

"Phew!"

"And given me five hundred lines——"

"My word!"

"And you two a hundred each."

"What?" yelled Jameson and Gibson together.

"A hundred each," said Wally calmly.

The two fags glared at him. They seemed to be hardly able to realise the facts for the moment.

"A hundred lines each!" said Jameson at last. "So that's how your giddy scheme has worked out, is it?"

"It's not my fault," said Wally. "The milk of human kindness was left out of Selby's composition somehow. It's not my fault if he has a set of books of Euclid in the place of a heart."

"This is your giddy scheme!" went on Jameson, unheeding. "A hundred lines each!"

"Oh, bump him!" said Curly Gibson wildly. "We've been fed up with his wheezes, but this is a little too much."

"Here, hold on!"

"Bump him!"

"Hands off! I—— Oh!"

Jameson and Gibson rushed upon their hapless leader, and he was whirled off his feet and bumped.

Twice, thrice they bumped him on the ground with great energy, and then they left him gasping for breath, and walked away, somewhat relieved in their feelings, but still feeling decidedly wrathful and indignant.

Wally sat up and gasped.

"Rotters!" he murmured. "This is what comes of wasting one's brain power planning holidays for other chaps. Blessed if I'll bother about them again."

And Wally walked painfully away.

There was no doubt that the great scheme for getting down to Eastwood for the cricket week had been a ghastly fiasco. But Wally had not given up the idea of going. In the Third Form dormitory that night he tackled his chums again on the subject.

"You kids game for another try to-morrow?" he asked.

"Oh, go and eat coke," said Jameson.

"And heaps of it," said Curly.

Wally snorted.

"Don't be slackers," he said. "I'm going; you'd better come."

"No floggings for me."

"Nor for me!"

"No fear!"

"Go to sleep, Wally; your wheezes are no good."

Wally turned in.

"Well, I'm going," he said. "I can't catch it much worse than I've caught it already, and that's one comfort. And when I'm home I'll persuade the guv'nor to make peace for me here. When I tell him all the dodges I've been through to get leave, it's bound to touch his heart."

"About as much as we touched Selby's!" growled Jameson. "Rats!"

"And many of 'em!" said Curly Gibson.

Wally sniffed.

"Well, I'm going, that's all," he said.

And on the morrow he went.

He was missed from the class-room, and Mr. Selby, with a very green look in his eyes, made inquiries, and reported to the Head, and a very warm time was intended for Wally when he re-entered the ancient walls of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 24.

The Gipsies' Match!

IT was a sunny morning at Eastwood. The juniors of St. Jim's were up with the sun, and most of the cricketers were early, too. Stumps were to be pitched at an early hour. The match was intended to last two days, but some of the men were of opinion that it would require fully that time, if it were not unfinished at the end of the second day. That opinion was not held among the Gipsies. They had been making a successful tour, in which they had beaten several county teams on their own grounds, and country-house teams galore. They had little doubt about walking over Lord Conway's eleven in the easiest way in the world.

But the fact that Mr. Banks had found men ready to lay good money on the Eastwood House team showed that Lord Conway's men had backers. Lovell's form was well known to men in the know; hence the ease with which Banks had succeeded in securing odds against the Gipsies—favourites with most.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the Gipsies when they went to the nets in the morning for a little preliminary practice.

They were a fine-looking, athletic lot, and Yorke, their captain, an old Cambridge Blue, was famous as a hitter of Jessopian power.

"They look wathah a decent lot, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sur-

veying the cricketers through his monocle. "I wathah appwove of them."

"Don't let them hear you say so," implored Monty Lowther.

"Why not, deah boy——"

"They would get swelled heads at once, and——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass round upon the grinning juniors.

"I fail to see any cause for mewwiment," he remarked.

"Go hon!"

"They are in wathah good form," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the cricketers again. "The House team will have a tussle, deah boys; but I wathah think that Lovell will make hay of some of them."

"Thank you!" said a cheery voice at D'Arcy's elbow.

The swell of St. Jim's turned, and saw the young professional.

"Good-mornin'," he remarked. "What do you think of the Gipsies, deah boy?"

"Very good form."

"But you will beat them, eh?"

"I hope so," said Lovell, with a smile.

At breakfast there was a crowded table. Eastwood House was full of guests, all cricketers or their relations. The talk ran on the coming match. Figgins spent most of his time in explaining cricket matters to Cousin Ethel. The girl was deeply interested in the game, and what Figgins didn't know about it wasn't worth knowing. Perhaps, however, she could not have stood so much cricket if she had not been interested in Figgins, too.

When the stumps were pitched there was a good crowd on the ground.

Village folk and country folk had come in from all sides to see the game, or at least, part of it, and among the spectators was a fat, red-faced man with flashy watch-chain and rings and beetling brows, with little, keen eyes under them.

Lord Conway's glance fell upon him, and the viscount frowned.

"That's Banks, the bookmaker," he remarked to Berkeley. "I wonder what he's doing here!"

Berkeley glanced at the fat man.

"Banks, by Jove!" he said.

"I suppose he's been putting some of his rotten money on the game," Lord Conway remarked. "Looks like it, his being here."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"It's a pity some way can't be found to stop that," Lord Conway said, with a frown. "Banks is one of the bookmakers who are turning their attention from racing to cricket and football, and they'll make the game a gamble just as horse-racing is, in the long run. Then it will be good-bye to a decent game."

Berkeley nodded.

"I've a jolly good mind to have him shown off the ground," said Lord Conway.

"Well, the public are admitted," said Berkeley. "Banks is one of the public, and you don't know for certain that he's here for any harm."

"I can guess pretty correctly, I think."

"No good making a row, Conway."

"Perhaps you're right. I wish he'd get out."

And Lord Conway took no further notice of Mr. Banks.

The sides tossed for choice of innings, and it fell to the Gipsies to bat first. Yorke went in with another man to open the innings, and Mr. Banks pricked up his ears, so to speak. Now he was to ascertain whether Berkeley's information with respect to the professional bowler was to be relied upon.

Lord Conway put on Raby to bowl the first over, and Yorke and his partner knocked up eleven runs for the Gipsies. In the second over Lovell took the ball.

Lovell walked on with a quick, springy step. His handsome face was glowing with health and keenness. He looked at the top of his form, as indeed he was.

He grasped the ball, and faced the batsman.

Yorke, the Gipsies' captain, faced him calmly enough. He knew that Lovell was good stuff, but he did not know how dangerous he was.

The House eleven looked on keenly.

They knew that they had a surprise-packet in Lovell, and they were anticipating the effect of his bowling on the visitors with much inward enjoyment.

Lovell took a little run, and the ball left his hand.

Click!

Yorke's wicket went to pieces in a flash.

"My hat!" said Yorke aloud, in his astonishment.

There was a buzz in the crowd.

"Well bowled!"

"Oh, well bowled!"

Lord Conway smiled.

Yorke carried out his bat, and another man took his place. A minute more, and the new man's bails were on the ground.

"Hurrah!"

"Bwavo!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, waving his Panama hat. "Bwavo! Wippin'!"

A third man came in.

He met with the same fate.

His wicket went down at the next ball, and there was a yell of "The hat trick! Hurrah!"

Lovell looked quietly satisfied.

He had performed the hat trick in the first over, and it was a feat to be proud of against batsmen like the Gipsies.

Grim enough looked the visitors.

They were three down for eleven runs, and it was a bad beginning to the match they had looked forward to as little more than a walk-over.

The batsmen played Lovell very carefully after that.

"My only hat!" said Yorke to his friends. "They've got a wonderful man there! He'll play for England in the next Test, if I'm any judge. He's regular mustard!"

And the Gipsies agreed that he was.

The St. Jim's juniors were looking on very keenly. They felt that they were backing up Lovell, somehow, and they were very pleased to see him doing so well.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "What did I tell you, deah boys? Pway stop pokin' me in the wibs, Blake."

"Ass, here's a telegram for you!"

"Wats!"

"The boy's been waiting five minutes."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, turning round and taking the buff envelope from the boy. "I suppose it's fwom that young wascal Wally!"

He opened the telegram.

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the news?" asked Kerr.

"That young wascal!"

"What's he done?"

"He's bolted!"

"Phew!"

"My hat!" said Digby. "There'll be a row!"

"Poor old Wally!" said Fatty Wynn feelingly. "I suppose he knows there's some jolly good feeding going on here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be trouble," said Tom Merry. "Lord Eastwood is certain to bundle him back."

D'Arcy nodded.

"The young wascal foresees that," he remarked. "He's wired to me to help him make his peace with the governah."

"By George, that's good!"

"Here's his telegwam—it must have cost him a lot. 'Dear Gus—I've hooked it.' That is a howwibly vulgah expwession."

"Does Wally say that?"

"No, you duffah; I say that. Wally says: 'I've hooked it. I shall be home by the twelve train. Meet me in summer-house at twelve-thirty to arrange how to break it to the pater.—WALLY.'"

The juniors grinned.

After his major's strict injunctions to him not to think of "bolting" from St. Jim's, it was considerably cool of Wally to call upon Arthur Augustus to make his peace for him. But Wally knew his major.

"You'll have to do it, Gussy?" grinned Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo, there goes another wicket."

Lovell was bowling again.

Arthur Augustus thrust the telegram into his pocket, and watched the bowling. Lovell was dangerous enough. It was pretty clear that the Gipsies' innings would not last after lunch.

And it did not.

At twelve o'clock the last man was out, and the Gipsies' innings closed for a total of 70 runs—about a third as many as they had confidently expected.

Berkeley glanced round for Banks in the crowd as the cricketers went off. The bookmaker had disappeared. The amateur left his comrades as soon as he could, and hurried away to keep his appointment.

CHAPTER 25.

What Wally Heard in the Summer-house!

"EARLY, by Jove!"

Wally made that remark.

The scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's had stepped out of the train at precisely twelve o'clock at

Easthorpe; but he had obtained a lift on a farmer's cart as far as the park gates, and so he had arrived much earlier than he had anticipated.

It was not yet ten minutes past twelve when he entered the summer-house—as quietly and stealthily as a cat.

Wally knew that it would not do to see his father at once.

He had no desire to be sent directly back to St. Jim's.

With Arthur Augustus as a go-between, peace might be made, and the earl might relent, and intercede for his youngest son with the Head of St. Jim's.

So Wally entered the summer-house quietly, and at the sound of a footstep approaching it from outside, five minutes later, he was on the alert at once.

He knew that both his father and his eldest brother came to the little building in the wood at times, and he didn't want to be discovered there by either of them.

He started up and listened.

The footsteps were coming directly towards the summer-house. Wally looked round quickly. There were several big garden chairs inside the building, and the Third-Former promptly ensconced himself behind one of them, kneeling on the ground to be completely covered by the high wicker back, near the wall.

A minute later, someone entered the summer-house.

Wally could not see who it was, and he dared not look—he would himself have been seen at once. He remained crouched behind the chair. The new-comer paused for a moment or two, and then came directly towards the chair, and sat down in it heavily.

Wally hardly breathed.

If it should be his father, the game was up if he was discovered. How long the visitor would stay in the summer-house was a problem, too. Suppose he was still there when D'Arcy came at half-past twelve to keep the appointment? It would be just like D'Arcy to blurt out the facts.

Wally groaned in spirit. But he made no audible sound.

He heard the scratching of a match, and then the scent of a cigar was wafted to him. The strong, coarse smell of it showed him that it could not be Lord Eastwood who was smoking. It was neither his father nor Lord Conway. But it might be just as dangerous to betray his presence to a guest of the house.

Wally remained very still.

There was a quick footstep at the entrance of the summer-house, and the man seated in the wicker chair gave a grunt.

"I've waited for you again, Berkeley!"

"I came as soon as I could."

"Well, the match has gone as you say," Banks remarked, puffing at his cigar. "The House team are bound to knock up more than seventy, I suppose."

"At least a hundred."

"And the Gipsies will do no better in their second innings."

"Not if Lovell bowls against them."

"I believe you."

Banks smoked in silence for some minutes. Berkeley stood watching him without speaking. He was sure of the bookmaker now.

"Well," said Banks, at last, "I suppose it must be as you suggested, Mr. Berkeley."

"Good."

"If Lovell drops out of the match——"

"Yorke will agree to Conway's playing a substitute; but there's no one at Eastwood to be afraid of. It will be some bungling amateur."

"Then the Gipsies——"

"Will win."

"And my money's safe," said the bookmaker.

"And mine."

Banks nodded.

"Yes."

"You hand me back my paper, and a hundred pounds in addition," said Berkeley quietly. "That's understood?"

"I agree."

"We'll have it in black and white."

The bookmaker grinned.

"An agreement like that wouldn't look well in writing, Mr. Berkeley, and it would do you more harm than good to show it."

"We shan't put it in writing like that. You will book it in the form of a bet—you to pay me three hundred pounds if the Gipsies win. Out of the three hundred you keep the two I owe you."

"That's all serene."

Wally hardly breathed.

Cool and nervy young scamp as he was, he was terrified at what he was hearing, and he did not know what to do. He simply dared not show himself.

"And now," said the bookmaker, "how

are you going to prevent Lovell from playing?"

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"As I said before, that's my business."

"Are you sure you can do it?"

"Yes."

"Then you have a hold on him?"

"Perhaps."

The bookmaker frowned darkly.

"Why can't you speak out?" he demanded. "We're in this thing together."

"So long as Lovell doesn't play for Conway, that's all that concerns you," said Berkeley coolly. "I keep my secret."

"Oh, have your way, then!"

"I mean to."

Mr. Banks rose to his feet.

"Well, I suppose that's about all," he said. "I may as well get out of this. No need to risk our being seen together."

"Quite so," said Berkeley. "I——"

He paused, with a change of colour.

There was a distinct sound of footsteps coming towards the summer-house. Wally heard them, too, and breathed with relief. He guessed that Arthur Augustus was coming to keep the appointment he had made by telegram.

"Hang it!" muttered Berkeley. "We mustn't be seen here! Get out of the window, Banks, and cut off through the bushes!"

Banks grunted.

"No fear! I'm not climbing out of any windows at my time of life!"

"You'll be seen——"

"That doesn't matter, if you're not seen with me," said Banks quickly. "You cut off by the window, and I'll walk out. Whoever it is will only suppose I strolled in here for a smoke."

Berkeley hesitated for a moment, but it was evidently the only thing to be done. He stepped out of the low window of the summer-house and disappeared into the trees. The bookmaker walked boldly enough towards the door. He met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he crossed the threshold.

The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass upon the bookmaker.

"Good-afternoon!" said Mr. Banks jovially. "I just strolled in for a smoke, you know."

And he walked on before the elegant junior could reply.

Arthur Augustus cast a suspicious glance after him. He did not like Mr. Banks' looks. Then he entered the summer-house.

He glanced round. There was no one visible.

"I'm early," murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "Wally isn't here yet. Pewwaps he hasn't left the school after all. I—— Bai Jove!"

He broke off with an exclamation as Wally rose to view behind the big chair, with a face so pale that Arthur Augustus forgot the lecture he had intended for him, and looked at him with great anxiety instead.

"Gweat Scott, Wally, what's the mattah? Are you ill?"

"No!" gasped Wally. "But I've just been listening to two awful rotters. They're planning to give away the match."

"Bai Jove!"

And the swell of St. Jim's listened in astonishment and growing horror as Wally explained.

When the fag had hastily stammered out what he had heard, D'Arcy grasped him by the arm.

"Come to the governah!" he exclaimed. "He's the pwopah person to know this!"

Wally hesitated.

"He doesn't know I'm here," he said.

"He must know now, Wally. We can't leave these awful wascals to cawwy out their plan. Come on!"

And he simply dragged the fag from the summer-house.

CHAPTER 26.

Lovell's Reply!

LOVELL came out after lunch and strolled in the grounds. There was an interval before the home innings commenced, and Lovell was not wanted to bat first, in any case. Tom Merry observed him stroll into the park, and noticed that Cecil Berkeley walked in the same direction a little later. He little guessed what was the intention in the mind of the amateur.

"I want to speak to you, Lovell."

Lovell stopped.

He looked at Berkeley with cool, clear eyes. The amateur hesitated a minute or two; he did not like approaching the subject he had in mind.

"Yes?" said Lovell simply.

"We can talk safely here, I suppose?" said Berkeley with a glance round.

Lovell looked surprised.

"Yes," he said. "There is no one to listen, if that is what you mean. But what would it matter?"

"A great deal."

"Yes?"

"The fact is, it's rather a curious matter," said Berkeley, plunging into the subject. "I want to ask a favour of you."

Lovell could only stare. That the gentleman amateur, who had always treated him with scarcely-veiled disdain, should care to ask a favour of him, was surprising enough.

"It's rather a peculiar one, too," said Berkeley, the colour coming into his cheeks in spite of himself. "I want you to drop out of the team for the rest of the match, and, of course, not to mention that I have anything to do with it."

Lovell could scarcely believe his ears.

"You want me to drop out of the team?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Are you mad?"

"No."

"I think you must be to make such a request," said Lovell. "Even if I were not bound by honour not to desert the side, I am paid for my services by Lord Eastwood, and I should be a rascal not to play. And I certainly shouldn't dream of dropping the match now to please you or anybody else."

"I don't expect you to do it to please me, of course. I expect you to do it with an eye to your own interests."

"I don't see it."

"You remember a little talk you had with the Australian lad yesterday," said Berkeley.

Lovell started.

"Yes. I did not know you heard it."

"Well, I did hear it, and it made a lot of things clear to me."

"I don't understand you."

"I had been wondering where I had seen you before," said Berkeley coolly. "That little talk made it plain to me. It was in Melbourne, two years ago, when I was over there with an English team. You were a bowler for an Australian side that met us at Melbourne."

Lovell did not speak.

"Your name wasn't Lovell then," went on Berkeley. "It was Luttrell. Luttrell gained a great deal of attention, and was widely mentioned in the Colonial press as a wonderful bowler, and there was talk of sending him to England in the next team. I remember a newspaper mentioning that he was not Colonial born, but a Surrey man by birth."

Still Lovell was silent.

"Luttrell was never sent to England with the Australian eleven, however," went on Berkeley. "He disappeared from Melbourne very suddenly—to avoid the police, who were after him for the forgery of a cheque by which he cleared three hundred pounds. He escaped, and from some inquiries I made by telegraph yesterday, it's pretty clear that he's never been tracked out by the police, if I did not know it already."

"Well?"

Lovell's face was deadly pale, but he spoke quite calmly.

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, "it's pretty clear, I think. You call yourself Lovell, a Surrey man, and so you may be; but in Melbourne two years ago you were Luttrell, and you are wanted by the Melbourne police for forgery!"

"Well?"

Berkeley made an angry gesture; the reiteration of that sharp, contemptuous monosyllable irritated him.

"You are in my hands," he said. "A word to the police and you would be extradited to Melbourne to take your trial."

Lovell smiled grimly.

"You know it," said Berkeley. "I shall speak that word or not, entirely according to how you act now. I want the Gipsies to win!"

"You want your own team to lose?"

"Yes."

"The side you are playing for!" exclaimed Lovell in contemptuous surprise.

"I don't want to discuss it with you!" said Berkeley, flushing. "I want the Gipsies to win, and that's enough. I believe they can win if you don't bowl against them in their second innings. I want you to drop out after the home innings."

"And let the enemy win?"

"Yes."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall denounce you to the police!"

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"Suppose I go straight to Lord Conway now," he said, "and repeat what you have told me, word for word?"

Berkeley smiled contemptuously.

"You're welcome to do so, if you like," he said. "You cannot imagine that Lord Conway would believe a word of it, I suppose? I should deny it from end to end!"

"You scoundrel!"

Berkeley's face went crimson.

"That's enough!" he exclaimed harshly. "I didn't come here to bandy words with a criminal! Will you do as I ask?"

Lovell shook his head.

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"Have you thought of the consequences?" demanded Berkeley, amazed and furious.

He was alarmed and confounded by the blank refusal of the professional. He had not doubted for a moment that the professional would jump at his terms to save his skin.

"Yes," said Lovell quietly.

"And you are prepared to face them?"

"Yes."

"You must be mad! Look here!" exclaimed Berkeley abruptly. "You will have guessed that I have money on the match. I suppose you really mean that you want your whack. If so, put it in plain English. How much do you want?"

"Nothing!"

"Then you definitely refuse?"

"Definitely!"

Berkeley ground his teeth. He thought of Mr. Banks, and the promise he had given him—of the certain ruin awaiting himself if the Gipsies lost the match. He had counted too surely upon his power over the professional.

He clenched his fists in bitter rage.

"You—you dare to refuse!" he hissed. "You—you forger—you beggarly hound ——"

"There's my reply to that!"

Lovell's fist lashed out, and Berkeley staggered back, and rolled on the grass. Lovell gave him one look and walked slowly away.

There was a cry of surprise. Lord Conway, who had come to look for Berkeley, had caught sight of him just as he fell under Lovell's blow.

He ran up to assist the dazed amateur to rise.

"What on earth does this mean?" he exclaimed.

Berkeley staggered up. He had a last card to play, and he played it. He made a gesture after the retreating form of Lovell.

"You saw it?" he muttered thickly.

"Yes. Have you been quarrelling with Lovell?"

"Quarrelling—with a criminal! No!"

Lord Conway stared at him.

"A criminal! What do you mean, Berkeley?"

"I mean that he is a criminal—that he's wanted by the Australian police for forgery, and that he may be arrested any minute! You can't let him play for the rest of the match!"

CHAPTER 27.
In the Dark!

LORD CONWAY stared blankly at Berkeley.

"What on earth do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Lovell a criminal! Lovell in danger of arrest!"

"Yes."

"You're dreaming!"

"I'm telling you the exact truth!" said Berkeley, calming himself.

He realised now that he had one chance left of keeping his arrangement with the bookmaker.

If he could brand Lovell as a criminal, an escaped forger wanted by the police, Lord Conway could not possibly allow him to continue playing in the Eastwood side.

At any cost he would have to drop such a player.

That knowledge, and the desire to be revenged upon Lovell, made Berkeley bitterly determined to ruin the young professional.

Berkeley's head was throbbing from the blow Lovell had given him. But he was cool and collected now, and savagely determined.

"I'm telling you the truth!" he repeated. "Lovell is a forger!"

"Impossible!"

"He is being hunted by the Melbourne police!"

"I did not know he was ever in Australia."

"He was a professional bowler there two years ago."

Lord Conway could only stare.

"He is a Surrey man," he said at last.

"So he has led you to believe!"

"But——"

"He went under the name of Luttrell in Australia," said Berkeley. "I saw him when I was playing out in the Colonies, and for a long time I've thought I'd seen him before. It occurred to me all of a sudden just now, and I taxed him with it."

"And he——"

"You saw for yourself."

Lord Conway was silent.

"He struck me," said Berkeley. "I will not soil my hands on the scoundrel; but you can't keep him in the team, Conway."

"Well, look here, Berkeley, if you accused a chap of a thing like that, it's not surprising that he should hit out," said Lord Conway bluntly, "and he's more likely to do it if he's innocent than if he's guilty."

Berkeley bit his lip.

"Does that mean that you do not believe me?" he exclaimed.

"Of course not! I take your word; but I shall want proof before I believe that you're not mistaken," said Lord Conway. "What proof have you?"

"I know the man."

"Yet for some days you've been thrown with him continually, and did not recognise him?"

"I was puzzled at first, but I am sure now."

"You are quite certain there is no mistake?"

"Quite!"

"It might be a resemblance——"

"Not at all!"

"Did Lovell admit anything?"

"Was he likely to?"

"I suppose not. But frankly, Berkeley, I can't believe this! I respect Lovell—I've seen a lot of him, and I've found him a decent chap. I simply can't believe that you're right! There must be some ghastly mistake."

Berkeley breathed hard.

"Let him explain it then," he said. "I only ask to be allowed to accuse him face to face, and then if he has anything to say, let him say it."

Lord Conway nodded.

"Well, that's only fair," he remarked.

"If he's a criminal you will not play him for the rest of the match?" Berkeley exclaimed.

"Of course not! It would be impossible! But it's most unfortunate. As a matter of fact, the Gipsies will lick us if Lovell drops out. You must have seen that he's the backbone of the team."

Berkeley shrugged his shoulders.

"I should be very sorry for that, but I'd rather lose a match than win with the assistance of a member of the criminal classes!" he said. "You couldn't in common decency allow such a man to handle a bat here!"

Lord Conway frowned.

"I hope I don't need instructing in what to do if this is true," he said. "But, to be frank, Berkeley, I can't help saying that you dislike the chap, and most of us have noticed it, and I think very likely that has prejudiced you. I want this proved before I believe it, in common fairness to Lovell."

"His name isn't Lovell, it's Luttrell, and I don't think he'll venture to deny it," said Berkeley. "Anyway, let's see!"

"Come on, then!"

They walked away towards the cricket ground, the direction Lovell had taken.

The young professional was there.

He was standing alone under a big tree beside the ground, with a gloomy expression upon his face.

Tom Merry had spoken to him, but the young man was in a preoccupied state of mind, and had not even heard him.

He did not reply, and Tom Merry, seeing that he was deep in thought, had left him alone.

Lovell did not look up as Lord Conway and Berkeley approached. His eyes were fixed upon the ground.

The juniors of St. Jim's noticed the grave look on Lord Conway's face, and they instinctively knew that there was trouble in the air.

They were in a group at a short distance, out of the reach of voices, but they could not help seeing.

"Something's up," Tom Merry remarked. "Lovell's got the blues an inch thick!"

"And Conway looks as if he's going to a funeral!" said Figgins.

"Yes, he does."

"Can't see what the trouble is," Lowther remarked. "Lovell has done wonderfully

well against the Gipsies. Conway certainly can't have any fault to find with his bowling."

"Hardly."

"Gussy's wanted," said Kerr. "Gussy ought to be here to look after his elder brother. Conway looks as if there was trouble on hand, and now's the time for Gussy's fatherly advice."

The juniors chuckled.

"By the way, where is Gussy?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Gone to meet Wally."

"They ought to have shown up by this time."

Tom Merry looked round.

"My hat! There they are!"

Two figures had appeared in sight in the distance, moving towards the house. They were Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his minor, and they were hurrying along, both looking very excited.

Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"Something up there, too!" he exclaimed. "There's trouble in the air this afternoon. What's the matter with Gussy?"

"Let's go and see."

The juniors cut across to intercept the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus hardly glanced at them.

"Don't stop me, deah boys," he exclaimed. "I'm in a feahful huwwy."

"What's happened?"

"You see, I'm in a huwwy."

"What's the trouble?"

"Pewwaps I may explain pwesently. At pwesent I am in a huwwy to see my governah."

"You're not taking Wally in to be licked, surely."

"Oh, no!"

"Rather not," said Wally, with a warlike look. "I'm going in because——"

"Come on, Wally——"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"Latah, deah boys, latah!"

"But——"

"Huwwy up, Wally!"

"I'm coming!"

And Arthur Augustus dragged his minor away towards the house.

The St. Jim's juniors stared after them in blank astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Figgins.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't understand it," he said. "Gussy can't be excited like this about Wally bolting from the school. Besides, it was the arrangement that he was to make the peace for Wally—and now he's taking him directly in to Lord Eastwood."

"It's curious."

"Let's make Gussy explain."

"Good; we can't have him getting into this habit of keeping secrets," exclaimed Blake. "If he's got a secret he can tell us, and we'll help him keep it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors dashed on at top speed after Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's heard them coming, and his eye-glass glimmered over his shoulder for a moment, and then he broke into a run.

"Come on, Wally!" he gasped.

They ran on.

But there was no escaping Tom Merry and Blake and the long-legged Figgins.

The three juniors overtook D'Arcy, and seized him, and they rolled on the grass together. And the rest of the crowd, rushing on, rolled over them as they rolled.

Arthur Augustus gave a stifled yell.

"Ow! Gewwoff! Yowp!"

"Gerroff!" yelled Wally.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gerroff!"

"Leggo!"

"Dear me, what does this mean?" exclaimed Lord Eastwood, stepping from the French window and looking upon the excited scene in great surprise. "I trust that you lads are not quarrelling."

Tom Merry extricated himself, and jumped up, very flushed and dishevelled.

"N-n-n-no, sir," he exclaimed. "We—we were helping Gussy with his education, sir."

"Eh?"

"Teaching him not to keep secrets, sir."

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"So you are keeping secrets, Arthur?"

"Ow!"

D'Arcy dragged himself from the melee in a dishevelled state.

He groped for his eyeglass and blinked dazedly at his father.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "If all these chaps weren't my guests, I'd give them all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses——"

"Arthur!"

"I have been thwown into quite a fluttah," said Arthur Augustus. "I was comin' to see you, fathah, on a most important matter."

"Indeed!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then why didn't you explain it, ass?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dear me," exclaimed Lord Eastwood, catching sight of Wally, "what is Walter doing here? I imagined he was at school."

And his brow bent severely at Wally.

The scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's dropped his eyes.

"You see——" he began.

"It's all wight, Wally," said D'Arcy, "I am sure the patah will look ovah your vewy sewious fault when he knows the facts. Come in!"

"But——" began Lord Eastwood.

"It's vewy important, dad."

"I was just going out to see the second innings."

"It's awfully important."

"Well, well, come in, both of you," said Lord Eastwood. And he led the two juniors in by the French windows from the terrace.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in great surprise.

"What on earth is the matter?" exclaimed Manners.

"Blessed if I know."

"Something's up."

"Looks like it."

"Well, I dare say we shall know later," said Kerr. "Let's get back to the cricket. The home team will be starting their innings."

"Yes, rather!"

And the juniors returned to the cricket-ground in a very puzzled and perplexed frame of mind. They waited impatiently for Arthur Augustus to rejoin them, but the interview with his father was evidently an important one, for the swell of St. Jim's did not come.

CHAPTER 28.
To Go or Not to Go!

MEANWHILE, Lord Conway and Berkeley had joined Lovell under the elm tree. The young professional did not observe their approach, and he did not look up till the viscount spoke to him. The gloom on his brow was so evident that Lord Conway felt a chill. What was the matter with Lovell—unless there were truth in what Berkeley alleged?

"Lovell!" said the viscount, a little sharply.

Lovell started.

He looked up quickly, and the colour came into his face.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"I want to speak to you. Mr. Berkeley has just told me a most extraordinary thing."

"Yes?"

"If it is true, you cannot remain in my team, or in cricket at all so far as England is concerned," said Lord Conway gravely. "I hope it is not true, however."

"Yes."

"Mr. Berkeley thinks he recognises you as a man he saw playing under the name of Luttrell in Melbourne some time ago."

"Yes?"

"This man Luttrell was a criminal."

"Yes?"

"Well, have you anything to say?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Deny that you are the man, if it isn't true," said Lord Conway sharply.

Lovell gave a slight shrug.

"My name is Lovell," he said.

"Your real name?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been known as Luttrell?"

"Never."

"You are not—not——" Lord Conway hesitated.

Lovell smiled bitterly.

"No," he said, "I am not a criminal. I am not wanted by the police. Mr. Berkeley has made a mistake."

Lord Conway heaved a sigh of relief.

"You hear that, Berkeley?" he said.

"Yes, I hear it," said Berkeley derisively; "but I don't believe a word of it."

Lovell's eyes glinted.

"Mr Berkeley accuses me of being a fugitive from justice," he said. "Has he told you that he asked me to become a

criminal here—that he asked me to sell the match we are playing, to the Gipsies."

"What!"

"It's a lie," said Berkeley.

"He had concluded that I was the man he supposed me to be," said Lovell quietly. "He threatened me with exposure if I did not give the match away."

"Liar!"

"Impossible!" said Lord Conway, looking from one to the other in dismay and amazement. "You cannot expect me to believe that, Lovell."

"It is true."

"Why should Berkeley wish his own side to lose?"

"He has his reasons, I have no doubt. Perhaps his friends the bookmakers could explain to you."

"This is infamous, Lovell! I could not possibly believe anything of the sort," said Lord Conway angrily. "This absurd accusation against Mr. Berkeley makes me more inclined to believe the charge against you."

"I have told you because it is the truth," said Lovell quietly. "I am ready to leave the team at any moment you please."

"Unless you are guilty I don't want you to go. Mr. Berkeley has not proved his accusation yet, and——"

"I will prove it," said Berkeley, between his teeth. "After what he has said about me, I will have no mercy on him. Call the boy, Harry Noble—the boy they call Kangaroo."

"What does he know about it?"

"He recognised Lovell, too."

"But——"

"Call him."

"Oh, very well!"

Kangaroo was standing at some distance, chatting with Tom Merry; the juniors had just returned after the bumping of Arthur Augustus.

Lord Conway called to him, and the Australian came up wonderingly.

"Do you want me?" he said.

"Yes," said Berkeley. "We want your evidence, Noble. Had you ever seen Lovell before you came to Eastwood?"

Harry Noble closed his lips, and looked inquiringly at Lord Conway. He did not mean to let Berkeley extract a word from him against Lovell.

"Please speak, Noble," said Conway, with a worried look. "This is an important matter, and we want to get at the facts."

"Speak out!" said Lovell quietly.

"Very well," said Kangaroo. "When I met Lovell here I thought I had seen him before."

"In Australia?" said Berkeley.

"Yes."

"Under another name?"

"The fellow I took him to be had another name, and then I remembered that it couldn't be Mr. Lovell," said Kangaroo.

"Because Lovell assured you so?"

"I would take Mr. Lovell's word against anybody's," said Kangaroo quietly.

"Thank you, Noble!"

"But you thought he was the man you had seen bowling at Melbourne at first?" asked Lord Conway.

"Yes."

"From a resemblance?"

"Yes, they were wonderfully alike."

"And anything else?"

"They had the same delivery in bowling," said Kangaroo. "Mr. Lovell is not a common bowler, and it struck me."

"But you are assured now that you were mistaken?"

"Yes."

"Only on Lovell's word," said Berkeley.

"Mr. Lovell's word is good enough for me," said Kangaroo, with a flash in his eyes.

"Thank you!" said Lord Conway. "That's enough, Noble."

Kangaroo nodded, and walked back to his friends.

"Well, is that pretty clear?" said Berkeley, with a curl of the lip. "I suppose you don't imagine that Noble was deceived by a chance resemblance as well as myself?"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"I have told you all I have to tell you, sir," said Lovell, taking no notice of Berkeley, and looking directly at the viscount. "If you wish me to leave the team, I am willing to do so."

"Where were you the year before last?" asked Lord Conway suddenly. "If you were in England at the time——"

"I was not."

"Were you in Australia?"

"Yes."

"In what part?"

"Melbourne."

"I think that settles it," said Lord Con-

way quietly. "How soon can you leave Eastwood?"

"In five minutes."

"Take your time, but go."

"Very well."

"And now, Berkeley——"

"Conway!"

It was Lord Eastwood's deep voice.

He had joined them unperceived, and his frowning, stern face made the viscount start as he looked at him.

"Yes, father?" he said.

"Stay, Lovell," said the earl.

Lovell hesitated.

"Stay!"

"Very well, sir."

"You, too, Mr. Berkeley."

"Certainly!" said Berkeley, looking in surprise at the earl, and at Arthur Augustus and Wally, who were with him.

"What is it?" asked Lord Conway.

"A matter that must be settled before the second innings is played," said Lord Eastwood quietly.

CHAPTER 29.
Wally Bears Witness!

BERKELEY gave a start. He had no idea of what Wally had heard in the summer-house, but the tone and look of Lord Eastwood struck him with a vague uneasiness.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Berkeley," said the earl. "May I ask if you were in the summer-house in the garden a short time ago, Mr. Berkeley?"

Berkeley turned pale.

"Or, rather, I should not put the question in that form," said Lord Eastwood. "I do not wish to entrap you. I know that you were there."

"I—I——"

"You met Banks, the bookmaker, there."

"What!"

"Do you deny it?"

Berkeley drew a deep breath.

He knew now that he must have been seen in the summer-house at the same time as the bookmaker, but that he had been overheard also he could not guess. He realised that he would have to tread warily.

"I was certainly there," he said. "I really do not see the drift of your remarks, Lord Eastwood. Am I to be called to account for my actions here? I strolled into the summer-house for a smoke. Banks was there."

"I had better speak out plainly," said Lord Eastwood. "My youngest son has left school without permission, to come down here for the cricket week. He hid in the summer-house till Arthur should meet him, intending that Arthur should arrange to make his peace with me. While he was hidden there he heard a certain conversation between you and Mr. Banks, the bookmaker."

Berkeley almost staggered.

That Lord Eastwood was in possession of the whole facts was clear to him at once, as if by a lightning flash.

His brain swam for the moment.

Ruin—black ruin and disgrace—seemed to overwhelm him.

Lord Eastwood's eyes were fixed upon him accusingly.

"You arranged with Mr. Banks to prevent Lovell from playing in the remainder of the match, in order that the Gipsies might win, your reason being that bets were pending on the result, Mr. Berkeley."

"I—I——"

With all his nerve, Berkeley could not immediately recover himself, or think of a plausible falsehood.

He stood unsteadily, his face deadly white.

"Have you any denial to make, Mr. Berkeley?"

"Yes—yes!" muttered the amateur hoarsely. "It's not true!"

"You accuse my son of having invented the story?"

Berkeley almost groaned.

What was the use of accusing Wally of anything of the sort? The story was one which could not have been invented by the fag. Wally had come there fresh from school, without even knowing that Lovell and Berkeley were there, or knowing anything about them.

His story was true on the face of it, even if Lord Eastwood had not known that his youngest son, scamp as he was, was incapable of falsehood.

"It is true," said Lord Conway.

"It's a lie!" muttered Berkeley. "The boy's mad—mad! I met Banks there, but—but we talked of nothing of the sort."

"It's too late for that," said Conway. "It agrees only too well with what Lovell has just told me, that you tried to prevent him from playing in the rest of the match."

Berkeley groaned.

Everything fitted together so well against him, that there was hardly a loophole left through which he could have hoped to crawl, if he had been in possession of all his keenness. And he was not himself now. He was utterly dismayed and thrown off his balance by the sudden turn of affairs.

And there was no mercy in the faces before him.

The baseness he had been guilty of was too black.

A cricketer who would sell his side, a villain who would threaten another player into betraying a match, was too base for pardon.

"Well?" said Lord Eastwood.

"It's a lie!" said Berkeley. "The boy's fallen asleep there and dreamed it. There's not a word of truth in it. Will you take the word of a young cad who confesses himself to be an eavesdropper?"

"Bai Jove!" began Arthur Augustus.

But Wally interrupted him.

"I didn't mean to listen," he explained. "I was hiding there, and you came in and talked, and how could I help it?"

"It's a plot!" said Berkeley. "I—I——"

"You rotter!" said Wally forcibly. "You know jolly well that it's true enough. You know you arranged with Banks to sell that match."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Berkeley was almost gasping for breath.

"I'm sorry, Lovell," said Lord Conway. "I can see now that it was all false. Berkeley used your resemblance to the Melbourne bowler as a trick to get rid of you. You won't leave the team? I take back what I said."

Lovell nodded.

"It's as you wish, sir," he said.

"Then you'll play?"

"Very good."

Berkeley's eyes blazed.

"Then you are going to play him!" he exclaimed. "You are going to play that man—that forger—that criminal!"

"Hold your tongue!"

Berkeley panted.

"I have been insulted here!" he exclaimed. "I am no longer a guest of yours, Lord Eastwood. I will go——"

"You will certainly go," said Lord Eastwood.

"But that scoundrel has not heard the last of this," said Berkeley passionately, pointing at Lovell with a shaking finger. "I shall go directly to Scotland Yard. In two hours' time there will be a detective here, and if Lovell is gone you will be held responsible for his escape."

Lovell's lip curled.

"Is there anything in this?" asked Lord Eastwood.

"I am sure there is not," said Conway. "It is false! Lovell is true blue. I won't hear another word against him. As for

you, Berkeley, the sooner you get out of the place the better. And don't trouble to recognise me in future."

Berkeley ground his teeth.

"I will go," he said. "Look for the police, that's all."

And he strode away.

Raby was striding over from the cricket-ground.

"I say, they're waiting to begin the innings!" he exclaimed. "Hallo, what's wrong! Anything the matter?"

"Yes; Berkeley's not playing any further," said Lord Conway abruptly.

"Why?"

"He's leaving Eastwood."

"Phew!"

"It's—it's important," said Lord Conway. "Tell Yorke, will you, and ask him about our playing a substitute for the rest of the match. I'll join you in a minute."

"Right-ho!" said Raby.

And he walked away, looking astonished.

Berkeley looked back once, and then disappeared into the house. A quarter of an hour later he was driving furiously to the station.

Lord Conway held out his hand to Lovell.

The professional started a little, and then grasped it.

"You are playing, Lovell?" said Conway.

"Certainly!"

"Then come on!"

And they went to the ground, where the other cricketers were awaiting them impatiently.

Lord Eastwood looked at Wally.

The scamp of the Third stood silent.

"You young rascal," said Lord Eastwood. "So you have bolted from school?"

"Not exactly bolted, dad," said Wally meekly. "I've left."

"Without permission?"

"I tried to get permission."

"And it was refused?"

"Owing to a series of misunderstandings."

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Well, your arrival here has been so fortunate that I don't think I shall punish you as you deserve," he said. "I ought to send you directly back to St. Jim's to be caned for your impudence in running away. But ——"

"But you won't, dad?"

"No, I won't. I'll try to excuse you to Dr. Holmes, and—and you can stay here till I hear from him, at all events."

"Hurrah!" yelled Wally.

And Lord Eastwood followed Conway. Wally performed an impromptu breakdown, Arthur Augustus looking on in rather a shocked away.

"Pway don't be so extwemely obstwepewous, Wally," he said. "I wegard it as wathah bad form."

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus."

"Weally, Wally!"

"It's ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah; but——"

"I knew I should fix it somehow," said Wally cheerfully. "Won't Jameson and Curly be sold for not coming—eh?"

"Yaas, but——"

"Let's go and see the cricket, Gus. Can't stand here, listening to you all day."

"Why, you've been doing all the talkin', and——"

"Oh, cheese it, and come on!"

And Wally scudded off to join the juniors of St. Jim's, who were grouped round Cousin Ethel, and Arthur Augustus followed more slowly, with a more circumspect regard for his dignity.

CHAPTER 30.
Cleared Up!

THE home innings had started now, and Tom Merry & Co. were looking on with great interest. Lovell was not so great a batsman as he was a bowler, and the substitute played in the place of Berkeley was a poor bat. The home side, therefore, could not be expected to make a very great show. But they were quite sure of beating the score made by the Gipsies, and they did.

The innings lasted till dusk was beginning to fall, and the light was failing, and the batting would have had to cease anyway for the day, when the last wicket fell.

Eastwood House were all down for 140.

It was exactly twice the score made by the Gipsies, but it was not so many as the latter would have scored, but for Lovell's bowling.

Lord Conway knew that, and he knew how much he owed the young professional.

The first day's play was over now, and it had ended greatly to the advantage of the home team. With Lovell at his best, Lord Conway had little doubt that the second day's play would have a similar result.

The cricketers were in high spirits.

The St. Jim's juniors shared their satisfaction.

As Blake remarked, it was a satisfaction to know that they had beaten a team which could beat the Gipsies.

Lovell was made very much of by Lord Conway, but most of the fellows knew that there had been something up, and that it was in connection with Berkeley's departure.

Of the real reason for Berkeley's going nothing was said.

It was best to keep the whole matter quiet, unless, indeed, Berkeley carried out his threat of bringing in the police to wreak his spite against Lovell.

That was regarded, so far, as an idle threat.

Lord Conway did not think that Berkeley himself really believed in his accusation against the young bowler.

But he had to learn differently. Tom Merry had noticed a stranger on the ground, among the crowd, watching the final innings.

Lovell was last man in, and when his wicket fell the innings closed, and the stranger who was watching followed the handsome young professional with his eyes.

Several of the juniors had remarked the interest that the quietly-dressed, keen-eyed stranger took in the professional.

As Lovell walked off the ground with Lord Conway the stranger approached them, taking off his bowler hat in a respectful way.

Lord Conway looked at him inquiringly.

"Excuse me, sir," said the newcomer. "You are Lord Conway, I think?"

"Yes."

"And this is Mr. Lovell, the professional cricketer?"

"Yes."

"Then my business is with you."

Lord Conway looked surprised.

"What business can you have with me?" he said. "I am not aware that I have ever met you before."

The other smiled.

"You have not," he said. "Your business has not lain in the direction of Scotland Yard, I presume."

Lovell looked at him hard.

"Your business is with me?" he said.

The inspector nodded.

"Exactly. We have received some very curious information, and I have come down here to examine into the matter, to see whether there is anything in it. My own impression was that a mistake had been made. Will you kindly step into some place where we can talk in private?"

"Come into my room," said Lord Conway shortly.

He led the bowler and the detective into his own quarters. He closed the door.

"Now," he said, "I suppose this means that you have received a visit from Mr. Cecil Berkeley?"

"That is the case."

"He has accused Lovell of being a man named Luttrell, who was accused of forgery in Melbourne two years ago?"

"Exactly!"

"Well, it is false; he made the accusation here, and we treated it with the contempt it deserved," said Lord Conway hotly.

The detective coughed.

"I am afraid it is a matter for proofs," he remarked. "Mr. Berkeley's statement seemed to me absurd, I admit, but on finding the photograph of the forger, Luttrell, I found that it was exactly like a picture of Mr. Lovell published in a sporting paper. I therefore resolved to investigate the matter."

"Quite right," said Lovell.

"I am willing to hear any explanation Mr. Lovell has to make."

Lovell hesitated.

"It is a matter that concerns myself alone," he said. "But as you are an officer of the law, you are entitled to know the truth. If I succeed in satisfying you of my innocence, however, I suppose the matter will not go further?"

"Naturally."

"Very well. I have never been known by the name of Luttrell, and I am not the man Mr. Berkeley supposed me to be."

"I was sure of that," said Lord Conway.

"Thank you, but I was in Melbourne at the time Luttrell was playing for an Australian club, and I knew him very well. My name is not really Luttrell, as Mr. Berkeley supposed, but Luttrell's real name was Lovell."

"Oh!"

"He was my brother."

"Ah, I see!"

"He was—was unfortunate," said Lovell, colouring. "I may as well speak plainly. He got into trouble in England, and changed his name on going to Australia. We were both born cricketers, and he took it up there. I went out to see him, and to satisfy myself that he was on the right road. I got there in time to find him in fresh trouble, and while I was there he fled from Melbourne, with the police on his track. I left the place quietly, and as you may guess, I have never mentioned the relationship to anyone."

The detective nodded.

"The resemblance, both in looks and style of play, was natural enough," said Lovell, "but you understand that it would do me no good professionally to have it known that the man who committed forgery in Melbourne two years ago was a relation of mine. Goodness knows I could not help it, and poor Frank was the victim of a set of scoundrels who made him their tool and their scapegoat. He has paid for what he did, but I did not feel inclined to explain any of the circumstances to Mr. Berkeley. It was no business of his, as far as I could see."

"Quite so," said Inspector Blaine slowly; "but, excuse me, have you any proof that you can give, that this brother of yours really exists?"

"Ample! If you communicate with the Melbourne police, you will find that Luttrell was arrested three months after his flight, in Ballarat, and was sentenced to prison for two years," said Lovell. "They will tell you also that he is still serving his sentence."

The inspector smiled.

"It will mean only a cable," he said. "I shall certainly do so; and I may as well say now that it is only a matter of form, and that I believe every word you have said, sir. If Mr. Berkeley had thought of inquiring in Melbourne, it would have saved us some trouble. Pray excuse me for having troubled you."

"Not at all; it was your duty."

And the inspector took his leave.

"I am sorry for this, Lovell," said Lord Conway. "I quite understand that you wished a matter like that to be kept secret, and it was shameful of Berkeley to drag it into the light; but you can depend upon my silence."

Lovell looked at him.

"Do you want me to play in the team now?" he said.

"Of course."

"I am not a criminal, as Berkeley supposed, but I am the brother of a criminal," said Lovell gloomily.

"That is nothing to me. I know you are as straight as a man could be, and that's all I want to know," said the viscount. "There's my hand."

And Lovell's eyes were moist as he grasped the hand of Lord Conway. His step was much lighter as he quitted the room.

CHAPTER 31.

Berkeley Disappears!

THE next day came the finish of the Eastwood match.

Lovell had never bowled so well as he did against the Gipsies in their second innings, and they were dismissed for 60, a smaller total than they had made on the first day of the match.

The home team, therefore, won by an innings and ten runs, a very creditable performance.

Tom Merry & Co. cheered uproariously.

"Bai Jove," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's simply wippin', Conway, deah boy, I congwatulate you."

Lord Conway grinned.

"Thanks, Gussy," he said. "It's pretty good, isn't it, considering the way you fellows licked us?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. And the juniors roared.

That day Lord Conway heard news of Berkeley, too—he had left the country in haste, and Mr. Banks and a dozen other creditors were raging over it. But they raged in vain. Cecil Berkeley had gone for good, and county cricket knew him no more.

The St. Jim's juniors enjoyed their cricket week keenly enough; but undoubtedly the fellow who had the best time was Wally.

Lord Conway and his father knew that but for Wally's coming Lovell would have left Eastwood in disgrace, and the match would have been lost; and they made much of him.

Lord Eastwood used his influence to make the scamp's peace at St. Jim's, and succeeded, and Wally stayed as long as Tom Merry & Co. did, and was a great trial to Arthur Augustus, the elegant junior's only consolation being that Wally had not been able to bring Pongo with him.

"Well," said Tom Merry, on the last day of that famous cricket week. "We've had a jolly good time, and I beg to propose, second, third, and pass unanimously, a vote of thanks to Gussy for having us down here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The pleasuah was entirely mine, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, more Chesterfieldian than ever now. "I——"

"Hear, hear!"

"I——"

"Hear, hear!"

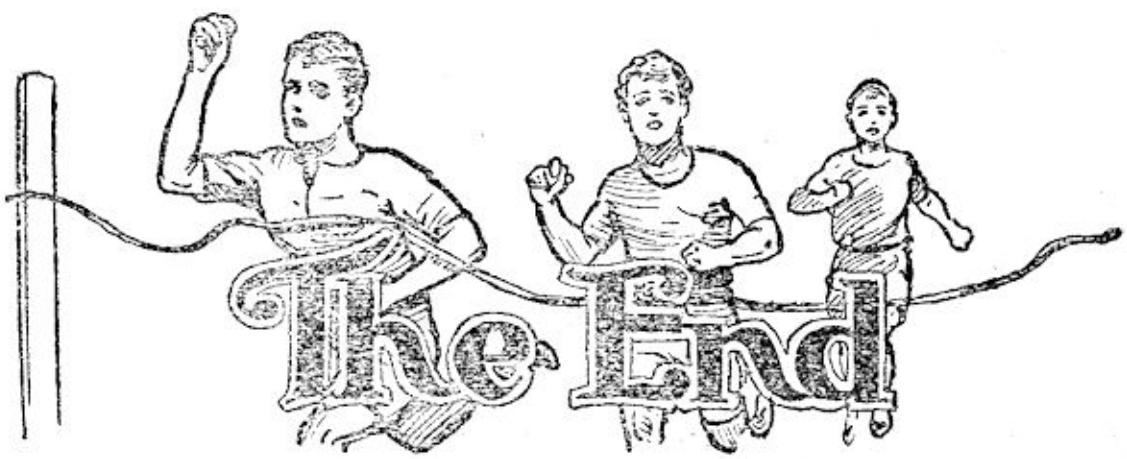
"Weally, deah boys——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally——"

"Hear, hear!"

And Arthur Augustus gave it up.



RACERS OF THE PAST!

There have been big sporting events with plenty of thrill in them ever since the world first sensed the excitement of competition, and we get further proof of this fact thanks to recent discoveries in Constantinople. Mr. Clifton Harby Levy has written of some of these marvellous "finds" and everything goes to show that when the Emperor Constantine started business in the City of the Golden Horn, and opened a magnificent hippodrome for chariot racing, he did things on a lavish scale.

Backing the Favourite!

This hippodrome was a stupendous circus, 400 yards long and from one to two hundred wide. In the centre was a row of magnificent monuments, the finest works of art which Greece had produced. The track had no equals. It was the very latest, and the huge, mixed population of the old Eastern city thronged in by the thousand to witness the record-making races of the charioteers. At the upper end was the emperor's box. This was a small palace, with accommodation for all the court. But it was in the "common" part—what, at a French meeting, is styled the "pelouse"—that the fun was found. These pleasure-seekers deemed their emperor a fine fellow, for he provided sporting events which created enormous excitement. The "form" of the bold charioteers was watched with the keenest interest.

The Thunder of the Race!

It was a stirring scene, with thousands craning forward to watch. You got everybody there, even the studious-minded, who would break away from lonely lives to catch the zest of a popular fête. There was the small-class—the shopkeeper, the assistant at the bazaars, the traveller who had crossed Europe to see the brilliant new city in the East. Constantine inaugurated a new kind of race. Hitherto many of the charioteers had been slaves. Now one saw splendid Amazons taking the reins, and guiding the mettlesome horses through the dust of the arena with the gaily-decked chariots rocking behind. The feelings of the spectators rose to fever heat, and yet the women who drove so well, knowing what the horses could do, needed no urging to do their best as they tore along the lines of surging people amidst the frenzied appeals to drive faster, or to cut in. There were yells to the charioteer who wore gold to make a spurt, to the driver who sported green to remember what she was there for, and frantic appeals to the rest of the bunch.

A Crash!

Lashed up to further endeavours, the horses, foaming, frightened by the volleying cries, raced madly on. Here would be a group of sightseers buzzaing themselves hoarse; their favourite had "got in" and was charging round the vast arena with the certainty of victory, bar a disaster. While, further down the line, hemmed in hopelessly, another "star turn," who had been reckoned a safe thing, received the hoots and execrations, to say nothing of any portable missiles hurled by disgusted partisans who felt they were being badly left in the cart. But sometimes the "winner" had relied unduly on a sporting chance to "get away with it," by taking all risks and cutting through a gap. Then came the crash, the steeds down in a welter of heat and dust and confusion, a smashed wheel, the horses kicking furiously, while the rest of the "field" swung and swerved to escape.

The Glory of the Past.

To some extent the imagination may reconstruct the whole scene, the blaze of effulgent colour, the opulent hues of the dresses, the grand fellows of the imperial guards, the rich hangings of the emperor's palace, the amazing variety of people, Greeks and Easterns, folks from every clime, slaves and free, with the sunshine flashing on the tinkling fountains, and the air filled with cries in many languages.

R/R